Book Review


Sometime between July 1 and July 5, 2011, the mid-twelfth-century Codex Calixtinus was stolen from a safe in the vault of the cathedral of Santiago de Compostela. None of the five security cameras were pointing directly at the vault, the keys to which were not strictly controlled. The theft appears to have been an “inside job” of some kind, probably carried out for the benefit of a private individual since the manuscript is obviously unsaleable on the open market. At the time of writing (five months later), no progress appears to have been made in recovering the precious object.1 The articles in the present volume were all written and the volume edited before the theft, which is not mentioned. A high-end facsimile of the manuscript was published in 1993.

After an introduction by Jean-Claude Vallecalle (5-12), the collection is divided equally into three principal sections (“Sacralité”, “Historicité”, and “Littérarité”), each containing three contributions. The manuscript itself consists of five parts: a liturgical section devoted to the cult of Saint James, a collection of miracles attributed to the saint, the story of the translation of his relics, the *Pseudo-Turpin* chronicle, and the pilgrim’s guide to Santiago. The structure and contents of the codex lend to this book the kind of coherence such volumes often lack and provide the authors with a number of common themes, in particular the progression from the sacred to the secular and from the historical to the fictional. Many of the issues raised in the individual essays have wider ramifica-

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1 Editor’s note: The Codex was recovered from an employee’s garage on July 4, 2012.

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tions beyond the immediate context of the Codex Calixtinus and the
_Pseudo-Turpin._

In a painstaking semantic study of terms such as _miracula_ and _mir-
abilia_, Jean-René Vallette examines the collection of miracles in their
relation to _exempla_ and shows how the _merveilleux_ here serves the needs
of hagiography (15-32). His conclusions have implications for the role of
the _merveilleux_ in other, later, genres. Likewise concentrating on the
_Liber de miraculis_, Marylène Possamaï discerns folkoric as well as
hagiographical elements in the tales, arguing that one of their primary
functions is to present James as a “practical” saint accessible to all (35-
54). Gérard Gros discusses the pilgrim’s guide of the final book of the
codex, showing how its spiritual function is grounded in the practical
geography of the travel enterprise (55-65).

The next three essays deal in various ways with the Latin text of the
_Pseudo-Turpin_ and its reception in late medieval French literature. Jean
Subrenat considers the attribution of the chronicle to the Archbishop of
Reims as part of the imposition of a wider _auctoritas_ in the text and the
manuscript as a whole, supported by the figures of Charlemagne and
Calixtus II (69-85). Marion Bonansea argues that death is presented in
the _Pseudo-Turpin_ as a manifestation of the meaningfulness of human
existence and a transformation of life’s chaos into the order of a spiritual
afterlife; something similar can be said of the pilgrim’s guide (87-109).
In the course of the thirteenth through the fifteenth centuries, as François
Suard convincingly shows, the _Pseudo-Turpin_ is gradually removed from
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The gradual evolution of the _Pseudo-Turpin_ into a purely literary
work devoid of sacred dimensions and pretensions to historical veracity
is also illustrated by the last three contributions, which also deal with
texts outside of the regions of the _langue d’oil_. Daniel Lacroix looks at
the use of the text as one of the many sources of the Old Norse _Kar-
lamagnússaga_, composed during the reign of Hákon Hákonarson (†1263)
The *Pseudo-Turpin* may have begun to circulate in the Nordic regions, along with other Latin texts such as the *Elucidarius*, the *Physiologus*, and the *Navigatio Brandani*, as early as 1200. In his own article, Jean-Claude Vallecalle shows how the figure of Turpin is transformed, divested of all his sacred functions and attributes, into an emblem of fictionality in two important Franco-Italian works, *L’Entrée d’Espagne* and *Aquilon de Bavière* (153-62). Finally, Leslie Zarker Morgan comes to conclusions similar to those of Vallecalle after an examination of references to Turpin in Italian literature up to the end of the eighteenth century (163-78). Each period, however, adds its own nuances to the image of the archbishop.

This nicely produced and well-presented volume closes with a bibliography (179-89), an index of names (191-94), and a subject index (195-96). If the contributions vary somewhat in quality, the usefulness of the collection as a whole renders individual criticism of them churlish (my principal complaint would be of the banality of certain statements of the obvious in a couple of the articles). Perhaps another volume could be devoted to the various translations of the *Pseudo-Turpin* into Old French (at least six, including one in Anglo-Norman) and into other vernaculars (Middle High German, Middle English, Spanish, Galician, Catalan, Occitan, Middle Irish and Middle Welsh). That said, this is a useful introduction to the Codex Calixtinus and the history of the *Pseudo-Turpin* and will be of particular benefit to specialists of the *matière de France* and its reception.

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