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Review in Speculum 86 (2011) of "Mining in a Medieval Landscape: The Royal Silver Mines of Tamar"

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Peter Purton, a private scholar with a considerable array of linguistic assets, has written a two-volume work, more than a thousand pages in length, dealing with sieges in medieval Europe and its environs. The first volume, which is under review here, treats early-medieval sieges and covers the period from ca. 450 to 1220. Purton's major contribution, and it is of no little importance, is to provide hundreds of references to sieges that took place throughout this period. As a result, Purton's study confirms in overwhelming detail the modern consensus that warfare during this period of almost eight centuries was dominated by siege warfare.

Equally valuable are Purton's conclusions, which deserve to be quoted in part: "There are no ends or beginnings in history, but every study has to start and end somewhere. We have traced significant continuities between the classical and medieval worlds in Europe and the Middle East. . . . We have demonstrated that there were very few revolutionary changes throughout the period, but rather incremental changes and developments both in weaponry, and in the form and strength of fortifications, while making the point that it is necessary to put the latter in their historical context . . ." (p. 388).

Purton's confirmation of the dominance of siege warfare and incremental development is presented in eight chronologically oriented chapters: "After Rome," "The Arab Conquests," "The Age of the Carolingian Empire," "The Tenth Century," "Shifting Balances: The Eleventh Century," "Franks and Saracens: The Early Crusades," "The Twelfth Century in Northern and Central Europe and Byzantium," and "Consolidation and Centralisation," and a ninth, somewhat synthesizing chapter, "The Developing Technology of Attack and the Response of the Defence." The volume is rounded out with a useful eighteen-page time line, a valuable seven-page glossary, seventy-three pages of bibliography including both primary sources and scholarly literature, and a twenty-one-page index. There are also fourteen very helpful maps and thirty-two high-quality plates, which include both photographs of various fortifications and depictions of "reconstructions" of various types of siege weapons.

Aside from dating the end of the early Middle Ages some two to three centuries too late, there are several serious problems with this work. There is no study of military demography, as a result of which the order of magnitude of military operations remains a mystery. Secondly, there is no treatment of logistics, which are of the greatest importance in understanding how sieges were executed. Finally, in the fields that I know best, Purton ignores the relevant scholarship produced during the past ten to fifteen years. These lacunae not only lead to errors but also make one wonder about the publisher's reputation for scholarly integrity and the adequacy of its referees.

BERNARD S. BACHRACH, University of Minnesota

STEPHEN RIPPON, PETER CLAUGHTON, and CHRIS SMART, *Mining in a Medieval Landscape: The Royal Silver Mines of the Tamar Valley*. Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2009. Pp. xiii, 207; black-and-white frontispiece, black-and-white figures, and tables. doi:10.1017/S0038713411002077

Ancient tin mining in southwest Britain long has been a source of both lore and study, given, among other aspects, its legendary associations with Joseph of Arimathea and the Grail cycle and, more recently, designation of the Cornwall and West Devon Mining Landscape as a UNESCO World Heritage site. Yet the fascinating story of nearby royal silver mining on the Cornish-Devon border in the late Middle Ages, and its significance for both regional landscape and the development of industry in Britain, has remained largely hidden until this important interdisciplinary study. The authors, a team of two archaeolo-

gists and an economic historian, put their usually divided specialties into dialogue in careful analysis of physical and documentary evidence to describe the significance of medieval mining to the landscape of the Bere Ferrers peninsula in the Tamar valley, on the west edge of Dartmoor due north of Plymouth.

In doing so they demonstrate how the differentiated categories of industrial and rural landscape are a false binary and how even the chronological boundary of industrialization as "modern" is a false one. The goal is "to move beyond traditional studies of industrial archaeology and mining history towards a more integrated understanding of the landscape" (p. 7). From 2006 to 2008 the authors bored into layers of the hidden industrial past of the now-quiet countryside of scattered farmsteads and one small town, Bere Alston, which they conclude "should perhaps be regarded as Britain's first dedicated mining town" (p. 164). In the area's medieval industrial heyday, the combination of silver deposits, woods, and water for fuel in the countryside, and the relatively low demand for labor for the mines, made such a rural area a valuable "industrial belt." But the authors make it clear that the industry was far more specialized (with its own mining communities), and less mixed with agriculture, than previous general assumptions would suggest.

It was the growing commercial economy of high-medieval England, with increased demand from the Crown for silver to mint coins, that spurred the development of silver mining in Bere Ferrers, at its start in 1292 known as the Devon manor of Birland. Mines there remained under royal control until around the time of the Black Death, when they were leased out and finally closed in the mid-1500s. The opening of the mines represented a transition from customary self-regulation of mining in Britain to direct centralized management of workers in more capital-intensive operations, arguably paving the way for later industrialization. The underground mining necessitated importing skilled workers from the Peak District and northeast Wales in "a far more concentrated mining operation than had previously been the case elsewhere" (p. 4).

The results of the workers' labor can be glimpsed in linear earthworks still discernible today beneath woodlands. One, the Lunburn Leat, was built in the 1470s, boring partially through bedrock to help provide power pumping for draining the mines. Large-scale mining in the early fourteenth century well below the water table required extensive drainage works. Even so, the fields and settlements of Bere Ferrers still reflect clearly patterns in place when the mines opened in 1292. The authors used GIS for geo-referencing of nineteenth-century and current detailed maps of the region, compared with an early-eighteenth-century mapping and earlier records, to help trace the landscape's history. The result, through graphics included in the book, indeed achieves the authors' goal of providing "a spatial—landscape—dimension to the rich historical sources that survive from the medieval silver mining industry" (p. 99).

The book admirably succeeds in what it sets out to do, concisely and with accessible clarity for a topic with so much technical detail, and is of great value to medievalists in a variety of fields, including burgeoning medieval environmental studies. Yet it is not (and does not claim to be) the ultimate model for integrated approaches to premodern landscape study, which has yet to be developed. The work remains a monograph on material culture, integrating economic history, archaeology, and approaches to landscape. It does not take into account fuller approaches to landscapes in environmental humanities that are still being developed, in fields varying from environmental semiotics to (more broadly) environmental phenomenology. One wishes that a practitioner of such qualitative aspects of cultural studies will be added to subsequent interdisciplinary efforts on medieval landscape study in order to convey further the larger significance of what is being discussed in a context of environmental studies. The relation of silver mining to larger developments in high-medieval society shaping the British landscape, setting the scene for later indus-

trialization, remains unexamined. Still unengaged are a broader and deeper array of late-medieval textual and landscape analogues to the changes in worldview reflected in the mines. Post-Black Death skepticism of both a failed central high-medieval order and its replacement by a rising commercialism, reflected, for example, in *The Canterbury Tales*, could shape a larger cultural contextualization for a landscape study like this. Yet the book successfully evokes in its specifics how the later Middle Ages nurtured the roots of what William Blake would call (in relation to the legendary tin trading of Joseph of Arimathea in the southwest) "Satanic mills" of modernization—even if lacking a more fully contextualized understanding of the cultural shift behind it.

ALFRED K. SEWERS, Bucknell University

ROBERT LE CLERC D'ARRAS, *Les vers de la mort*, ed. Annette Brasseur and Roger Berger. With facing-page Modern French translation. (Textes Littéraires Français, 600.) Geneva: Droz, 2009. Paper. Pp. 661; 1 table.
doi:10.1017/S0038713411002089

This is the first complete edition of Robert le Clerc's *Les vers de la mort* since that published by C. A. Windahl in 1887. This mid-thirteenth-century work shares its title with the much more famous poem from the late twelfth century by Hélinand de Froidmont, whose apostrophes to death, mirror rhyme scheme (*aabaabbbabba*), and metrical and stanzaic structures Robert also borrowed. While it could be argued that Robert le Clerc's poem is simply a homage to and a continuation of Hélinand's, the editors make a convincing argument for the linguistic, literary, and cultural importance of Robert's composition. Certainly Robert's *meditatio mortis* far exceeds his predecessor's in length: while Hélinand's poem comprises 600 octosyllabic verses divided into 50 stanzas, Robert's counts 3,744 octosyllabic verses arranged into 312 stanzas. This augmentation corresponds to a greater lexical variety and a broader thematic scope on Robert's part, which indicate his encyclopedic and original conception of the allegorical address to death.

There is little to criticize and much to admire in this edition. Brasseur and Berger have devoted their careers to the language, literature, and society of thirteenth-century Arras, and their knowledge is usefully on display throughout the volume. A brief summary of the contents demonstrates the great efforts to which they have gone to make the text accessible. The short preface is followed by a lengthy introduction that describes the three manuscripts in which Robert's *Les vers de la mort* survives; justifies the choice of Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 375, as the source; provides a table of stanzaic concordances; explains the editorial, translation, and annotation principles; provides linguistic, thematic, and stylistic analyses of the text; and gives information about the author and date of composition (1266–71). There follow a bibliography, the text of the poem with a facing translation in Modern French, notes, a list of proper names, a glossary, a rhyme index, and an index of proverbs and sayings arranged alphabetically by incipit and by keyword.

The presentation of the text is straightforward and uncluttered. The stanzas are clearly separated and numbered with large roman numerals; the folio and column of the source manuscript are indicated in the side margins; and variants are given in the *bas de page*. The facing French translation aims for clarity rather than poetic effect or fidelity, which will make this edition useful for teaching and for specialists in fields other than French literature, as will the thorough glossary. The extensive notes placed after the text offer a wide range of information, from explanations of editorial choices to clarifications of mean-