

been lost. Others are reproductions in wax or metal of the original lead versions. Indeed, the longest section of the introduction (pp. 35–57) is devoted to nine seals (groups of two and seven) that Mayer and Sode demonstrate to be forgeries made possibly in Constantinople in the nineteenth century, created to accommodate what was apparently a booming market in medieval antiquities. Forgeries though they may be, the authors ultimately conclude that they were based on actual seals that have since disappeared. Given the number of problematic, lost or missing entries, this volume reminds us just how much physical and literary evidence from the Latin Kingdom has been lost. What most usefully emerges here is a sense of continuity in the diplomatic practices of the Latin Kingdom. Baldwin I (r. 1100–18) established a basic design for the seal – round, made of lead, with an enthroned king on the obverse and the city of Jerusalem on the reverse – that his successors followed with only slight modification until 1225. Beginning in that year, when Frederick II obtained the crown of Jerusalem through marriage, the kings were foreigners whose primary political and territorial interests lay outside the kingdom, and their seals reflected these outside influences. Wax seals also became common at that point, along with occasional golden seals. Some of Mayer and Sode's conclusions seem uncertain. Baldwin I, for example, is said to have used five different seals over the course of his reign. The evidence for one of them, however, rests on a single modern sketch, and two of them derive from the above-mentioned forgeries. There is also relatively little historical context or interpretation of the seals' iconography. On the whole, however, the book is a virtuoso demonstration of a historical art to which many medievalists will have had only passing exposure and a remarkable piece of scholarship, service and detective work for which all students of the crusades will be enormously grateful.

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*The Middle English life of Christ. Academic discourse, translation and vernacular theology.*

By Ian Johnson. (Medieval Church Studies, 30.) Pp. viii + 198. Turnhout: Brepols, 2013. €70. 978 2 503 54748 0

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Middle English *Lives* of Christ, of which Ian Johnson identifies twenty-four, are by any standard a major witness to devotional life in late medieval England. This makes them a critical focus for modern research, whether one is, like Johnson, energised by their evidential power or, like many other scholars, inclined to put them in the 'important but boring' category which resists (or anyway repels) intellectual engagement. In recent scholarship, the *Lives* have generally had a lukewarm press, in spite of such significant work as Michael Sargent's edition of Nicholas Love's *Mirror* and the *Geographies of orthodoxy* project, co-piloted by Johnson himself. They have been thought to lack technical as well as iconographic interest, and to fade in historical terms into a homogenous landscape of Christocentric devotion. Indeed, the academic climate has tended to frigidify in the view that, supported by clerical diktat, Love's *Mirror* stifled under a passive

bulk of a lusher, essentially self-regulating vernacular literature. In other words, *Lives* of Christ have acquired for many the status of the ‘myopic dead-centre’ which Michael Camille once opposed to the vigour of the margins. Johnson is unabashedly sceptical about all of this. His agenda is to rehabilitate the *Lives* by demonstrating their technical and historical interest. The subject of translation is primary here, for the obvious reason that the main texts are themselves translations. But translation was not, as Johnson explains, a simple matter in either execution or consumption. It entailed grave responsibilities, knowledge of much more than the base text and ability to empathise with the varied requirements of readers. Moreover, translation into Middle English was not, as many have seen it, a matter of ‘Latin-vernacular competition and displacement’ (p. 37), but rather a complementary process roundly beneficial to religion. It was also rooted in a theory of its own operation, detectable, for example, in the ‘scholarly technicalities of excision, transposition, rephrasing and insertion’ (p. 64). The detail of Johnson’s argument is largely devoted to clarifying this relationship between translation and late medieval devotional intelligence, and showing how it produced subtle and useful texts. He sets the subject up by explaining – disarmingly to this reviewer’s mind, and certainly not without humour – both the anachronism of the premises of much recent academic criticism and the intrinsic value of the *Lives* for medieval readers. Of course, the critique of scholarship is necessary to make the main subject seem worthwhile, but it is more than simple deck-clearance: it embodies an approach to Middle English texts which prioritises historical value over what Johnson considers academic ‘cults’ (p. 30). The heavy work of buttressing the arguments is naturally achieved by case studies; a number of shorter ones in chapter ii, and extended studies in chapters iii and iv of Love’s *Mirror* and the *Speculum devotorum*, both Pseudo-Bonaventuran texts charitably produced by Carthusians in the first half of the fifteenth century to feed the hunger of non-Latinate readers. These were chosen for their richness (the close readings are clever and revealing), and also because they suggest paths for future research. Such seeding is an aspect of all good scholarship, and a further reason to recommend this clear-headed, important book.

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JULIAN LUXFORD

*Les Officialités dans l'Europe médiévale et moderne. Des tribunaux pour une société chrétienne. Actes du colloque international organisé par le Centre d'études et de recherche en histoire culturelle (CERHiC-EA2616) (Troyes, 27–29 mai 2010).* Edited by Véronique Beaulande-Barraud and Martine Charageat. (Ecclesia Militans, 2.) Pp. 340 incl. 12 ills and 6 tables. Turnhout: Brepols, 2014. €75 (paper). 978 2 503 55149 4

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Officialities formed a complex system of justice in Europe between the twelfth and eighteenth centuries, and their tribunals have provided fertile ground for historians of law intent on determining their institutional organisation and procedures. A number of the sixteen essays in this collection concentrate on these areas of research, but the majority assume a less familiar perspective, in order to shed new light on the tribunals’ personnel and activities, and especially on the experiences of the diocesan