

Sphere." Attention to the correlation between science and superstition might have yielded a more comprehensive and convincing conclusion. Rejecting the initial association with folklore and subsequent generalizations, Chardonnens leaves far-reaching questions unanswered when he attributes the Anglo-Saxon prognostics to the "learned superstition" of monks (pp. 128–29).

In sum, *Anglo-Saxon Prognostics* proposes fascinating but tentative theses. What the author calls "the rough edges of my mind" (p. xiii) may have caused key premises not to be consolidated and arguments not to be correlated. An editorial hand could have remedied those flaws, as well as various problems of style, which need not be itemized here. Such care would have resulted in a more valuable—and more manageable—book. Nevertheless, Chardonnens has furthered the serious study of historic writings that were once deemed esoteric and even dismissed as senseless. His analysis should stimulate fruitful debate on a gamut of themes. His edition makes the texts more accessible—although an electronic version seems overdue.

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PIERRE CHASTANG, ed., *Le passé à l'épreuve du présent: Appropriations et usages du passé du moyen âge à la Renaissance*. (Mythes, Critique et Histoire.) Paris: Presses de l'Université Paris-Sorbonne, 2008. Paper. Pp. 523 plus 4 color figures; 1 table. €34.

It is impossible in a brief review to do justice to a book of more than five hundred pages, and the difficulty presents itself with special force for the volume under consideration here. This is so not only because of the extremely broad chronological and geographic sweep of the historical and literary texts discussed by the twenty-seven contributors but also because of the deep and detailed knowledge they bring to bear on each country and period treated, which demands from the reader an equally profound range of learning to be truly appreciated.

The book's central theme of the appropriations and uses of the past during the Middle Ages and Renaissance is characteristic of recent approaches to medieval and Renaissance historical writing, which typically explore the range of modalities premodern authors employed to record the historical past and to encode its significance from the perspective of the present. Moreover, as this collection demonstrates brilliantly, it is the desired meaning of the past *in the present* that governs the choice of modes and content included in any given text, choices generated by a complex combination of received traditions preserved in earlier texts and of memory and contemporary pressures that inflect those traditions, thereby activating the social, political, and cultural utility of the past for the present. The precise combination of received tradition and present understandings that a society entertains about its past and its consciousness of its own nature gives rise to what François Hartog has called "régimes d'historicité," which include specific experiences and conceptions of time as well as the knowledge of specific events that later became the focus of modern historiography. Given this, it is not surprising that many of the articles stress periods of rupture with the past in the texts they examine, ones that give rise to novel conceptions of the relationship between past and present.

What is new—and welcome—in this volume is the insistence in the introduction by Pierre Chastang that we not only remain alert to the manipulation of the past by medieval and Renaissance chroniclers and writers but also appreciate the degree to which "the question of the 'past in the crucible of the present' discloses constraints"—the resistance of historical legacies to certain interpretations, which risk being accused of lying if they depart too egregiously from tradition. Yet at the same time, the past remains accessible to contemporary discursive mediation, seen in the choice of fragments, epochs, and historical figures

no mention of the Anglo-Saxon riddles (only a vague allusion to "a riddling aspect," p. 179). Relatively familiar categories include the "Egyptian Days" and six lunaries. A more exotic though ancient category, "Brontologies," comprises genres of divination according to the times at which thunder occurs.

Chardonnens unifies the disparate material under his own definition of prognostics as "a codified means of predicting events in the life-time of an individual or identifiable group of individuals, using observation of signs and times, or mantic divination" (pp. 8 and 160). Defining the subject matter, however, is less easy than circumscribing it with the overlaps and differences of other areas. The edited texts incorporate, in varying combinations, something of the empiricism of science, the credence of religion, the imagination of literature, and the convention of folklore. On the other hand, there are marked differences (about which the editor is silent, to the surprise of this reviewer and perhaps other nonspecialist readers) between the Anglo-Saxon "prognostics" and forms of forecasting such as augury, meteorology, and medicine. Medical teaching distinctly separates the *doctrina prognosticandi* from the *regimen sanitatis* or governance of health (*diaeta*). This demarcation is crossed—without comment—in *Anglo-Saxon Prognostics* by the inclusion of two brief dietetic items as "means of predicting events": neither the "bloodletting prognostic" (p. 245), which lists the hours suitable for phlebotomy, nor the monthly health guide, though titled *Medicina Ypogratis* (p. 473), lies within Hippocratic or other medical traditions about prognosis.

The relationship of the Anglo-Saxon prognostics to medicine, as well as to science and superstition, has been the subject of a lengthy and complex discourse. Assessments have moved far beyond the allocation to folklore by Thomas Oswald Cockayne. After a medico-magical interpretation by Charles Singer came Angus Cameron's rationalizations. Currently, in a "iatromathematical perspective" (p. 24), Faith Wallis and others grant prognostics "an overbearing medical status" (p. 147), according to Chardonnens. Paradoxically (and confusingly), he observes that "the majority of prognostic genres had a medical status, but the intended use of the texts depended upon the context" (p. 157).

The emphasis on manuscript context exposes the dual challenge of specifying the purpose of the texts and recognizing the broader historical context. Just as we depend largely on conjecture to explain the presence of "prognostics" in certain manuscripts, we have only scant and indirect evidence of their utilization. Chardonnens affirms their actual use with the argument that "it would have been a pointless exercise" to copy them "without the express intent of consultation" (p. 141). Similar logic underlies his amazement about poorly written MS Sloane 475: "If these texts interested the scribe, why did he copy them so carelessly?" (p. 43). The link between the texts and the Benedictine reform is crucial, but Chardonnens both underestimates its multiformity and overstates its effect. Preoccupied with practical applications, he overlooks possible pedagogical, heuristic, and other motives for copying. In addition, determined to treat the texts as a corpus, he believes that the scholars of the reform introduced "a *systematic* approach to prognostics" (p. 62, emphasis mine).

It proves difficult to fit the complete corpus into the frame of a coherent evaluation and, particularly, to classify it consistently as science, superstition, or a combination of both. A major proposition, that "the prognostics are a form of science in Anglo-Saxon England," is justified by loose criteria, namely, that the texts are codified, contain learned allusions, and arrived in manuscripts of learning or were translated in manuscripts "containing science such as the computus" (p. 159). Furthermore, the assignment of a scientific status seems at odds with the stated objective "to clarify the status of prognostication as a superstitious practice" (p. 95). Superstition, in turn, is viewed without reference to science but with the typology of theology. This view reflects Ælfric's stance rather than Byrhtferth's interests, and it blurs the distance between, say, the *Sortes sanctorum* and the "Apuleian

and the plurality of meanings attached to facts and texts at the historian's disposition. For Chastang, it is the play between the constraints arising from the past and its availability (what he calls the "disponibilité du passé") that structures the discursive field within which the writer—whether historian proper or *littérateur*—operates. The goal of the present volume is, precisely, "to explain the mediating role played by writing in the procedures deployed in the reappropriation of the past and the construction of memory," a development that, in its totality, is tantamount, according to Marcel Détienné, to "knowledge in the present." Not all the contributors to the volume give equal attention to the tension between availability and constraint signaled by Chastang as the volume's theme, but a notable few do, in particular the chapter by Patrick Boucheron, "Palimpsestes ambrosiens: La commune, la liberté et le saint patron (Milan, XIe–XVe siècles)," which examines the complex and changing role played by Ambrose in the political self-definition of the eponymous Ambrosian Republic of Milan.

The contributions are divided into five thematic sections. Part 1 examines texts concerned with origins and the construction of social memory, which include topics as diverse as the antiquities of Metz (Mireille Chazan); a study of Gaimar's *Estoire des Engleis* (Catherine Croizy-Naquet); the invention of the past of Liège by Jean d'Outremeuse (Edina Bozoky); similarly, the invention of a mythic English past in *Waldef* and *Gui de Warewic* (Catherine Gaullier-Bougassas); the origin of Italian towns seen in the history of Genoa (Nathalie Bouloux); and the historical treatment of the loss and recuperation of Spain (Patrick Henrier), together with the discussion of Milan already mentioned.

Part 2 takes up questions of reform, renovation, and reference, with articles on the rejection and appropriation of *l'Hispania* in medieval Catalonia (Michel Zimmermann); the rewriting of the history of Spain by Gregory VII (Thomas Deswarte); Chastang's own contribution, on the etiological function and legitimizing uses of the past in the ecclesiastical history of Narbonne in the second half of the eleventh century; and the place of the present and past with respect to the Bible's translation in English sermons of the fifteenth century (Stephen Morrison).

Part 3 considers appropriations of the past in biographical texts, with contributions on Christine de Pisan (Lori J. Walters); the instrumentalization of biblical figures in Christian polemics against the Jews of Aragon in the second half of the thirteenth century (Claire Soussen); *Hakon's Saga* as a historical argument for integration with the West (Florent Lenègre); the figure of David (or at least his nose and arm) as treated by Michelangelo and Vasari (Frédérique Duhard de Gaillarbois); and the use of prophecy as a founding legend among the Gonzagas of Mantua in the second half of the sixteenth century (Delphine Carrangeor).

Part 4 examines textual borrowings and "readings" that frame specific discourses, such as references to the past in the historiography of Monte Cassino (Arnoud Knaepen); the meaning of history from Wace to Layamon (Marie-Françoise Alamichel); the construction of an epic past in the *Song of Roland* (Silvère Menegaldo); reinterpretations of the legend of St. Francis among reforming Italian Franciscans from the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries (Marc Boriosi); and a discussion of Marot's edition of Villon (Susan Baddeley).

The final section returns the ideas of *ratio* and *novitas* to historical consideration as elements, Chastang emphasizes, consciously claimed in opposition to custom from the twelfth century on, in particular as the basis for monastic reform, framing the renovation of monastic practice in terms of the progressive growth of a knowledge that contrasts an atemporal (*intemporelle*) truth in the present to experience inscribed in time. Here are found discussions of "renovating" discourse among Cistercians in the twelfth century (Alexis Grélois); a study of the fifteenth-century *Cent nouvelles nouvelles* (Nelly Labère); the privileging of experience over authority in commentaries on Avicenna's *Canon* in the fifteenth century (Joël Chandelier); Brutus's stoicism as portrayed by Shakespeare in *Julius Caesar*

(Jean-François Chappuit); the place of the *Lo somni* of Bernat Merge between past and present (Marina Mestre Zaragoza); and, finally, praise of the past and refusal of the present as seen in the poetic work of Ausiàs March (Marie-Claire Zimmermann).

A retrospective look at the findings of these studies by Michel Zimmerman underlines the inherent ambiguity in the relation between past and present as structured by the texts examined, with the relative authority and dominance of one over the other not easily determined at any given moment, despite the putative weight of the past in the thought of medieval writers. However omnipresent were references to the past, Zimmermann notes, it would be erroneous to conceive medieval respect for and fidelity to the past as a sign of enduring submission to it, for the present could just as easily enter into competition and conflict with it. Indeed, the overall trajectory of historical consciousness as seen through the lens of these twenty-seven essays demonstrates the passage over time, Chastang concludes, from a belief in the authoritative nature of the past to one that consists in a history of social and textual mediations by which the present reappropriates an available past in accordance with its own intentions. Once again, we see here the affinity between pre- and postmodern conceptions of historiography, alike in their distinction from the intervening myth of objective history upon which so much of modern historical writing based its own claim to authority.

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ROBERT CHAZAN, *The Jews of Medieval Western Christendom, 1000–1500*. (Cambridge Medieval Textbooks.) Cambridge, Eng., and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006. Pp. xvi, 342; 3 maps. \$75 (cloth); \$29.99 (paper).

"I vacillated regularly between *The Jews in Medieval Western Christendom* and *The Jews of Medieval Western Christendom*," admits Robert Chazan. "I ultimately opted for the latter title, out of the strong conviction that medieval Europe was far more than simply a terrain on which Jewish life unfolded." All problems aside, "the Jews upon whom we shall focus were very much a part of the medieval European scene." As much as they were affected by their environment, "they influenced—for good and ill—the majority ambience within which they found themselves." Chazan stresses "both the diachronic and the synchronic aspects of the Jewish experience, that is to say the Jewish experience as shaped to an extent by the overall trajectory of the Jewish past and the Jewish experience as shaped by the specific contours of one or another area of Europe." He strongly rejects "the sense of medieval Jewish experience as consisting essentially of suffering." Quite the contrary: "one of the most striking aspects of the Jewish experience in medieval western Christendom involves the growing number of Jews who became part of the Christian ambience." Chazan's desire for historical nuance and cultural complexity is what makes his general survey so admirable; yet, while mostly achieving what he intends, some assumptions about the study of religion do occasionally undermine that nuance and complexity.

"Medieval western Christendom encompassed a vast area and included diverse peoples, languages, economies, political systems, and cultures." Consequently, such "heterogeneity makes a linear history of the Jews" impossible. It is not clear why that should be so, especially as Chazan undertakes a resolutely linear and homogeneous history of the medieval church in his second chapter, "The Pan-European Roman Catholic Church." Apparently, the "Roman Catholic Church was in fact the common element that enables us to speak of western Christendom as a more or less coherent entity." Latin Christian intellectuals from the late eleventh until the early thirteenth centuries certainly articulated lucid doctrines and established consistent ecclesiastical structures, yet Christianity in thought and practice, especially among ordinary men and women, was not yet (if ever) an entity at