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year university students or general readers with a stimulating introduction to
the Viking Age.

Lisa Bennett
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Clanchy, M T, **England and its Rulers: 1066-1300**
(3rd ed: Malden, Oxford and Carlton, Blackwell Publishing) 2006, paperback; 344
pages; RRP $62.50; ISBN 1405106506

Michael Clanchy is an engaging writer whose work is always
notable for its clarity without oversimplifying the key academic debates.
The third edition of this excellent survey text is no exception. Earlier
editions were important because they placed England (and its rulers) in an
international context and rejected a narrowly ‘national’ history. Of three
new chapters now included, ‘The Matter of Britain’ is the most important,
since the lack of sustained discussion regarding the political tensions
between England and her immediate neighbours was the most obvious
shortcoming of previous editions. The focussed treatment this issue now
receives enriches the contextual depth of almost all the other material,
particularly the chapters on national identity and the reigns of Henry III and
Edward I. New material on ‘Lordship and the Structure of Society’ and
‘The Creation of Wealth’ is less well integrated into the existing flow of
discussion, but nonetheless adds considerably to its scope. The list of
further reading has also been updated and provides a good foundation for
anyone embarking in the field. This text will be a valuable asset to any
undergraduate course covering the post-Conquest era of Anglo-Norman
history and to researchers hitherto unfamiliar with the period.

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Fraser, Veronica M, **The Songs of Peire Vidal**
(New York, Peter Lang, 2006) hardback; 259 pages; RRP US$71.95; ISBN
0820479225

Peire Vidal was a highly celebrated troubadour and accomplished
entertainer who performed his own songs. His poetic career, c1176-1206,
began at the court Count Raymond V of Toulouse and he later entertained at
the courts of Viscount Barral of Marseille, King Alfonso II of Aragon and
Boniface of Monferrat. Peire Vidal continued to travel throughout his
career, looking for new opportunities and patrons. He traveled to the Holy
Land, staying at the court of Raymond of Tripoli for a year until Jerusalem
fell to Saladin. He was also highly sought after by courts in Spain, Hungary, Italy and Malta.

In *The Songs of Peire Vidal*, Veronica M Fraser has translated, from the old Occitan language, the 45 songs of Peire Vidal’s that have survived. These songs provide a fascinating look at his travels and the courtly society of his times. Fraser has divided the songs into three sections: 22 love-songs, 21 satirical songs and two dialogue poems, and she has grouped the works thematically within each section. Each song or poem is provided with a brief, but very adequate, commentary that assists with contextual and stylistic information.

In the introduction Fraser pieces together the life of Peire Vidal. There is very little historical detail on his early life, and a biography that was written 50 years after Peire Vidal’s death was ‘probably made up of fictitious material’ (1). However, Fraser puts together a fascinating insight into his travels, his patrons, the politics, the poetry and music of the time, the performance and the surviving manuscripts which she consulted during her research. The songs and poems are printed in the original Occitan followed by the English translation.

Fraser’s translations are a pleasure to read; the songs and poems retain a vitality that is often lost in the translations of medieval poetry. In the love songs the rules of *fin’amor* (courtly love) shape the composition. The courtship is long and requires patient devotion; themes of absence, loss and powerlessness prevail. Of love Peire states ‘I could cure myself of any other illness, but the bonds of this malady tore me to pieces, when my beautiful lady promised me that which she did not intend to fulfill’ (57). These songs of love are overtly personal but the search for the joy of love is not tempered by its loss. ‘I was wrong to call her untruthful, but a blind lover is devoid of all good sense … but now I am deprived of love and pleasure, if she does not favour me with perfect joy’ (127).

The satirical songs are a mixture of political, moral and love themes. He attacks personal and public enemies and deals with the issues of the day. He criticises the Emperor Henry for imprisoning King Richard on his return from the crusades: ‘I despise a thieving and avaricious emperor and a dishonest king, who insults God and shames his barons by his false exercise of power … by mistreating the good Richard, and transgressing thereby the laws of God’ (140-141). The potent mixture of religion and political power in the crusades and the realities of the late twelfth century leave a very cynical mark in Peire’s work: ‘I see the whole world in the grip of trickery and deceit; the miscreants are so numerous that faith and justice can hardly survive; everyone tries to betray his friend to enrich himself’ (203). Amongst the scepticism there is a strong moral and humorous tone to his satirical songs: ‘Since beauty makes the most sensible man reckless, he who does not maintain secrecy is indeed foolish’ (237).

The last two poems these poems are self-referential, misfortune and the decline second is a dialogue between love’s reward, for ‘It request love and tomorrow Peire Vidal’s son, disappointments in both p. Fraser’s translation and o. This is a useful and highly medieval literature.

School of Architecture an

Hartmann, Sieglinde (ed) of the Medieval Environment (Frankfurt, Peter Lang, 200 9783631563021

Fauna and Flora

‘present a multifaceted picture range of attitudes toward during the Middle Ages’ say that it is without inter- rather slimmer for the ear has drawn together paper: Congress between 2000 a animals, plants or the lan- cohesiveness.

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The last two poems of the book are the dialogue poems. Both of these poems are self-referential. The first deals with the theme of the misfortune and the decline into poverty of the Marquess Lancia. The second is a dialogue between Blacatz and Peire and is about the futile wait for love's reward, for 'It is not love but obvious deception if today you request love and tomorrow you abandon it' (248).

Peire Vidal's songs and poems reveal the hopes, dreams and disappointments in both private and public life in the late twelfth century. Fraser's translation and commentary encapsulate the work and the times. This is a useful and highly accessible text for any students or specialists of medieval literature.

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Hartmann, Sieglinde (ed), Fauna and Flora in the Middle Ages: Studies of the Medieval Environment and its Impact on the Human Mind
(Frankfurt, Peter Lang, 2007) paperback; 323 pages; RRP £46.50; ISBN 9783631563021

Fauna and Flora in the Middle Ages promises, on its jacket, to present a multifaceted picture of environmental history and reveal a broad range of attitudes towards the natural world current in Western Europe during the Middle Ages. In my opinion, it does not deliver. That is not to say that it is without interest for the medievalist, although the pickings are rather slimmer for the early medievalist. The editor, Sieglinde Hartmann, has drawn together papers delivered at the Leeds International Medieval Congress between 2000 and 2002, all of which have something to do with animals, plants or the landscape. This is about the limit of the book's cohesiveness.

Hence, we find an extremely technical and detailed seismological analysis of a thirteenth-century Swedish earthquake (Gabriele Schwarz-Anetti, D Fah, Ph Kastle, V Masciardi and R Schibler, 'The Churwalden (CH) Earthquake of September 1295') rubbing shoulders with a discussion of the theme of exile in a fable (Nigel Harris, 'Animals and Exile in the Echasis cuiusdam captivi'). While this latter has some slight connection to animals in that the main character of the fable is a calf, Harris is not interested in the 'calf-ness' of the character, merely in the human characteristics and behaviour it conveys. This is not a fault in the paper – it is a very good paper – but it might be grounds for suggesting that the paper does not belong in this collection. Harris's second paper ('The Camel in Medieval Literature: Perspectives and Meanings'), by contrast, does make some very interesting comments about human perceptions of and interactions with animals. He argues that the characteristics attributed to