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Barlow's narrative reflects the inherent contradictions and ambiguities of eyewitnesses. For example, regarding Thomas's tenure as archbishop and his reluctance to remain as royal chancellor to the king, Barlow declares "obviously Thomas as archbishop was in appearance much more splendid than ever before" (83). In another instance, Barlow discusses the flight of Becket from England to France, and he states that Henry always protested that Thomas had simply bolted and had not been pursued, but "intentions are seldom consistent and justifications rarely entirely true" (116). When discussing Thomas's vendetta against Jocelin of Salisbury and Gilbert Foliot, Barlow states "it may not be irrelevant that both Jocelin and Gilbert Foliot came from baronial families" (149). These cryptic statements may be the result of the source material, but Barlow fails to explain their meaning. Such ambiguous passages, however, are rare and Barlow deserves praise for this well-produced and lively work.

Barlow concludes that in many ways Henry's pilgrimage to Canterbury ends the story of Thomas's life and death, but his achievements still remain to be considered. For a London merchant's son to have become royal chancellor, archbishop of Canterbury, and a saint is a rarely equalled achievement (270). Barlow convincingly argues that after Thomas's death things were never quite the same. Becket's actions were the impetus to positive reform in the Church. He had brought the archaic English customs to the notice of the pope, cardinals, and all the canon lawyers, and had succeeded in getting them scrutinized, debated, and in part, abolished or reformed (274).

An irascible and stubborn man to the end, Becket resisted attempts from his clerks to persuade him to flee Canterbury. He still resists attempts by historians to explain his personality. The weakness of Barlow's work is not in its scholarship or execution but its inability to make Becket a three-dimensional figure. Overall, Barlow adds significantly to the scholarship on Thomas Becket because of his ability to intertwine primary archival sources with recent scholarship and present facts as objectively as possible. This makes his book a welcome and necessary addition to studies of this kind. Barlow competently narrates without much analysis the life of the monstre sacre (275) and produces an attractive and thoughtful work.

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The expressly stated purpose of the volume under review is to provide an interdisciplinary study of the relationship between literature and history,
the latter taken in a sociological sense. Literature and society are not viewed as two separate entities; the subtitle sets us straight: we have a mirror, literature, and in it we see society reflected. Not surprisingly, reflection, mirror, and image are keywords in Muir's study.

Literature alone can breathe life into a bygone era. Held up as a mirror, it transmits a picture of French medieval society as seen by medieval man. Muir has singled out for scrutiny a set of texts that lend themselves to sociological probing. Although the literature of the period forms "a vast tapestry of medieval life and thought" (6), Muir fully realizes that some measure of interpretive effort is required to sort out fact from fiction and to strike a balance between idealization and distortion. Overall, literature is accorded more weight than society in the work, which is to say that the mirror at times fails to project a clear image while, at other times, the transmitted reflection is either too trivial or too familiar. This seems particularly true of the initial sections of the book. That the epic reflects a society permeated by nationalism and religious fervor is belaboring the obvious. Another question deserving to be raised centers on the problem of individualization vs. generalization. We are told that Guibourg is "splendidly drawn, believable and human" (31), but it is not clear whether by the same token we are given to understand that she is also representative of a class. The book is thus seen to contain much information that one would expect to find in an explication de texte, but which seems less appropriate within the chosen framework; other sections contain more pertinent material, specifically the chapter on the logistics of medieval theater performances.

Muir's book makes for entertaining reading and can be recommended as a good, lively introduction to medieval literature. The style is easy-flowing, but Muir goes overboard in her efforts to cater to popular taste. Lexical ultramodernisms mar the text. I shudder in disbelief as I watch Alexander the Great dive into the ocean in a bathysphere or explore the heavens from his weather satellite. Spread through the volume are many trivial comparisons: "the problems [Marie de France] describes are unlikely to find their way into the pages of Woman's Own" (65); "Cupid's arrow... has deteriorated... to an arrow-pierced heart... scribbled on the walls of public lavatories" (73); "[French devotional literature is] the equivalent of the Bible Reading Fellowship Notes" (171), etc. Certain things are best left untold; certain comparisons are best left uncommitted to print.

The book contains four useful appendices: genealogical tables of French and English royalty, suggestions for further readings and notes, a bibliography of English translations, and a bibliographical index. It is illustrated by ten plates.

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