

Eastern Illinois University

From the Selected Works of Bailey K. Young

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Review: CHRISTINA LEE, Feasting the Dead: Food and Drink in Anglo-Saxon Burial Rituals

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the third chapter, devoted to the eight songs that employ birdcalls. She argues persuasively that just as birdcalls are described as irrational in the theoretical literature, often analogously they occur outside the metrical structure of the poem, and their musical notation uses heuristic deployment of notational conventions to depict irrational rhythmic lengths that do not exist theoretically and cannot be explained.

Based on its title, *Sung Birds*, the book could have ended here; the title suggests that it will examine repertoire about birds or in which birdcalls are depicted musically, a discussion that is limited to this chapter, titled "Birds Sung," tellingly playing with the title of the book. But although in her opening sentence Leach poses the question, "Is birdsong music?" she stipulates later in the opening paragraph that her "point of departure is to explain why such aurally pleasing melody [birdsong] was not music for medieval thinkers" and, from there, "to establish what music *was* in the Middle Ages, and how its definition related to its producing agents, its sonic components, and its reception or effects" (p. 1). With a different title and a subtle difference in orientation in the first two (lengthy) chapters of theoretical groundwork, the second half of the book, following the in-depth discussion of the musical depiction of birdcalls, would seem more obviously integral to the whole.

The book, however, does address effectively, in illuminating, original, and multifaceted ways, what music was and was not in medieval culture, a far more impressive achievement than answering the much narrower question, "Is birdsong music?" Moving beyond birdsong, the following two chapters consider moral aspects of music. The fourth chapter examines medieval hunting songs, mostly *caccie*, that employ the shouts and cries of humans or the barking of dogs and relates them to moralizing elements in hunting treatises. The following chapter, which ought to become standard reading in advanced gender and music classes, "treats femininity as another form of irrationality, linked to that of bestiality through the use of female birds in moral critiques of music" (p. 239). The final chapter returns to intentionality on the part of the producing agent in defining what music is, by assessing developments in music technology from the seventeenth through the twentieth centuries. Since the idea of intentionality—the expression of a rational human—in defining what art is has been taken up so radically by many veins of the modern-art movement, including in the sphere of music, the discussion here could have been more wide-ranging.

Through detailed discussion of treatises on music, philosophy, grammar, and hunting, appraisal of advice manuals and bestiaries, and interpretive analysis of music and poetry, Leach offers a truly interdisciplinary book; although a musicologist herself, Leach writes for medievalists, rather than for musicologists per se. With such a broadly targeted audience of medievalists yet such a detailed discussion of musical repertoire in chapters 3 and 4, the book would have benefited greatly from an accompanying CD or, at the very least, a discography. But medievalists of all stripes will find this book a fascinating and worthwhile read.

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CHRISTINA LEE, *Feasting the Dead: Food and Drink in Anglo-Saxon Burial Rituals*. (Anglo-Saxon Studies, 9.) Woodbridge, Eng., and Rochester, N.Y.: Boydell and Brewer, 2007. Pp. xiv, 176 plus 8 black-and-white plates; 6 black-and-white figures and 1 table. \$80.

This book, deriving from the author's Ph.D. dissertation, delivers both more and less than the title promises. Though in her introduction Christina Lee describes it as "limited to food and drink in funerary contexts" (p. x), she stretches those limits considerably and in the process displays a wide-ranging erudition. She takes us from late Roman gravesides (presumably in the Mediterranean, evidence coming from Augustine), where Christian families

celebrated a yearly memorial funerary feast (p. 115), to banquets depicted on the Bayeux Tapestry, in which William and Harold feast with their respective followers before the action gets under way (pp. 130–31). She discusses written evidence regarding food rents (*feorme*) payable to the king and other lords (p. 43), monastic rules as a source for the diet of monks (p. 36), and King Svein Forkbeard's assuming the succession of his father by drinking to his memory (and to the memory of St. Michael and to Earl Sigvaldr's father, too; p. 123 and n. 123). She quotes Anglo-Saxon poetry that evokes the fruits of the earth and the joy of eating or the bitter, death-bringing feast resulting from sin (*The Phoenix*, pp. 30, 135); she also shows Grendel feasting on the men in Hrothgar's hall (p. 137). The illustrations include a wonderfully delicate scene of elite feasting from an early-eleventh-century Cotton Julius manuscript, shown in color for the book jacket. But what about Anglo-Saxon burial rituals?

Chapter 1 begins with archaeological evidence for food raised and consumed on Anglo-Saxon settlement sites, both from animal sources (cattle predominating by far; pigs, sheep, and goats more or less well represented, and sometimes horses; wild animals rare) and from crops (cereals for making bread as well as, one is happy to learn, beer are well attested), before turning to the cemeteries for a fascinating discussion of what can now be learned about nutrition from skeletons. Not only do these reflect such conditions as DISH (Diffuse Idiopathic Skeletal Hyperostosis), indicating a diet rich in fat and prolonged obesity, but stable isotope analysis can reveal whether people were eating more plants or animal protein. Interesting, surely, but ritual? Chapters 2 and 3, which consider respectively evidence from burials of animals and of vessels (pottery, buckets, cauldrons), make up the archaeological heart of the book's argument. Lee rightly draws attention to recent excavations, like Spong Hill, Sancton, and Castledyke South, where rigorous on-site methodology backed up by laboratory analysis has not only revealed fair numbers of animal remains but has sometimes distinguished the age of slaughter or correlated the presence of animals with the age, gender, and types of grave goods of the people buried there. The problems of interpretation are, however, as Lee recognizes, complex. A horse or dog sacrificed to accompany his master does not equate with pig bones from a roast enjoyed by mourners at graveside or brought from some picnic spot and tossed into the grave fill. Modern excavations, which carefully sift the grave fill (quickly removed in the old days), may find more small animal bones, but what proves they all derive from funerary feasts? The closer one looks, the more daunting become the problems of making precise sense of the data. Take figure 1, a bar graph of species distribution in male and female graves at Castledyke South by age group: it seems to contradict Lee's statement (p. 64) that pig bones are found exclusively with females and that cattle and fowl are found mostly in male graves (it does not help that the bar graphics are inconsistent and hard to read). Perhaps compensating for the frustrations of dealing with picky detail, Lee will sometimes make assertions too sweeping for the references and discussion provided: for example, on the symbolic meaning of sixth-century ornament (p. 70) and the relation of "focal graves" to vessel deposit (p. 83). The layout of the body and objects in a grave displays a "choreography," she notes at one point (p. 64), meant to convey a message to contemporary mourners, thus echoing Guy Halsall's suggestion of "scene-making" rituals as inherent to the funerary process. Perhaps that fits the reality in some cases, but the figure of speech seems rather too grandiose for much of the available evidence.

The last three chapters further develop Lee's general argument that physical, "secular" feasting of the dead by kindred and friends around the grave was replaced (though incompletely, as the survival of "wakes" attests) by Christian forms of ritual commemoration. In this Lee follows paths well blazed by scholars like Otto Oexle, Giles Constable, Michel Lauwers, and, of course, Bonnie Effros, whose 2002 book, *Creating Community with Food and Drink in Merovingian Gaul*, Lee abundantly cites. There are broad parallels between

the Insular and Continental worlds (which were closely linked), such as a decline in grave-goods practices during or after the seventh century, the spread of rural monasteries and their impact on funerary practices, notably among the elite, and the shift to churchyard burial, which was to become the overall medieval pattern. The problem of integrating written sources, so clerical in their origin and concerns, with the more haphazard, contested, and methodologically inconsistent evidence that can be drawn from archaeology is also parallel. Christina Lee indeed offers much "food for thought," but not all of it is well digested. Her bold attempt at integrating the archaeology deriving mostly from the earlier Saxon times with literary evidence mostly later in date will not disarm the skeptics, but it should stimulate some useful reflection.

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RALF LÜTZELSCHWAB, *Flectat cardinales ad velle suum? Clemens VI. und sein Kardinalskolleg: Ein Beitrag zur kurialen Politik in der Mitte des 14. Jahrhunderts*. (Pariser historische Studien, 80.) Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 2007. Pp. vii, 509. €59.80.

Born in 2002 as a dissertation at the Free University of Berlin, this is a systematic, deep description of Pope Clement VI's relations with his cardinals: his policy and practice in creating them and his diplomatic use of cardinal legates. The policies of any of the popes of Avignon can be studied in contemporary chronicles and in the account books and registers of letters kept in such abundance by that bureaucratic government, but only Clement VI, reputed to be among the greatest preachers of his time, also left such a large collection of sermons and occasional *collationes* (conferences). Lützelshwab makes full and wise use of that treasure of sources. The Latin originals are extensively transcribed and accurately interpreted.

The book begins with a compact statement of the scholarly industry on Clement VI down to 2005, the research, editions of sources, and theoretical debates. Then the author painstakingly details the institutional history of the College of Cardinals and the position of cardinals under Clement VI. Chapter 3 introduces the pope himself with a biographical outline and an account of his preaching and sermon writing.

Chapter 4, in seven sections, is devoted to Clement VI as creator of cardinals, and here the author depends heavily on the *collationes* written by the pope himself and spoken when particular candidates were presented to the cardinals in consistory. Transcriptions of five *collationes* are given in one appendix. These five were occasioned by the inaugurations of Cardinals Pierre Bertrand, Nicolas de Besse junior, Elie Talleyrand de Périgord, Bertrand de Deux, Pierre Roger de Beaufort (later Gregory XI), and Guillaume Court. One *collatio*, *Loquere tu et audiemus* (Exodus 20.19), was given when the "Cardinal of Limoges" received his red hat. Lützelshwab is unsure (p. 98) whether this was Nicolas de Besse or Pierre de Cros senior, but the latter seems impossible: his informal name was "Cardinal of Auxerre." Nicolas de Besse was created cardinal in February 1344. While he did not enter the curia before June, he could have taken his *capellum* by proxy on 10 March when this *collatio* was spoken, citing the Epistle of the day, Wednesday in the third week of Lent.

When Clement was crowned pope in 1342, the Hundred Years War had just begun, advantage England. The longest chapter and the heart of this study, "Cardinals' Legations," begins with the legates who managed papal diplomacy between the warring kings: Annibaldo Ceccano, Pierre Desprez, Étienne Aubert (Clement's successor as Innocent VI), and Bertrand du Pouget. Then Clement's legations to Italy are narrated: those of Guillaume Court, Aimeric de Châtelus, Bertrand de Deux (with a structured Latin synopsis of the pope's *collatio* on the occasion of his return to the curia), Annibaldo Ceccano again, and Gui de Boulogne.