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Review Of "Le Temps Des Croisades" And "Les Royaumes D'Occident" By F. Avril, X. Barral I Altet, And D. Gaborit-Chopin

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Review

Reviewed Work(s): *Le temps des Croisades* by François Avril, Xavier Barral i Altet and Danielle Gaborit-Chopin; *Les royaumes d'Occident* by François Avril, Xavier Barral i Altet and Danielle Gaborit-Chopin

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to best advantage an engaging sense of humor. Peter of Dreux “shed loyalties as easily as a serpent sheds its skin” (p. 92), and “The Bretons were adept at fishing in troubled waters and equally adept at ensuring that they themselves did not become the catch” (p. 13). In short, Alexander not only provides us with a most useful study of one of the great magnates of Angevin England but manages to entertain us at the same time. It is to be hoped that he will have more to tell us of the earls of Chester in the future.

JANET A. MEISEL
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FRANÇOIS AVRIL, XAVIER BARRAL I ALTET, and DANIELLE GABORIT-CHOPIN, *Le temps des Croisades*. (Le monde roman, 1060–1220; L’univers des formes, 29.) Paris: Gallimard, 1982. Pp. 402; 464 illustrations, many in color.

———, *Les royaumes d’Occident*. (Le monde roman, 1060–1220; L’univers des formes, 30.) Paris: Gallimard, 1983. Pp. 445; tables, maps, black-and-white and color photographs.

THESE TWO VOLUMES in the well-known L’univers des formes series (which was conceived by André Malraux and has been appearing gradually since 1960) are concerned with Romanesque art and architecture in western and central Europe and in the western European settlements of the Near East. Although the titles give no clear indication of it, the material covered in the two volumes has been divided between them geographically: *Le temps des Croisades* includes Germany, the Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden, Poland, part of France (the northeast, Burgundy, Provence), Switzerland, Italy, and the Holy Land; and *Les royaumes d’Occident* surveys the art of Norway, England, Ireland, the remainder of France, Catalonia, Spain, and Portugal. The rationale for such division and distribution is not always clear, and the thematic unity promised by the titles is elusive. England, Spain, and France, for instance, certainly participated in crusading. Categories of artistic genre or medium, which might have been used more effectively in partitioning material between the two volumes — one could have concentrated on monumental or architectural art, for example, the other on books and small-scale luxury objects — have been used instead to divide each volume into three sections, each written by one of the three authors: architecture, monumental mosaic and sculpture, and pavements (Barral i Altet); wall painting and manuscript illustration (Avril); and metalwork, enamels, textiles, and ivory carving (Gaborit-Chopin). The titles given to these sections are as problematic as those assigned to each volume as a whole. The painting covered in the second section is designated as “Les arts de la couleur” even though mosaics and enamels could just as easily belong within such a category. The third section is signaled as “Les arts précieux” even though objects — notably manuscripts, stained glass, and mosaics — included in the other sections are precious, in both senses of the word. Terminology and categorization are admittedly difficult in the art of this period — “Romanesque” itself is a notoriously slippery term — but the ambiguity and distortion imposed on these books by their organization and taxonomy are most unfortunate.

Those familiar with the L’univers des formes series (or Arts of Mankind in the English-language edition) will already be aware of certain of the strengths and several other weaknesses of these recent volumes. Reading the pictures in these books is as rewarding, for specialists and novices alike, as reading the words. But a clearer system

of referring within the text to relevant illustrations would have helped enormously, as would the integration of all pictures within the text. The color plates are especially splendid and are distributed appropriately and rather evenly between works that are already familiar because of their recognized importance and others which deserve to be better known. The text has been entrusted to established specialists in the art of this period and, even if aimed at a general audience, is packed with insights informed both by a firm grasp of the scholarly literature and by personal observations rooted in individual research. As with most general books that address a large, rather unwieldy subject in a limited space, there are topics or monuments given less attention than certain readers might ideally prefer, but there is welcome attention to several subjects, notably pavements and secular architecture, not usually treated in such detail. The absence of footnotes will be frustrating to scholars, but most authors cited specifically in the text do appear in a limited bibliography of important literature found at the end of each volume. Also appended to each are a "Tableau synchronique" (relating art and architecture to political history on a time line) and a series of useful and clear maps (coordinating artistic and political geography).

This is, then, a valuable, and unusually scholarly survey of Romanesque art and architecture that is, unfortunately, often difficult and confusing to use. Its clearest utility, as a source of general narrative and pictorial art history for undergraduates, is further undermined by the fact that, unlike other volumes in this series, it has not been published in English translation.

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STANLEY BOORMAN, ed., *Studies in the Performance of Late Medieval Music*. Cambridge, Eng., and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983. Pp. xiii, 282. \$49.50.

AS A SUBJECT for academic inquiry, the performance of medieval music has had a checkered history. In its earlier days (not so very distant in time) it was dominated, on the one side, by nonperforming scholars whose work sometimes suggested that they had never heard a note of their material and, on the other side, by performers whose enthusiasm frequently outran their scholarly training. As Tilman Seebass points out in the present volume (p. 19), a second and more recent stage in the development of the subject saw a polarization between generalists, whose theories were often based on somewhat flimsy evidence, and specialists, whose insistence upon detail frequently obscured a broader truth.

Over the last decade or so a more balanced view has begun to emerge, together with a clearer recognition of the importance of the field. As Stanley Boorman notes in his introduction, for medieval musicology, research on performance practice is "nearly the whole subject" (p. ix). At the same time many of the scholars writing today are both willing and able to draw on evidence from an extremely wide range of sources (vital when the information is so scanty) and to link hard documentary evidence with less clear-cut iconographical material and with a first-hand understanding of the capabilities and limitations of voices and instruments.

This series of essays, a revised version of papers presented at a 1981 conference hosted by New York University's Center for Early Music, is indicative of these trends and represents some of the best work being done in the field. Pride of place goes to