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Bruno Lemesle, *Procès en récit: Formes et perception de procès avant l'an mil (IX^e-X^e siècles)*. Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2021. 294 pp. Bibliography and index. €69.00 (hb). ISBN 9782406109846; €31.00 (pb). ISBN 9782406109839.

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In this book, Bruno Lemesle performs an intensive source analysis of two accounts of legal proceedings in the ninth- and tenth-century West Frankish kingdom. The first, the affair of Bishop Hincmar of Laon, took place over the course of the late 860s and early 870s and resulted in his deposition and blinding. The second, the affair of Archbishop Arnulf of Rheims, took place in the early 990s and also resulted in his deposition, although in this case the outcome was heavily contested and Arnulf resumed his see some years later. Both these events left what are, especially by the standards of the period, bulging dossiers of sources, composed largely by each man's main opponent: Hincmar's uncle, Archbishop Hincmar of Rheims, in the first case, and Arnulf's rival for the see of Rheims, Gerbert of Aurillac, in the latter. Lemesle does, it must be noted, turn to other legal proceedings from this time for the sake of synchronic comparison; yet it is these two dossiers to which Lemesle turns his analytical eye that provide the main thread of coherence stringing this book together.

In his introduction, Lemesle argues that both Hincmar's and Arnulf's cases display marked similarities in the nature of the actors, the stakes, the uses of authoritative texts, and the accusations made against each bishop. Over the course of the following nine chapters, he goes on to demonstrate this, largely through an exhaustive close reading of his source base. His combined legal and rhetorical analysis does, largely, prove his points. Lemesle generally approaches the sources with due caution, given that virtually all of them were written as *parti pris* documents by one side of the case. The word "slanted" does not convey the half of it. For instance, the acts of the 991 Council of Saint-Basle, where Arnulf was deposed, were written some years later by Gerbert of Aurillac in order to defend both himself and the proceedings from an angry papacy, and, consequently, they often fail to line up with exactly contemporary sources. Given his rhetorical focus, Lemesle is able to handle these issues adroitly for the most part. In his account of the Synod of Douzy which condemned Hincmar of Laon in 871, he is able to focus on how the various documents associated with the trial, including the account of the synod itself, were written to justify and legitimise the outcome. However, on some occasions, notably during discussions of trial procedure, the book can leap from discussing the way the texts describing such-and-such a process present it to the process itself. To go back to Saint-Basle, during Lemesle's discussion of the way that Arnulf's defenders tried to use authoritative texts to defend him but eventually capitulated and apologised for wasting the synod's time, it is not always clear

how far these events were being analysed as though they actually happened and how far they were being analysed as rhetorical constructs. This is particularly relevant since, in this case, one of the defenders was Abbot Abbo of Fleury, a confident, learned, and outspoken man whom I for one cannot imagine uttering the capitulation Gerbert puts into his mouth under any circumstances. To be clear, however, this is only an issue occasionally. Most of the time, Lemesle's analysis is rooted in very solid source criticism.

The fruits of this can be very interesting indeed. In particular, Lemesle argues that a major strand of the accusations against the bishops on trial consisted of attacks on their bodies, movements, and physical persons. His discussion of the way episcopal bodies were presented is fascinating. To take one example, during a discussion of the *Opusculum* of Hincmar of Rheims attacking Hincmar of Laon, Lemesle notes that Hincmar takes care to present his nephew as disordered in body, twitchy and unable to control himself. These descriptions are not simple *ad hominem* attacks but taken from textual authorities such as Gregory the Great and Gregory of Nazianzus. This builds into a picture of Hincmar of Laon as a man totally unsuitable to hold episcopal office: his uncontrolled behaviour is but the outward reflection of his internal disorder, specifically his inability not just to control his body but control his passions and tendencies to vice. It is a masterful reading of the texts, one which will be particularly interesting to scholars of Carolingian ideas about the body.

Such an intense focus on a small number of texts could lead to the study being very narrow, and Lemesle attempts to avoid this danger through both synchronic and diachronic comparisons. In the first case, chapter four discusses three other Carolingian bishops who were put on trial (Rothad of Soissons, Wulfad of Bourges, and Ebbo of Rheims), whilst chapter eight discusses the 993 Council of Saint-Denis and the texts written about it by the circle of Abbo of Fleury. The first of these is more successful at widening the book's scope than the latter. The three bishops chosen are apt selections, and the comparison is worthwhile, even if confining the comparison to a single chapter rather siloes these cases off from that of Hincmar of Laon. The chapter about Abbo, albeit perfectly interesting by itself, reads by contrast as rather a digression. The idea here is that Abbo's *Apologeticus*, a treaty written for the kings Hugh Capet and Robert the Pious after the disastrous riot which shut down the Council of Saint-Denis to exculpate himself from wrongdoing, has themes which reach back to some aspects of the discussion of the Council of Saint-Basle (such as in the analysis of Abbo's conception of *lèse-majesté*). However, given that (as Lemesle notes) there was never actually a trial, one wonders whether the stakes at play were all that closely comparable.

The other means through which Lemesle works to broaden his study is through diachronic comparison. As the author of a book on church government in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, he is well placed to do this. [1] The portions of the book where he makes these comparisons contain some of its most significant contributions to wider scholarship. Two particular stand-outs are his discussion of Gerbert of Aurillac's role in developing conceptions of treason and *lèse-majesté* between late antique authors and its appearance in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries and the final chapter on the reception of Hincmar of Rheims. In the latter case, several passages from his *Opusculum* found their way into the work of scholars from Ivo of Chartres to Bernard of Hildesheim, the twelfth-century canon law commentaries of Huguccio, and finally the fifteenth-century writings of Nicholas of Cusa. Lemesle shows that Hincmar's writings on the use of excommunication influenced posterity for centuries. It is a shame that such

diachronic comparison is not carried out more systematically throughout the book, as the harvest Lemesle reaps when he does is abundant.

However, this is not to disparage the book. If one comes away from *Procès en récit* wishing that it went further outside of its relatively narrow lane more often, this is only because the results are particularly interesting. The bulk of the work remains a solid deep dive into a coherent and judiciously chosen set of sources. Lemesle's analysis of their authors' rhetorical and legal strategies is thorough and well done; anyone who works on the trials of Hincmar of Laon or Arnulf of Rheims will need to take this book into account. Given the richness of the documentation surrounding both affairs and their consequent importance to wider historiographies, Lemesle's work is important for scholars who work on law, ritual, learning, or church politics in the ninth or tenth centuries.

NOTE

[1] Bruno Lemesle, *Le gouvernement des évêques: La charge pastorale au milieu du Moyen Âge* (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2015).

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