

# MEDIUM ÆVUM

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## Review

Reviewed Work(s): *Les Manuscrits de Chrétien de Troyes/The Manuscripts of Chrétien de Troyes*. Vol. I. Vol. II by Keith Busby, Terry Nixon, Alison Stones and Lori Walters

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which Walter concentrates on what he perceives as the essentials, would be more usefully read after some preliminary acquaintance with the romances in question. To help his reader, Walter invariably cites editions of texts which include Modern French translations.

Birmingham

LESLIE C. BROOK

*Les Manuscrits de Chrétien de Troyes/The Manuscripts of Chrétien de Troyes*, ed. Keith Busby, Terry Nixon, Alison Stones, and Lori Walters, Faux Titre 71 (Amsterdam and Atlanta, Georgia: Rodopi, 1993). Vol. I: xiii + 503 pp.; 370 figures. Vol. II: 553 pp.; 435 figures, 28 colour plates. ISBN 90-5183-613-9. No price given.

The surviving manuscripts of the works of Chrétien de Troyes were first drawn together by Alexandre Micha in *La Tradition manuscrite des romans de Chrétien de Troyes* of 1939, though one manuscript (Princeton, University Library, MS Garrett 125) and several fragments have come to light since. Despite the publication of numerous editions of the texts, there has been little analysis of the manuscripts since Micha, and notions of reception have been based largely on the analysis of textual variants and dialects. No copy survives from the author's own time: the earliest witness is probably the Tours manuscript of *Cligés* (Bibliothèque Municipale MS 942), perhaps as early as c.1200, followed by a continuous sequence into the second quarter of the fourteenth century. There are forty-five manuscripts altogether, including fragments, more than for other twelfth-century vernacular literary texts, but not on the scale of a medieval best-seller such as the *Roman de la Rose*. All but four of the manuscripts are of French origin. Illustrations are found in one or more manuscripts to all the works except *Cligés*.

Volume I of this majestic new treatment contains a series of essays by various contributors in English or French. (Bilingualism is confined to the title page.) Volume II contains the apparatus (all of it in English) which will act as a vital source of data not only for the reading of the essays but also for Chrétien studies in the future. The catalogue of manuscripts is by Terry Nixon, working in collaboration with several of the other contributors. Five manuscripts have not been examined in the flesh, but this number includes two missing fragments. Each is dated to the nearest quarter-century, in many cases radically revising the date proposed by Micha, who had mostly followed the dates assigned by Foerster in the *Sämtliche Werke*. The evidence for early ownership of the manuscripts is extremely limited, so the index of former owners by Roger Middleton concentrates mainly on post-medieval ownership. The detailed biographical and collection entries make this a formidable work in its own right, and it is accompanied by additional notes on questions of provenance concerning some of the manuscripts. A short note by Michel Pastoureau on the heraldry in the illustrations is followed by four appendices:

of the other texts found accompanying the works of Chrétien in the same manuscripts; of post-medieval copies of medieval manuscripts of Chrétien; of manuscripts containing texts inconclusively attributed to Chrétien; and of all the subjects of illuminations in the romances, together with a complete transcription of the rubrics where applicable. The plates which follow the bibliography, presented in chronological order, form a vital photographic corpus (Micha's work was not illustrated). Each manuscript is represented by at least one reproduction; all the miniatures and historiated initials are included.

Volume I begins with a general introduction by Alison Stones and an essay by Terry Nixon on the two large-sized court-produced romance collections of the second quarter of the thirteenth century (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MSS f.fr. 794 and 1450), which signal a departure from the type of the portable manuscript containing a single work. The next three contributions all deal with aspects of textual transmission. Tony Hunt's illustration of the dangers of relying on the texts written by the scribe Guiot in fr. 794 is reprinted from his article in *French Studies* of 1979. Margot van Mulken demonstrates some of the difficulties involved in constructing a traditional stemma for the manuscripts of *Perceval*. The phenomenon of a manuscript first relying consistently on one source, then abruptly changing to another, suggests the simultaneous copying of a text by several scribes from separate quires of one or more exemplars. Meanwhile Keith Busby uses two copies of *Perceval* and its *Continuations* written by the same scribe to investigate the level of divergence apparently regarded as insignificant. The scribe's degree of freedom in relation to the text demands a rethinking of our understanding of what constitutes a variant.

Three essays deal with all the manuscripts of a particular work. Stewart Gregory and Claude Luttrell describe each manuscript of *Cligés* in turn. Though they are able to discuss scribes and linguistic forms in more detail than is possible in the descriptions of these manuscripts in the general catalogue, there is inevitably an element of duplication. The descriptions of the manuscripts of *Eric et Enide* by Françoise Gasparri, Geneviève Hasenohr, and Christine Ruby are more detailed. Of particular interest is the discussion of punctuation: the authors identify a trend towards grammatical or syntactical punctuation and away from punctuation linked to reading aloud. Roger Middleton's study of the various possible functions of the coloured capitals in the manuscripts of *Erec et Enide* eloquently demonstrates the dangers of reliance on the existing editions.

The second half of Volume I is mainly devoted to art historical contributions. Each is accompanied by its own illustrations, a procedure which makes for ease of reference but inevitably also some duplication. Patricia Stirnemann suggests that some of the vernacular manuscripts in the Manerius style were made for the court of Champagne at Troyes, where Chrétien himself had found patronage. Alison Stones, in a contribution of almost a hundred pages, explores the artistic context of all eleven illustrated Chrétien manuscripts: this is pioneering work, since the comparative material is extremely little

known. Though several manuscripts of the first generation emanate from Champagne and Flanders, Chrétien manuscripts are subsequently found associated with Hainaut, Artois, Amiénois, Burgundy, and Paris. Though Stones argues against the use of the term 'vernacular' in reference to the illumination found in these books, she is tempted to assume, from their relatively low artistic level, that some may have been commissioned by members of the bourgeoisie. Stones's survey of the entire corpus is complemented by two small-scale studies: one by Elizabeth Burin of Pierre Sala's manuscript of *Le Chevalier au lion*, the other by Lori Walters on the use of multi-compartment opening miniatures in two of the manuscripts.

The remaining six essays all focus on the manuscripts of *Perceval* and its *Continuations*, in which the majority of illustrations are found. Keith Busby's first contribution on the illustrations to *Perceval* itself is reprinted from the *Zeitschrift für französische Sprache und Literatur* of 1988. No standard programme of illustration is apparent across the different manuscripts, but Busby discerns some coincidence between those scenes selected for illustration, and the themes and episodes of Chrétien's texts which were taken up and reworked by later authors. Busby's new contribution complements his earlier work by examining the relations between text, miniature, and rubric in the *Continuations*. Angelica Rieger subjects the miniatures in the most richly illustrated manuscript (Montpellier, Bibliothèque Interuniversitaire, Section Médecine MS H 249) to a detailed comparison with the text, whilst Lori Walters investigates the depiction of Blanche fleur in the same manuscript in the light of the tension between the sensual love of the protagonists and the religious structure of the work. Finally, Laurence Harf-Lancner discusses the illustration of supernatural events, and Emmanuèle Baumgartner traces the progressive Christianization of the motif of the Grail itself.

Our limited knowledge of the circumstances in which the surviving manuscripts of Chrétien de Troyes were produced will always make the study of the reception of the romances complex and difficult. Very few of the manuscripts contain the names of their scribes or editors. No artist signs his work in a Chrétien manuscript. No surviving manuscript can be associated with the original patron of Chrétien's text, and most indications of ownership are considerably later than the manuscripts themselves. The editors rightly make no attempt to reconcile differences between their contributors. Nevertheless, the thousand pages contained in these two volumes show what can be achieved, both by the investigation of the manuscripts themselves at a detailed level, and by looking outwards to try to situate them in the interlocking landscapes to which they belong. By thus showing the way, and providing the raw material for future study, these volumes have made a major contribution towards the integration of the literary exploration of the works of Chrétien de Troyes with the study of the manuscripts in which they survive.

Oxford

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