

NORRIS J. LACY, ed., *Text and Intertext in Medieval Arthurian Literature*. New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1996. Garland Reference Library of the Humanities, vol. 1997. Pp. ix, 239. ISBN: 0-8153-2358-9. \$38.

When the International Arthurian Society invited papers for its 1993 Triennial Congress, it asked for papers which focused on the intertextual dimensions of Arthurian literature. *Text and Intertext in Medieval Arthurian Literature*, a collection of fourteen papers, is the select proceedings of that congress. The first thing that strikes the reader is the overarching influence of a single text, the Prose Vulgate. Of the fourteen papers the majority are primarily concerned with at least one portion of the prose cycle and all but three at least refer to it. This can be seen as an indication of the growing interest (especially among English scholars) in this text which is central to medieval Arthurian tradition. As with most congresses (and collections), however, the volume in general is a mixture of the insightful and the mundane.

The International Arthurian Society specifically requested papers which dealt with 'generic intertextuality,' an ambiguous phrase at best. This ambiguity led to a wide range of methods, and in his brief introduction, Norris J. Lacy speaks of the 'remarkable variety' of the papers delivered (viii). Included in this volume are studies of Arthurian texts which exhibit intertextuality with other Arthurian texts, other romances, other literary genres (such as the lyric, or the chronicle) and even within a single text's manuscript tradition. Although the importance of intertextuality to composition in the Middle Ages is well recognized, scholarship which seeks to study intertextuality has a tendency to fall into one of two traps. It is easy either simply to trace sources, or merely to catalogue literary motifs.

Despite Michael W. Twomey's statement that 'Intertextuality is not source study' (90), there is always the possibility that it might become so. Several papers in the collection merely trace stemma of story elements through several texts with little detailed analysis. Source studies, however, need not be simplistic. Twomey's own paper on Morgain la Fée in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and Edward Donald Kennedy's paper on the *Alliterative Morte Arthure* and the 'Fall of Princes' tradition both demonstrate this. Both of these studies identify the possible sources, but they also examine the ways that their authors have appropriated, adapted and interpreted the material which they have used.

The temptation to provide a catalogue of motifs is also almost irresistible. Many papers in the collection trace motifs, such as food, time, the 'specular encounter,' or the telling of tales, with very sparse analysis. In contrast, Thea Summerfield's excellent article on Pierre de Langtoft's *Chronicle* traces and examines Langtoft's use of three recurring motifs: comparisons with Arthur, the influence of the Bishop of Durham, and the intervention of a trio of British saints. She argues that through these motifs the author drew attention to the reigns of William the Conqueror, Richard I, and Edward I. This 'grid' of motifs allowed Langtoft to draw attention to certain events and thus provide poignant political commentary (202).

Stylistically, the volume shares problems which are common to many conference proceedings. Papers which were designed as oral presentations have been transformed

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into written texts with varying degrees of effort. Grammatical and typographical errors have, of course, slipped into several papers. In addition the papers are generally of a colloquial style, complete with casual construction and sentence fragments. These features, acceptable and often effective in an oral presentation, are jarring on the printed page.

Readers, especially those interested in the Prose Vulgate, will find some material of interest in *Text and Intertext*. The collection, however, is a typical offering of conference fare, and surrounding the few insightful studies are papers which merely scratch the surface of potentially interesting questions.

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