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Review of *Das Paenitentiale Vallicellianum I: Ein oberitalienischer Zweig der frühmittelalterlichen kontinentalen Bussbücher. Überlieferung, Verbreitung und Quellen* by Günter Hägele

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Das Paenitentiale Vallicellianum I: Ein oberitalienischer Zweig der frühmittelalterlichen kontinentalen Bussbücher. Überlieferung, Verbreitung und Quellen by Günter Hägele

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line translations, succinct notes, a good and informative introduction, and a sizable bibliography.

The editorial principles are clear and judicious, considering the purpose of the edition: what is reproduced here is a selection of texts as they appear in the famous manuscript published in photocopy by Henri Omont in 1932 (reprint, Slatkine, 1973), with selected variants indicated in the notes. This late-thirteenth-century manuscript has the advantage of excellent legibility and correct texts, and though it is well known that its clarity has been achieved by considerable corrective editing by the medieval scribe, the advantage remains: it represents a good and authentic text tradition from the times when the fabliau was still alive and well.

The specialist can compare the texts given here with the texts given in N. van den Boogart and W. Noomen, *Nouveau recueil complet des fabliaux* of which two volumes have been published (Assen, Netherlands, 1983 and 1984): this edition also follows B.N. f. fr. 837, but with elaborate editions of all variant texts alongside and painstaking critical notes.

The selection of texts offered by the Eichmann and DuVal edition compares favorably with all earlier partial editions, most of which have been marked by considerations of decency that have favored certain nonobjectionable, but uninteresting, texts (*Estula*) to the detriment of some of the most brilliant specimens of fabliau storytelling. Here one can read such remarkable pieces as *Le bouchier d'Abeville*, *Le pescheor de Pont seur Saine*, *Aloul*, and *La saineresse*. Personally, I would not have regretted *Jouplet* and *La crote*, had they been left out, for I do not appreciate scatological humor; yet I am glad to see them brought to the fore, since it is an undeniable historical fact that such tales were part and parcel of the thirteenth-century fabliau corpus.

In a few cases the manuscript gives an obviously corrupted text, as in its confused rendering of the dice game in *Saint Pierre et le jongleur*; this defect is corrected in the notes, where the clarifications given by R. C. Johnston and D. D. R. Owen in their fabliau edition (Basil Blackwell, 1957), on the basis of the variant manuscript, are summarized.

The translations are good and exact, with occasional exceptions: the translation of *Aloul* contains numerous questionable or erroneous renderings, but it is atypical in this respect within the two volumes. I will, however, express one regret: as a matter of principle the translation parts from the capricious tense system of the Old French and adheres to the norms in modern English (p. xxxii). That is commendable, but the principle should not have been extended to passages in which the narrator comments, to the audience, in present tense, on the situation he is telling, as is done, for example, in *Aloul* vv. 174–75 (“Now the lady was in trouble, / If she couldn’t keep a careful watch”; cp. vv. 225, 332, 486, 537, 984).

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GÜNTER HÄGELE, *Das Paenitentiale Vallicellianum I: Ein oberitalienischer Zweig der frühmittelalterlichen kontinentalen Bussbücher. Überlieferung, Verbreitung und Quellen.* (Quellen und Forschungen zum Recht im Mittelalter, 3.) Sigmaringen: Jan Thorbecke, 1984. Pp. 107. DM 32.

SCHOLARS are turning to penitentials with increasing frequency as valuable records of social history, medieval “popular morality” if you will. Evaluating them is tricky and

hotly debated. Yet much work remains before reliable texts of many of the most important penitentials can be established. Hägele's study, by examination of all known manuscripts of Paenitentiale Vallicellianum I and related texts, prepares the way for a critical edition of the work, defines its place among affiliated texts, and redates it.

Hägele's study consists of an introduction (pp. 13–19), which summarizes previous scholarship, and nine sections. The most important are thorough descriptions of the manuscript witnesses of Vallicellianum I, Merseburgense a, and related liturgical manuscripts (pp. 21–38); grouping of the manuscripts of the Vallicellianum I into three families (pp. 39–43) and a comparison of the order of the canons in all eight Vallicellianum manuscripts with that in the Merseburg manuscripts (pp. 43–48); a report on the deficiencies of the published texts (pp. 49–50) — none of the four editions of the penitential is based on more than one manuscript; an account of the distribution of the manuscripts of both penitentials (pp. 51–53); a study of the sources of the Vallicellianum (pp. 59–63) — especially Merseburgense a, of which the first 142 of 169 prescriptions are taken almost word-for-word into the Vallicellianum — and of Merseburgense a itself (pp. 63–73), with notes on the inscriptions in the Vallicellianum (pp. 76–81) and on three manuscripts which contain the penitential among liturgical texts (pp. 82–84); discussion of the date and provenance of Vallicellianum I (pp. 88–98); and a one-page summary (p. 99). A list of manuscripts discussed and an index conclude the volume (pp. 100–107).

Hägele argues that the Paenitentiale Vallicellianum I was compiled at the end of the ninth or during the first half of the tenth century, moving the date a century from the “viii^{ex}/ixⁱⁿ” previously maintained by scholars. The manuscripts themselves support this later date, as they (and their distribution) do a north Italian origin of the collection.

Hägele shows how “the compiler of Vallicellianum I took the last step from a historical to a systematic ordering” when reworking the Merseburg penitential (p. 61). “In this version, the penitential, now naturally much better suited to practical use, enjoyed a considerably wider distribution than the unsystematic Merseburg penitential” (pp. 61–62). Hägele never forgets that each of the manuscripts represents a book that was used. The compiler of Vallicellianum I was indeed remarkable: he tried to provide the source for each of the prescriptions, although none of the manuscripts of his original gives such information (p. 76).

Hägele's book embodies that ideal of precision and correctness German colleagues describe with the Greek word *Akribie*. Thoroughness of citation sometimes appears to be carried to needless extremes: need complete bibliographical information to Lowe-Brown appear on both page 27 and page 29, to Lowe's “A New List . . .” on page 28 (n. 38) and on page 29, and to the same work of Fuhrmann twice on page 37 (in the text and in n. 74)? The book is carefully proofread (but p. 26, n. 31: MLWB I should be MLWB II). A quibble: how much evidence, even supporting evidence, can addition or omission of initial *h* provide, when omission supports southern French or northern Italian provenance (p. 22), frequent addition and (occasional?) omission supports probable Roman origin (p. 33), and frequent addition points to northern Italian provenance (p. 36)?

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