than their sources and offer a new secular framework for ethical instruction by accusations of treason and repetitive use of treason words.

Chapter 4 focuses on Malory’s Arthurian cycle, intelligently arguing that Malory was contributing to a wider contemporary genre which reshaped romance material to comment on a politically unstable society. Leitch illustrates how Malory used treason as a mode of establishing ideals, engaging treasonous characters to test the community with actions opposite to chivalric fellowship. The chapter goes on to display the frequent performative use of ‘traitor’ words in dialogue, highlighting unknightly behaviour through the persistent publicizing of treason. Leitch also uses her argument about treason rhetoric to intriguingly suggest that Malory questions institutional conceptions of loyalty, hypothesizing that he critiques unhelpful legal systems in recognition of contemporary fears of being falsely accused. Chapter 5 reflects on the literary patterns of late fifteenth-century texts that are demonstrated in the previous chapters, illustrating how Caxton’s translated romances show an awareness of contemporary English literary tastes, containing parallel anxieties about trust, fellowship, and treason. Finally, Leitch’s Post Script argues that this preoccupation with treason dwindles in sixteenth-century romances.

Romancing Treason is a stimulating and scholarly examination of the framework used to address treason in Wars of the Roses romances. Leitch convincingly re-evaluates the continuation between medieval and early modern literature while offering an enriched understanding of a distinct literary culture beyond Malory during the mid- to late fifteenth century.

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Cynthia Turner Camp explores how late medieval English hagiographers, such as the Wilton chronicler, Osbern Bokenham, Henry Bradshaw, and John Lydgate, selectively reconfigured the early English past as a means of reframing monastic institutional identities and to effect the ‘ethical betterment’ (p. 123) of the individuals living within them. Taking as her corpus the Middle English lives of five native saints, Camp traces the development of these legends through their Latin and Old French antecedents, their codicological contexts and illustrated forms. Deploying a range of disciplinary approaches, Camp surveys in an impressive manner a breadth of material underpinned with a sound theoretical understanding. While her introductory explanation may be somewhat overblown,
she nevertheless uses the Bakhtinian concept of the ‘chronotope’ judiciously, to connect her texts and contexts. For her late medieval hagiographers and their principally monastic audiences Camp identifies three chronotopes: an ‘Anglo-Saxon’ one, where England was ruled by a peculiarly pious elite; a ‘monastic one’, where the first English monasteries developed in the context of this benign and pious rule; and, finally, an ‘iconic’ chronotope which imagines the past as a place ‘where a saint’s imitatio Christi is realized’ (p. 20).

The five case studies that Camp employs attempt to show how these chronotopes worked to mitigate the political, economic, and cultural challenges facing late medieval English monasteries in an attempt to present a more ‘useful’ version of the past, prompting their audiences towards a reconsideration of their own status as ‘ethical bodies’ (p. 9). The first three chapters take in turn three female Anglo-Saxon saints, showing how their hagiographers’ refashioning of their lives attempted to enhance the reputation of the saints and the monastic communities associated with them. The Wilton chronicler’s Middle English life of St Edith of Wilton, written c.1420, was an attempt to imbue her with real political influence in both life and death. The Chronicle educated the Wilton nuns about their own prestigious past, but also spoke to contemporary national concerns about Lancastrian legitimacy. Similarly, Camp argues, the various lives of St Audrey composed in the early fifteenth century encouraged their female monastic audiences to reflect on Audrey’s own spiritual life and its connection to contemporary reform. Chapter 3, on Henry Bradshaw’s Life of Werburgh, written in the second decade of the sixteenth century, is perhaps the strongest of these three chapters, offering a clear explanation of how chronotopes were employed to both strengthen the monastic community, in this case Chester Abbey, internally and challenge encroachments upon their identity and liberty from the king, Henry VII. Camp shows how Werburgh’s Mercian identity framed her spiritual identity, using this Mercian connection to deny royal attempts to limit the abbey’s freedom and, by extension, the separate corporate identity of the region as a whole. Bradshaw also cleverly resolves the issue of Werbergh’s decayed physical body and the threat this posed to her sanctity and authority. Her putrefaction becomes a metaphor for the potential of the monastic body to reform and change, in other words to transform itself from a state of sin into one of spiritual perfection.

The final two chapters deal with two royal male saints. Here both the source material and approach is slightly different. Chapter 4 deals with the visual hagiography of Edward the Confessor, while chapter 5 deals with both the textual and visual portrayal of St Edmund in John Lydgate’s Lives of Ss Edmund and Fremund. Both Edward and Edmund, as has been frequently pointed out, were good saints but bad kings. The challenge for their hagiographers was to reconcile these factors. Camp shows how the pictorial lives of Edward represented
him as an ‘abstracted symbol of saintly kingship’ (p. 168), employing the iconic chronotope in an attempt to address the problem and allowing him to function as a ‘useful’ saintly model to both kings and the monks at Westminster. The reading of Lydgate’s much-studied Edmund and Fremund is sophisticated and novel. Rather than primarily being a text functioning in the ‘Mirror for Princes’ genre for Henry VI, Camp shows how Lydgate’s poem casts the poet in the guise of shrine-keeper, with the poem itself functioning as a metaphorical shrine through which the young king (and crucially, we might argue, the wider Lancastrian community) might enjoy the saintly help of Edmund. The illustrations that accompany BL Harley MS 2278, however, are firmly located in a monastic chronotope, highlighting the role that the Abbey of Bury St Edmunds, Henry’s hosts in the winter of 1433–4, played in mediating the saint’s power.

Camp has succeeded in writing a (for the most part) elegant and readable monograph. While the lack of a concluding chapter is regrettable, the discussions of various saints’ lives relate and reference one another to produce a coherent and scholarly argument. To some extent her central point that hagiographers wrote and rewrote saints’ lives to meet the contemporary political, spiritual, and cultural needs of monastic communities is not novel (indeed, the impressive footnotes attest to the amount of scholarly work already done in this area), but her readings are sophisticated and add to our growing understanding of Middle English hagiography. At times one suspects that the historical context could be more nuanced, but this should not detract from a valuable addition to the literature.

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HILARY POWELL


Nicole R. Rice and Margaret Aziza Pappano’s The Civic Cycles: Artisan Drama and Identity in Premodern England conducts sustained, well-researched, and frequently very convincing readings of the nuanced expressions of artisan civic identity at work in the late medieval cycle drama. Historicist in its approach, the study responds to, and builds on, work by critics such as Robert W. Barrett, Jr. (Against All England, 2009), Christina Marie Fitzgerald (The Drama of Masculinity and Medieval English Guild Culture, 2007), and Ruth Nissé (Defining Acts, 2005). The introduction makes the true and telling statement that, in cities like York and Chester, ‘artisan life and dramatic expression existed in a complex, dialogic relationship to each other’ (p. 3) and concludes by signalling the work’s intent to