Leeds Studies in English

New Series XLV

2014

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Leeds Studies in English

<www.leeds.ac.uk/lse>
School of English
University of Leeds
2014

REVIEWS

Catherine A. M. Clarke, *Writing Power in Anglo-Saxon England: Texts, Hierarchies, Economies.* Anglo-Saxon Studies 17. Cambridge: Brewer, 2012. 206 pp. ISBN 9781843843191.

This book is a nuanced exploration of power and its various representations in late Anglo-Saxon texts. Catherine Clarke combines textual analysis, theoretical frameworks and historical and cultural contexts to great effect, presenting a series of case studies in impressive depth of detail. A particularly notable characteristic of these studies is how Clarke plays with genre, refusing to adhere to traditional generic categorisations, recognising the power these have to affect our expectations and analyses. Genre and language are compared and contrasted, and they present multi-level relationships which intertwine, interact and sometimes contradict.

Clarke presents structures of power in late Anglo-Saxon texts in two ways. First is the vertical hierarchy of power and authority, both secular and spiritual, which is often represented by patrons and their dependents. Alongside this, interacting and intertwining with it, is the horizontal axis of interdependent relationships of friendship and reciprocity. None of these power relationships is straightforward; they are often fluid and multifaceted, filled with ambivalences and contradictions. Individuals are shown to live within a strict hierarchy but also in interconnected relationships of mutual obligation and reciprocity. As Clarke concludes, 'identities and relationships do not have to be reduced to one single model or meaning, but can be suspended as dual, multivalent or ambiguous' (p. 172).

The case studies focus on interactions between author, reader and patron, as well as relationships within the texts themselves. In them, textual production and reception are brought to the fore. This means that the literary analysis is always grounded in the external practicalities and contexts of Anglo-Saxon England. However, it should be noted that Clarke is not attempting to extend these representations of power to the reality of Anglo-Saxon England, maintaining a distinction between textuality and history. The case studies, while detailed and impressive, still only show a snapshot of patronage and power in Anglo-Saxon England and the book leaves a sense that this is only the tip of the iceberg. Regardless, this work is impressive in its scope, its detail and its open-minded approach to the material.

The first chapter of this book focuses on the Guthlac poems of the Exeter Book and their expression of relationships of rank and hierarchy on the one hand, and personal relationships of kinship and friendship on the other. In this chapter, Clarke also explores the Anglo-Saxon aesthetic of interlace (the similar elements of Guth*lac* and *-lace* are unrelated, although Clarke connects them as a 'striking visual pun', p. 13, n. 7) and its potential for use as a metaphor for the intricacies of the Anglo-Saxon representation of power and relationships.

The relationships in the Guthlac poems, which fall within a spiritual hierarchy, are often expressed through spatial metaphors, where closeness and distance express status and rank. However, alongside these vertical hierarchies are relationships between patron and follower which are dependent on reciprocity and mutual obligation. These create an 'inter-connected, inter-dependent knotwork of reciprocity and symmetry' (p. 42) of individuals from all levels of the power hierarchy. In this way, Clarke persuasively draws together the hierarchies and relationships — both spiritual and secular — of the poems with the visual metaphor of interlace. However, despite the discussion being grounded in the manuscript contexts of the poems and making use of connections to other texts, this connection comes rather late in the chapter, as does the impact of this connection on understanding the poems' audiences (past or present).

The second chapter is devoted to the expression of reckoning and reciprocity in epitaphs in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, texts which have a 'complicated generic status' (p. 44). This chapter showcases one of the most interesting themes of this book: its engagement with genre. In it, Clarke reassesses two passages relating to Edgar as epitaphs rather than as the traditional eulogy, panegyric or laudatory verse, with the hope that this new framework will enable a new analysis. This discussion is grounded in a discussion of epigraphic tradition across the Middle Ages. The purpose of epigraphy is to memorialise the subject and to open up their life for reflection and judgement by the reader. By treating these texts as epitaphs, the reader is brought into an active power-relationship with the subject rather than remaining a passive recipient of the texts. This reassessment highlights the problem with applying modern expectations of genre to Anglo-Saxon texts, but in doing so, merely applies a new genre. While the exercise is worthwhile in exploring new aspects of the texts, and showcases some interesting power relationships, these findings are still shaped by the lens of genre.

Chapter 3 addresses absent or remote patronage in the contexts of the shifting power structures of the Benedictine Reform. Clarke focuses on prose hagiography (the *Vita Sancti Oswaldi* — describing the relationship between the distant Oswald and his community — and the two earliest *Vitae* of Dunstan) and panegyric verse (the poetry of Abbo of Fleury). Through them, she explores the textual strategies used in late Anglo-Saxon England to express the power or 'presence' of a patron in both his physical and spiritual absence (p. 90), and his relationship with his dependents. The use of these different genres in this chapter leads to a comparison of the different strategies and agendas used for each, which Clarke finds are genre-specific: the verse acrostics of Abbo express the relationship between absent patron and dependent using metaphorical and literal gift-giving (the poetry is, in itself, a gift), while the prose hagiographies use epistolary conventions and emotive spiritual narratives to express remote patronage. The effect of each of these genres is to present patronage as a practice not dependent on physical location or material presence, but rather an 'ideological system', grounded in the needs of the tenth century (p. 111).

Chapter 4 is also concerned with patronage, but this time in the relationship between patron and author. Clarke's focus here is on gender and its place in the expression of power hierarchies in literary production. To do this, the chapter explores the interplay between female patrons or protagonists and male authors and the different expressions of that relationship in three texts: Cynewulf's *Elene*, the *Encomium Emmae Reginae*, and the *Vita Ædwardi Regis*. These texts offer a strong basis for comparison as they cover Old English and Anglo-Latin and multiple genres, while falling within the same context. Tantalisingly, Clarke mentions the possibility of a comparative reading of the two extant versions of the *Encomium*,

which could have added an extra dimension to the discussion of that text's representation of patronage and power, but the case study does not suffer from its absence. The portrayals of the female patron in each of these texts are complex, and perform a multitude of functions. The overriding conclusion, though, is that gender is not inherently linked with power and agency; textual gendered personae share complicated and shifting relationships which are not fixed within the hierarchy of patron and author, but adapt to reflect the complexity of the relationships themselves.

The final chapter again plays with our perceptions of genre, this time by performing a refreshing literary analysis on the charter texts of the *Libellus Æthelwoldi Episcopi*, in which different representations of power interact in two textual genres. This prosimetrical text presents patronage in the period of the Benedictine Reform through the needs of Bishop Hervey in the twelfth century and demonstrates the enduring relevance of Anglo-Saxon patronage. The *Libellus* shows Æthelwold within local networks of power with his community and with the laity. He is enmeshed in relationships of exchange, gift-giving and obligation, as each community is dependent on the other. The prosimetrical text is simultaneously panegyric and practical. It explores the asymmetric relationship between the ecclesiastic and lay communities, in which the laity is presented as opportunistic and the monastic community, represented by Æthelwold, is fair and just. Similarly, in the prose text, Æthelwold is pragmatic and politically capable, whereas in the verse he is saintly and idealised, described with hagiographic language that elevates him above the earthly concerns of the petty laity and their land-holdings. These representations of Æthelwold create for Hervey a 'legitimising' model for his own actions in the twelfth century, asserting his rights in the newly created bishopric of Ely (p. 170). This chapter successfully explores different models for expressing patronage, both practical and spiritual, using different genres.

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Donald Scragg, *A Conspectus of Scribal Hands Writing English, 960–1100*. Publications of the Manchester Centre for Anglo-Saxon Studies 11. Cambridge: Brewer, 2012. xxii + 94 pp. ISBN 9781843842866.

Donald Scragg's *A Conspectus of Scribal Hands Writing English, 960–1100* is a welcome and valuable addition to the reference resources for the study of English scribal and manuscript culture in the later Anglo-Saxon period. The scope is limited to the narrow band of the 'long eleventh century', and the work seeks to identify and enumerate the contribution of scribes working in that period across our surviving manuscripts. In addition to the table of scribes itself, a number of other resources are included that expand the usefulness of the *Conspectus*, including five full-page, black-and-white images of scribal hands; an index of names mentioned in or otherwise attributed to the various manuscripts, cross-referenced by hand number; an index of places where the scribes are thought to have been active; and a map of the locations mentioned in the *Conspectus*, as well as a subject index based on the summary of the contents supplied by the respective scribes. The project rests on the back of a significant quantitiy of palaeographic research into the manuscripts; references to the secondary literature are condensed down to the absolute minimum form required. As such, the *Conspectus* identifies the various scribal hands writing in English in the long eleventh century and gives locations in the manuscripts where each can be found. The details of and