

thedral liberal arts schools, (4) Scholasticism is something that can be opposed to the liberal arts tradition. In the process, in an argumentative move that is too subtle to detail in the space allotted here, McNerny wages effective battle with Curtius's view of the history of European literature.

The book's thirteen illustrations usefully amplify the arguments in the text. A time line in the form of a tree diagram plots the advent of important grammarians from Aristotle through Johannes Aurifaber whose *Determinatio de modis significandi* appeared in 1332. In the chapter on Geometry, Roriczer's solution for the length of the circumference is mapped. The chapter on astronomy includes drawings of both the front and back of an astrolabe.

In general the essays summarize what is already known without breaking much new ground, making this a useful compilation for two audiences: students unfamiliar with the rich range of scholarship on the individual arts and those familiar with the history of one or two of the arts but not with the others.

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The Implications of Literacy: Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries, by Brian Stock. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1983. Pp. x, 604. \$45.00.

The more we learn about history, the more we are surprised by the forces that shape it. In recent years it has become apparent that one of the major and most pervasive forces has been the invention and spread of writing. Studies on orality-literacy contrasts and interactions are getting better and better, and Brian Stock, a Fellow of the Pontifical Mediaeval Institute in Toronto, has here produced one of the very best and one of the richest.

The introduction of writing into a culture changes thought processes, the forms and the genres of verbal expression, political and family and other social structures, religious beliefs and organizations, economic life, the nature of education, and much else. But writing does not take over immediately when it first comes in. It creates various kinds of interdependence and interaction between itself and underlying oralities.

Medieval orality-literacy relationships were bewildering, lodged in the total fabric of society and evolving in countless different ways in different places and milieus. Moreover, literacy itself is a protean term, impossible to define fixedly, since the ability to work with letters has always admitted of various levels and mixtures of competencies (pp. 6-7). A high-level literate of past centuries would have lacked some of the basic competencies of low-level literates in our credit-card culture. Roughly, however, one can say that until the millennium literacy of any sort was of no particular cultural or social value to most individuals; powerful or influential persons could hire others to read and write for them. But by the end of the twelfth century, legal and institutional communication was so involved in texts that illiteracy became more and more disabling, though not in the same ways in all places.

In the profusion of materials Stock deals with and meticulously analyzes, the central element and tool of analysis turns out to be the "textual communities," or "groups of people," not necessarily all literate, "whose social activities are centered around texts, or more precisely, around a literate interpreter of them" (p. 522). Such groups are typically medieval and account for a vast number of medieval intellectual and cultural developments, including the often ferocious

civil and ecclesiastical maneuverings of the Lombard power elite in Milan when nepotism, nicolaitism, and other "corrupt" practices were attacked by the Pataria reform movement, which itself was both held together and divided by its interpretation of texts. Such "textual communities" of course included the medieval universities with their scholastic thought (ancient philosophy had not been built around textual commentary as medieval philosophy was). Stock goes into the work of Anselm, Abelard, and Bernard in meticulous detail. These communities also account for the fascinating connections between the disputes about the eucharist, the revision of concepts of "nature," and the rise of intellectualism. Intellectualization of eucharistic teaching by literates made the study of sense perception and of the nature of "nature" more central and urgent in philosophy than it had ever been previously and set up contrasts between the "modern" literate world and the old oral world. On the one hand academia's attention to sense perception validated "in writing the normal, concrete appreciation of the phenomenal in nonliterate society" (p. 243), but on the other hand it downgraded oral folk by making their religious practices appear often uninformed. The use of Latin, a chirographically sustained and controlled language, all of whose users were literate, of course further separated the organization of the eucharistic liturgy from popular influence, leaving determination of its shape entirely to Latinists.

The textual communities also account in great part for the proliferation of heresies in the eleventh and twelfth centuries—Stock writes of "the making of heresies" (pp. 145-151). By fitting very complex social and religious movements to interpretive models worked out in fixed, written terms, the textual communities, proceeding often on procrustean principles, could find such movements to be "heresies" that they could readily label and purportedly cure by well-known remedies. The mismatch here between actuality and interpretive model led to highly organized misunderstandings which (although Stock does not put it quite this way) could only delight the residually oral, fiercely agonistic personalities found even among the highly literate. The predictable result was the wild pyrotechnics of politico-religious oratory and written dispute, as seen spectacularly in the Pataria movement in Milan, but also just about everywhere else.

One of the great strengths of this book, in addition to the massive learning and skillful interpretation that mark it, is its freedom from the unconscious and pervasive literate bias that until recent years has made studies of this depth impossible. Stock points out, for example, that, as writing invaded formerly oral sectors of life, the effects could be disruptive (p. 9)—a fact still hardly credible today to persons for whom literacy is the indispensable source, preserver, and enforcer of order, as illiteracy is of disorder. Yet his occasional use of "verbal" where "oral" is clearly meant (pp. 42, 522, etc.) registers some of the latent confusion that still plagues our vocabulary and thought when we deal with orality-literacy contrasts.

I am puzzled as to why medicine is passed over in lists of fields allied to writing (e.g., p. 34, but also elsewhere). The reference to the "quadrivium" on p. 243 could perhaps be qualified for uninformed readers, since quadrivium is strictly a mythological term (as "trivium" is not): there seems never to have been any medieval curriculum anywhere that consisted precisely of the four subjects arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music which Martianus Capella lined up with deceptive neatness in his *Marriage of Philology and Mercury*.

This is a major seminal work. It clearly shows in how deep a sense the Middle Ages was by far the most literate period that Western culture had ever known.

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