

attempts to bridge the gap between divinity and nature created in the Chartrian tradition, a gap that allowed earlier writers to contrast earthly and divine powers of creation, even as it emphasized the limitations of the visible world. Langland, on the other hand, sought to highlight the consonances between material and spiritual. This is a convincing argument. It does, however, raise the further question: if Langland seeks to demonstrate an identity between God and nature (even if imperfect), to what extent can his vision be labelled a Neoplatonic one? While the book occasionally acknowledges that the term does not fully encompass the complexities of Langland's imaginative project, it holds on to this label. Yet the nature that emerges from Davis's careful analysis seems more syncretic (and consequently more fascinating) in its blending of Augustinian theology with Aristotelian natural philosophical concepts.

Filled with thoughtful readings, *Piers Plowman and the Books of Nature* will become a staple for Langland scholars in coming years. This book, however, will repay careful attention not just by those already devoted to Langland's poem but also by those interested in the many other late medieval works where *kynde* plays a central role.

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FULVIO DELLE DONNE, ed. and trans., *Breve chronicon de rebus Siculis*. (Edizione nazionale dei testi mediolatini d'Italia 42; Ser. 2, 19.) Florence: SISMEL Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2017. Pp. 152. €40. ISBN: 978-88-8450-773-0.
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The *Breve chronicon de rebus Siculis*—this title has no manuscript authority and seems to have been coined by its first modern editor, Alphonse Huillard-Bréholles, in the 1850s—is a set of relatively sparse annals that would probably be of only limited interest to historians were we better supplied with narrative texts from the kingdom of Sicily in the time of Frederick II. As it is, it stands alongside the much fuller account of Richard of San Germano as the only such source from the *regno* during the first half of the thirteenth century. Brief as its entries are, it contains a generally reliable, and often quite specific, account of Frederick's rule in the kingdom of Sicily—with, for example, attention paid to his meetings with the popes in the 1220s and 1230s, his marriages and children, and to the rebellions in Messina in 1233 and the Capaccio plot of 1246. It commences with a brief introduction, tracing Frederick's ancestry and rule over southern Italy back to Duke Robert Guiscard (d. 1085) and through the twelfth-century monarchs. This is the second edition of this text in recent years, following that of Wolfgang Stürner for the MGH in 2004. While the Latin text in Delle Donne's edition does not differ significantly from that of Stürner, apart from the editorial insertion of chapter numbers, he does reexamine the question of authorship in the introduction and reaches new and quite different conclusions. Previous students of this text all saw it as the work of a single author, whom to Stürner was an Apulian cleric writing after c. 1272. Delle Donne, by contrast, sees it as a composite text, combining an eye-witness and first-person account of Frederick II's Crusade (the most detailed section of the text) with other material by at least two different persons. That the section after the crusade contains some criticism of Frederick, concerning his bad faith in punishing the Messina revolt and his cruelty to the Capaccio conspirators and their families, whereas the pre-crusade section is generally sympathetic to him, supports this argument. Furthermore, the two principal manuscripts that preserve this text—both late, dating from the end of the fourteenth century—differ considerably one from another. In particular, they have quite different endings: one (Vatican City, BAV, MS Ottob. Lat. 2940), the fuller of the two, continuing with a brief postscript concerning the succession to Frederick, down to the death of King Manfred at the Battle of Benevento in 1266, the other (Naples, Biblioteca Nazionale, MS VIII C.9) concluding with a copy of the Emperor Frederick's testament

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of 1250. There are occasional references to pseudo-Joachimite prophecies. Two of these occur in both manuscripts and would thus seem to have been in the original text, but the most detailed, based on citations from Isaiah 60 and Revelations 8–11, concerning the recovery of Jerusalem, is an addition in the Vatican manuscript. (The citations from Revelations are identified by Stürner, one should note, not by Delle Donne.) That apart, the text is well annotated, and the reader will find it somewhat easier than in Stürner's edition to identify the differences between the two versions. There is also an Italian translation to go alongside Stürner's German one, not that the Latin is difficult—indeed, for this very reason, this would be a good text to study for students learning medieval Latin. Hence, this is a modest, but nonetheless helpful, addition to the available sources for the history of thirteenth-century southern Italy.

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IRINA DUMITRESCU, *The Experience of Education in Anglo-Saxon Literature*. (Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature 102.) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018. Pp. xiii, 235. \$99.99. ISBN: 978-1-108-41686-3.
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Irina Dumitrescu's book offers an erudite and refreshingly innovative interpretation of depictions of pedagogy in Anglo-Saxon literature. It builds on the premise that Anglo-Saxon writers reflected on their educational experience by "translating, adapting, and composing fictions of teaching" in their works (2). Its particular focus is on the tensions and struggles within the learning process that these scenes of instruction reveal. Through a wide-ranging series of case studies—in poetry and prose, Latin and Old English, and various genres—Dumitrescu explores the darker side of experiencing education in Anglo-Saxon England.

Bede's account of a young man healed of a linguistic disability by John of Beverley (*Historia ecclesiastica* 5.2) takes pole position. Constructively linking the scene to the stories of Imma and Caedmon, Dumitrescu reads the youth's healing as indicative of both his liberation from pagan sinfulness and his entry into Christian community. Unlike Caedmon the youth chooses to return to his own home rather than enter a Christian institution after having been taught to speak. The boy's choice implicitly validates the status of the vernacular, Dumitrescu suggests: he says yes to the authority of Christian teaching but no to Latin as its means of expression (and here, perhaps, the resemblance with Caedmon may be seen to reemerge).

Following on from Bede comes the first of two chapters focusing on Old English poetry. *Solomon and Saturn I*, Dumitrescu argues, uses "graphic and violent defamiliarisation" of the Pater Noster as a way of teaching readers to be eager to understand this prayer fully (35). Saturn's intense curiosity about the Lord's Prayer is designed to prompt readers to feel the same yearning. The pain associated with such curiosity is vividly depicted through the violent descriptions of the Pater Noster's individual letters (so T, for example, "injures [the devil] and stabs his tongue, twists his throat, and smashes his cheeks" [37]). By setting up a drama of ignorance, desire, and learning, Dumitrescu argues, the poem reminds Anglo-Saxon Christian readers of their own early education. The reader is invited to engage with the process of learning to read, as well as to see the power of that learning. The important role of memorization in learning, touched on in this chapter, is given more attention in a later chapter on another Old English poem, *Andreas*. Dumitrescu proposes that Christ's teaching of the apostle Andrew in this poem acts as a model for the way the poem educates its readers "through wonder, recollection, and reflection" (91). Andrew's constant misunderstandings and failures to learn might seem to privilege violence and fear as the most effective teaching methods. Ultimately, though, they endorse the idea that in order to learn we must constantly ask questions and recall what we know. In advocating a theory of learning as a process of dynamic recollection, the poet shows the influence, Dumitrescu suggests, of Cynewulf's *Elene* and Boethius's *Consolation*