

Book Reviews

A CRISIS OF TRUTH: LITERATURE AND LAW IN RICARDIAN ENGLAND. Richard Firth Green. 1999. University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia. £49 (\$62.50). ISBN 0-8122-3463-4.

This book is an ambitious interdisciplinary work, which attempts to relate a significant change in the meaning of the Middle English word 'trowthe' to some of the major themes of English literature in the last quarter of the fourteenth century and to a broader transformation that had been taking place since the later twelfth century in the nature of English law and popular reaction to that transformation. The author also seeks to place this exploration of the relationship between law, language and literature in a wide comparative context. Professor Green's 'home base' is, as he readily admits, 'late medieval literary history' but research for the book has led him to explore not just the history of later medieval English common law but also 'the folklaw of the Anglo-Saxons and other Germanic peoples', the social and political history of the period, medieval philosophy, theology and political theory, legal anthropology, literacy studies, English philology, and even the literature of modern West Africa. As he says, a 'lifetime would barely suffice to acquire expertise in any of these fields, let alone all of them'; but he seeks to disarm criticism by pleading that 'if interdisciplinary work is to make any real contribution to scholarship it must hope for lenient treatment at the hands of the strict disciplinarian'.

Green's starting-point is the significant change which took place in the later fourteenth century in the meaning of 'truth'. Chapter 1 ('From Troth to Truth') looks at the different semantic fields covered by the Middle English word 'trowthe'. Its original legal sense seems to have been 'mutual agreement on the basis of a promise' (as in 'betrothal'). There is also in Middle English an ethical sense of 'fidelity' or 'honesty' (the quality of keeping one's word, fidelity to oath) and a theological sense of 'faith' or 'belief'. Only in the later fourteenth century does it come to have an intellectual sense, the predominant meaning in Modern English, that of 'correspondence to reality'. Green argues that this shift is a reflection of profound social changes. The semantic shift matched a parallel shift in popular attitudes towards the nature of evidence and proof, primarily within the legal system, the result of increased literacy. It reflected an erosion of faith in the word of human beings and an increasing credence in written documents and records.

Chapters 2 ('Trothplight') and 3 ('The Folklaw') paint, with a broad brush, the main characteristics of the pre-literate legal system, of a 'folklaw' seen by Green as common to England and the rest of Western Europe. Central to pre-literate contracts was the taking of oaths (or 'plighting of troths') by the contracting parties accompanied by the performance of non-verbal gestures (including the delivery of tokens) and in the presence of witnesses. Central to the pre-literate legal process (in that minority of cases not settled by negotiated compromise) was the taking of an oath by one party to prove his case, though that oath might then be further 'tested' by battle, the ordeal or by the requirement that a set number of compurgators ratify the oath by oaths of their own. Chapter 4 ('the King's Law') presents a very bleak view of the impact of the introduction and growth of literate and centralised royal justice from the later twelfth century onwards on the English legal system. Green sees the main effect of introducing written records of court proceedings as being to 'freeze' existing legal procedure, turning the norms of procedure into a set of inflexible rules justified by tradition and difficult, if not impossible, to change. The main effect of centralisation was to remove trials out of the local setting where local knowledge of the reputation and standing of the parties could ensure justice was done, to a remote court lacking this knowledge and with no better methods for getting at the truth. Green suggests that these manifest defects in 'the king's law' led to a widespread scepticism about the functioning of the legal system in the fourteenth century, to a widespread perception of the 'legal bureaucracy' as arbitrary, inflexible and corrupt. This is taken up in chapter 5 ('Folville's Law') where Green perceives a parallel decline in the fourteenth century in the effectiveness of the 'folklaw' institution of arbitration.

So far so good: there is quite a lot for an English medieval legal historian to disagree with, but there is a fairly clear argument. At this point, however, this reader at least lost the thread of the argument Chapter 6 ('Truth and Treason') is an excursus on what Green argues is a related change in the meaning of the term 'treason'. The 'older' idea is that of a 'personal' wrong committed against someone who has reason to trust the individual concerned; the newer that of an offence against someone in authority. As with 'truth', both meanings continue to exist side by side down to 1400 and beyond. Chapter 7 ('Charter and Wed') looks at how written documents continued to be treated in later medieval England as primarily physical objects of symbolic importance, analogous to the tokens of preliterate culture, rather than as bearers of specific written information. There is also a discussion of Lollardy which aligns the spreading of a new vernacular literacy with the emergence of a radical critique of pre-literate religious practices by the Lollards. Chapter 8 ('Rash promises') is a wide-ranging discussion that focuses on the reluctance of the medieval common law

to go beyond externals or formalities in considering the validity of contracts or culpability for wrongdoing. Chapter 9 ('Bargains with God') looks at a different kind of agreement, that between the Christian believer and the saints. These chapters read like fragments from a broader and even more ambitious work. However, the author seems to have lost sight of his original concern, to explain the change in the meaning of the word 'truth'.

There is much of interest here and much that is suggestive. There is also much that is plainly wrong or at least highly misleading: for example, Green grossly exaggerates the inflexibility of the later medieval legal process. He is probably right in arguing for long-term shifts in popular attitudes towards 'truth' and the ways in which it could best be discovered and that these reflect the development of a more literate society in which a much greater proportion of the population had direct access to literate culture. But I do not find compelling the suggestion that this change was closely linked to a radical critique of the functioning of the English legal system: it seems much more likely that this was part of the much wider and much slower transformation of the values of an increasingly literate society.

PAUL BRAND

RICHARD BEAUCHAMP: MEDIEVAL ENGLAND'S GREATEST KNIGHT. David Brindley. 2001. Tempus Publishing, Stroud. £19.95.

ISBN 0-7524-1780-0.

As many *Ricardian* readers will already know, Richard Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick, although a very prominent figure of the first half of the fifteenth century, has not been the subject of any published biography, and there is certainly scope for one, especially since we have a unique contemporary work, the *Beauchamp Pageant*, which illustrates the earl's life in a series of some 53 line-drawings. This important manuscript has been printed on two occasions, in the fine Roxburghe Club facsimile edition of 1908, and in the less satisfactory edition by Viscount Dillon and W. H. St John Hope, published in 1914.

David Brindley's book on Richard Beauchamp consists of his text interspersed with reduced size reproductions from the 1914 edition, together with a commentary on the pictures. In addition, there is a set of rather poor quality photographs between pages 96 and 97. This confusing format presents problems for the general reader, as it gives no idea of the *Pageant* as an integral work, disrupts the continuity of the text and, in most instances, gives rise to an unsatisfying disjunction between the illustrations and events being described by the author. Further inconveniences arise from the fact that the pictures and the

author's commentary, together with his transcription of their accompanying text, do not always appear opposite each other.

In his preface, Reverend Brindley tells us that his work was researched during a three months' sabbatical leave, scarcely sufficient time to deal with so great a subject matter. As a result, he has been led into serious errors and misconceptions too numerous to list; however, the following instances alone undermine the credibility of the whole work. To begin with, a close connection with Beauchamp's chantry chapel, which is in his care as Rector of St Mary's, Warwick, has impelled Reverend Brindley to advance the premise that the *Pageant* was created to mark the transfer in 1476 of Richard Beauchamp's body to the building which, at the time, was newly completed. Were this the case, it is difficult to see why a picture of this significant occasion does not appear among the *Pageant's* illustrations; as it is, the work closes in 1439 with the interment of the earl's body in its temporary resting place, a stone coffin placed in the south transept of the church. Then, in the commentary on Pageant VIII, the three main figures have all been incorrectly identified, even though the crown makes it clear which of them is the king, and it is obvious that the figure without armour could not be Richard Beauchamp. Despite the fact that, on occasion, the author concedes that the *Pageant* is more interested in the earl's chivalry than his diplomatic or military career, a misunderstanding of the nature and purposes of the work (aspects which will be dealt with in the reviewer's forthcoming critical edition) has meant that its information has generally been taken at face value. The author accepts unquestioningly (p. 83) that Beauchamp was the first to cross the walls of Caen, under siege in 1417, whereas it was the duke of Clarence who led the attack. Beauchamp and other captains made a separate assault on the town, but this was less instrumental in forcing its surrender. Similarly, he is convinced by the rubric of Pageant XLVIII, which claims that the army led by the duke of Gloucester forced the retreat of the Burgundians from Calais in 1436; in fact, the Burgundians had already raised the siege before the English arrived. Because he is anxious to promote the importance of the *Pageant* as an authentic historical source, Reverend Brindley never seems to have consulted other, more trustworthy authorities. For example, although he asserts (p. 68) that we have 'no knowledge of "the lorde Tony"', mentioned in Pageant XXIX as one of earl's ancestors, a quick glance at the *Complete Peerage* would have identified him as Richard Beauchamp's great-great grandfather. Then, too, he claims (p. 77) that there is no other record of the earl taking part in jousts during the Council of Constance, whereas the report of Master Brewster — a kind of press agent to Beauchamp — describes him participating in at least one three day tournament held there. All these errors can be put down to inadequate research in the vast amount of printed primary and excellent secondary material covering the period.

Reverend Brindley's partiality for his subject has coloured some of his statements about Richard Beauchamp. To describe the earl as 'an extraordinarily able businessman, heading an empire with a private civil service that would make modern international companies look insignificant' is in itself a jargonistic overdramatization but, more importantly, the serious financial losses in estate revenue which *we know of* and which are, in part, described in Charles Ross's article cited in the author's bibliography, point to a rather more desultory attitude to financial affairs on Beauchamp's part. Indeed, it is hard to imagine this busy soldier, administrator, diplomat and sportsman having either the time or inclination to devote to a constant monitoring of account books. Again, the description of Beauchamp as 'Henry V's greatest friend', who 'secured Normandy' is, in the first instance, virtually impossible to prove and in the second, manifestly not the case, since there were many captains who took part in the subjugation of Normandy.

One last point: it was rather surprising to read in the preface that there is 'no adequate biography of Richard Beauchamp' and then to find that so much information has been taken from this reviewer's thesis on the Beauchamps in the later middle ages, which includes a life of Earl Richard. It is considered a courtesy among scholars, when theses are to be used to any great extent, to ask permission to consult the author's work, to say nothing of using it without detailed references. Regrettably, references to this thesis and to the published works of other authors — K.B. McFarlane and Maurice Keen to name but the most eminent — are extremely sparse and, where cited, often omit or incorrectly quote the relevant page numbers. The index also leaves much to be desired.

Lack of experience in the field, enthusiasm for his subject matter, and an obvious desire to associate the *Beauchamp Pageant* with the earl's chantry chapel have conspired to place David Brindley in the tradition of John Rous rather than of William Dugdale; the irony is that, 500 years after its completion, the propagandist material of the *Pageant* still has the power to convince.

ALEXANDRA SINCLAIR

BLOOD RED ROSES: THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF A MASS GRAVE FROM THE BATTLE OF TOWTON AD 1461. Edited by Veronica Fiorato, Anthea Boylston and Christopher Knüsel. 2000. Oxbow Books, Oxford. £30.

ISBN 1-84217-025-2.

The short title of the book is a poetical allusion to the subject matter: the study of the skeletal remains of Lancastrian foot soldiers from a 'Wars of the Roses' battle. It is a multi-disciplinary work, involving forensic anthropologists, archaeologists, historians, experts in arms and armour and takes the form of a

set of papers clustered around a common theme. Happily there is no attempt at producing a fashionable 'integrated text', which tends to make some accounts of archaeological investigations almost unreadable. Although the subject matter of some of the papers may appear hard going the general reader ought not to be put off by this.

An introductory chapter describes the initial finding of ancient human remains during works at Towton Hall, Yorkshire, in 1996. There then follows an account of the battle by Andrew Boardman, appropriately the author of the most recent work on the subject. Boardman re-iterates the claim that the Battle of Towton on Palm Sunday 1461 was the bloodiest battle to be fought on English soil; in fact the bloodiest battle involving British arms up until the first day of the Battle of the Somme (1916). There is a discussion of the conduct and results of the battle, together with a critical examination of the sources and their estimates of the numbers of combatants. Dr Boardman also concludes that although, of course, this defeat for the Lancastrian cause did not destroy their capacity for further military action it was the last time that they were able to field an army that did not rely heavily on Scots and mercenaries. Here, unfortunately, he repeats the allegation that Ralph, Lord Dacre, a Lancastrian casualty of the battle, was buried upright in Saxton churchyard with his horse in the same grave. This, of course, is a legend that was refuted more than ten years ago by the late Pauline Routh. More pertinently, Boardman goes on to quote John Leland on the presence of mass burial pits nearby containing some of the enormous number of those slain at Towton. The next two chapters describe the excavation of just such a pit (0.5 to 1.0 metres deep) at Towton Hall. Catastrophe pits, such as mass burials following a major battle or disease epidemic present different problems of excavation from those encountered in an 'attritional' cemetery, where the dead from a town or other settlement normally are laid to rest in discrete graves. New methods of recording the skeletons, attempting to separate individual persons found lying prone or supine, were attempted. Despite the potential confusion of the interlaced skeletons it was possible to conclude that the bodies had been laid carefully, if haphazardly, in the pit rather than being thrown in carelessly. The three chapters that follow deal with the detailed analysis of the skeletons with regard to demography, stature and health. The layperson could be forgiven for skipping these but this would mean missing some gems. Thus, the chapter on Demography showed that, not surprisingly perhaps, all thirty-eight skeletons examined proved to be male. What was certainly fascinating was that several of the men had died in their late forties, equalling in numbers those who were at least twenty years younger. Moreover, examination of their wounds revealed that here were veterans of several battles in the 'Roses' series; their earlier

healed injuries were still detectable in nine individuals. One of the taller men had an old, severe but healed wound of the lower jaw. A reconstruction of his facial appearance, with ancient scars, was commissioned for the Project and is illustrated on the back cover.

Here too, at last, we have a partial answer to the old chestnut: 'How tall were people in the fifteenth century? The skeletal evidence for physical stature for the middle ages tends to come from skeletons in parochial cemeteries that have been in use from the twelfth century to the mid-sixteenth, at least. Christian cemeteries by definition have nothing by way of 'grave goods' that could be used to ascribe a date to individual burials, so all that can be done is quote an *average* height for women and another for men over the general medieval period. In a recent survey, average height for men excavated from twelve different 'medieval' cemeteries varied with the site, from 170 to 173 cm. However, as recently as 1998, Bertram Fields (in *Royal Blood*, p. 253), felt able to say 'Humans in the fifteenth century were normally smaller than they are today'. Hitherto, exhumations of fifteenth-century individuals had chiefly been those of members of the (tall) nobility and so could not be regarded as typifying the population as a whole. Indeed, here the authors refer to information that the height of Edward IV, 6 feet 4 inches, was known from documentary sources (citing the popular work: *Chronicles of the Wars of the Roses*), whereas that figure was not quoted in any document during his lifetime but dates instead from the examination of the remains in his coffin in St George's Chapel in 1771. However, to return to commoners, it was calculated that the thirty-seven Towton men for whom the leg bones could be measured ranged in height from 158.5 cm (5 ft 3 in) to 183.5 cm (6 ft 0 in), giving a mean stature 171.6cm, or over 5 feet 7 inches tall. So is this average height representative of Englishmen of the period or is there some other explanation? Clearly it would appear that no attempt had been made to recruit soldiers necessarily from among the taller members of the population, given that nearly half of these men (43%) were less than 5 feet 7 inches tall. It may be significant here to consider the physique of the soldiers and sailors who perished when the *Mary Rose*, grand warship of Henry VIII sank in 1545. Here, less than a century after Towton, these men ranged in stature from 5 ft 3 in to 5 ft 11 in, with a mean of 5 ft 7 in (Ann Stirland, *Raising the Dead: the skeleton crew of ... the Mary Rose*, 2000, p. 80). Although the Towton dead do not provide us with a definitive figure for average height in the fifteenth century they do allow us to dismiss the notion that persons of the period were significantly shorter than in the present day.

Another question that has exercised Ricardians is that although the notion of the 'hunchback' is a Tudor invention, did it have as its root in Richard III

possibly having one shoulder apparently higher than the other owing to over-extensive weapon practice? Dr Christopher Knüsel here addresses the problem generally rather than specifically. He studied professional athletes and examined the affect of exercise and prolonged practice on the favoured arm. Thus, for example, right-handed male professional tennis players have as much as 35% more bone mass on the right arm than on the left. Dr Knüsel then looked at robust arm bones from Towton, both directly and via X-rays. Some showed similar robusticity of both arms, suggesting practice on two-handed weapons such as hand-and-a-half swords or poleaxes. Others showed an asymmetry of the right shoulder but also the left elbow. Through comparisons made with the arm bones recovered from the *Mary Rose* (together with longbows, from the wreck, of estimated draw-weights up to 170 pounds), the conclusion was that here were archers. In right-handed archers the left arm must remain straight, whereas the right arm carries the weight of bow and arrow as well as taking up the draw strain of the string: this appears to lead to a build-up of muscle and bone on the right shoulder joint and of bone on the left elbow (pp. 108–9). So could Richard's body have shown an asymmetry of its upper part, owing to diligent weapon practice involving his dominant (and unwithered) arm? Would such excessive muscular development have produced the appearance of one arm being higher than the other? The answer is *perhaps*, especially if he had practised archery, although class presumably would have precluded him from recourse to the longbow.

The Towton Project team had the benefit of the experience of an American forensic ballistics expert, Shannon Novak, present during her sabbatical year. Ballistics is not the field of expertise that springs to mind immediately so far as medieval battle is concerned but transferable skills are involved, as it were. Whether or not early examples of cannon were deployed in the Battle of Towton they would have been rather ineffectual, compared with arrows, say. After dealing with 'puncture wounds' Dr Novak was able to draw the distinction between 'projectile-force', 'sharp-force' and 'blunt-force' injury on the skeletons, frequently with more than one type of injury being visible on a single skeleton. She demonstrated that it was possible to look at a skull from Towton that showed multiple injuries and deduce the precise order in which blows were struck, according to the lines of fracture radiating from the wounds. Experts from the Royal Armouries at Leeds ingeniously attempted to match the observed wounds to the battle implements, supplementing this work. The four chapters by specialists from the Royal Armouries at Leeds discuss aspects of medieval warfare with a possible bearing upon the Battle itself. Dr Graeme Rimer reviews the types of weapon and bodily protection available to foot soldiers of the type who would have been engaged in the Battle of Towton. He

uses the *Bridport Muster Roll* of 1457 to demonstrate that, after the longbow, the poleaxe was the most common weapon resorted to by the foot-soldier, followed by the glaive and the bill. Furthermore, he finds that the muster for Edward IV's French Expedition of 1475 contained ten times as many foot soldiers as men-at-arms. The infantry would have been provided with little by way of personal protection, less than half possessing a *sallet* (defending the head) and/or a *jack* (protecting the torso). Hence, most of the dead studied in the Towton project had head injuries. In one of these it was felt that a puncture wound of square cross-section could be matched accurately with the top spike of a staff weapon, almost certainly a poleaxe. Dr Thom Richardson describes the armour of the nobility, based on monumental effigies, brasses and illustrations in manuscripts of the fifteenth century, together with the prolific surviving examples of armour of the period. When considering the body protection of the ordinary soldier at Towton, however, Richardson has fewer resources upon which to draw. He illustrates several different types of sallet, a quilted jack, a brigandine ('coat of plates') and a habergeon (mail shirt) of types that some of the infantry may have worn at the Battle. John Waller contributes a chapter on archery as well as a second on medieval 'Combat techniques'. A second chapter by Tim Sutherland is entitled 'The archaeological investigation of the Towton battlefield' and deals chiefly with metallic objects found or excavated from the site of the Battle. Most of the latter objects proved to be fragments of later agricultural implements but there were arrow heads of medieval date that could have had their origin in the Battle itself. A concluding chapter by two of the editors deals with the contributions made by the Towton Project to knowledge of late medieval warfare. The spines of the Towton dead were in a condition that reflected hard agricultural work as the primary occupation of these indentured warriors but a number of them showed musculoskeletal changes in the arms, which were suggestive of the regular practice of archery. The skeletons also revealed that the men were in robust good health until they were killed. They suffered no major dietary deficiency diseases; moreover, because cane sugar, other refined carbohydrates and dried fruits could be afforded only by the nobility, their teeth, even if worn down, were in good condition and dental decay was rare. They revealed a higher proportion of head wounds than was evident in the mass graves from the Battle of Wisby 1361. This may have been because the latter wore mail coifs and these had fallen into disuse a century later, to be replaced by the less regularly available and more easily detachable sallets. Conversely, the dead from Wisby showed far more injuries of the lower limbs than did those from Towton. Did the latter wear greaves or some other protection for the leg?

There are several Appendices. Osteologists, anthropologists and palaeo-

pathologists will be delighted with the complete catalogue of skeletal data for all the deceased that is offered. The work also includes a Gazetteer of battles on English and Welsh soil from the first to the seventeenth centuries AD. The list is not exhaustive, since it is based on responses to a questionnaire sent out by one of the editors and that many recipients of the questionnaire failed to reply. The results are listed by region and date. The value of the data is uneven, given that it can only be as good as the information supplied by respondents. However, in a work dedicated to one of the battles in the Wars of the Roses it is a pity to see that some battles in this series are not properly dealt with. Thus, there is no record in the Gazetteer of Ludford (1459) or Losecote Field (1470), although the latter is mentioned in the body of the text (p. 174). Curiously the major Battle of Mortimer's Cross (fought on 2 February in the same year as Towton) is dismissed merely as '15th Century'. For Bosworth there is no mention of the possible alternative site of Dadlington. A second Table, summarising archaeological work undertaken on English battlefields is more useful and includes continuing projects at Tewkesbury, Bosworth and Towton itself.

The book is magnificently produced, with a Foreword by Robert Hardy, thirty-six colour plates and many more black-and-white photographs and the index is excellent. It advances forensic analysis of burials and of mass graves, in particular, and points the way for future analysis of 'catastrophe cemeteries' and of multi-disciplinary historical studies, generally.

WILLIAM J. WHITE

BIRGITTA OF SWEDEN AND THE VOICE OF PROPHECY. Claire L. Sahlin. 2001. *Studies in Medieval Mysticism 3*. The Boydell Press, Woodbridge, Suffolk. £50.

ISBN 0-85115-821-8.

On 1 October 1999 Pope John Paul II in an apostolic letter, which can be found on the internet, declared St Bridget of Sweden (born 1303) one of the co-patronesses of Europe, together with St Catherine of Siena (born 1347) and St Teresa Benedicta of the Cross (Edith Stein, born 1891). The male patrons saints, since 1980, are Sts Benedict of Nursia (born c. 480), and Cyril and Methodius (both ninth-century). Without going into detail it may perhaps be said that however important these three male saints may have been in their day, the three women, who seem to have been chosen almost as an afterthought, were selected with great care and appear to be of more immediate interest and relevance to the average modern European.

Edith Stein was of Jewish birth; via atheism, phenomenology and the teachings of St Thomas Aquinas and St Teresa of Avila she became a Carmelite nun, but ended her life in Auschwitz. St Catherine, according to the

pope's letter, 'was tireless in her commitment to resolving the many conflicts which afflicted society' in her day, and she also demanded of 'churchmen of every rank ... the most exacting integrity in their personal lives and their pastoral ministry'! St Bridget led an exemplary, devout and charitable married life and had eight children — one of whom is also venerated as a saint — but after her husband's death she turned entirely to God, left her family and settled in Rome. The intensity of her faith allowed her to have visions of Christ and the Virgin, in which they directly conveyed to her, she said, the word of God. The instructions she received were both general, concerning the church and the political situation in Europe, and particular, solving the problems of individuals who had come to her for help. She was also 'instructed' to found the contemplative Order of the Most Holy Saviour, or Bridgettine Order, which was to spread all over Europe, including England, where it was highly favoured by successive kings, Edward IV in particular.

The present study is just one among the vast number of books and articles concerned with Bridget's life and teaching that have come out in the last few decades. It concentrates on her visionary role, a role into which women have been 'forced' over the centuries because they were barred from official and public religious teaching. Her prophecies were mainly 'comminatory', warnings of punishment to come if God's will is not obeyed; they are not prophecies of events that will eventually and indubitably come to pass. The visions, committed to paper as the *Revelations*, are very direct and 'physical', recalling her life as a married aristocratic lady and mother; they are often colourful, humorous, even repulsive. Bridget virtually identified herself with the Virgin Mary in her love for Christ, with all the physical aspects of such an identification, but she was always sure that she was only seeing the likenesses of the spiritual realities and not those realities themselves. Christ himself explained to her that she could never see, for example, angels, demons or the souls of the saints while she was alive.

The words that Bridget passed on to others had great authority with her followers: she was compared to the greatest of all prophets, Moses, and she considered she played an important part in the history of salvation. Her detractors, whose comments appear in colourful anecdotes in her hagiography, dismissed her as a mere woman, uneducated in religious matters, whose ascetic practices caused delusions, even madness. Of those who believed in her, both during her life and after, some gave to her words as much authority as to the Bible itself and praised them highly because they were easily understood by the uneducated. Some attached particular value to the fact that she was a woman, a 'strong woman' preaching against vice and iniquity in an 'effeminate' age. The church continued to struggle with the problem of the origins of her visions.

How could one be sure they did not teach false doctrines? How could a woman serve as mediator between God and men? Even the pope's recent apostolic letter mentions such doubts, and prefers to emphasise comfortably that St Bridget is an 'ecumenical bridge' between the protestant church of Scandinavia and the church of Rome.

Sahlin's book goes into all aspects of the controversy during and soon after Bridget's life time. It is a thoroughly scholarly, exhausting and very slightly repetitive study, an important addition to Bridgettine critical literature — though I am not particularly qualified to say so. It is interesting to realise, however, that the quotation from the saint's *Revelations* which Edward IV's advisors decided to be of crucial importance to his claim to the throne and was included verbatim at the end of the magnificent Philadelphia Roll, came from a book that, according to some, if 'the sacred Scriptures had been burned ... would be sufficient for reforming the Catholic faith'. (For the quotation see Sutton and Visser-Fuchs, *Richard III's Books*, p. 202).

LIVIA VISSER-FUCHS

TRADITIONS AND TRANSFORMATIONS IN LATE MEDIEVAL ENGLAND. Edited by Douglas Biggs, Sharon D. Michalove, A. Compton Reeves. 2002. Brill, Leiden, The Netherlands. €88; US\$103.00.

ISBN 00-04-12341-5.

The twelve essays collected in this volume represent the proceedings of the second conference of the American branch of the Richard III Society, held in May 1998 at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. The contributors include both senior and younger scholars from either side of the Atlantic, and the broad range of their chosen subjects bears ample witness to the continued vitality of fifteenth-century studies in both Britain and America. The subjects covered range from the political and legal to the religious and urban history of the period, and include studies in archaeology, art history and literature.

As with many similar collections of papers, some of the volume's fascination derives from the contrasting and complementary approaches of juxtaposed essays. Helen Maurer presents a competent re-evaluation of the 'loveday' of March 1458, the formal reconciliation between Richard, Duke of York, and Queen Margaret of Anjou, and their respective adherents. Dismissing the occasion as a mere charade, some of its previous students have cast Queen Margaret's role in a somewhat murky light. Maurer sets the part played by the queen in the context of the traditional intercessory role of the king's consort, and while not achieving a complete rehabilitation, succeeds in explaining Margaret's actions in the light of contemporary expectations. The

historiography of another royal '*femme fatale*', Queen Elizabeth Woodville, is the subject of Anthony Pollard's piece, which the author handles with customary wit and elegance. Painstakingly peeling off the layers of tradition assembled in 500 years of historical writing, Professor Pollard nevertheless has to conclude that it may no longer be possible to find the 'real' Elizabeth Woodville. Women of lesser social status are presented in Joel Rosenthal's survey of the religious life of late medieval East Anglian females. Ranging from the cloistered nun to the better-documented Paston matriarch, Rosenthal presents an interesting overview of the range of expressions female devotion could find in fifteenth-century Norfolk and Suffolk, illustrated with some amusing anecdotes such as that of the prioress of Redlingfield, who had been found alone with the bailiff in 'the small hall with windows closed'.

Halls, both great and small, feature in Michael Jones' and Gwyn Meirion Jones' beautifully illustrated account of recent archaeological work on the homes of the Breton gentry in the late middle ages. This is a subject which has long preoccupied the authors, and the paper bears ample witness to the extensive and painstaking research that has gone before. Several other authors have also returned to topics that have preoccupied them in the past. Compton Reeves' examination of the career of John Booth, Bishop of Exeter, completes a 'trilogy' of work on the three members of the Lancashire family of Booth who were elevated to the episcopate in the course of the fifteenth century. Between them, the three Booths were pivotal to ecclesiastical patronage in the period, and it seems fitting that this paper is to an extent more preoccupied with their patronage of younger relatives, than with Bishop John himself. Douglas Biggs, who has in recent years published much on changes to the royal administrative machine in the context of the 'Lancastrian revolution' of 1399, turns his attention to the justices of the peace. Both papers raise interesting issues worth following up further, and to say that both discussions would have benefited from some work in the original English public records to establish to what extent appointment to crown office was matched by actual service, should not distract from the essays' undoubted merits. The same is to some extent true of Sharon Michalove's examination of Henry VII's confidant, Sir Giles Daubeney. The author herself is conscious of the limitations imposed upon her discussion by a lack of Daubeney family papers, and succeeds in drawing an intriguing picture of her subject which makes it seem a pity that her initial attempt at a comparison with Edward IV's chamberlain, William, Lord Hastings, is not pursued further. A very different, visual, aspect of the early Tudor monarchy, Henry VII's badges and their origins, are the subject of Virginia Henderson's well-illustrated article. Taking as her starting point the legend of Richard III's crown found in a hawthorn bush at Bosworth,

Henderson skilfully navigates the multiplicity of religious, political and dynastic meanings adopted by individual royal symbols of the period.

At a social level very different from the court, Michael Myers investigates the role of attempts at arbitration in the context of the civic unrest in Bishop's Lynn between 1411 and 1416. Making extensive use of the local records, Myers challenges current concepts of arbitration as a force for peace. Social differences in an urban environment are also the theme of Mark Addison Amos's paper on distinctions of status in fifteenth-century London, a contribution which could at times have benefited from greater use of concrete evidence in favour of abstract concepts. The diversity even within urban communities which these two articles highlight is fundamental to the argument of Matthew Boyd Goldie's wide-ranging discussion of audience reactions to medieval drama — here contrasted with church sermons — and the role and interrelationship of Latin, English and 'Englysch Laten'. Although almost twice the length of most other contributions, the article is worth pursuing to the end, for it has much to offer to the historian as well as to the literary scholar.

It is all the more unfortunate that this otherwise fine volume should be marred by its quite simply appalling presentation. It appears that although the editors corrected page proofs, technical problems at *Koninklijke Brill* publishers subsequently introduced the plethora of typographical errors which riddle the volume. Some of these are minor, but others rather more serious, as for instance the substitution of commas for the £ sign in Professor Rosenthal's paper (p. 9). It is quite astonishing that as long-established a publishing house as *Brill* should not have picked up these defects before going to press.

Technical problems aside, the papers contained in the volume are in their majority competent and full of interest, and the book ought to be commended to a wide readership as a significant contribution to the growing scholarly literature on fifteenth-century England. I have serious doubts over only one individual paper, Kelly DeVries's essay on the use of gunpowder weapons in the Wars of the Roses. It may seem spiteful to single out an individual article for particular criticism (especially as the editors may have to bear some responsibility for agreeing to include this piece as it stands), but this paper's deficiencies are more than merely linguistic. It is fair to say that the author may not have had a chance to revise his argument in the light of new research, published in *War in History* in 2000, which fairly comprehensively refutes his fundamental contention that the English Crown lost control of its gunpowder weaponry in the fifteenth century, but even with such qualifications the paper raises some serious doubts. Where it is intelligible, it is frequently confused: Professor Robin Storey would surely be surprised to find himself credited with the revolutionary new interpretation that '[i]n 1455, at the siege of Powderhorn [*sic*], the

guns of Thomas Courtenay, Earl of Devon, were used to conquer the castle of William, Lord Bonville' (p. 36) (in fact, the siege of Sir Philip Courtenay's castle of Powderham ended unsuccessfully with the withdrawal of Earl Thomas's forces). Even more fascinating, however, is the assertion that '[i]t would be a gross understatement to say that Henry VII was not the same king that his predecessors had been' (p. 37). Regular readers of *The Ricardian* might not be alone in wishing to disagree.

HANNES KLEINEKE

Notes on Contributors

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Hannes Kleineke. Research Fellow in the 1422-1504 section of the History of Parliament. Currently preparing an edition of the Household Accounts of William Worsley, Dean of St Paul's, 1479-99 (with Mrs Stephanie Hovland).

Wendy Moorhen joined the Society in 1987 and is Chairperson of the Thames Valley Branch. Elected Research Officer of the Society in 2001. Currently researching the life of John de la Pole.

Alexandra Sinclair completed a thesis on the Beauchamp earls of Warwick in the later middle ages. Her edition of the *Beauchamp Pageant* is due to be published shortly.

Livia Visser-Fuchs has just finished a thesis on Jean de Wavrin's historical work and the reputation of Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick, in the Low Countries.

William J. White is an osteoarchaeologist in the Museum of London Specialist Services. He studies cemeteries of all periods, chiefly those excavated in the Greater London Area.

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. 45-46.

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.

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