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Mathew Kuefler, *The Making and Unmaking of a Saint: Hagiography and Memory in the Cult of Gerald of Aurillac*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014. 306 pp. Maps, figures, notes, bibliography, and index. \$79.95 U.S. (hb). ISBN 978-0-8122-4552-3.

Review by Steven Vanderputten, Universiteit Gent.

Gerald of Aurillac and the corpus of texts devoted to his memory are central to scholarly discussions of lay piety and sainthood circa 1000. Born in the middle of the ninth century to a family of landowners and warriors of the Auvergne region in central France, Gerard became the subject of a modest cult shortly after his death. According to a consensus established in the late 1800s, in the 930s Odo, second abbot of Cluny, wrote the *Vita proluxior*, a fairly lengthy account of Gerald's life. Exceptional for its representation of lay sainthood and Christian virility at a time when most hagiographers were strictly interested in celebrating the memory of saintly monks and clerics, Odo's text sought to reconcile the moral values of the lay elites with those of the cloister. As such, it stands at the heart of a discussion, initiated nearly three decades ago, over a suspected crisis of lay morality and masculinity in the ninth and early tenth centuries. Noblemen in particular are thought to have struggled with an immense pressure to meet the exacting standards that members of the clerical elite had set for fulfilling the obligations of a Christian life. Although Gerald's hagiographical tradition was subsequently amplified with a sermon for the saint's feast day, a handful of miracles, and a late-tenth-century *Vita brevior* or abbreviated *Life*, Gerald's cult lost its appeal for contemporary audiences over time, not least because it relied on an outdated vision of sainthood and lay spirituality.

In his monograph, Matthew Kuefler rejects these interpretations as irrelevant, on the basis that the dating of the hagiographical corpus devoted to St. Gerald is entirely wrong. Instead, he makes a case for attributing the *Vita brevior* to Odo, and all other texts to chronicler and notorious forger Ademar of Chabannes (d. 1034). This radical change in perspective yields an interpretation of Odo as a hagiographer that is entirely at odds with historians' traditional vision, and firmly situates the much-discussed "Odonian" view of St. Gerald in the entirely different context of the early eleventh century. The introduction clearly outlines Kuefler's goals with his study. First, by relying on a method of "textual archaeology" (by which is meant a systematic investigation of the chronology and interrelatedness of different textual layers in Gerard's hagiographical corpus), he aims to do away with the notion that hagiographers of the medieval period were exclusively focused on communicating only the most "transparently pious of intentions" (p. 6). And second, he wants to reconstruct how and why Gerard's status as a lay Christian hero drastically change over the course of the tenth to nineteenth centuries, and why he is now a largely forgotten saint.

Six chapters develop the argument. Chapter one presents the author's reasons for stating that the *Vita brevior* is not, as scholars have always assumed, a late-tenth-century abbreviated version of Odo's *Vita proluxior*, but that it is, in fact, Odo's original account of St. Gerald's life. As such, Kuefler claims in chapter two that Odo's narrative does not qualify as an enigmatic and, at times, contradictory discussion of how a layman could become a saint without abandoning the world, but a melancholic reflection on what Odo's

life might have been like had he not decided to enter the cloister. Chapter three attributes the *Vita proluxior* to Ademar and investigates how its contents relate to issues current in social thought and monastic ideology at the beginning of the eleventh century. Chapters four and five relate the emergence and success (a relative success, for the documentary basis is very thin) of Gerald's cult in the tenth to twelfth centuries to the abbey of Aurillac's institutional blossoming at that time. Likewise, the cult's later decline is pegged to the institution's decline as a prominent religious center in the following period. The final chapter considers the modern and contemporary state of St. Gerald's cult and historical memory.

Kuefler's book is commendable for the clarity of its prose and for the attractive evocation of the spatial and material aspects of St. Gerald's cult. The author is less successful in establishing a new chronology for the hagiographical material dedicated to St. Gerald, in situating his research in scholarly discussions past and current, or in explaining the consequences of his findings for the study of medieval society and culture (whether in the areas of lay piety, masculinity, monastic ideology, or hagiographic practice).

Kuefler is very outspoken on how he positions himself regarding scholarly traditions and current debates. Yet several of his claims to originality and innovative thinking are highly questionable. For instance, in the introduction, he indicates that his principal aim is to "restore to medieval hagiographers their proper role in the crafting of the historical memory of saint," as if scores of historians before him have not been doing exactly the same thing, for over half a century (p. 5). There is a real danger, should non-specialists read this book, that the impression would gain hold that medievalists so far have done little else but catalogue and reproduce the pious testimonies of medieval monastic beliefs. Just as potentially damaging is his suggestion that historians of the period think of hagiographic rewriting in terms of "forgery" (as he does for Ademar's interventions in Geraldian memory), as if the entire *réécriture* ("rewriting") debate that has transformed the study of such texts simply did not take place.^[1] What, one might ask, is there to "forge" about a hagiographic narrative?

Another flaw of this book lies in the way in which it represents and analyses the scholarly consensus on St. Gerald and his hagiographic memory. While it is a good idea not to weigh down a book with overlong historiographical debate, in this reviewer's opinion, scholars have a duty to tell their readers precisely where they stand in current discussions of their subject. The absence in this book of any serious coverage of the high-quality body of scholarship on Odo and the *Vita proluxior* by Isabelle Rosé, Dominique Iogna-Prat, Christopher Jones, Rachel Stone, and numerous others does not meet that requirement.^[2] Telling is the brief, frankly laconic mention of the work of his main opponents in the book's penultimate paragraph. One also wonders why Kuefler has opted largely to ignore recent discussions of Odo's views on ascetic virility and lay piety, and declines to explain in detail how his re-dating of the evidence impacts our understanding of tenth- and eleventh-century monastic views on Christian virtue, masculinity, and the role of the laity in Christian society. While monographs of this type do ask for brevity and clarity in making an argument, the space Kuefler uses for discussing post-1200 developments in St. Gerald's memory and cult would have been better spent on an in-depth discussion of what impact his radically new reading of these hagiographies has for the current state of these dynamic areas of medieval scholarship.

Finally, and most crucially for the success of this book as a piece of original scholarship, there are also issues with Kuefler's new dating of the *Vita proluxior*, *Vita brevior*, and the other texts in St. Gerald's hagiographic corpus. Throughout the introduction and the first few chapters, he rejects the *communis opinio* regarding the chronology of these materials on the basis that it rests upon flawed arguments and wishful thinking. But his own reasoning arguably suffers from exactly these problems, coupled with several poor methodological choices. First, there is the purely formal aspect of comparing the *Vitae brevior* and *proluxior*. While it is common practice in historical textual criticism to suspect that the longer version of a narrative is of a more recent date than the shorter one, in the case of hagiographic narratives from the high medieval period, this is a problematic notion. Prior to postulating that the *Vita brevior* is indeed the older of the two versions, Kuefler should have considered the possibility that the version traditionally attributed to Odo was subsequently rewritten to cater to the needs and interests of a non-local audience,

or perhaps a less diversified, strictly monastic one (a point Kuefler confusingly insists upon when attributing the *Vita brevior* to Odo). Or maybe a later rewriting was simply to serve a different, perhaps liturgical, purpose.

One also wonders why Kuefler has not done what seems to be the obvious thing when (re)attributing texts to well-known authors, which is to look at lexical and stylistic matches and differences with securely attributed works. Odo's output is very distinct in terms of vocabulary and style, and when this reviewer compared the *Vita proluxior* to Odo's other writings, he immediately spotted shared idiosyncrasies that Kuefler fails to address. For Ademar, we also have a corpus that lends itself to lexical, stylistic, and even stylometric analysis. Likewise, Kuefler does not make any in-depth comparison of the social and religious arguments in the *Lives* of St. Gerald with those made in other works by Odo and Ademar. This would have been fairly easy to do since the *œuvre* of the two authors has been the subject of intense scholarly interest. Both of these essential methodological interventions might have helped to make a stronger case for the re-dating and re-attribution of the narratives central to his study. This reviewer suspects, though, that they would have yielded arguments in favor of, not against, the current consensus.

Finally, Kuefler's attempt to match the views in the *Vita proluxior* and *Vita brevior* to, respectively, early tenth- and early-eleventh-century contexts is unconvincing. The implications of his new dating of the *Vita brevior* are unclear, except that the text was presumably strictly aimed at a monastic audience (something which previous authors have also argued, despite the different dating); that Odo was presumably "unimpressed" by Gerald (p. 67); and that the abbot presumably projected many of his own concerns onto Gerald. As for the message presumably contained in Ademar's *Vita proluxior*, the arguments about its ideological relationship with the Peace of God movement are tenuous at best, as are those about the text matching monastic ideals typical of the early eleventh century, as several of these are equally applicable to Odo's time. Once again, the question arises as to why there is so little reference to the life and further written output of the two main protagonists in Kuefler's story and to the considerable body of recent scholarship on both.

While the University of Pennsylvania Press is rightfully known for publishing top-quality monographs in the field of medieval studies, readers should approach this one with utmost caution.

NOTES

[1] The term "*réécriture*" is commonly used by medievalists to designate the study of how hagiographical narratives in particular were subject to ideological, stylistic, and linguistic processes of rewriting, often with significant implications for the contents and message of these texts.

[2] See, for example, Isabelle Rosé, *Construire une société seigneuriale: itinéraire et ecclésiologie de l'abbé Odon de Cluny, fin du IXe-milieu du Xe siècle* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols Publishers, 2008); Dominique Iogna-Prat, "D'une morale statutaire à une éthique absolue? La place idéale des laïcs à Cluny (v.930-v.1150)," in M. Lauwers, ed., *Guerriers et moines. Conversion et sainteté aristocratiques dans l'Occident médiéval (IXe - XIIe siècle)* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols Publishers, 2002), pp. 291-316; Christopher Andrew Jones, "Monastic identity and sodomitic danger in the 'Occupatio' by Odo of Cluny," *Speculum* 82/1(2007): 1-53; Rachel Stone, *Morality and Masculinity in the Carolingian Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Stuart Airlie, "The Anxiety of Sanctity: St. Gerald of Aurillac and his Maker," *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 43(1992): 372-395; Janet Nelson, "Monks, Secular Men and Masculinity, c. 900," in D.M. Hadley (ed.), *Masculinity in Medieval Europe* (London: Routledge, 1998), pp. 254-272; and Andrew Romig, "The Common Bond of Aristocratic Masculinity: Monks, Secular Men and St. Gerald of Aurillac," in D. Thibodeaux (ed.), *Negotiating Clerical Identities: Priests, Monks and Masculinity in the Middle Ages* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. 39-56.

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