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Linda Patterson, *Culture and Society in Medieval Occitania*. Farnham and Burlington: Ashgate Variorum, 2011. xi +297pp. Tables, graphs, plates, notes, and index. \$165.00 U.S. (cl). ISBN 978-1-4094-2398-0.

Review by Claire Taylor, University of Nottingham.

This latest publication in the Variorum reprints series contains the work of an author who has made a highly significant contribution to our understanding of both the content and social context of southern French vernacular literature. The collection of twenty articles, the earliest published in 1982 and the most recent in 2009, in English and French, brings together her best historical articles thus far. The book consists of six sub-sections: "Identity", "Women: Marriage, Property, Love and Sin", "Knights and 'Chivalry': Literary Evidence", "Court Culture", "Medicine", and "Troubadours and the Crusades."

The first section contains just one article, but its significance warrants this. 'Was there an Occitan identity in the Middle Ages?' (2005) demonstrates that an impression of a discreet southern French cultural identity that defined itself against that of northern France is a historiographical construction (and, it could be suggested, a modern cultural construct also). Instead, identity in the south was far more locally focussed, relating to a town or a county, for example, or was religious (although Paterson could expand more on whether this refers to religious orders, houses or cults, for example, or whether it means 'orthodox' as opposed to 'heretical' identity, given the large numbers of Cathar and Waldensians in the south). This is the case for the twelfth century at least. However, in the aftermath of the Albigensian Crusade (1209-1229) and the dominance of new, northern lords, a regional cultural identity did indeed emerge; a reaction to it, producing "a failed political identity but a long-term cultural identity" (p. 11). Although her case relies almost exclusively on literary evidence and the examples range widely in terms of chronology, this is an important conclusion and provides an essential backdrop to the case she had made in older articles concerning the conventional juxtaposition of 'southern' and 'northern' cultural forms and one which, therefore, permeates the volume.

Articles two to five, for example, on women, undermine an accepted truism about female power in Occitan society. In "Women, property and the rise of Courtly Love" (2003), Paterson takes issue in particular with the work of Howard Bloch, who has argued like Michelet before him that regional factors such as law codes allowed women to inherit property freely, meaning that they could wield a large amount of social and economic power that was not the case in the north. This, Bloch's case runs, produced the misogyny prevalent in Courtly Love; it was a reaction to female independence, in particular their ability to choose marriage partners. Paterson challenges the evidence for female control over land and property, drawing on the work of Claudie Duhamel-Amado on matrimony before 1130 and on Theodore Evergates' work on Champagne, which indicates that the south was not particularly distinctive in terms of female inheritance and that in the north in the same century women were also holding land independently. Paterson also suggests that our concept of female-controlled allods only relates to the upper strata of society in any case. Furthermore, she disputes that southern women benefitted from the fact that holding land of other people did not involve military service. Here she seems to conflate 'fiefs' and allods somewhat; an allod is not the same as a fief minus military service. Nonetheless, she is convincing in her use of Susan Reynolds' work, which indicates that fief-holding in general did not involve military service to the extent that we imagine it did in terms of the upper nobility in the north either. Paterson is more convinced by Bloch's assertion that women actively disposed of land, enacting as well as assenting to charters. However,

when it comes down to a central case-study exemplifying Bloch's case—that William IX of Aquitaine's activity in the courtly sphere was a reaction to the founding of Fontevrault and the authority it gave women over men—she concludes quite the opposite; women were in fact losing rather than gaining authority in the twelfth century, Robert of Arbrissel was no liberator of women, and William IX was not hostile to female patronage of the Church. Ultimately “the hypothesis that an increase in women's power to control and dispose of property gave rise to Courtly Love is unconvincing” (p. 52).

Articles six to nine address the concept of chivalry, also comparing the south and the north very often to establish their distinctiveness, for example in six, “The concept of knighthood in twelfth-century Occitan lyric” (1984) and seven “La Chanson de la Croisade albigeoise: mythes chevaleresques et réalités militaires” (1989). She finds that as in the north, as Jean Flori argued, before c.1180 knighthood was essentially a profession, not a system of values in the sense that ‘chivalry’ was. She explores the theme by establishing what southern sources mean by words such as ‘cavalaria’ and ‘cavallier’. In this case, she indeed finds contrast between north and south, for example in that ‘cavallier’ is used to denote an extremely wide social group, that knights were not necessarily mounted, and that mercenaries on stipends very much typified southern military culture. Northerners were appalled at the extent of this, for example that mercenary Gascon *dardassiers* had a higher status than infantry archers in Henry II's southern army.

One problem here is that her evidence is entirely literary, and as such it can surely only give us part of the picture. Reading Paterson alongside the work of Conor Kostick on the social make-up of the army of the First Crusade would be instructive. But her conclusion that courtly culture, as opposed to chivalry, was in any case a key component of southern warrior identity and that there is no discernable shift from the mounted warrior's ‘professional’ ethos to a ‘chivalric’ seems sound; lyrics had always portrayed the knight as a courtier more than a warrior. Article seven goes on to test this hypothesis against one of the most important Occitan sources, the thirteenth-century ‘Song’ of the Albigensian Crusade. She finds within it neither the terminology nor trappings of ‘chivalry’, for example the tournament or dubbing of men as a way of transforming them into knights. Instead, the concept of *paratge* is dominant. She could perhaps do more to identify exactly what the difference between *paratge* and chivalry actually was, however.

Article eight, “The Occitan squire in the twelfth and thirteenth century” (1986), continues the contrast between north and south in finding that the closest southern equivalent of the ‘squire’, the *escudier* or *donzel*, were professionals in their own right, not trainee knights and that their work routinely involved non-military tasks, such as carving and serving meat at table, with varying degrees of status associated with them. They did not progress towards knighthood necessarily, and if they did, no associated ceremony noted this. Some of the evidence for this comes from the troubadour Raimon d'Anjou, and he is the focus of “A propos de la datation de Raimon d'Anjou” (1987). He was thought to have lived from c.1120 to 1200, but Paterson uses literary and historical evidence to arrive at the dates c.1150-1230. As such he is slightly later than troubadours who were previously thought to have been more contemporary, such as Jaufre Rudel, Marcabru, Bernart de Ventadour and Bertran de Born.

The progression from discussion of knights and chivalry to the ‘Court Culture’ section is smooth, because similar concepts to those in the first two sections are addressed, for example in article ten “Tournaments and knightly sports in twelfth- and thirteenth-century Occitania” (1986). Here Patterson examines what the use of the word *tournei* in the south can contribute to our wider understanding of tournaments. She distinguishes the tournament firstly from other forms of military games, such as the *quintain* or jousting, neither of which were in any way typical of the south. The tournament, rather, was a battle, if a safe one. Several troubadours seem to have been familiar with tournaments. However, this was possibly in the context of the Plantagenet sphere in the cases of Bertran de Born and Arnaud-Gilhem de Marsan, or the third crusade, in the case of Giraut de Bornelh. However, she notes that the word *tournei* is ambiguous and sometimes in fact means ‘battle’ and that it is really in the latter sense that troubadours use the term. In short, the tournament too was a northern phenomenon.

Article eleven, "Great court festivals in the South of France and Catalonia in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries" (1982), asks two very important questions: "What reality, if any, lies behind the nostalgia of generations of troubadours, almost from their earliest days, lamenting the decline of courtly splendour and largess? When, if ever, did life conform to their dreams?" (p. 213). To answer these, she looks to non troubadour evidence. She does note differences between north and south, but also between the Midi and Catalonia. The 1170s and 1180s were the "golden age of court festivals" (p. 215) in Europe more widely. She gives a fascinating account of some of these and demonstrates that they were religious as well as secular affairs, even involving crusaders taking the cross after Jerusalem fell as a result of the battle of Hattin in 1187. It was this that troubadours expressed nostalgia for and regretted the loss of in the aftermath of the Albigensian Crusade. But she notes that such affairs were very costly and few and far between in the south, and as such the troubadours' reminiscences are more of a literary device, their nostalgia being misplaced.

The section on troubadours and the crusades focuses to a large degree on the Occitan *Canso d'Antiocha*, composed by Gregory Bechada according to Geoffrey of Vigeois, in the vernacular (of the Limousin or Occitania) before 1137, possibly as early as 1106 when Bohemond of Antioch toured Europe marshalling support for the crusader state. It was possibly set to music and was the model for later chanson such as that of the Albigensian Crusade. It comes down to us in a fragmentary fashion through a thirteenth-century Occitan manuscript. Article eight, "Occitan literature and the Holy Land" (2005), contradicts Elizabeth Sibbery's assertion that crusades feature only marginally in troubadour writings. Paterson shows that between one-sixth and one-seventh of troubadours wrote about the crusades at some point, from the time of the Second Crusade to the fourteenth century (although it has to be said that this doesn't necessarily undermine Sibbery's impression). She demonstrates that these troubadours had a pretty good understanding of the Holy Land, including its geography, and that not only Bechada was especially interested in Antioch, specifically its capture in 1198. Indeed, the capture "sparked the creation of vernacular epic historiography" (p. 96). This is the focus of the *Canso d'Antiocha*. Article nine, 'Legal agreements in the Occitan *Canso d'Antiocha*', discusses the portrayal of the capture of Antioch by the First Crusade in a very specific context, that of a *covenensa* between the Franks and the leader of the 'pagan' Seljuks, Kherboga. This is an absolutely fascinating article, translating into English large sections of the very detailed agreement that allowed for an unusual kind of duel, involving thirty knights from each army, to determine possession of the city, as opposed to this being the outcome of a costly battle. The initiative was Kherboga's, and the terms extraordinarily detailed, giving us a valuable insight into legal concepts that would have been familiar to an Occitan audience and embodied in specific terminology, if not necessarily into the historical events themselves.

There are a couple of possible weaknesses with Patterson's articles. She rather conflates Aquitaine with Occitania as part of the 'south', whereas Poitevin and Gascon culture were in many ways distinct from each other and from the Midi and Catalonia. Although this supports her 2005 conclusions, it muddies the waters rather where she does draw contrasts between north and south. It could also be said that sometimes the sources are left to speak for themselves, and the opportunity for exploring both context and depth are not fully exploited. But the extensive translated Occitan source extracts make the south accessible to the non-Occitan reader, and her revisions of historiographical suppositions should be taken up by historians and literature scholars alike.

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