

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

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surprisingly free or omit without acknowledgement sense elements present in the Old Norse (e.g. pp. 24–25, 74, 99, 114, 115, 201). Published translations quoted are not always duly referenced (pp. 148–49), and a few incorrect references (pp. 178, 179) and ‘typos’ (pp. 87, 149) were observed.

Despite these generally minor shortcomings Haki Antonsson has provided in a remarkably wide-ranging work an important contribution to our growing appreciation of the important Christian dimension in Old Norse saga literature. It deserves to be read by serious saga students and scholars but also by those from other fields with an interest in the popular religion of medieval Western Europe.

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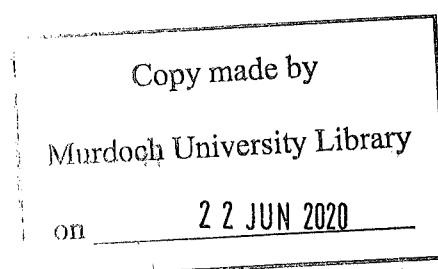
Huot, Sylvia, *Outsiders: The Humanity and Inhumanity of Giants in Medieval French Prose Romance* (The Conway Lectures in Medieval Studies, 12), Notre Dame, University of Notre Dame Press, 2016; paperback; pp. 360; R.R.P. US\$40.00; ISBN 9780268031121.

Sylvia Huot’s *Outsiders* examines the multi-faceted roles played by giants in medieval French literature. As exceptional human beings situated at the intersection of humanity, bestiality, and demonry, giants ‘elaborate fantasies of racial and cultural alterity and [...] explore the traumas and desires that shape Christian chivalric subjectivity’ (p. 25). *Outsiders* persuasively develops this thesis by drawing on a wide body of evidence, primarily consisting of prose Arthurian material, but ranging across epic, *chansons de geste*, ancestral romance, and lyric poetry, with a brief nod to manuscript iconography. The author’s judicious use of critical theoretical frameworks, including postcolonial, anthropological, and psychoanalytical approaches to subjectivity and race—a term which Huot acknowledges lacked sustained theorization in medieval (European) culture—also draws out pertinent analogies between medieval, early modern, and modern concerns with identity, alterity, and security.

Outsiders begins, logically, by exploring the origins of giants to reveal how their liminal ontological status is figured by their location on the borders of courtly civilization and by their identification as peoples indigenous to hitherto unexplored realms. These marginal gigantesque societies are characterized by a distortion of Christian, political, structural, and moral values that become conflated with a racial and cultural alterity shared with ‘Saracens’. This alterity informs giants’ resistance to, and rejection of, the master civilization embodied by Arthur’s chivalric court.

In their effort to overcome this threat to courtly society, knightly encounters with giants reflect an intersection between ‘the physical and ideological violence of military adventuring, imperial expansionism, and the consolidation of cultural hegemony’ (p. 107). Detailed analysis of the prose *Tristan* and *Lancelot* romances uncovers how giants (and Saracens) contest, and yet ultimately fail to subvert, courtly historical narratives: attempts to disrupt the Arthurian polity with violence are overturned by heroic archetypes of chivalric and devotional virtue.

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Outsiders elucidates the evolution of knightly subjectivity as a consequence of violent encounter with giants in light of giants' allegorical potential as 'vivid fantasies of racial and ethnic difference' (pp. 237–38). Ultimately, *Outsiders* affirms the importance of violence in the formation of knightly identity and in chivalric culture's quest to protect and extend Christian society: it is a knight's civilized control of his violence that justifies its exertion over gigantesque barbarism and savagery.

Huot's discussion is dense with critical observations and evidence, yet the prose remains clear throughout and helpful subheadings enable readers to absorb her insights in digestible sections. Iconographic analysis suggests how giants could be invested with various meanings contemporaneously, although some reflection on how representations of literary giants changed across the Middle Ages would have been interesting. This contribution to an ever-growing literature on non- and barely human figures in medieval literature offers many new insights into the role of alterity in medieval literature. *Outsiders* also illustrates how modern anxieties about self and identity, encounters with Others, and the control of historical and cultural narratives were embedded within the medieval European world.

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Insley, Charles, and Gale R. Owen-Crocker, eds, *Transformation in Anglo-Saxon Culture: Toller Lectures on Art, Archaeology and Text*, Oxford and Philadelphia, Oxbow Books, 2017; paperback; pp. xviii, 136; 30 colour and 16 b/w illustrations; R.R.P. £38.00; ISBN 9781785704970.

This volume contains five lectures delivered at Manchester University between 2009 and 2014, with an introduction by Gale Owen-Crocker, and an index. As proclaimed in the title, 'transformation' is a key theme explored in the lectures, highlighting the Anglo-Saxon capacity for 'adaptation to new circumstances' (p. xv). All contributors have long and distinguished careers and the experience and breadth of vision necessary to explore successfully such a theme. In different ways, each lecture provides a window into and a summation of their respective research interests.

John Hines's contribution is titled 'A New Chronology and New Agenda: The Problematic Sixth Century'. This lecture arises out of the large-scale, multi-authored research report edited by Hines and Alex Bayliss, *Anglo-Saxon Graves and Grave Goods of the 6th and 7th Centuries AD: A Chronological Framework* (England Society for Medieval Archaeology, 2013). Hines discusses the team's revision of major material-cultural dates bounding the period of particular types of furnished burial, previously placed with the period c. 570–720, but, under the revised chronology, considered to span the period c. 530–680. Within the first half of this period, observed shifts in material culture in both male and female graves raise new questions about the environmental and sociopolitical circumstances that may lie behind the steep decline in burial with grave-goods around 570, followed