ROWLAND, Jenny, *Early Welsh Saga Poetry: a study and edition of the 'Englynion'.* Pp. x + 688. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1990. £ 75.

Dr. ROWLAND'S book is an edition with exhaustive commentary of the 'Englynion', the series of verses dating from the ninth and tenth centuries which make up some of the earliest poetry in Welsh. These poems, some of the finest ever written in a Celtic language, seem to come from sagas (now lost) set in the eighth and ninth centuries, when there was fierce fighting between English and Welsh along the present border of Wales, and the Welsh were losing the last of their lowland territory to the English and being driven up into the hills for ever.

The background to these poems, once described as 'the nearest thing to great drama that Wales ever produced', is thus one of tragedy. One remembers above all the protagonist, Llywarch Hen or 'Llywarch the Old', the irritable chieftain who taunts his sons again and again into hopeless battle against the English. When all his sons have been killed, he remains in solitary desolation to grieve for them and for himself, a foolish old man.

> Neither sleep nor happiness comes to me
> since the killing of Llawr and Gwên.
> I am a cantankerous carcass -I am old.

Other poems describe the tragedy of the princess Heledd, who sees the body of her brother Cynddylan lying dead after battle with the English, a grey-crested eagle feeding upon his breast. This happened

at the unidentified locality of 'Pengwern', somewhere near Shrewsbury.

> The grey-crested eagle of Pengwern -tonight
> his screech is very high,
> greedy for the flesh which I loved.

While Cynddylan lies dead, Heledd sees his hall, plundered and abandoned.

> The hall of Cynddylan is dark tonight,
> without a fire, without songs.
> Tears wear away the cheeks.
>
> The hall of Cynddlylan is silent tonight
> after losing its lord.
> Great merciful God, what shall I do?

These poems might lead one to think that, after defeat by the English onslaught, the Welsh lost everything except their genius for poetry.

Early Welsh Saga Poetry provides the most thorough piece of work on these poems since the researches of Sir Ifor Williams at the University of Wales in the 1930s. Dr. Rowland's book contains over 400 pages of annotations. Clearly it will be the best edition of these archaic Welsh poems for a very long time.

Anglicists will find the book of special importance for its comments on the links between Welsh poetry and Old English poetry, especially the so-called elegies *The Wanderer* and *The Seafarer.* Here Dr. Rowland discusses various passages in these poems and also *The Wife's Lament, Wulf and Eadwacer,* and *Beowulf,* noting how English and Welsh verse together use gnomic material and references to nature to make their effect. She thereby advances research on the account of this subject in P. L. Henry's *The Early English and*

Celtic Lyric (London, 1966). Heledd, for example, reflects in her sorrow on the Eagle of Ely.

> The eagle of Ely watches over the seas:
> Fish do not penetrate into the estuaries.
> He calls, he feasts on the blood of warriors.

Similarly, *The Seafarer* opens with the speaker uttering his sadness in a bleak seascape with the eagle as a rare companion.

> There storms beat against the rocky cliffs,
> There the tern with icy feathers answered them.
> Often did the eagle with dewy wings circle round, screaming.

Thanks are due, therefore, to Dr. Rowland for providing an accurate translation and study of the corpus of the Welsh material. Anglo-Saxonists will now easily be able to include the Welsh englynion in their comparative discussions of Old English elegy. Dr Rowland's important book should be consulted by anyone hoping to shed new light on the background to Old English verse, although another account of this subject, Nicolas Jacobs's 'Celtic Saga and the Contexts of Old English Elegiac Poetry', *Études celtiques,* XXVI (1989), 95-142, must also be read as a corrective to many of Dr Rowland's views.

More positively, one hopes that Spanish readers of *Early Welsh Saga Poetry* will be stimulated to make their own contributions from points discussed in it. On p. 597, for example, Dr Rowland mentions bloody tears and seems to suggest this is a particularly Celtic phenomenon. Concerning this, however, see my 'The Virgin's Tears of Blood', *Celtica,* xx (1988), 110-22, which shows this to be an international topos, of which Spanish examples may await investigation.

Again, on p. 601, Dr Rowland quotes the Shropshire place-name *Ercall* as deriving from Old English *Ercol,* 'Hercules', plus an Old

English word for 'burial mound'. However, *Ercol* is not an English form of 'Hercules' at all. It is a British form used by the Cornishman or Breton who, it seems, translated the Old English Orosius for King Alfred, as I argue in a forthcoming paper for the Oxford journal *Notes and Queries.* Since Orosius was an Iberian writer, coming from the vicinity of Braga in modern Portugal, this point may interest Anglicists in the Peninsula. It may be worth pointing out, incidentally, that because the Old English Orosius is one of the few books in medieval English known to have been read on the Continent, and Cornwall and Brittany had strong links with the monasteries of northern France, as shown in Dom Louis Gougaud, OSB, 'Les Relations de l'Abbaye de Fleury-sur-Loire avec la Bretagne armoricaine et les îles Britanniques', *Mémoires de la Société d'Histoire et d'Archéologie de Bretagne,* iv/2 (1923), research on how the Old English Orosius as the work of a Cornishman or Breton fits into the pattern of cross-Channel learning described by Gougaud would be especially worth doing.

Early Welsh Saga Poetry is, therefore, one of those large works of scholarship important not only in the information they contain, but also in suggesting further paths of investigation. One wishes this major work of learning the widest circulation amongst medievalists in Britain and abroad.

Andrew Breeze
University of Navarre

* * *

Medieval Literary Theory and Criticism c. 1100-c. 1375: The Commentary Tradition, ed. by A. J. MINNIS and A. B. SCOTT, with the assistance of David Wallace (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988). xvi + 538 pp. £ 65.00.

It is impossible to do justice to this remarkable anthology in one short review. Each section deserves careful reflection and discussion, but it is an essential tool for anyone trying to gain a full understanding of Middle English literary theory and criticism.

The "prescriptive" branches of medieval literary theory *-artes poeticae, artes praedicandi, and artes dictaminis-* have received the attention of some modern scholars and most of the important texts have been translated into English. But in this book, the authors focus their commentaries and translations on "descriptive" and evaluative texts from c. 1100 until around c. 1375, undoubtedly one of the most significant periods for the development of the commentary tradition. All translated treatises and commentaries reflect a tradition of commentary on writers both sacred and profane, Latin and vernacular, ancient and modern.

The purposes of this anthology are three: to offer at once a "reader" of medieval literary discourse, a "sampler" which may encourage the reader to go back to the original documents themselves, and to show a collection of essays about the history of medieval literary theory and criticism.

The book consists of ten sections and a general introduction in which is analysed the significance of the medieval commentary-tradition. In the first section an anthology of literary prefaces is introduced: *Introduction to the Authors*, those writers who were becoming established in medieval grammar-schools. In the second chapter we can read some extracts of the *Accessus ad auctores*, "Dialogue on the Authors", written by Conrad of Hirsau, an interesting work based on Bernard of Utrecht's commentary on Theodulus, who had drawn on Isidore of Seville's *Etymologiae* either directly or through some medieval intermediary. Reading this dialogue between a master and his pupil we can understand the notion of hierarchy, how classical literature must be subordinated to Christian doctrine, a basic principle in Middle English literature well conveyed by the common metaphor of "despoliation of the Egyptians", here cited in St. Augustine's formulation:

> ... what they (i. e. the pagans) have said should be taken from them as from unjust possessors and converted to our use. For, just as the Egyptians had not only idols and heavy burdens for the people of Israel to abominate and eschew, but also vessels and ornaments of gold and silver and clothing for that people, departing from Egypt, secretly to rescue for itself, as if to put them to a better use, not on its own authority but at God's command, while the Egyptians unwittingly supplied them with things which they themselves did not use well, so all the doctrines of the pagans contain not only simulated and superstitious imaginings and grave burdens of unnecessary labour, which each one of us leaving the society of pagans under the leadership of Christ ought to abominate and avoid, but also liberal disciplines more suited to the uses of truth, and some most useful precepts concerning morals.

Section III and IV deal with dominant figures in the 12th. century such as the spiritual allegorists Hugh of Saint-Victor, Peter Abelard and Peter Lombard, and the more philosophical such as Bernard Silvestri, William of Conches and Ralph of Longchamps; the unifying element in their work is their common engagement with the Platonism of the School of Chartres. All these writers are keenly sensitive to new modes of thought and expression, and they observe the interrelation between secular and biblical hermeneutics; a comparison of Hugh with Alain may serve as an index to the effect of these developments in the course of the 12th. c. and 13th. c. These allegorists who wrote in prose and poetry stand at opposite ends of a period of debate and experimentation which saw the rise and decline of a great movement of humanistic and scientific thought, a movement whose signs are still visible everywhere in Europe. This humanist enterprise was uniquely and profoundly important for the subsequent development of medieval poetry. The contrast of Chartrian rationalism with the ultimately traditionalist position of Hugh also serves to explain the gradual discrediting of Chartrian thought and the redirection of the School's influence into channels of literary study and poetic expression.

Section V: *The Dionysian Imagination: Thomas Gallus and Robert Grosseteste* presents the Platonic models of this period while section VI focuses on the Aristotelian influence on the literary theory; this topic is also analysed in sections VII and VIII with commentaries and translations. Such topics as the nature and structure of the universe and the relation of ancient philosophy to Christian doctrine are expressed in these chapters as the great concerns of medieval thought.

In the last two sections we are presented the transformation of critical tradition and the new ideas and theories expressed by Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio in their writings.

After reading this anthology we can understand that medieval theory and criticism have many things in common with modern criticism, in particular formalism, structuralism, semiotics and reception-theory, and that no criticism is free of ideology, as every approach to a text reflects and depends on a particular world-view.

It is a weakness of the book that, while the authors are extremely interested in the development of dominant figures in which the unifying element in their work is their common engagement with allegorism, they are less concerned with such writers as Adelhard of Bath and Bacon, to mention just a few authors among many others more concerned with a rational philosophy. Against this weakness, however, many strengths must be set which will make the book a valuable introduction to the reader and scholar of Middle English literature.

The book is almost impeccably edited, it also has a full bibliography and index, and many notes to explain the complexities of the texts and of the historical and literary issues arising from it. This anthology can be recommended to all students and is a most welcome aid to more advanced medievalists.

A. Bravo
University of Oviedo

* * *

Bruce MITCHELL, *On Old English: Selected Papers* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988) xiii + 363 pp. £ 35.00.

It is a real pleasure for students and scholars of Old English language and literature to read this collection of essays. Most teachers and students of Anglo-Saxon know Professor B. Mitchell thanks to his popular and well-known introduction to the language and literature of the Anglo-Saxons, *A Guide to Old English* (with Fred Robinson), and everyone with a love of English philology knows his authoritative *Old English Syntax*. But Professor Mitchell is less well-known for his essays, articles and reviews, most of which involve interpreting Anglo-Saxon literary texts. This book is a selection of those essays.

The book is divided into five sections; the first four bring together the majority of his "lesser works", while the fifth section provides a review of Anglo-Saxon studies since 1947. In the first part a selection has been made of articles, notes and reviews about *Beowulf*, the most outstanding being *Until the Dragon Comes..., Some Thoughts on Beowulf, An Introduction to Beowulf,* and *1987: Postscript on Beowulf*.

The second part is made up of five short works on the poet Cædmon, and among the most important of these is *Postscript on Bede's "mihi cantare habes"*.

The third part examines, basically from a syntactic perspective, some lyric poems, such as *The Seafarer, The Wanderer* and *The Wife's Lament,* the most significant on the basis of its length and depth being *Linguistic Facts and the Interpretation of Old English Poetry.*

In the fourth section there is an assortment of studies of a linguistic nature, such as *Syntax and Word-Order in the Peterborough Chronicle 1123-1154,* and *The Origin of Old English Conjunctions: Some problems.* In addition there have been gathered together several reviews in which Mitchell shows himself to be a wise and judicious critic, little inclined to superficial, laudatory remarks if the piece of work under consideration is not praiseworthy, at least in some respects. At the same time, however, he knows how to see the positive aspects and encourages the author to strive to do better.

The last part of the book focuses on the evolution of Anglo-Saxon studies in the last forty years, *Conclusion: Forty years On*. But alongside this short and well-documented summary Professor Mitchell voices his hopes and fears about future work on Anglo-Saxon literature. On the one hand he approves of the interesting study by D. Donoghue, *Style in Old English Poetry*, and Paul Szarmach's *Studies in Earlier Old English Prose;* but on the other he censures the superficiality of many publications and the unmerited interest in overly allegorical interpretations. His conclusion on this point is summed up in a quote from Professor Robinson, another of our modern distinguished teachers of Old English and the most cited in the book, who has written the following about the interpretation of Old English poems:

> A knowledge of philology and history would do more than anything else (except perhaps good judgment) to discourage the proliferation of bizarre and arbitrary "critical readings".

Bruce Mitchell has been not only an insightful researcher of Anglo-Saxon language and literature, but also a great teacher, and those of us who have had the good luck to have attended his classes will always remember him for his gifts as a scholar and a teacher; it is

hardly surprising to find the same quality in this collection of studies. Mitchell almost always suggests rather than being dogmatic, especially when dealing with literary texts. For instance, in his *Introduction to Beowulf* he writes:

> Whether the reader chooses to adopt one of the interpretations outlined above... or to find one for himself must be a matter of personal response.

He also teaches us with his profoundly religious point of view what can be read between the lines and that not everyone is able to detect, that in Anglo-Saxon poetry, and specifically in Beowulf, there exists a triumph of good over evil, whether Germanic or Christian (p. 29):

> Today in this nuclear age, with man's inhumanity to man daily more apparent on all levels and the powers of darkness in seeming ascendency throughout the world, we may see Beowulf as a triumphant affirmation of the value of a good life: as the poet himself says "Bruc ealles well"- Make good use of everything.

But Professor Mitchell does not let himself become tangled up in simplistic religious and allegorical interpretations. On the contrary, he frequently warns against the unwarranted reading of allegory.

In this regard I am reminded of one of his papers given at the University of Oviedo in the first SELIM conference, in which he compared Anglo-Saxon literature to a flowering garden in which the rankest smelling blossom is allegorisis.

To sum up this review I would like to make use of an idea that all of us students of English literature should keep in mind and that is well expressed by B. Mitchell in the book:

I firmly believe that some knowledge of Old English is an essential tool for anyone trying to gain an understanding and appreciation of English literature.

A. Bravo
University of Oviedo

* * *

CALDER, D.C. & CHRISTY, T.V. (eds.): *Germania: Comparative Studies in the Old Germanic Languages and Literatures.* Wolfeboro: D.S. Brewer, 1988 (ix + 209 pp.)

This book consists of a number of papers presented at a conference held at the University of Los Angeles (UCLA) in 1985. The contributions aimed mainly at reviving "an integrated approach to the study of the various Germanic languages and literatures" (p. vii). According to this, they tried to recover in this way that comprehensive orientation of the first philological studies (taking, therefore, into account some of the related disciplines such as mythology, religion, the history of civilization, etc.), which began to break off and specialize already in the late 19th century. In this connection, and as another important feature, the works included in the book show a comparative character. The underlying general goal is to get to the common core of Germania through its varied manifestations in different aspects.

The essays fall into two sections, the first including what might be considered purely linguistic studies, the second, more neatly literary ones. Before this latter section, there is a study (I. Rauch: "How do Germanic linguistic data react to purely literary methods?"), which undertakes a twofold approach into the Germanic material.

The articles of a linguistic character are the following: "Can Proto-Germanic be reconstructed as a natural language?" (H. Penzl); "Mutual intelligibility among speakers of early Germanic dialects" (W.G. Moulton); "On the origin of the dental preterit of the verba pura" (K. Matzel); "Systems and changes in Early Germanic phonology: search for hidden identities" (T. Vennemann); "Old English mæµl and sæµl in the all-Germanic environment: comparative study" (K.R. Jankowsky); "Sentence connectives in ancient Germanic texts" (T.H. Wilbur). Those in the literary section are: "Oral-formulaic tradition and the affective interpretation of Early Germanic verse" (A. Renoir); "Walter Haug's *Heldensagenmode"* (T.M. Andersson); "Eddic poetry and continental heroic legend: the case of the Third Lay of GuÍruån *(GuÍruånarqviÍa)"* (M. Curschmann); "Woden as 'Ninth Father': numerical patterning in some Old English royal genealogies" (T.D. Hill); "The drink of death in Old English and Germanic literature" (G. Russom); "What kind of poetry is *Exodus"* (R. Frank).

From the titles in the list above it becomes clear that, generally speaking, it is the collecting of diverse articles into a single volume and not the content of each of these articles individually considered what permits the editors to achieve their main goal of an "integrated approach".

Most essays can be regarded as fully modern. In many cases, an attempt is made to apply updated theoretical models in order to reformulate explanations and laws traditionally settled in the field. As an illustrative example one can mention "Systems and changes in

Early Germanic phonology: search for hidden identities", in which T. Vennemann suggests a profound revision of Grimm's and Verner's famous laws. Other contributions show a serious attempt to fill in gaps and systematize traditionally neglected data (cf., for instance, the works by T.H. Wilbur and R. Frank).

The comparative character of the theses put forward is specially reflected in papers such as those by H. Penzl, W.G. Moulton, A. Renoir and G. Russom, all of which show a painstaking effort to combine data from different Germanic languages and literatures in order to draw the appropriate conclusions.

As far as the edition is concerned, this book is beautifully printed and bound. However, an effort to impose a coordinate criterion on the bibliographical selection is lacking. This is left to each author's discretion and there appears no global list at the end of the volume.

Finally, we must add that this book, although not exactly what undergraduates need, will prove to be extremely interesting for scholars and teachers of the subject, since it offers a remarkable overview of the research being carried out at the moment on Old Germanic languages and literatures.

Eugenio Contreras
University of Madrid (Complutense)

* * *

GÓMEZ BEDATE, P. (1990): *Boccaccio: Decamerón.* 2 vols. Selección de Lecturas Medievales, Siruela, Madrid. (Ptas. 5,000)

In the mind of a fourteen-year-old girl, the *Decameron* was something attractive since it was something forbidden, something unknown. She had entered the cinema secretly to see the film with the same title by the Italian director Pier Paolo Pasolini. This meant two hours of frustration and disenchantment: adults were right, that was a pornographic film based on a medieval novel which she believed equally pornographic.

In the mind of an apprentice medievalist, the great plague that invaded Europe in the 14th century represents the starting point, the context for the most popular of the works by Giovanni Boccaccio: *Il Decamerone,* the evident heir of the medieval story-telling tradition in Arabia *(Arabian Nights)* and Europe (above all, that of the French 'fabliaux'). Seven women and three men with their respective servants try, by means of some tales, to mark time before the dreadful 'black death' can reach them: they have left Florence, the birth-place of the culture of the Italian 'trecento' -forerunner of the Renaissance period-, behind them. They have abandoned houses, possessions and the tombs of their dead to flee from death which is now the owner of palaces, towns, cities and even entire countries. For ten days and in 'courtois milieux', these ten characters will narrate stories to each other, some of them imaginary and exaggerated, others real, which they had been told previously by their fellow citizens.

The *Decameron* has been considered for ages one of the 'bêtes noires' in Medieval Literature. Authors of miraculous legends and lives of saints, courtier poets, historians, have been consecrated by the traditional literary critics, but only a few fabulists have been given

these honours: Boccaccio has been one of those but not always in a positive way. Reviewers have always wanted to see in the *Decameron* its erotic part dominating over the stories or songs following the courtois fashion or pattern. Sex, promiscuity, adultery, all kinds of tricks..., all these have their place in the novel but they do not monopolize it as Pasolini wanted to show us in his adaptation of the brilliant work by Boccaccio. Their design and structure are analogous to those in the *Canterbury Tales* by the English poet Geoffrey Chaucer, though their situations are different: the *Decameron* mixes up stories about achieved aims, impossible passions, tales to laugh and others to cry, sometimes sprinkled with irony, sometimes with delicious erotic touches. There are not so many explicit descriptions of sexual intercourse as we have been told. The novel has been mystified too much by many people and almost everyone, at one moment or another, has been misled into including it in an *Index* of books forbidden because of their sexual content that even verges on pornography. This has nothing to do with the real world, anyway.

Pilar Gómez Bedate and the Siruela editors offer us the possibility to undo the injustice. This new translation into Spanish of the Italian classic allows the Spanish reader to come nearer the European society and culture of the 14th century through the diverse social types that the author described in his mother language: medieval Tuscan (a direct translation from the medieval original is claimed). Perhaps the style used by the translator for her purpose turns out to be excessively pompous or too formal. But it has been an effort, a satisfactory one, to adequate as much as possible to the Rhetorics of the period, coming from Latin *oratores* and highly influenced by the style of the Provençal troubadours and an incipient Humanism.

Is there an abuse of the word ‘incontinenti’? Maybe, but also maybe this is a mere reflection of the first written steps of a language subject to a complex process of evolution, subjected to pressures

coming from other neighbouring cultures. The style, very repetitive and with structures hardly ever renewed, gives us a complete account of the difficulties of a young language entering the literary world through the main door.

Just in between the 'Dark Ages' and the light of the Renaissance, who would deny saying that the *Decameron* is one of the first flames in the History of the European vernacular literatures?

Gabriela García Teruel
University of Oviedo

* * *

GODDEN, Malcolm: *The Making of Piers Plowman.* Longman: London & New York, 1990. (£ 12.95).

The reader of Dr Godden's essay is confronted with a very interesting and complete review of the poem and the critical approaches to it, both ancient and modern which make it a most useful first approach to *Piers Plowman* and its tradition. *The Making of Piers Plowman* is a book of general reference for this particular poem, and a wholesome introduction directed not just to

undergraduates but also for serious students who would approach *Piers Plowman* for the first time with real and sound interest.

What may be considered a handicap is that the texts adopted for criticism and quotation are not uniform, neither are the criteria used by the author in his selections.

One might assume that Godden's choice of the textual editions of the versions of the poem seems to derive from their accessibility rather than from their scholarly quality. Thus he chose A.V.C. Schmidt's partly-modernized edition for Text B quotations, and Derek Pearsall's C-Text edition, whereas he relies on Kane & Donaldson's critical A-Text, and on Rigg & Brewer's sole edition of their Z-Text.

The Making of Piers Plowman has an appropriate discussion of the topic setting apart in the first chapter all external matters: discussion on the poem's creation in which Godden defends single authorship against the traditional multiple authorship hypothesis, identity of the poet, and the literary and intellectual background of the work and Langland.

Internal discussion of the poem using Text A starts from chapter two onwards, a chapter usually being devoted to each section of *Piers Plowman,* and the account of the plot of the vision is currently spiced with adequate and illustrative quotations. Godden continues discussing Text A in chapters three and four, as he deals with Langland's second and third visions.

The discussion on the seven deadly sins, and the idea of the Church which seems to emerge from the text lead to a debate concerning Langland and the Lollard movement. Dr. Godden points out the importance of the Wycliffite *Of feigned contemplative Life* for the Pardon episode. Particularly interesting is what we see on page 57 concerning the passages omitted or changed in versions Z and A. The author appears to suggest that Langland may have followed

Wyclif in the Spiritual reformation, though not in the Social Reformation, or at least adherence to the latter is not clearly specified. Then Godden incardinates very cleverly the problem of the A version in connection with the subsequent re-writings of the poem. Topics like the Friars and thought, and the dispute about the offices of Friars and the secular clergy are examined and on page 70 we find the following remark:

> The plowman who in the second vision had come to stand as an image of man's productive labour which wins him Heaven now reappears to prove the irrelevance of striving...

that helps the reader to attain what he calls "the true end of the A version", and thus closes this first section of his essay.

Chapter five starts with a survey of the problem of dating Text B. It is the passage called "The Parliament of mice" which in the first instance places the poem in ±1380, but Godden expands his very convincing arguments by explaining that there has been a full revision of the first two visions, especially in those points traditionally connected with Wycliffite concepts: the theory of kingship, the use and abuse of pardons, and the confession of sins and the aims of repentance. Godden suggests that the revision of the third vision and its completion in a new inner dream instead of the awakening of the narrator imply a new conception of the rôle of the poet. On page 89 we read:

> The opposition between the role of satirist which Langland plays and the ideal of charity which he preaches is one of the sources of tension in the passus.

and as it has happened previously, this section ends with further discussion about clerks and the current debates concerning faith versus knowledge, and "kynde wit" versus "clergie".

The fourth vision is analysed in chapter six by means of an examination of the rôle of Haukyn, the active man, and then by discussing the allegory of the different lives of man in full with special reference to the features of Patience, Poverty and Penitence. Godden reviews these carefully as we read (p. 102):

> Patience thus represents one of the great ideals of Langland's time, the cult of poverty.

This is the virtue represented in the poem by a hermit or a pilgrim, and it seems to me remarkable here that Godden did not mention clearly that the Dreamer in *Piers Plowman* was clothed as a Hermit at the beginning of the poem, and no further detailed mention of his clothing has the relevance of his first appeareance. What Godden does in this section is to reinterpret the figure of Piers. "Clergie" is rejected in favour of Patience, who is also a hermit, and hence the earlier Piers builds on the authority and anti-intellectualisms he has acquired so far throughout the dream:

> Patience, being a hermit, is what Piers chose to be. (p. 109).

It is then that Piers Plowman stops being the representative of the active life, and Haukyn intervenes, as the inherent sinfulness of active life leads into a discussion in which the author finally rejects the values associated with the active life (p. 114):

> The qualities of austerity, simplicity and dedication which the Prologue had seen in both plowmen and hermits are now firmly located in the latter.

In chapter seven there is a new dream in which Anima is the central topic; there follows a very interesting examination of the sermon on the Tree of Charity as the dreamer undergoes a new change in the fifth vision as the dreamer dreams within his dream, and Piers is apparently identified with God. Godden makes a very clever point in his discussion, as he states the dual nature of Anima, being a feminine "soul" and a masculine "mind". A discussion of previous interpretations of this passage centred on the works of Coghill and Wells, concludes in Godden's theory on how the different levels of society are used in the poem and how virtuous life is enacted in them. Purity is confronted with Death and Piers, previously identified with God is now interpreted as Christ. And then the dreamer wakes from the dream within a dream and meets Abraham (Faith), Moses (Hope) and the Samaritan (Charity). The poem has developed into an increasingly complicated mess, and Godden actually understates it (p. 136):

> The vision as a whole is one of the most complex in the poem, but also one of the richest in significance.

Christ's Passion and the Harrowing of Hell appear in chapter eight. The new dream of Palm Sunday in Jerusalem allows the author to review the traditional English accounts of the passion by commenting, namely, on The Northern Passion, Ælfric, the *Cursor Mundi,* Grosseteste, the *Ancrene Riwle,* and *The Dream of the Rood.* The love-theme of salvation is also extended by Godden to references found in *Piers Plowman* which may ultimately derive from the apocryphal *Gospel of Nicodemus,* in the passage dealing with the Harrowing of Hell as the problem of Redemption and the second coming of Christ seem to have a very important relevance for the interpretation of this section of the poem.

In chapter nine the author examines the dreamer when asleep in Church as he sees Christ in the form of Piers, thus providing evidence for the earlier identification and starting with a discussion about Conscience and Grace and including in the debate the Battle of Pride and Conscience. The idea of redemption surveyed in the previous chapter is finally completed as the Church becomes heir to Christ's work of redemption. As Godden puts it (p. 156):

> Conscience explains that the Holy Spirit is Grace and the dreamer joins in the singing of a hymn to him.

and thus he leads his readers into the interpreting of the Castle of Unity as Holy Church, and the argument in which the problem of Need and the justification of Justice become controversial, because the corruption of the Church will ultimately cause the coming of Antichrist at the end of the poem. As the Church has not followed the ways of Poverty, the enemies of Life, led by Elde, deprive the dreamer of his hair and sexual powers hence introducing the end of times both for the world and the dreamer.

Text-B is now finished, and Godden offers the reader the following conclusions (pp. 168-169):

> As we have seen before, Piers' essential role in the poem is as the organiser of man's salvation and a nexus of the current ideals and aspirations of the visions in which he appears... The poem ends with no answers, only an enrichment of experience and understanding [is achieved].

Chapter ten is devoted to exploring the C-Text of *Piers Plowman,* and Godden has very carefully rejected the dates offered by Skeat and Devlin on internal evidence: he concludes that the late 1380s or

the 1390s are the most probable period for its completion. He comments in great detail the alterations or revisions found in the fourth and fifth visions, which in version C are merged into one. The inner dream of the fifth vision disappears as well, and Godden infers that there is a general recasting of the Poem but for the last two Passus. He also considers the reasons which might account for that: the death of Langland, demands of a patron, or even the lack of interest on the part of the author. Godden also reviews in this section the theories of E. T. Donaldson and G. Russell on the process of rewriting the C-Text.

What I have found particularly rewarding is his comparison of the opening of the poem in the A, B, and C texts, and the "weariness" and "matter of fact" expressions found in version C are remarkably well explained. The prologues of the three versions are contrasted, and this results in Godden's opinion about the radicalization of the last text of the poem. He insists on the social criticism of the second vision and the intellectual crisis of the third as evidence for the abundance of more radical arguments. But he also points out the changes: Patience in Text-B is a hermit, but in Text-C only resembles a pilgrim and Piers as well; and moreover, Patience becomes an ordinary pauper instead of being a voluntary one. In Text-C Piers is a palmer, and Piers is no longer identified with Christ as in B, though the rejection of learning for austerity is maintained. Godden finally remarks (p. 200), that *Piers Plowman* is a poem that "in its own way it tells the story of its poet".

An Epilogue closes *The Making of Piers Plowman*. The possible connections of Langland with *Winner and Waster* that Godden provides are quite interesting and fairly convincing, though I assume that further discussion and research is needed. The list of references and suggestions for further reading is very well selected for the audience of the book, although I have not found in it two items which

could well be there: Elizabeth Salter's (1962): *Piers Plowman: An Introduction,* (Oxford University Press, Oxford); and J. A. W. Bennet's article on the dating of the A-Text (1943a: "The Date of the A-Text of *Piers Plowman." P.M.L.A.* 58: 566-572), which is especially remarkable, as Godden quotes his other paper on the B-Text (1943b: "The Date of the B-Text of *Piers Plowman." Medium Ævum* 12: 55-64).

S.G. Fernández-Corugedo
University of Oviedo

* * *

Charles JONES: *A History of English Phonology.* London & New York: Longman. 1989. x + 318 pp. (£10.95).

Professor Jones's book is included in Longman's Linguistics Library, first edited by R. H. Robbins and G. N. Leech, and later by Robbins and Martin Harris. Since J. M. Anderson's *Structural Aspects of Language Change* appeared in 1973, no other specific book on diachronic linguistics had been published in the series. In the meanwhile, both authors had published a seminal study for the students of English historical phonology: *Phonological Structure and the History of English* (Amsterdam: North Holland). This latter,

together with a book by Anderson and R. Lass: *Old English Phonology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), and with Lass's *English Phonology and Phonological Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), *On Explaining Language Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980) and *The Shape of English* (London: Dent & Sons, 1987); constitute a bibliographical resource that no serious course on the History of English can ignore. I must acknowledge, though, that Professor Jones's recent manual can be exploited as a most comprehensive textbook for a thorough and updated review of the History of English Phonology and Phonological Changes on its own. That is no mean merit for a book whose extension is just slightly over three hundred pages.

I think it must be made clear that although Professor Jones claims in his preface that the book "does not attempt to produce any major rethink on phonological change, far less does it claim to provide anything like an exhaustive coverage of all recorded types of sound change dealt with in the handbooks" (p. X), it is a major rethink on English Phonological Changes, as it enhances the idea of recurrence in a language and the need for using linguistic data instead of social, cultural or historical ones, as the primary source for explaining language change. It does provide as well a very exhaustive coverage of English sound changes, and a coverage that all but exhausts all interesting recorded types of language change dealt with in the traditional handbooks. *A History of English Phonology* is also a remarkable practical study in the issues of that branch of theoretical Phonology which little by little sprung from the joint venture that Jones and Anderson started in 1974.

A History of English Phonology is an extremely well organised book: a statement of the aims, methods and models (pp. 1-8), prepares the reader for the dual nature of the data and the treatment of those

data to be developed in the four sections (or chapters) that make up the presentation of the different phenomena discussed. It is quite difficult to demolish Jones's method and model from the point of view of traditional structural linguistics, but one is tempted to wonder whether James Foley's ideas concerning phonological strength set out in *Foundations of Theoretical Phonology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977) might not help to the better understanding of certain aspects of the Jones-Anderson-Ewen's *Dependency Phonology* model, with special reference to the revised theory of sonority hierarchy appearing on pp. 6-7. However, Jones's model proves extremely well grounded and fruitful for many sound change instances: his exposition of the Old English Vowel Harmony processes (pp. 73-93), and the Middle English Vowel Shift (pp. 127-141) are mastery.

After the methodological aims have been stated in chapter 1, the book discusses English diachronic processes in succession from the period named by Jones the Early Origins to the 12th century (chapter 2, pp. 9-93), to the section concerning the period from the 18th century to the present day (chapter 5, pp. 279-304). In between, two more chapters on Middle English: 13th-15th centuries (chapter 3, pp. 94-195), and 16th to 18th centuries (chapter 4, pp. 196-278), link the temporal sequence. One might criticise the study division that Professor Jones uses: for example in chapter 2, terms such as Old English, Late Old English and Middle English are constantly used, and I have been unable to decide the sort of reference, either linguistic or temporal, they respectively cover. The author has warned us at the very beginning of the book that the establishing of 'periods' or epochs has very little meaning for linguistic study, and that "the tradition of English and other historical linguistics is often bedevilled by the proliferation of descriptive nomenclature and by failure to relate phenomena in one often ad hocly delimited period with others" (p. 2),

and I think he is quite right, but I also think that there must be some points of reference. And Professor Jones does use those referential points in certain instances such as those when he talks about Old English and Late Old English, for example.

There is also the structuring itself of the book in sections dealing with periods of time: chapter 2 handles no less than six centuries; chapter 3 studies three centuries; and chapters 4 and 5 deal with two centuries each. There is a rather evident lack of balance, and I would ask him to make some concessions in this respect. Everyone knows that temporal nomenclature is just a convenient label, a common reference. It means that when Professor Jones says that "the highly compartmentalized nature of the scholarly tradition... which, for cultural and often idiosyncratic reasons, produced a territory of separate scholars and schools where there was little or no inclination to enquire into the chosen realm of other workers", we might immediately think of Dickens and Wilson's *Early Middle English Texts* (Cambridge: Bowes & Bowes, 1964), or in Bennet and Smithers's *Early Middle English Verse and Prose* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966), as a territory in secession from the vaster domains of Middle English. In the *history* of a language there ought to be temporal divisions, and although these are quite whimsical on many occasions, as Professor Jones points out, there are others in which there seems to exist a wide and well established consensus. And J. W. Clark's *Early English* (London: A. Deutsch, 1957) appears to underlie, somewhat partially though, some of Jones's conceptions as expressed in chapter 2.

My second remark concerns chapter 5: twenty-five pages are devoted to the modern period, and that is further proof of the uneven nature and evolution of linguistic changes. For Professor Jones demonstrates that changes are recurrent and similar language developments seem to be active throughout the history of English

phonology: but they do not emerge with the same predictability upon occasion. And there is the problem of data as well. These are either too many or too disperse to obtain a proper selection that may provide a comprehensive interpretation. Jones argues that "There are many reasons why these two centuries are the Cinderellas of English historical linguistic study," (p. 279), and he offers many to his readers, to conclude that "Against such a simplistic one to one, period to innovation mapping we have, of course, been arguing throughout this book, and we shall again attempt to show how the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries manifest the same types of phonological processes we have met at earlier historical 'moments'." (p. 280). However a sense of doom is haunting the author because he decides to limit his study: "It would, of course, take all of a book of this size and more even to review the exciting and increasingly productive research being carried out at present into contemporary language change along a temporal axis: we shall have space to examine but a few present-day ongoing innovations in this chapter, selecting in particular those which relate to some of the central historical processes which have been our recurrent concern thus far." (p. 281). I hope that Professor Jones will delight us in the near future with such a book on Modern English phonological history.

It is virtually impossible that a book on Phonology be free of errata: these are uncommonly absent from *A History of English Phonology:* the publishers should be congratulated for their careful work. There are some, though, and it must be noticed that although an erratum example such as that found on p. 306: a font-size change as *denOs,* -which should read *DenOS* instead on the evidence of DeCHENE, just before it-, is a very easy one to detect and correct even by the inexperienced reader, such errata as *[c]* -correct to *[ç]*- on p. 239, or the alpha symbol which does not appear with the stress mark in the first quotation (p. 239 as well), though there is an explicit

reference to it in the following paragraph, take for granted important previous linguistic training.

And finally the reader cannot decide whether in the case of the *more/More* pair on p. 245 it should be emended to *more/moor*, as the next pair is *pore/poor*. However all these are but toys, as Bacon said, and enough of them: because after reading *A History of English Phonology* there is little need to go anywhere else to find a convenient advanced university textbook for the phonology of the Old, Middle and Early Modern English periods. It is also time to mention here Jones's *An Introduction to Middle English* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1972) to complement some aspects of Middle English sound changes treated in the work we are discussing.

I am afraid that Professor Jones may now, indeed, look after his Soay sheep with fewer distractions: whole flocks of patient undergraduates and graduates will graze in the happy fields of his fertile *A History of English Phonology*. But we will be waiting for more.

S.G. Fernández-Corugedo
University of Oviedo

* * *