Review by John Sabapathy, University College, London.

This is a learned, provocative, and theoretically very informed study of three thirteenth-century authors, principally Vincent of Beauvais and his *Speculum maius*, Ramon Llull and his *Libre de meravelles*, *Arbor scientiae* and *Arbre de filosofia d'amor*, and Jean de Meun's extension and re-framing of the *Roman de la Rose*. Franklin-Brown's "scholastic age" is a lively one at present with scholars as interested in instititions and scholastic method as they are in particular questions of intellectual substance. Her study is a stimulating addition to this literature. As her selection of texts implies, Franklin-Brown wishes to knock down some of the well-tended fences which might separate more "literary" texts and approaches from more "scholastic" ones, and her disciplinary trespassing is welcome. Likwise, it indicates her ambition to incorporate texts from multiple linguistic traditions into her thesis, and her integrated reading of them is again to be welcomed, as is her attention to both textual analysis and the success and purpose of palaoegraphical *mise en page* (especially interesting on Ramon Llull and the limitations of his tree figures). The scholarly skills brought to bear are very impressive. Franklin-Brown offers an excellent introduction to the literature and historiography on medieval encylopedias, an accessible survey of the central analytical terms she uses (*figura*, *glossa*, *compilatio*, *ordo*), and detailed readings of her chosen texts/authors in service of her thesis.

What then is the thesis? She argues that medieval reading practices did not always project and internalize epistemic unity and uniformity, as earlier readings have sometimes supposed. To the contrary, medieval, specifically thirteenth century encyclopedias create difficulties for such presumptions (pp. 84-92). They were "uniquely suited to the heterogeneity of thirteenth-century thought" (p. 72) and reflected it. The problems of coherence that thirteenth-century encyclopedists posed for themselves were consequently not so much resolved as incorporated into their evocation and call for self-conscious readers who would actively use encyclopedic reading to construct a world of knowledge, well aware of its own problematic epistemological status. Like our use of Wikipedia (allusions to which open and close the study), medieval readers of encyclopedias were accustomed to the problem of attempting to produce unity out of a reading of disparate material. Those readings encouraged reflection on the problem of how far, and in what ways, the excerpted world was a figure of the real world. These encyclopedic mirrors reflected the brokenness of knowledge back at the reader (pp. 304-310). Franklin-Brown's thesis raises interesting issues that will provide those working in the field with fruitful lines of enquiry.

The first and most important issue is a consequence of Franklin-Brown's selection of authors and texts. It is, perfectly reasonably, a study of particular authors, not a general survey (p. 27). The selection has particular effects, however, and they relate to her argument. In important ways the book is a study of failure. Vincent of Beauvais' *Speculum maius* proved an insuperable, unfinished labour, as he tried to integrate different organisational strategies. It was seldom transmitted whole, significantly reducing its efficacy given Vincent's stress on a sequential, eschatologically complete reading (see pp. 98-100, 126-

128). Ramon Llull's failure in the *Arbor scientiae* was of a different sort, as he tried to compress knowledge into his multivalent trees. Llull's problem was reconciling his content with his form in order to be to able to see (figuratively) the forest for the trees (pp. 170-175). It was also a failure in terms of popularity. The same failure was not Jean de Meun's in continuing the *Roman de la Rose*. It is not, however, an encyclopedia at all, but a critique of such modes of learning, not limited to the purely encyclopedic.[1] (In passing, it is interesting that Foucault's ghost, so instructively summoned and exorcised elsewhere, is absent in framing Jean's critique of learned knowledge where a knowledge/power typology might have been interesting, e.g., at pp. 194-200.) None of these texts are "straightforward" encyclopedias. Rather, all of them offer extremes of different sorts, as Franklin-Brown acknowledges (pp. 96, 132, 184-185).

An effect of this selection is to stress dissonance more than might be the case in a study which focused on more "successful" or less extreme sources (e.g., p. 63). Franklin-Brown has chosen inherently interesting texts, but the more generalised argument for encyclopedic dissonance would be interesting to explore in other encyclopedias, such as James le Palmer's *Omne bonum*, to see how it operates there. A defense of the selection would reason that to look at such extreme cases is to look at an encyclopedic paradigm at its points of greatest stress. Just so. A response in turn might be that, granted this, it risks exaggerating the dissonance proposed at the heart of the genre (whether playful or angst-ridden). A characterization which sharply reified that encyclopedic "genre" as a way of reading bound up with such immanent dissonance would be striking given that the texts selected are extreme and the category potentially so open-ended. Franklin-Brown is naturally well-aware that characterizing these texts initially *qua* encyclopedias is anachronistic, a rubric she pragmatically justifies *faute de mieux* (pp. 8-11).

Smudging the line between encyclopedias and related texts might also make the formers' claims to dissonance less marked. Franklin-Brown draws quite a sharp line (p. 8) between encyclopedias and *summae*, but they, *quaestiones* and *quodlibeta* may offer examples of "dissonance" more than she allows. Notwithstanding the resolution they promise, their epistemological procedure is premised on the articulation of contrary views and a claim to disentangle different, incoherent and so inapplicable, levels of analysis. Yet, not infrequently, one can finish a *quaestio* thinking the solution has not had quite the best of the argument, and wondering whether an audience offered consent or dissent on the apparent synthesis. Dissonance may have been a more common currency than is perhaps implied here. Legal encyclopedias would push this line of enquiry further in different, interesting ways, given the pragmatic stress on completeness and accuracy in some of them. (Is "Gratian" an encyclopedia or a *summa*? Whichever, it is a "concordance of discordant canons," an interesting, and contemporary, rubric to think with in this context.)

Related to the dissonance Franklin-Brown proposes in encylopedic texts is the question of how far failure was intended, indeed embraced, by encyclopedic authors. As she asks—but not I think answers— what were the stakes (p. 308)? One need not wholly subscribe to Sir Richard Southern's account of scholastic humanism's will-to-order to ask whether thirteenth century encyclopedists would have been quite so sanguine in embracing the dissonance of synthesized knowledge as they do here.[2] Equally, one need not presume that all Dominicans are humourless heretic hunters to wonder how far Vincent of Beauvais might have relished comparisons with Roland Barthes. The question is an important one linked as it is to the large horizon of how one should seek to characterize the goals and character of scholastic enterprise(s) and what sort of plasticity they had. Franklin-Brown's study will provide an important reference point in exploring how far one should go in qualifying the sometimes humourless or calcified images of her "scholastic age." Particular interests of Franklin-Brown may be taken forward productively by counterpoint with other recent work. Her interest in *historia*, *enarratio* and rhetoric could be usefully juxtaposed with that of Matthew Kempshall.[3] So too with Guy Geltner's work on anti-fraternalism or Ian Wei's Parisian studies, both of which stress in different ways the importance of institutional contexts for understanding the content of intellectual production. The latter's discussion of critics of scholastic learning (including Jean de Meun) would be of especial interest.[4] And from a

methodological perspective, those interested in the insights and problems resulting from transposing strategies and concerns from non-medieval contexts to medieval texts could contrast Franklin-Brown's primarily post-structuralist approach with Alain Boureau's increasingly psychoanalytical approach to scholasticism.[5]

There are particular questions one would like to explore further. The unresolved dissonance in Vincent of Beauvais's inconsistent presentation of *rana* (frog) due to his use of the compatible but different accounts of Pliny and Isidore seems more a consequence of poor excerpting than because the underlying epistemological discourses are different, notwithstanding Franklin-Brown's sophisticated argument (*pace* pp. 223-232, esp. 224-225). How far, given their idiosyncrasies, can the standpoints of one text be read over to another? Can the same attitude to mirrors and reflection be read across from the *Speculum maius* to the *Roman de la Rose* (p. 287)? Should we really connect the character Félix with the *fênix* (phoenix) in Llull's *Libre de meravelles*, and then that phoenix too with Jean de Meun's (p. 300)?

A final (if appropriately) puzzling question is provided by Franklin-Brown's endnotes, or rather the fact that they are endnotes and not footnotes. In the laudable tradition of Edward Gibbon and Anthony Grafton, they are anything but highly abbreviated archival citations. Some are mini-gobbets on important scholarly debates, others are clear sketches of important contiguous topics, not at all only relevant to the most dedicated readers. They are rich, learned, extremely instructive, and sometimes very lengthy. So one can see a publisher's pragmatic reasons for displacing them to the back of the book. But in what is otherwise an elegantly produced volume, this is a great irritation, not least because endnoted gloss quite often contains details important for evaluating Franklin-Brown's arguments. Inevitably the "Beauvaisian" reader finds himself dropping the book as all his fingers find themselves otherwise occupied with keeping multiple pages in hand. This is ironic for a book whose subject is the way in which medieval readers of encyclopedic texts had to negotiate their way actively through different problematic layers of knowledge, thus becoming more reflective readers—so ironic indeed that I wondered whether it was a sly joke on the part of the author.

NOTES

[1] The latter point is stressed by Ian P. Wei, *Intellectual Culture in Medieval Paris: Theologians and the University, c. 1100-1330* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 357-374.

[2] Southern never finished his synthesis which in many ways hinged on the disunity and decline he saw in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, but its general outlines may be seen in R. W. Southern, "The Changing Role of Universities in Medieval Europe," *Historical Research*, 60 (1987): 133-46, esp. 137-39 and the first two volumes of the synthesis: R. W. Southern, *Scholastic Humanism and the Unification of Europe, Volume I. Foundations* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995) e.g., pp. 4-13; *Scholastic Humanism and the Unification of Europe, Volume 2, The Heroic Age* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), e.g., p. 54.

[3] Matthew Kempshall, *Rhetoric and the Writing of History, 400-1500* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011).

[4] G. Geltner, *The Making of Medieval Antifraternalism: Polemic, Violence, Deviance, and Remembrance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Wei, *Intellectual Culture in Medieval Paris*, pp. 356-414.

[5] Perhaps best summarized in Alain Boureau, *En somme: pour un usage analytique de la scolastique médiévale* (Lagrasse: Verdier, 2011).

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