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R. GRAEME DUNPHY: *History as Literature. German World Chronicles of the Thirteenth Century in Verse* (= Medieval German Texts in Bilingual Editions 3). Kalamazoo: Western Michigan University Medieval Institute Publications 2003. 186pp. ISBN 1-58044-042-8. \$11.

This volume has been published under the auspices of the Consortium for the Teaching of the Middle Ages (TEAMS) of the Medieval Institute in Kalamazoo, and designed for use in medieval studies in general as well as just within German studies. Indeed, with the rapidly increasing attrition of medieval German studies in the Anglo-Saxon world and in the United Kingdom in particular, the wider audience of medievalists at large seems to be increasingly important, and indeed to be the appropriate target for works like this. To maintain the tradition of a bilingual edition, however, is especially praiseworthy for this series. Within this context, the book offers a broad selection of extracts from three very large chronicles, one of them not even readily accessible in German to the specialist, all with facing-page translations. Two functions are fulfilled: to give the reader an idea of what the German rhymed chronicle was like, and to demonstrate the literary interests and approaches of the three chronicles.

Medieval chronicles vary enormously, of course, and it is strictly speaking a generic over-simplification to use the term at all. Graeme Dunphy points out in his admirably succinct introduction the essential differences between the three texts used here. Those chosen are first the *Weltchronik* of Rudolf von Ems (known in Ehrismann's edition) and third the *Weltchronik* of Jans Enikel (accessible in Strauch's MGH edition, and a work on which Dunphy has published extensively, arguing most recently that the author should more properly be referred to as Jans der Enkel). The middle text here is the otherwise virtually unavailable *Christherre-Chronik*, for which the edition was able to draw upon the as yet unpublished text in preparation by Kurt Gärtner, Ralf Plate and others. All three works used here are biblically based chronicles (there are other kinds, such as the exclusively national or even the city chronicle), and Rudolf's work was even referred to as a *Reim-Bibel* by early critics.ⁱ Yet as Dunphy emphasises, it is courtly in tone, where the *Christherre-Chronik* is monastic in its interests. Jans Enikel's chronicle also covers biblical material, of course, but it is secular, too, and this aspect is (rightly) represented by the bulk of the extracts from that work. Dunphy's description of the *incidentia* is useful in the introduction, although one might have welcomed a little more on the basic sources used by medieval chroniclers.

As indicated, it is very difficult indeed to pin down the medieval chronicle in generic terms, and the 'rhymed Bible' designation is in fact still used for otherwise similar works in other languages, such as the French works by Evrat, Macé de la Charité, Jean Malkaraume and others, and the massive influence on chronicles in many languages of Peter Comestor's *Historia Scholastica* cannot be overemphasised.ⁱⁱ It is of interest (and the book makes this possible) to compare these German works with chronicles in other languages. The prose/verse distinction discussed by Dunphy is in

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fact not necessarily very significant, although we may well be most inclined to compare these texts with verse chronicles in other languages. One thinks, beside the French works mentioned, especially of the English *Cursor Mundi*, but also of the less than impressive versifying of Andrew of Wyntoun. Latin chronicles (even some mentioned in Dunphy's time-chart in his introduction) may also be in verse or in a mixture of verse and prose, and the essentially organic nature of the chronicle (also indicated in Dunphy's introduction in the way some of these are combined or cited) is exemplified, too, by works like the magnificently eccentric and much-revised Irish *Lebor Gabála Éirenn* (which in its many recensions also mixes both prose and verse, and biblical and secular material). And what does the student of the medieval chronicle do with something like the Scots *Sex Werkdays and Agis*, a remarkable little prose text of the late fifteenth century based both upon the Hexaemeron and at the same time the *sex aetates*, and including secular material, Greek gods and some geography.ⁱⁱⁱ

The least well-known of the three texts offered here is indeed the *Christherre-Chronik*, which was long thought of as a simple expansion of Rudolf. Rudolf and the *Christherre*-chronicler both use the Comestor, as do so many biblical chroniclers, but even Dunphy's designations of Rudolf's work as *Weltgeschichtsdichtung* and the other chronicle as *Bibeldichtung* (the term is used also in quite different contexts) may not say enough. The *Christherrechronik* adds apocryphal material such as the Adam-legends to the canonical narrative, for example, as indeed does Heinrich von München's even larger chronicle, which is discussed in the introduction and which (had space permitted) could well also have been excerpted here.^{iv} Dunphy points out, finally, the integral importance of the use in medieval chronicles of illustrations (there are some well-chosen, but sadly only black and white reproductions here), and rightly indicates their significance in assessing the social standing of these texts.

The translations offered are close and accurate, and only rarely does one have any quibbles. In Rudolf 346, however, the devil's *nit* ought really to have been rendered as *envy* rather than *anger and fury*, since envy, *invidia*, is the normal motivating force behind the temptation of the protoplasts. 'Arch' for 'ark' in line 107 is simple misprint, and 'no kidding' is perhaps a little colloquial for *ane loughin* 1642, but these *are* no more than quibbles, and the Creation in Rudolf 189-97 is a good example of skilful handling of the texts.

The precise extracts from each text are chosen to give a wide range of topics, with literary interests in mind as well as serving to typify the works involved. Thus the extracts demonstrate the individual features of the works are introduced also in their own right, something perhaps especially necessary for Jans Enikel's idiosyncratic and interesting text. For Rudolf we are given the prologue and then the Hexaemeron, an important feature in world chronicles, which is sometimes even determinative and linked in itself with the *aetates*, as is the case with the Scots *Sex Werkdays* mentioned above. A second passage is concerned with the monsters and wonder of India, since Rudolf does have a geographical section, and material here is of considerable transcultural interest.^v

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The *Christherrechronik* is represented by the story of Jacob, including the vision of the ladder, then his marriage to Leah and then Rachel, and the birth of most of his sons. This story is treated in the other chronicles, of course, and an alternative might have been to show us how Jans Enikel handles the story.^{vi} However, it is of equal interest to have now the tenth *incidens*, albeit one might have wished for more information on Ogygos and indeed on the effective subordination of the flood associated with him (in Eusebius). Almost certainly the length of space available for notes was prescribed by the publisher, but the desire for more is not uncommon with texts like this. The notes are accurate and useful, but could be extended in plenty of cases (that of Frau Holle/ Hulda is another example).

With the third work, Jans Enikel's chronicle, we look first at Job, and move thereafter to more recent history and quasi-history, touching upon Pope Joan, the maligned Sylvester-Gerbert and then the fable of Saladin's tripartite table, and finally to an extensive final section part devoted to Frederick II, partly historical in a more modern sense (on his first excommunication, for example), but with inserts such as his experiment on digestion using condemned prisoners, and the tale of the Knight Frederick of Antfurt and the Lady's Chemise, essentially a courtly romance (based on a fabliau). The whole ends, entirely appropriately, with Jans Enikel's comments on the mysterious disappearance -- or not -- of Frederick II himself. What is the truth, asks the chronicler, and then answers himself: *des maeres bin ich worden frî*.^{vii}

Within the limitations it sets itself and which were imposed by the format of the series, this scholarly and also attractively produced book provides an excellent introduction for the comparative literary scholar (since Clio is very clearly a muse in all of these cases) to a particular and in fact fairly circumscribed range of medieval German rhymed chronicles. It will stimulate interest in the idea of the world chronicle (in which there has been an increased amount of interest in recent years -- *vide* the Utrecht conferences) in the middle ages as such, but especially in respect of its overlap with the rhymed Bible, and it would be of as great an interest to those looking at medieval theology as in introductory courses on medieval historiography. Many of the motifs -- most notably the biblical narratives, but also the descriptions of monsters -- in these chronicles are found, too, in a variety of comparable works. For the medieval Germanist the appetite is whetted, of course, for the full text of the *Christherrechronik*. The bibliography (to which the notes in the present review offer some supplementary materials) is well-ordered and useful.

Prof. Brian Murdoch
 German Department
 University of Stirling
 Stirling Scotland FK94LA
 U.K.
b.o.murdoch@stir.ac.uk

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- i. A. F. C. Vilmar, *Die zwei Recensionen und die Handschriftenfamilien der Weltchronik Rudolfs von Ems* (Marburg: Liwerts, 1839) is, in spite of its increasing antiquity, still interesting in this context. Vilmar referred to Rudolf's work as a *gereimte Bibel*.
- ii. See for example the recent studies by Jaap van Moolenbroek and Maaïke Mulder, *Scholastica willie ontbinden. Over de Rijmbijbel van Jacob van Maerlant* (Hilversum: Verloren, 1991), James H. Morey, "Peter Comestor, Biblical Paraphrase and the Medieval Popular Bible," *Speculum* 68 (1993), 6-35, Maria Sherwood-Smith, "Die *Historia Scholastica* als Quelle biblischer Stoffe in Mittelalter," in: *Die Vermittlung geistlicher Inhalte im deutschen Mittelalter*, ed. Timothy R. Jackson, Nigel Palmer and Almut Suerbaum (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1996), pp. 153-65, these recent works all covering chronicles in a variety of languages. David Fowler, *The Bible in Early English Literature* (London: Sheldon, 1977), who also discusses the role of the Comestor, draws distinctions between classical (cyclical) and biblical (linear) history, distinguishing the *Cursor Mundi* and the *Polychronicon*, for example, and also emphasising the literary aspects; his title is significant, of course.
- iii. Its editor, L. A. J. R. Houwen, notes that it defies generic determination, and points out that it crams 700 proper names into about 950 lines of prose: *The Sex Werkdays and Agis* (Groningen: Forsten 1990). The Irish chronicle *Lebor Gabála Érenn* was edited and translated by R. A. S. Macalister (Dublin: ITS, 1938-56), and see John Carey, *A New Introduction to Lebor Gabála Érenn* (Dublin: ITS, 1993).
- iv. See for example Bob Miller, "Eine deutsche Versübersetzung der lateinischen *Vita Adae et Evae* in der *Weltchronik* Heinrichs von München," in *Studien zur 'Weltchronik' Heinrichs von München*, ed. Horst Brunner (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 1998), I, 240-332, with an edited text.
- v. On which see for example Roy Wisbey, "Marvels of the East in the *Wiener Genesis* and in Wolfram's *Parzival*," in: *Essays in German and Dutch Literature* (London: Institute of Germanic Studies, 1973), pp. 1-41.
- vi. See R. Graeme Dunphy, *Daz was ein michel wunder. The Presentation of Old Testament Material in Jans Enikel's Weltchronik* (Göppingen: Kümmerle, 1998), pp. 146-54 and also Brian Murdoch, *The Medieval Popular Bible* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2003), pp. 149-74.
- vii. Discussed most recently by Hannes Möhring, *Der Weltkaiser der Endzeit* (Stuttgart: Thorbecke, 2000)

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