

Book Reviews

CHAUCER AND FIFTEENTH-CENTURY POETRY. Edited by Julia Boffey and Janet Cowen. 1991. King's College London Medieval Studies V. Obtainable from Dr D. Hook, Dept. of Spanish, King's College London, Strand, London WC2R 2LS, £8.75 incl. postage and packing.

This useful and stimulating volume contains nine essays which were originally given as lectures in the University of London, 1989. Their origin in teaching marks them for better and worse, accounting both for their graceful and accessible presentation and for the occasional over-reliance on plot summary in some of the contributions.

The first two essays interest themselves in contemporary critical approaches. Pamela King shows the extremely reflexive character of three fifteenth-century poems: *Golden Targe*, *Bowge of Court*, and *Kingis Quair*. These poems are self-conscious, self-referential, 'sophisticated and confident', since they employ 'an art form (the dream vision) which regarded itself closely in many ways and for a long time'. Hoccleve's notable self-awareness prompts James Simpson to reflect on the poet's conscious deployment of conflicting modes in his *Series*, where the poem alternates between the conventional (realistic autobiography) and the textual (literary modes). In this disjunction between 'real life ... and the literary artifact' Hoccleve is perhaps following Chaucer. Simpson's conclusion synthesizes these antitheses by suggesting that Hoccleve's real-life recuperation from mental illness might be assigned to his development in the text of 'new models of personality unauthorized by literary tradition'. King's and Simpson's essays sound the volume's central note: the exploration of Chaucer's influence provides many novel perspectives, both here and elsewhere, as the master's shadow is seen to fall in unexpected places.

Three following essays then offer wide-ranging surveys of particular kinds of writing. The survey mode, a demanding one for the author, has its principal value for the reader not so much in the accuracy or even the wit with which a great many texts are dispatched, as in the sideways illumination which texts throw upon one another. Thus W.A. Davenport is particularly stimulating, for instance, when his survey of medieval bird-poems allows us to see how Skelton's Parrot recalls both Chaucer's eagle and Chaunticleer, and combines elements of the court jester and Old Testament prophet – perspectives which rest upon his detailed preceding inspection of the bird-poem tradition.

Janet Cowan's essay examines medieval treatments of Medea in light of the double tradition of praise and blame of women. In Lydgate's presentation of Medea in the *Troy Book* the author emphasizes female sexual appetite so strongly

that the reader's sympathies are misdirected in what began as a narrative of female abandonment. Cowan implies that Lydgate's own sympathies may have produced the contrasting portrait of Medea in *Fall of Princes*, where her magical restoration of the aged Aeson receives a credulous and sympathetic account. Julia Boffey's survey of the theme of prisoners in medieval literature serves to differentiate the *Kingis Quair* from its Boethian-Chaucerian materials. The vision of the beloved, for instance, does not intensify the prisoner's misery, as in *Knight's Tale*, but leads to heavenly instruction. New uses of traditional elements, in combination with the record of individual experience (James I's own imprisonment) produces a fresh synthesis in this poem.

Three other essays present close readings of a text. Jane Roberts outlines 'a way of reading (Henryson's *Orpheus and Eurydice*) which I have grown into', in which overarching thesis is subsumed by a multitude of trenchant observations, concluding with the suggestion that, as Henryson's *Testament* springs from Chaucer's *Troilus*, so Henryson's *Orpheus* may constitute his meditation on the *Knight's Tale*. Rosamund Allen shows how Lydgate's *Siege of Thebes* really does constitute an ending for the *Canterbury Tales*, through its linear rather than circular form. Thus for instance the fiction of a listening pilgrim audience is allowed to drop in Lydgate's conclusion.

My own favorite here is Henrietta Twycross-Martin's examination of moral issues in *Testament of Cresseid*, which is deeply informed by Chaucer's presence at every point and offers a series of original and delicate reflections, concluding that Henryson places a higher value on earthly love than does Chaucer, since in the *Testament's* world 'human beings are all we have to go by, and illumination will come through them or not at all'.

It is no reproach to the substantial work which precedes it to say that the volume's final essay, Peter Brown's work on *The Tale of Beryn*, is of a different order. It will be indispensable, not only to readers of this text, but to the many interested in fifteenth-century literature's social context. Brown juggles a great many different balls with apparent ease in the essay. It begins with an interesting history of the text's editorial vicissitudes, then suggests an original and convincing theory of authorship, and a date, illuminates the *Tale* as part of the ecclesiastical-political world of St. Thomas' shrine in early fifteenth-century Canterbury, indicates what the author's own political imperatives were, and his literary ones (by analyzing his relation to Chaucer) and finally, questions current ideas about the Chaucerian audience after the poet's death. The essay is daring in its range, successful in its achieved grasp.

The volume's production is impeccable. Not a single typo, misspelling, or variant form appears to mar the presentation of this valuable work.

MARY C. ERLER

PATRIARCHY AND FAMILIES OF PRIVILEGE IN FIFTEENTH CENTURY ENGLAND. Joel T. Rosenthal. 1991. University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, £33.50. ISBN 0-8122-3072-8

This is a book about the family, its forms and structures and above all, its diversity. It tackles the great problem of how, by looking at individuals and particular case studies and their unique experiences one may generalise without destroying the very idea of diversity or uniqueness that one wishes to preserve. Professor Rosenthal begins by questioning two notions that have enjoyed acceptance in the history of the family, namely that one form of the family exists as a dominant model and secondly, that changes in the family always occur in the one compelling direction. He urges the case for diversity for he tends to the view that the history of the family cannot be written because there never has been a single family system.

The book revolves around three family contexts – patriarchy or the nuclear family; the horizontal family sprawling outwards from siblings; and widowhood, the distinctly female experience of family. This last deserved better representation in the title for matriarchy comes across as a major element of family life, here indeed enjoying a marginally greater space than that specifically devoted to patriarchy!

Professor Rosenthal has based his work on existing printed sources combing in particular inquisitions *post-mortem* and wills, as indicators of relationships between family members. Throughout he draws frequent attention to their limitations. Inquisitions often do not give the ages of the heirs or give them inaccurately unless their import be critical, nor do they help historians to discover family members beyond the immediate heir, and least of all do they give any hint of feelings. Wills too can easily mislead. They may represent a final and perhaps uncharacteristic wave of generosity (p. 124), though it is perhaps important here to distinguish between wills made *in extremis* and those made some years in advance. Where one of each type does survive for an individual these can reveal very telling differences and changes of attitude. Equally it ought to be said that what is not in the will may be as important as what is, so that unrecorded generosity during life may best explain an apparent exclusion or meagre bequests at death and therefore affects judgement about the relationship. Rosenthal makes interesting observations on social control through the will though he perhaps overplays his hand, creating an impression that all beneficiaries were bound to severe obligations in return for their benefactions (pp.120-1), for this was not always the case. In truth historians are poorly equipped to write the history of the family, but overall the message of these sources strongly endorses the author's argument for diversity, and through them he breathes life into a range of greater and lesser aristocratic families. This book is deeply human in its concerns, a thing too easily brushed aside when the knife is wielded to carve out those convenient categories so beloved of historians.

Professor Rosenthal asks difficult questions. Did a high rate of infant mortality freeze emotional links between parents and children until the child's survival seemed assured? Did the bond between husbands and wives stop short of full confidence because it was well known that many spouses remarried? Such questions have no easy answers though they need to be considered if historians wish truly to enter into the emotional lives of men and women. At several points the author moves out of aristocratic life hinting that in terms of quality of family

relationships the gap between better recorded families and the lower classes may not be so wide as one might expect. Quarrels are quarrels whether they concern large estates or small plots.

Turning first to his model of patriarchy, Rosenthal establishes that the preservation of patrilineage was at once both important and nigh unto impossible. He re-examines the replacement rates among fifteenth century families, thereby reinforcing the McFarlane view of biological failure, though he enters a plea for historians not to dismiss the damage caused by the civil war too easily. Nevertheless he is compelled to the conclusion that 'the Jesse tree came down more easily than it grew'. Though he continually urges diversity not even Rosenthal entirely frees himself from the sense of the dominance of patriarchy as an ideal or model. He is forced to stress how 'irremediably patriarchal and oppressive society was' (p.233), while finding hope in the fact that 'patriarchy itself... was neither all embracing nor invariably triumphant' (p.257). His case study here is of the lords Scrope of Bolton, one of only twelve aristocratic families who actually made it through the fifteenth century by father to son transmission.

Diversity shows up particularly in the horizontal family and among widows. The experiences in both of these, especially the former are characterised by a greater element of volition. Rosenthal shows how medieval people were interested in who their relatives were and he presents a rich tapestry of enormously varied relationships and responses to family situations. Among these interesting byways he dallies with those men who died by violence in the fifteenth century. Since nearly half left no direct male heirs he explores the idea that lack of close family may have led such men to gamble, to take greater risks since they had so much less to lose than others whose attainders might ruin their sons. Case studies of two ecclesiastical families – the Chicheles and the Booths – reveal powerful adherence to the horizontal family in a circle where patrilineage was, of course, not a possibility. A third study, of Ralph Neville's great brood of children, provides a different example of family networks.

In his chapter on widows, Professor Rosenthal presents a gloomy picture, making much of the involuntary nature of this new status, of a life rarely 'of great joy or ease' (p.178), of melancholy tales, of a society that 'defines widows as obstacles and impediments' (p.198) and though he adds that he does not intend 'to depict a scene of unremitting gloom or of unceasing struggle', that is the chief impression of his discussion. It is surely important not to make light of the loneliness, hardships and struggles that widows might face but these were by no means exclusive to widowhood – they could apply equally in marriage and indeed equally to men – and even if problems did arise it does not mean that there was not much contentment and joy in the periods between such difficulties. Nevertheless there is much to be commended in this section, not least the discussion of women and religion which draws back from ideas that widows were exceptional in their patronage of the church or of education.

It has not been the author's intention here to cover the family comprehensively but rather to explore chosen themes. This has been effectively done in spite of some infelicities and inconsistencies in the text. Lord Wenlock was not of course killed at Towton in 1470 (p.49); and Ralph Neville's first wife was indeed Margaret Stafford (p.151), not Margaret Holland (p.152), his brother, Thomas Lord Furnival (p.151), not Lord Fauconberg (p.153) and his son Robert, bishop of

Durham was fifth son of his *second* wife, not his first (p.158). Setting these aside readers will find in this book a valuable assessment of aristocratic families that is handled with sensitivity but without stooping to sentimentality.

ROWENA E. ARCHER.

THE HOUSEHOLD BOOKS OF JOHN HOWARD, DUKE OF NORFOLK, 1462-71, 1481-1483. Introduction by Anne Crawford. 1992. Alan Sutton for Richard III and Yorkist History Trust, £35.00 Special price for members, £27.50, incl. p & p from Sales Officer, 14 Lincoln Rd., Guildford, Surrey GU2 6TJ.

One hundred and fifty years ago the surviving books of personal and household accounts of John Howard, later Duke of Norfolk, were printed in two volumes of the Roxburghe Club, edited respectively by Beriah Botfield and J. Payne Collier. They have, of course, been used by fifteenth-century historians since, but the volumes are rare and many libraries do not possess them, so their employment in studies of the period has been much less than their contents warrant. This reprint will, therefore, make available to a much wider readership an important source for many aspects of the late fifteenth century not just in East Anglia, Howard's home, but in England as well. As with the reprint of the *Paston Letters* some ten years ago Alan Sutton have made the volumes reasonable in price and easy to handle by printing four pages of the original volumes to the page. It must be confessed that at least one older reader found the type-size somewhat of a strain on the eyes but fortunately there are not long passages of narrative to read and the text is perfectly clear.

Anne Crawford's introduction does not deal in detail with the complex structure and relationships of the original documents, which would no doubt be more appropriate for an entirely new edition: her checking of the printed text against the originals apparently found that the transcript was very accurate, so such an edition would have been an unnecessary labour. Instead she uses the introduction to sketch the life and activities of John Howard and to demonstrate the riches contained in the almost uniquely detailed record of daily payments of all sorts made by Howard and his servants during the period for which the accounts survive. She shows the light these accounts shed upon a gentleman's household and his family relationships, on the management of his lands and the various business interests which helped to make him rich, particularly the rare information on ship-building and shipping, and on material possessions and diet. They are illuminating, too, on Howard's activities in local administration and politics and on his relations with the Dukes of Norfolk (whom, by the way, Miss Crawford numbers differently from the *Complete Peerage*, making the last Mowbray duke (d.1476), the '3rd'). But John Howard was not just a local magnate. He was one of the key political figures of Yorkist England, active in war on land and sea, in diplomacy, politics and the administration of the Royal Household, and the accounts also provide much evidence on his involvement in public affairs, particularly during the crucial year of 1483.

The reprint has been provided with an excellent index which will make much easier analysis of Howard's relationships with family, servants, tenants and neighbours. There have also been added to this edition a selection of other cognate survivals from the Howard archive, most of them, like the accounts, apparently saved by Thomas Martin in the early eighteenth century from the decaying chambers of Framlingham Castle. These include two lists of Howard's household and one of his second wife's, a valor of his lands for 1463-4 and an account-roll of his estates for 1483-4. The documents – printed in normal type-size – form a valuable addition to a volume which will provide much of interest to any student of the politics and society of Yorkist England.

ROGER VIRGOE

A RENAISSANCE CARDINAL AND HIS WORLDLY GOODS: the Will and Inventory of Francesco Gonzaga, 1444-1483. D.S.Chambers. 1992. Warburg Institute Surveys and Texts 20. University of London, Warburg Institute, Woburn Square, London WC1H 0AB. £18.00. ISBN 0-85481-080-3

Francesco Gonzaga, the second son of Lodovico III Gonzaga of Mantua, is perhaps best known to posterity from his portrait in *The Meeting* on the west wall of the 'Camera degli Sposi', in the Ducal Palace, Mantua. Mantegna completed this in 1474, some three years after Francesco had been appointed Cardinal Legate of Bologna.

David Chambers' study provides a short biography of the Cardinal, an account of his professional and social environment and discusses his patronage and cultural interests. Over half this book, however, contains the transcribed documents: the Latin Will (signed the day before Gonzaga's death on 21 October 1483), a vernacular post-mortem Inventory of his goods and chattels, and a selection of vernacular correspondence between his heirs, executors and others concerned with various problems arising from his bequests. All these are examined in detail by the author, so that a knowledge of Latin and Italian is not essential, although some understanding of the latter is desirable for a proper appreciation of the correspondence. The index also serves as a glossary, and although the author notes the difficulties of translating obsolete terms, he seems somewhat over-cautious when dealing with dress and textiles. It seems reasonable, for example, to translate 'un zipone' as a doublet rather than as 'a close-fitting jacket' and 'raso' as satin, not 'a type of satin'; surely, too, 'una farsata' is a quilt (derived from the Latin *farcire* – to stuff) not 'a type of garment', especially since it is listed with bedding and bed-linen. The entry for gloves, 'see guanti' is missing. 'Two pairs of woollen gloves' and 'two pairs of kid gloves, embellished with silk and gold, may, however, be found in the Inventory (p.165) amongst a curious miscellany that includes, '...three Moorish style belts of divers colours', 'a cloth-of-gold dog-collar embellished with silver' and 'an ivory box with a piece of amber'.

For those unfamiliar with fifteenth century inventories from noble households the sheer quantity of items in the Inventory may seem astonishing. It is, as the

author points out, probably incomplete, omitting possessions from the Cardinal's two residences in Rome. Certainly the amount of personal clothing included (Items 121-70) is rather modest for a man of Gonzaga's rank, and he must have owned more than two doublets and one pair of hose! There is, on the other hand, a substantial list of furnishings, including at least twelve sets of tapestries and numerous carpets for hanging, for covering tables and for floor coverings: Also listed are vestments, ecclesiastical and secular silver, horse trappings, armour and the Cardinal's collection of over a thousand gems and medals. His cutlery includes several silver forks and a gold one 'with an enamelled flower at the top'.

The contents of the library give some indication of Gonzaga's interests. He was well-read, and most certainly a connoisseur of manuscripts, as well as of antique cameos and gems, for he owned at least two hundred manuscripts and thirteen printed books. Of these some eighty-three might be classed as 'professional' since they dealt with theological or scriptural topics and with canon and civil law. Otherwise the classics and science predominate. There were forty-five titles relating to or by Roman and Greek authors. In fact his most lavish manuscript commission, unfinished at his death, was the 'Vatican Homer' (MS. Vat. Gr. 1626, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana), with a parallel Greek and Latin text of the Iliad and the Odyssey. Thirty-nine titles relate to medicine and astronomy. Dr Chambers suggests that the former may have been acquired as the result of the Cardinal's chronic ill-health, but it is possible that he had a genuine interest in things scientific. He owned works on astronomy translated from Arabic, as well as an astrolabe and two quadrants. He was also curious about the mechanics of clocks, and owned an early type of alarm clock.

There is little evidence of Francesco Gonzaga's interest in painting, sculpture or architecture in these documents, although he appears to have been friendly with Mantegna and Alberti (both employees of his father). In 1477 he purchased a Botticelli Madonna for the modest price of 40 ducats. The Inventory, however, lists only two paintings 'two old Greek icons (not '...in the Greek manner', as the author states): one of a crucifix and the other of Our Lady' (p.164, No.598). It seems most unlikely that these were the only devotional pictures he owned. Perhaps other works of art had been left in Bologna, or were in Rome. It certainly seems rash to deduce from the Cardinal's reluctance to stay in the Schifanoia Palace with its recently completely frescoes in the 'Sala dei Mesi', that he had no interest in painting. (p.103, n.41). It was, as he rightly commented, '...inconvenient, being far from the city centre, and uncomfortable in winter'. Despite its art, it was not suitable for a chronically ill man with, as it happened, less than a year to live. One also cannot assume that he had no interest in themes for painting or in iconography on the evidence of what seems like a witty reply to a rather silly question. When asked by a miserly neighbour to advise on an unexpected theme for a painting, Francesco retorted '...a personification of liberality' (p.87 and n.282). This surely cannot be understood as evidence of a lack of ability to devise iconographical programmes!

The letters contain a wealth of information about contemporary life, as well as revealing something of the relationships of the Cardinal with his family and household staff. Also of interest are the problems his brothers inherit in attempting to settle with Francesco's creditors, including the Medici Bank in Rome.

This study contains much that is of use for those concerned with the social and

cultural environment of late fifteenth century Italy. It is perhaps a book for the specialist, but those with a general knowledge will find it informative, particularly if complemented with broader reading.

JANE BRIDGEMAN

AGE OF CHIVALRY: ART AND SOCIETY IN LATE MEDIEVAL ENGLAND. Edited by Nigel Saul. 1992. A History Today Book; Collins and Brown, London. £20.
ISBN 185585-0524

This collection of nine articles, five of which were published in *History Today* to coincide with the Age of Chivalry exhibition held at the Royal Academy in 1987-8, place English art and architecture of late medieval England within the context of contemporary society and patronage. The essays are well illustrated by black and white figures and there is a section comprising sixteen good quality coloured figures. Each figure has an explanatory caption. Although the majority are informative, there are some which offer inaccurate or vague dates, or omit dating altogether, even when such information is readily available. For instance, colour figure 14, the Trinity Apocalypse, is described as 'early thirteenth century', although there is a general consensus that it is c.1250; and by no stretch of the visual imagination could the miniature on page 92 be datable to the fourteenth century. The transposition of the figures illustrating Canterbury and Gloucester cathedrals (pp. 11 and 18) is particularly unfortunate.

In the first of Nigel Saul's essays there is no indication from his title that he will take architecture as a focus for his discussion on 'Culture and Society in the Age of Chivalry'. Despite the relevance of the Gothic style for the period it is surprising to find in the context of his paper a fairly lengthy summary of architectural developments in France and England. Certain key issues, such as England's ambivalent response to French High Gothic and the preservation of our national identity under the umbrella of the Perpendicular style, could have been made in more general terms in his discussion from page 15 onwards, where themes more pertinent to his title are discussed. By way of a conclusion, the essay reverts rather arbitrarily to architecture. One is left with the distinct impression that two papers have been grafted together in a not too happy alliance.

Perhaps Saul's unstated aim was to give the reader a sample of the ensuing articles, but both his preface and introductory essay fail to achieve this. This is what the publication lacks, an article which sets out to draw the contributions together into a meaningful whole. Similarly, a number of themes touched on in Saul's second article, dealing with patronage in Gothic England, are ones expanded by other contributors and which could have been incorporated in a single comprehensive opening essay, with appropriate cross-references to other articles. The editor seems to have missed an opportunity which would have lifted this publication above the average. As individual essays, however, they mostly work well.

Juliet and Malcolm Vale's article, 'Knightly Codes and Piety', is central to the

theme of the book. There was an indissoluble link between chivalry and Christian belief: the knight's arms were a metaphor for the defence of the holy church. The visual and poetic intertwining of the secular and religious perfectly embodies the chivalric mentality. Many of the themes which inspired chivalric display in the period stemmed from Arthurian romance. Its fourteenth-century counterpart is seen in Edward III's founding of the Order of the Garter and the Collegiate Chapel at Windsor.

Arthurian subject-matter is discussed in greater detail by Brian Stone in an article which rewards perseverance, despite a rather unpromising opening. Stone interestingly draws parallels between Arthurian romance and medieval kingship, as exemplified by certain of Edward III's military exploits and codes of practice. Chivalric literature is perhaps truer to life than is sometimes recognised. Stone bases his paper on three Arthurian texts compiled in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, so contemporary parallels are not surprising. The two knightly qualities of the ideal hero-king, prowess and largesse, can be in conflict in romance and reality alike. Battles can be justified if fought in the name of God and against heathen peoples. Stone concludes that Arthur, who oscillates between the primitive and the civilised, cuts a paradoxical figure.

Peter Draper, in his essay 'The Architectural Setting of Gothic Art', explores the concepts of symbolism, function and status in both secular and, more particularly, ecclesiastical buildings. Architecture was the expression of worldly and spiritual aspirations. Castles could reflect chivalric ideals and the concept of the Heavenly Jerusalem lay behind churches and their associated sculpture and other artefacts. Church building was essentially governed by the changing forms of devotional practice in a period which saw a rise in the popularity of the cult of the Virgin, the celebration of local cults and the adoption of the Use of Sarum. The generation of wealth among the laity led to the refurbishment of the naves of existing churches, the creation of chantry chapels and the donation of various ecclesiastical objects.

Nigel Ramsay, in his informative paper on 'Artists and Craftsmen', discusses how patrons set about commissioning memorials, ranging from elaborate tombs to more modest works of art. He highlights the known centres of art, and also the better documented crafts, and notes that the availability of raw materials (and consumers) largely determined such locations. He confronts certain basic questions, such as how the design and subject-matter of a given monument might be chosen, touching on craft manuals and treatises as well as guilds and their formation. Ramsay is of the opinion that the least important consideration would have been the relative artistic merits of a commission. No distinction was drawn in the Middle Ages between artists and craftsmen, the concept being that of craftsmanship in the service of God, and not that of the artist divinely inspired. Although every master craftsman was supreme in his own sphere there was a sharing of ideas. Indeed, the predominantly linear Gothic style lent itself to dissemination via drawing; artistic ideas were thus carried to and from the provinces and across the various media.

Janet Backhouse, in her well-titled 'Devotions and Delights', makes her selection of English Gothic illuminated manuscripts with a view to drawing out points about ownership and the luxury book trade, dispelling for the general reader certain popular misconceptions. We are reminded that the end product was largely

dictated by the pocket and tastes of a patron. In a period which was dominated by the popularity of the Psalter (c.1250-1350) the margins become a vehicle for documenting everyday life. The Book of Hours became the 'best-seller' from c.1350 onwards. In this readable, broad account, Backhouse also discusses Apocalypses, Saints' Lives and Missals; literary manuscripts seldom received high-quality illumination.

The underlying message of Pamela Tudor-Craig's essay, as she takes us on a journey along the highways and byways of English Gothic wall-painting, is that of a need for conservation and funds to meet this requirement. It is explained that the paucity of surviving, well-preserved examples has resulted from the use of the less durable, but more 'vital', dry fresco method and later, often numerous, repaintings. Tudor-Craig acknowledges that the whole interior surfaces of a church would once have been decorated – a sobering thought and one which should be taken to heart if we are to preserve for future generations what still remains.

Finally, Veronica Sekules' contribution, 'Women's Piety and Patronage,' establishes that women played a significant role in formulating artistic trends, although this involvement is often difficult to determine since a woman's personality was customarily overshadowed by that of her husband. However, as widows, noblewomen had the economic and personal independence to assert their individuality as patrons. Despite misogynistic propaganda, religious art commissioned by noblewomen increasingly indicates their piety and devotion, thus denying Langland's satirical view of the vain Lady Mede in his *Vision of Piers Plowman*, the entertaining extract with which Sekules opens her article.

As stated, the various contributions have much to recommend them, but what of the publication as a whole? For whom is the book intended? The specialist is unlikely to buy it and the general reader may well feel that a paperback, at approximately half the price, embodying the same information with the addition of a strong editorial essay presenting an overview, would be more welcome.

LYNDA DENNISON

THE MEDIEVAL SIEGE. Jim Bradbury. 1992. The Boydell Press, Woodbridge, £25. ISBN 0-85115-312-7.

This is a very enjoyable book. It is a full survey of an important part of medieval warfare, showing that it consisted of more than battles in the open field. While – of course – describing the destructive power of *ballistae*, *trebuchets* and bombards as well as the conventions regulating sieges, Bradbury does not ignore the stories told by medieval chroniclers: their anecdotes enliven almost every page.

The work is not too technical for the general reader and contains more than twenty good plans and over fifty black and white reproductions from manuscripts. 'France and England after the Hundred Years War' are briefly discussed on pages 178-182, with Charles the Bold's sieges and the Bastard of Fauconberg's attack on London receiving most attention.

In a study of this scope, covering the life and fate of both the besieged and

those outside the walls from Roman times to 1565 and from Scotland to the crusader principalities, some minor flaws and inconsistencies are hardly avoidable. Why, for instance, has Lake Peipus become a river in the text (p.204ff)? The numbering of the Aragonese kings is confusing (p. 358). At Zierikzee in Zeeland, no one was driven into exile: it was not the citizens, but the defeated Flemish besiegers who had to spend a few August days with virtually no food and without their tents (p.333). It was the castle at Courtrai, not the town, which the French attempted to relieve in 1302 (p. 138), and why has the Bruges leader, Jan Breidel, been given a German Christian name (*idem*)? The 'Fifteenth-century Flemish siege' on page 309, from Wavrin's *Chroniques d'Engleterre*, does in fact depict the capture of a bastion at Troyes, France. Something seems to have gone wrong with the source references of the illustrations on pages 269 and 272.

These mistakes need not deter interested readers. Nor should anyone be put off by the fact that Richard III isn't mentioned at all! It is the attention paid to the human beings involved, their conduct under extreme conditions, that makes this a fascinating and at times sad story.

JAN WILLEM VERKAIK

WARUM WERDEN SIE DESPOTEN? Herodes – Nero – Richard III – Iwan der Schreckliche – Robespierre – Stalin – Ceaușescu – Hitler. Gisbert Kranz. 1992. Casimir Katz Verlag, Gernsbach, Germany, DM42. ISBN 3 925825 57 6

The best thing about this 400 pages long book is its five page introduction. It shows that the author may be excused for writing on this topic of tyranny and slaughter. As a contemporary of Stalin, Ceaușescu and Hitler, I think he has a right to want to look back and theorise about how and why people come to abuse personal power in such horrific and inhuman ways. No answers are found other than the commonplace ones that power corrupts and that we are all potential criminals. The author says he looked for facts and found questions, raising more questions. 'Therefore this book is not merely a historical study, but also a philosophical one'. A grand claim, but is it lived up to?

It is not. In the introduction Kranz states – in a way that raised my hopes of the book as a whole – that all the tyrants he discusses were very different, but had three things in common. They all read history, that is, the lives of their predecessors, either in power or in evil. Secondly, they all lived in fear – I do not accept that for Richard – and more so as their power grew. Finally they all had willing servants, without whose help they could not have perpetrated their crimes. Here 'philosophy' is exhausted. What follows is a series of pocket biographies that are quite readable if one does not mind the blood and gore, the torture, hate and sadism. Partly based on impeccable sources they are nonetheless derivative and singularly unrevealing. The ones that I did read – Herod, Nero, Richard III, Iwan and Robespierre – all appear to claim that the protagonists were shaped by their childhood, and that they, and those around them, were motivated by great hate and great love, and all believed that they were doing the right thing. This is no doubt

true, and has the added advantage that great hate and great love do not require explanation, but it is not particularly eye-opening.

Richard's biography and the author's judgement is based on Kendall, Kalckhof, Eising and common sense; it contains nothing that is new and much that is old. It occurred to me that, compared to the other 'tyrants' in the book, Richard was a mere amateur in evil even if he were guilty of all that has ever been laid at his door. If forced to choose between these eight men one could be persuaded to leave one's nearest and dearest in his care, whereas one would not like to see one's enemies in the hands of Herod, Iwan and the rest.

Kranz's book is expertly written and will no doubt do well. Ricardians who do not read German need not worry, however, they are missing nothing but blood and tears. If they want brief, factual accounts of the lives of these particular 'nasties' – I am excluding Richard – they can find them elsewhere. Some people will argue that to refuse to take account of a survey like Kranz's is to hide from the truth and increase the risk of a repetition of the disasters he describes. Personally I think that even the times we live in and the depressing suspicion that new dictators and tyrants will inevitably and inexorably arise in the future, do not morally oblige us to face historical facts when they are as 'popularly' presented as in the present book. Also: history does not repeat itself, and even if I could have borne to finish the book and wade through the almost familiar bloodbaths created by Stalin, Hitler and Ceaușescu, I would still not be able, ever, to save the world.

JOHN WOOD

Notices of Books and Articles

The following list consists of recent books and articles, mainly published in the last twelve months, although earlier publications may be included. The appearance of an item does not preclude its subsequent review.

ARTICLES

Julia Crick, Geoffrey of Monmouth, prophecy and history, *Journal of Medieval History*, volume 18, December 1992, pages 357-71.

A survey of the reception of the *Prophecies of Merlin* in the twelfth century: they were taken seriously by the learned and even added to the credibility of the *History of the Kings of Britain* as a whole. (Richard III owned a copy).

S.J. Gunn, The courtiers of Henry VII, *English Historical Review*, volume 108, number 426, January 1993, pages 23-49.

Looks at the careers of a number of men in the service of a pleasure and money loving king who frequently inspired great loyalty, and shows his court to have been very similar to his predecessors' and successors'.

Gerald Harriss, Political society and the growth of government in late medieval England, *Past and Present*, number 138, February 1993, pages 28-57.

Argues that the section of society involved – in the widest sense – in politics was expanding in the late middle ages, and by its interaction with and pressure on royal authority influenced the development of central institutions, state finance and taxation, as well as the management of law and order. Useful for its many references to recent work.

Michael Jones, Les ambassades de Roger Machado, le heraut Richmond en Bretagne (1490), in *La Bretagne, Terra d'Europe*, ed. Jean Kerherve and Tanguy Daniel. Brest, Centre de recherche bretonne et celtique, and Quimper, Societe archeologique du Finistere, 1992.

Gives all the facts known about the public and private life of Machado, Leicester Herald to Edward IV and Richard III, and discusses his detailed reports on his two embassies to Brittany in the service of Henry VII, including their context and their picture of the exhausting life of an ambassador and the complexity of diplomatic relations.

Anne F. Sutton, Order and fashion in clothes: the king, his household, and the city of London, *Textile History*, volume 22, part 2, 1991 [issued 1993], pages 253-276. This volume being the papers of the Pasold Conference on Dress and Textiles of Summer 1985; also issued as *Fabrics and Fashions. Studies in the Economic and Social History of Dress*, edited N.B. Harte, Pasold Research Fund, London [1993].

The conflict between the desire for new fashions and the need for respectable conformity. Examines Edward IV's and his two successors' choice in clothes, cloth, style, and especially colour, as well as those of others lower down the social scale, such as William Catesby; the liveries of the royal household c. 1450-1509, the civic liveries of London and the legal liveries, especially their cloth and colours; and the operation of the sumptuary laws.

Copies can be purchased from the Sales Officer, 14, Lincoln Rd., Guildford, Surrey, GU2 6TJ, at £1.50 incl. postage & packing.

Elza C. Tiner, Patrons and travelling companies in York, *Records of Early English Drama*, volume 17, number 1, 1992, pages 1-36.

An index of travelling companies by patron, 1396-1642, supplementing the York volumes of *Records of Early English Drama*. Very brief identification of the patrons where possible; several from the Yorkist royal family.

Roger Virgoe, The earlier Knyvetts: the rise of a Norfolk gentry family, (part 2), *Norfolk Archaeology*, volume 41 Part 3 (1992), pages 249-78.

The family from the 1460s to the 1560s, and in particular the career of Sir William Knyvett who died in 1515, after a life acquiring much property, three wives and many children. Affiliated to George Neville, George of Clarence and Henry, Duke of Buckingham, under the Yorkists, and later more successfully to Margaret Beaufort. Extensive details of kinship and service relationships.

Retha M. Warnicke, More's *Richard III* and the mystery plays, *Historical Journal*, volume 35, part 4, 1992, pages 761-78.

The argument that More's English life of Richard III was greatly inspired by contemporary drama is supported by analysis of several famous scenes. Potentially destroys the historicity of all More's narrative detail.

Notes on Contributors

Rowena E. Archer wrote a thesis on the Mowbray dukes of Norfolk and has published several articles on Medieval women. She is currently teaching mature students at Manchester College, Oxford.

Jane Bridgeman. Freelance historian. An Italian graduate, she studied at the Courtauld Institute with Stella Newton, and has a special interest in Italian dress, textiles and ceremony c. 1400-1600.

Lynda Dennison. After completing her doctorate in 1988 on the manuscripts produced for the Bohun family, has taught history of art at St. Mary's School, Wantage, continuing research in her spare time.

Mary C. Erler is Associate Professor of English at Fordham University, New York. She is working on a study of women's reading and book ownership in the early modern period.

Natalie Jane Prior is a literature graduate. She is the author of a number of specialist indexes on Queensland history, and three children's books.

Pauline Sheppard Routh writes mainly on medieval ecclesiology, specialising in church monuments, including (as co-author) *The Medieval Monuments of Harewood; The Sheriff Hutton Alabaster: a Reassessment; A Ryther Legacy: the Monuments Assessed*.

Raymond Skinner retired from teaching in 1986; subsequently, time spent in historical research and writing. Recent contributions to *Wiltshire Archaeological Magazine; The Hatcher Magazine; Family Tree Magazine; Genealogists' Magazine*, etc.

Jan Willem Verkaik is about to finish a Utrecht Ph.D thesis on Florens V, Count of Holland, and his relations with England, France and Flanders that led to his murder in 1296.

Roger Virgoe, Senior Lecturer in History at the University of East Anglia.

John Wood, a retired classics teacher; his interests are philological, Ricardian and mathematical, in that order.

Instructions to Contributors to the Ricardian

Contributions are welcomed on any subject relevant to the aims of the Society. These may be illustrated by photographs (glossy prints showing good contrast) or by line drawings. All contributions, including letters, must be typewritten, with double spacing and adequate margins, on one side of the paper only. Permission must be obtained for the use of copyright material, but this is not usually necessary for short quotes. References and footnotes must be given in one sequence at the end of the article. Details need not be given in full for second and subsequent references to the same source. They must take the form of the following examples:

R. Horrox and P. W. Hammond eds., *British Library Manuscript 433* 4 vols. Upminster and London 1979-83, vol. 1, pp. 45-6.

Daniel Williams, The hastily drawn up will of William Catesby Esquire, 25 August 1485, *Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society Transactions*, vol. 51 (1975-6), p. 48.

Anyone interested in taking display advertisement space – full, half or quarter page – or in placing an insert should contact the Editor. (Classified advertisements should be sent to the Editor of the Bulletin).

Contributions for the June 1993 *Ricardian* must reach Miss Anne Sutton, 17 Enfield Cloisters, Fanshaw Street, London N1 6LD, by 31 March. Articles should be sent well in advance. Further advice on presentation may be obtained from the editor.

RICHARD III AND YORKIST HISTORY TRUST

**The Household Books of
John Howard, Duke of Norfolk,
1462-1471, 1481-1483**

With an Introduction by Anne Crawford

This volume contains transcripts of the households books, the record of the money received and dispensed by Howard and his family and household officers. They throw light on the administration of John Howard's estates and his domestic expenditure on his household, food, clothing and even his tavern entertainment. Contains a new introduction discussing his life and career and an appendix of newly transcribed related documents. The first index of names to these important documents.

Long unavailable except in rare nineteenth century editions of which these are reprints, printed four original pages to one new page.

Frontispiece, 368 pages

Special price to members of the Richard III Society £27.50 including post and packing from Sales Officer, 14 Lincoln Road, Guildford, Surrey GU2 6TJ. Cheques to be payable to the Richard III Society.

Price to non-members £35, including post and packing, from Alan Sutton Publishing Ltd., Phoenix Mill, Far Thrupp, Stroud, Gloucestershire GL5 2BU. Cheques to be payable to Alan Sutton Publishing Ltd.

Ricardian Indexes

Comprehensive author and subject indexes to articles, notes and reviews in all issues of *The Ricardian*.

1979-1984, volume V and VI

£1

1985-1987, volume VII

£1.25

1988-1990, volume VIII

£1.75

Prices include postage and packing. Cheques payable to the Richard III Society.

From: Miss A. E. Smith, 14 Lincoln Road, Guildford, Surrey GU2 6TJ.