hyperbole (superfluidity) or *elleipsis* (lack). Singer examines Petrarch's anti-medical writings, his *Invective contra medicum* and his later letters from the *Familiares* and *Seniles*, in which an incompetent medical practitioner is represented as blind, and argues that, for Petrarch, medical doctors should not appropriate rhetoric, while poets can offer curative lyrics.

In each of the four remaining chapters, Singer takes a rhetorical trope and demonstrates how it was used by medieval poets as a therapy for blindness through the principle of cure by contraries or similarities, arguing that each rhetorical strategy restores the humoral balance. The four figures of rhetoric examined – irony, metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche – were later identified by Giambattista Vico as the four fundamental tropes of rhetoric. In the third chapter, Singer argues that irony is used as a remedy for ill fortune and ocular problems in the pseudo-Senecan *De remediis fortunae*, its translation into French by Jacques Bauchans, and its Petrarchan adaptation, *De remediis utriusque fortunae*. Metaphor is discussed as the second therapeutic tool that replaces medical expertise in the fourth chapter with reference to cataract surgery in Guillaume de Machaut's *Remede de fortune* and Gilles Li Muisis's autobiographical verse. The fifth chapter draws a parallel between prosthesis and metonymy in Machaut's *Livre du voir dit*, whereby the one-eyed lover's body is potentially reconstructed through the insertion of 'round' lyric forms into the text. Synecdoche and the blindfolding of injured and offending eyes are examined in relation to Martin le Franc's *Estrif de Fortune et de Vertu*, Pierre Michault's *Dance aux aveugles*, and Charles d'Orléans's lyric poetry.

This is an ambitious volume, meticulously researched and bringing together a wealth of material. While the first half of Singer's book is suggestive, the exact relationship which Singer is attempting to establish between rhetorical strategies and medical procedures in the second half of the book is unclear, especially in light of the frequent recourse to modern medical terminology and treatments, such as 'psychotherapy' and 'cognitive tools', to speak about the therapeutic potential of literature in the Middle Ages.

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Susanne Knaeble, *Höfisches Erzählen von Gott: Funktion und narrative Entfaltung des Religiösen in Wolframs 'Parzival'*, Trends in Medieval Philology 23 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011). viii + 317 pp. ISBN 978–3–11–023473–2. €99.95.

The subject of religion in Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival* has been worked over so thoroughly that one can only commend Susanne Knaeble's courage in attempting to find something new to say on this subject sufficient to fill a book. Moving away from interpretative paradigms based either on searching for influences from theological writings, or on anthropocentric views of God as an independent actor within the text to be understood in relation to the other

characters, she chooses to examine how themes that might be called religious are narrated, using for this purpose Niklas Luhmann's theory of religion as a system of communication, one of many that comprise a social system. The specific portions of *Parzival* that are given detailed analysis in this study are the prologue and its implications with regard to the depiction of religion; narratives of the Grail and the miracles it produces; narratives about the Grail kingdom; and the 'deconstruction of the utopia'. The origins of this monograph in a doctoral dissertation are, unfortunately, very much in evidence. A good third of the volume is taken up by a discussion of earlier scholarship (which is, at the current length, superfluous) and of Luhmann's theories regarding their applicability to medieval literature. Much of the textual analysis that follows is heavily reliant on the works of other scholars (in particular Joachim Bumke and Cornelia Schu), who are often cited at some length; it is quite striking that after the lengthy theoretical introduction, Luhmann makes few appearances, and it is not apparent to me how exactly the reading of the text has been enriched by the almost sixty pages devoted to discussing Luhmann. A significant aspect of Knaeble's thesis is her suggestion that since the narrator (or 'Erzählinstanz', as she puts it) is a creator, he is in the same position as is God in forms of religious communication, and thus both cannot be shown as present at the same time. This problem can only be got around by various means of multiperspectival narration (and the prologue sets out a theory of what this sort of narration might be; Knaeble's reading of the prologue itself does not, however, seem to me to provide anything very new). Knaeble's analysis of this form of narration in *Parzival* adds to the already large body of work on narrative methods and theories of perception in this text. Although her book is not without insights in matters of detail, particularly with regard to the use of religious motifs in portions of the text that are apparently primarily secular, it seems to me that, at a broader level of interpretation, this monograph does not really bring us much closer to understanding how specifically courtly (or even more specifically Wolfram's) methods of narrating religious matter relate to those employed by others. Nor does Knaeble shed much light on (or invalidate) the principal religious questions one could address to this text – by which I do not mean some sort of 'objective' assessment of Parzival's guilt or other questions that plagued earlier generations of scholarship, which Knaeble rightly dismisses, but rather issues such as the value attached to forms of religious behaviour and even belief, or Parzival's own perception of his relationship to religious belief and practice. The book will nevertheless be a useful point of reference for those wishing to go back to the question of religion in this text, and will hopefully stimulate further new approaches to the old questions.

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