chronological organizational axis (‘Rhizomatic Robin Hood’). He anchors the rhizome in the medieval and early modern entwining of written and spoken text (‘Interfacing orality and literacy: the case of Robin Hood’). Knight then proposes that Scottish appropriation of the Robin Hood tradition might be responsible for characteristic traits of the tradition, like the outlaw’s status as a civic-minded noble robber (‘Rabbie Hood: the development of the English outlaw myth in Scotland’). No Robin Hood scholar can avoid *The Gest of Robin Hood* (c.1500): Knight proposes a reading of the *Gest* and its origins that deliberately cultivates multiplicity (p. 78), by contrast to conventional views of it as ‘a carefully and consciously upmarket confection’ that panders to early print requirements (p. 55; ‘Robin Fitz Warren: the formation of *The Gest of Robin Hood*’).

Knight sees the unrelenting obsession with the ‘real Robin Hood’ as the cause of much intellectual and scholarly distraction, noting that when ‘Robin Hood studies started looking at the actual cultural materials, rather than questing possible real Robin Hoods from places or periods of interest to the enquirer, great strides have been made’ (p. 83). The post-medieval broadside ballads are an important component of the Robin Hood tradition, yet they are relatively understudied (‘Revisiting the broadside ballads’). As Robin Hood scholars know, and Knight demonstrates we must acknowledge, the Robin Hood tradition is not purely medieval. Knight thus focuses strongly on the tradition’s nineteenth-century resurgence: the poetic interests of the century’s first half (‘Romantic Robin Hood’); and the explosion of novels begun by Walter Scott’s *Ivanhoe* (1820) and leading to multiple stage plays and operettas by 1900 (‘Robin Hood and nineteenth-century fiction’). Marian’s variability and ‘volatility’ is the focus of the penultimate chapter (p. 188; ‘The making and re-making of Maid Marian’), and Knight provides a fine survey of the figure beginning in the late thirteenth-century French *pastourelle* and concluding with modern film and novels.

Ultimately, Knight shows us that by connecting an individual text to the broader Robin Hood tradition, scholars, creators, and audiences are always participating in a process of rhizomatic cultural creation.

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VALERIE B. JOHNSON


Why should a modern reader delve into Old French epic songs? Catherine M. Jones’s volume on *chansons de geste* is modelled on a question which, *mutatis
mutandis, every medievalist can relate to. This book’s purpose is to introduce non-specialist readers to Old French epic tradition and make them recognize in it ‘modes of conflict that continue to surface in the modern world’ (p. xi).

Jones’s teaching experience is evident: the style, the structure, and the choice of contents make her agile volume both clear and informative. The first chapter provides an overview of the genre’s stylistic features and addresses the issues of origins, sources, and reception by presenting a balanced view of the ongoing scholarly debate. The texts are the volume’s core: after a chapter outlining the content of most *chansons* and their cycles, Jones analyses in depth six very different songs: *La Chanson de Roland, Le Charroi de Nîmes, La Prise d’Orange, Raoul de Cambrai, Ami et Amile,* and *Huon de Bordeaux.* This selection is instrumental in drawing a varied picture of the genre, with each text illustrating particular styles, narrative topoi, and themes. The author’s propensity to provide a clear and rounded picture of the matter becomes apparent in the appendices. In the bibliography, the secondary sources list is compact but rich, and, like the book itself, it operates an intelligent fusion of European and American scholarship; a short catalogue of *chansons* and a glossary of names and key terms accompany the bibliography.

However, the volume’s most significant aspect is its constant effort to provide a complex and updated image of medieval culture and literature. Jones constantly underscores the genre’s elasticity, the variety of its values and audience, the intricacy of its apparently static ethos. Moreover, she interrogates the modern relevance of the *chansons* throughout the volume and, in the last chapter, confronts the reader with the centuries-long tradition these texts produced across Europe and their nineteenth-century nationalistic exploitation. It is always a pleasure to read a work that promises to attract new readers to a still largely misunderstood genre; it is an even greater pleasure to see it celebrating epic songs’ narrative opulence and cultural density with the verve and erudition of Jones’s volume.

Université Catholique de Louvain

ANTONELLA SCIANCALEPORE


This rich and informative study examines the motif of metamorphosis – both bodily shape-shifting and the transformation and fusion of received literary materials – in a range of medieval French texts. The introduction raises fundamental questions of bodily stability and boundedness – or lack thereof –