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.

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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 –
and the implications for human identity, illustrated by examples from the lais of Marie de France and the *Naissance du Chevalier au Cygne*. The first chapter focuses on the *Ovide moralisé*, offering illuminating readings of this vast and important text – one that, despite increased scholarly attention in recent years, is still under-studied. With recourse to the Lacanian concept of anamorphosis, Griffin argues that the *OM* poet uses metamorphosis as ‘a means of understanding the whole truth about Christian history and doctrine’ (p. 27). Chapter 2 zeroes in on the Ovidian myth of Echo and Narcissus; and where the greater share of critical analysis has traditionally been lavished on the latter figure, Griffin chooses to concentrate more on the former, tracing Echo herself – a figure for the voice as object of desire – in a series of texts from the twelfth to the fifteenth century.

Chapter 3 moves away from explicitly Ovidian material to look at a group of texts featuring knights who periodically or temporarily transform into wolves or bears, whether as a result of magical spells or through some mysterious means inherent to the individual himself. Texts analysed here include *Bisclavret*, *Melion*, *Guillaume de Palerne*, *Perceforest*, and the *Conte du papegau*. Drawing on concepts developed by Agamben and Derrida, Griffin analyses the significance of skin and its role in bodily metamorphosis: the membrane delimiting the body, a layer used to mask or reveal identity in the form of clothing or disguise, a sheet used as the foundation for written texts, a means by which the human is overlaid with the animal. The fourth chapter, in turn, treats shape-shifting women: primarily Melusine, but also the serpentine ladies of the *Paradis de la reine Sybille*, Medusa, and Pygmalion’s beloved statue, which moves from inanimate work of art to flesh-and-blood woman. Noting that shape-shifting men are generally ashamed of their transformations and seek to hide the mutating body from public view, while shape-shifting women are specifically held up as objects of the male gaze, Griffin comments on the implications for the female body as ‘both horrifying and desirable’, an ‘object to be scrutinized and fixed in the face of its mutability’ (p. 175).

Chapter 5 turns to chivalric romance with a detailed examination of Merlin in a range of texts: *Merlin* and its various continuations, *Les Premiers Faits du roi Artu*, and the *Roman de Silence*. Griffin also devotes some space to an avatar of Merlin in *Perceforest*, the constantly shape-shifting Zephir. Though Zephir is a fallen angel and not, like Merlin, the hybrid son of a fallen angel or demon and a mortal woman, his narrative role and his behaviour are clearly derived from those of Merlin. Just as Merlin both shaped and recorded the processes that formed and furthered the birth and reign of Arthur, Zephir also drives the *Perceforest* narrative forward, playing a major role in the shaping of a British history that will lead inexorably to the rise of the Arthurian world. Both are in that sense authorial figures, responsible for setting or transforming the course of history. And if Merlin’s unstable body means that his true physical appearance...
can never be known with certainty, the spirit Zephir even more explicitly lacks any bodily identity at all, taking on a bewildering array of shapes at will.

The conclusion, finally, reflects on the motif of metamorphosis through a reading of Machaut’s *Fonteinne amoureuse*, with its famous treatment of the kaleidoscopic figure of Morpheus. In all, this book is much to be welcomed and contains much of interest for advanced student readers as well as seasoned scholars. It belongs on the shelf of any university library.

S.H.

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This very interesting book examines what might at first seem like well-trodden ground. Milena Mikhaïlova-Makarius traces the figure of the ‘phantasm’ in courtly love poetry, with particular attention to the mythological exempla of Narcissus, Pygmalion, and Pyramus and Thisbe. Beginning with detailed studies of the twelfth-century *Lai de Narcisse* and *Pyrame et Thisbé*, she proceeds to offer close readings of a series of loosely related texts: the *Roman de la Rose* (principally that of Guillaume de Lorris, but with some consideration of Jean de Meun as well), Jean Renart’s *Lai de l’Ombre*, Robert de Blois’s *Floris et Lyriopé*, and Guillaume de Machaut’s *Voir dit*, with additional attention to *Galeran de Bretagne* and the *dits* of Jean Froissart. The final chapter traces the use of similar motifs and constructions in the modern German novel *Gradiva*, as a way of demonstrating the enduring qualities of these dimensions of medieval love psychology and literary subjectivity. Along the way she considers the ways in which the inaccessible – or non-existent? – object of desire is figured through the systematic use of doubling, reflections, projection onto substitute objects of stone or water, artistic representation, and sheer fantasy. As she shows, each author in turn constructs novel or unexpected configurations of these motifs. In this way, each anew seeks ways of allowing the lover to bridge the gap between fantasy and reality, and establish contact with an actual, living ‘other’ who nonetheless corresponds to the original imaginary object; or alternatively, brings out the fatal obstacles in such a process, which may become identified with homoeroticism, incest, idolatry, and self-delusion.

At their basis, these ideas are familiar ones to scholars of courtly literature. But that is not to say that Mikhaïlova-Makarius fails to make any new contribution to our understanding of medieval love poetry in general, or of these texts and authors in particular. Her close readings show the complexity and interest of