

which are essential to scholarly interrogation of cultural continuity and discontinuity from the ancient to the modern periods.

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FERNANDO RIVA, “*Nunca mayor soberbia comidió Luçifer*”: *Límites del conocimiento y cultura claustral en el “Libro de Alexandre.”* (Medievalia Hispanica 27.) Madrid: Iberoamerica, and Frankfurt: Vervuert, 2019. Paper. Pp. 234; 1 black-and-white figure. €24. ISBN: 978-8-4919-2057-1.  
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Critical attention to what is regarded as the first work of learned literature in Spanish, the *Libro de Alexandre*, has come in waves: from the intense scrutiny it received initially by Raymond Willis in the thirties, followed by philological and interpretive studies from scholars such as Brian Dutton, María Rosa Lida, and Ian Michael in the sixties, to its study within the corpus of *mester de clerecía* by Isabel Uría Maqua and others in the nineties. Since the turn of the millennium the field has been reinvigorated by the work of scholars such as Amaia Arizleta and Julian Weiss, producing a number of important studies and projects that bring together scholars working on historical and theoretical angles, as well as a number of distinctive disciplinary engagements, probing the text both as part of the corpus of *clerecía* and considering it in its singularity. Coupled with Juan Casas Rigall’s superb critical edition, an interdisciplinary focus has firmly renovated the engagement with the *Libro de Alexandre*. Beyond questions of sources or metric or genre to contextualize different episodes, the poem has seen innovative scholarship that places its creative rewriting in the context of political and historical developments, in the history of pedagogy and a multi-lingual intellectual life, in the reconfiguration of polities and cultural influences between monarchy, university, and clergy or cloister. Within this well-established field, Fernando Riva revisits the canonical text with the advantages of the expert writing for a group of initiated followers. Focusing on the twin structural themes of pride and the pursuit of knowledge, Riva widens the discussion by centering his attention on a claustral environment for the genesis, writing, and site of production of the *Alexandre*, tying the poem’s conceptualization to a particular moral reaction to the *moderni clerici* and their heterodox Aristotelian orientation in natural philosophy, an attitude that would extend into the literature produced throughout the century.

Following the introduction, the exploration of these twin topics is organized into five chapters, each dense with productive asides into neighboring themes and texts and arguments. Written in an antiquarian style, full of (relative) pronouns whose referents are not always to be found, or are too far away in the paragraph to feel reassuring, I found myself having to read phrases and sentences over and over again. However, I was rewarded by an interesting parallel, a curious connection, and most often with a copiously developed context for traits and themes of the poem. The first chapter, “El saber de Alejandro y sus límites,” focuses on the limits placed on the pursuit of knowledge, especially by monarchs and by the Bible and Saint Augustine. Coming after a detailed overview of the book in the introduction, this chapter serves more as prefatory material to the parallel arguments that are developed at large in chapters 2 and 3. This first chapter goes through well-known themes and problems in the poem, focusing on the links between the sin of pride and *scientia* versus *sapientia*, themes developed in contrasting episodes of the story. The second chapter, “*Scientia, sapientia* y la profecía de Daniel,” builds on the connections to the book of Daniel to explain Alexandre’s “failure” from the perspective of prophecy, linking this failure to what Riva assures us through extensive documentation is a claustral elaboration of the distinction between *scientia* and *sapientia*. A third chapter, “El clero y el claustro: El *contemptus mundi* y el fin de los tiempos,” continues the apocalyptic framework by joining the reading of the *Alexandre* to Diego García de Campos’s

*Planeta* through the trope of *contemptus mundi*, linking it back to the apocalyptic strain. Riva's fourth chapter, "La reacción frente al aristotelismo hispánico," fully expands on the work's version of the Alexander story as a reaction to heterodox Aristotelianism as it developed in the Iberian Peninsula, and is perhaps the book's most rewarding, offering a plethora of details and reflections on the intellectual environment of the period. The final chapter, "Los viajes del rey y el linaje de Babilonia," looks at the mirror episodes of the flight and the submarine descent: Riva summarizes the different elements scholars have expanded upon and links them to the prophetic through a genealogy traced from the Babel and Babylon stanzas, through the multiple allusions to Lucifer, and ideas of the fall and the apocalyptic in its moral and intellectual dimensions, as shaped in a claustal context that binds the end of times to ideology, pride to tradition, etc., which closely follows—providing multiple analogies and interesting parallels—known interpretations of the episodes.

Riva excels at finding close correspondences that help sharpen the contours of the intellectual milieu in which the Spanish Alexander was conceptualized and received. In the landscape of *Alexandre* studies, while Riva's book does not reorient the interpretation of the poem's themes or main structural elements, it fills out the features and with minute detail draws the backgrounds. He brings to the discussion a large number of parallel texts that enrich our picture of clerical (if imbued by the cloister) composition in the thirteenth century and further strengthen the interpretations that have oriented this field in recent years. A bibliography and a name index of ancient and medieval names complement the study.

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EDWARD ROBERTS, *Flodoard of Rheims and the Writing of History in the Tenth Century*. (Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought: Fourth Series.) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019. Pp. xiii, 268; 3 tables. \$99.99. ISBN: 978-1-3165-1039-1. doi:10.1086/714951

To state the conclusion of this review up front: Edward Roberts has written, in 250 pages, an eminently readable, well-structured, and convincing account of Flodoard's life, with a bibliography that overlooks not a single relevant title.

At the start, Roberts explains why he chose to write yet another biography, after the brief German account of Peter Christian Jacobsen from 1978 (*Flodoard von Reims: Sein Leben und seine Dichtung "De triumphis Christi"*) and the voluminous French study of Michel Sot from 1993 (*Un historien et son Église au X<sup>e</sup> siècle: Flodoard de Reims*). His very good answer is that Jacobsen, as a medieval Latinist, placed Flodoard's *De triumphis Christi* [On the Triumphs of Christ] at the center of his considerations; and, apart from brief biographical remarks, neglected the other important works of the Rheims archivist. Sot, meanwhile, dealt primarily with Flodoard's extensive *Historia Remensis ecclesiae* [History of the Church of Rheims], and especially with Flodoard's fourth and fifth books, which cover the pontificate of Hincmar of Rheims (845–82) and his successors.

Roberts divides his monograph into five chapters. In the first, he explains how his book contributes to research on Flodoard, and describes Flodoard's career together with the political circumstances in the western Frankish Empire that shaped his historiographical approach. Through Flodoard's extensive writings and occasional autobiographical remarks, it turns out that there is a lot to say about this canon and archivist. Roberts convincingly characterizes him as self-confident and, as we would say today, well connected. In this way, he sets the stage for the ensuing four chapters, which aim "to explore the relationship between Flodoard the historian and Flodoard the actor" (28). Chapter 2 deals with Flodoard and his attitude towards the archbishops Hugh and Artold of Rheims, together with the importance of the bishopric in the political conflicts of the difficult mid-tenth century. This

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