the tenth century, and a fundamental review of the critical agenda for historical linguistic analysis of both this and its related texts. This is nonetheless a valuable start, not least in that it identifies significant and substantial topics ready and waiting for further research.

Cardiff University

JOHN HINES


This volume was written, the author states in his foreword, ‘for students new to the enterprise’ as a ‘practical handbook for beginners … that might show what is at stake in the process of editing a text and what steps one might take to address the attendant difficulties’ (p. vii). Accordingly, after brief preliminary reflections on the nature of editions and their potentially differing relationships to the manuscript witnesses of their texts, the author expounds the process of editing via five chapters devoted in turn to (1) Collecting the witnesses; (2) Finding a copy-text and transcribing it; (3) Comparing the witnesses, or collation; (4) The examination of the variants; and (5) Annotation. The discussion is supplemented by a specimen edition, collation, and translation of Richard Rolle, ‘Super canticum’ 4; and by extended descriptions of five of the relevant manuscripts for which adequate published accounts were lacking.

Meeting a real need, such a guide will be most welcome. The material is logically ordered and clearly explained, the exposition throughout being linked to the specific case of Rolle’s ‘Super Canticum’, passages and trial exercises from which are continually laid before the reader for contemplation and practice. That said, the present writer (and his current cohort of palaeography students) identified three general demerits. First, though not a long book, it is not a short book either, and is, in places, rather discursive for a genuinely ‘practical handbook for beginners’: the real debutants would have preferred something pithier, with more signposts (in effect, sub-headings) to help them locate more easily the treatment of the particular issue they were encountering at a given time. Second, although generally engagingly, intermittently rather informally, written (alternating – sometimes in a single sentence – between impersonal and personal forms: ‘One can – and the extra size will help to eliminate obscurities of your penmanship, as you write in variations – use full sheets of A4, for example’, p. 40), the discussion occasionally becomes rather challenging for the beginner at whom it is purportedly aimed: ‘In a number of dispersed examples, individual scribes prove committed to more correct grammar-school Latin than
their source, e.g. the tendency to suppress “solecistic” prepositions in favour of the “proper” ablative of means …’ (p. 82). And from time to time, it is arguably too compressed, almost gnomic: ‘However, the presentation of the sources has a logic integral to the presentation of the text; it is a general bibliographical rule that the physical form and context in which a text has been transmitted, broadly communicated in a manuscript description, provides evidence of potential editorial importance’ (p. 103). The third demerit (doubtless beyond the control of the author) is the price, which is, frankly, outrageous for a concise book without illustrations, and effectively ensures that no graduate student will ever own a copy. It is earnestly to be hoped that a second edition – ideally with some strategic simplification and the addition of sub-headings – will shortly be produced in paperback so that the work can genuinely reach those who most have need thereof.

Durham University

RICHARD GAMESON


In this volume for the fine series on medieval romance edited by Corinne Saunders, Jamie McKinstry takes a novel approach to his study of a number of Middle English romances. I was not at all sure that discussing them in terms of ‘the craft of memory’ could be more than a misapplied gimmick, but I am pleased to report that in fact McKinstry makes an intriguing, if not entirely satisfying, case for analysing many structural features of these narratives in that light. Rather than a strictly linguistic approach to vernacular romances (the main interest they had when I was in school), or a post-colonial, gendered, or psychological approach, he has chosen to look at their structures and patterns as cognitively productive, and has absorbed completely what is now a common neuropsychological view, that memory supplies the matrix for imagination and reasoning, and that recollection is a cognitive activity that looks to past experiences uncovered through images in order to construct present understandings and future plans, the Ciceronian idea that recollection has a ‘Janus face’. As the matrix of the virtue of Prudence (Wisdom), it should always have these three ‘faces’ (or ‘phases’). The result is a cognitively based formal analysis that asks not what a particular work (or repeated trope) means, but how it acquires and sustains some understanding both for the characters in the narrative and – even more importantly – for the audiences who experience it. For McKinstry argues forcefully that these works seek to involve audiences actively, to make them labour within their own memories, by telling