

masculine social control—explores the discursive relationship in the male social imaginary between treason and a wife's murder of her husband while underscoring the wide-reaching politics of the medieval household. And Chapter Seven, analyzing Thomas Usk's "Appeal," provides a fitting ending to the series, for it traces the complex and sometimes sadly capricious workings of texts, textuality, and their socio-political fields. The book ends with two helpful appendices: the first, "The Accusation Against Thomas Austin"; the second, "The Literature of Livery."

Hochon's Arrow should be on the shelf of every medievalist interested in literary and historical discourse—and in the complex relationships and negotiations between "fiction/fact" and "textuality/reality." The book will encourage many scholars to reshape the way they conceive and undertake their work.

David Lorenzo Boyd, *University of Pennsylvania*

Wyschogrod, Edith. *Saints and Postmodernism: Revisioning Moral Philosophy*.
University of Chicago Press, 1990. Pp. xxvii + 298.

Despite occasional discussion of medieval saints such as Catherine of Siena, the most pronounced manifestations of medieval sanctity in *Saints and Postmodernism* are found in the illustrations. But appearances here are not wholly deceptive. While this ambitious work in the Chicago series, *Religion and Postmodernism*, is not specifically addressed to the study of saints in the medieval period, it has much to offer medievalists in a variety of disciplines who are interested in working with postmodern approaches. The central concern of the book is to develop a postmodern ethics which can withstand the critiques of the grounding of theory in modern philosophy.

Wyschogrod's response is to examine narratives of saintly lives as a way of grounding ethical imperatives. Hagiography, as written in the imperative mood—"go and do likewise"—confronts the fundamental ethical question, "how should I act?" Her choice of narratives is largely literary, although she also examines several early Christian saints' lives, and the possibility of political sainthood. The subjects, for the most part, are specifically secular, ranging from the incipient sanctity of Millie in James' *Wings of the Dove*, through Genet's *Our Lady of the Flowers*. By her understanding of sanctity as radical altruism—a vulnerability to and compassion for the needs of others—she posits a saintly self which is already fragmented and open through desire, and one peculiarly attuned to the body. Humanness is grounded in the body's susceptibility to pain, and it is the bodily misery of others which is most clearly manifested and responded to.

But in Wyschogrod's analysis, the saint's body as locus of desire operates in a universe temporally and textually decentered, leaving an unmoored subject, whose gendered and speaking self is so ambiguous as to be "neutered," a body on which "the needs and desires of the Other can be inscribed" (123). The questions raised here are taken up again in the closing sections on postmodern problems of ecstasy, individuation and transcendence, in which the author tries to clarify the uses of traditional hagiography, while maintaining the irrevocable difference of postmodern sanctity. Although the issue of gender invites considerable further discussion, the section on Kristeva seemed especially helpful for those interested in applying her insights to medieval women mystics.

The book is generally clearly written, although densely conceived, and the highly compressed arguments require careful unpacking. The author's cogent chapter summaries are a significant help in keeping track of how the multiple strands of her thought contribute to the central project. There is a sustained reading of the history of philosophical ethics, especially phenomenological developments since Hegel, and the analytical/linguistic work of Quine and Davidson. Her negotiations with postmodern foundations center on Levinas, Lacan, Derrida, Deleuze and Guattari. Wyschogrod's bold attempt to construct heroic postmodern ethics offers much to those studying the ethical and hagiographical strains of medieval narratives of courts and chronicles, religious orders, and pulpit.

Joan Gibson, York University

SHORT NOTICES



Paterson, Linda M. *The World of the Troubadours: Medieval Occitan Society, c. 1100 - c. 1300*. Cambridge: University Press, 1993. Pp. xii + 367.

New and old historicists alike will delight in this treasure trove of information about medieval Occitania, a veritable encyclopedia of the "realities and particularities of medieval Occitan life" (8). The data is gathered in a well-ordered manner, making access easy for the researcher. Under eleven general headings appear sub-headings and, when the need seems reasonable, even further sub-sub-headings of pithy paragraphs. Every chapter provides a useful summary of what comes before.

Paterson attacks some of the obvious issues: feudalism, knights and chivalry (10-89), and towns (152-85), other pertinent questions: courts (90-119), peasants (120-50), religion (312-43), and finally, subjects which have only recently demanded the attention of societal historians: medicine (186-219), women (200-79), children (280-311), and the Jewish communities of Occitania (175-82; 192-95).

Her style is lucid, her arguments carefully-reasoned and her general attitude cautious: she frequently makes apologetic statements like: "It is not easy to know . . ." (115); "And yet this is not the whole picture" (194). She readily acknowledges the complexities of scholarly contradictions: "Toulouse has been considered alternatively as one of the most brilliant centres of troubadour patronage, or as virtually without significance" (93). She is quick to admit that distance and paucity of documentation should cause scholars to eschew facile and hasty explanations: "Our knowledge of medical teaching and teachers before 1250 is fragmentary" (195). She is aware that text is often context and not infrequently draws upon the troubadour literature as her source, making no excuses for the characteristic circularity of much of the Duby type of social research (63, 88, 100, 183, 218, 254). She builds her case on the basis of objective review of materials, and only once argues, as she does concerning Ariés' comments on children, in refutation (280-86).

No doubt some scholars will point to misrepresentations and bibliographical lacunae. Some will even accuse Paterson of falling prey to the lure of intriguing trivia: "In Montpellier consuls wore a striking but simple costume of red robe and black cap"