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physical heavens, "the mismatch between reality and representation at first appears to be caused by an error in the sketch of the physical universe, but turns out to reflect accurately the metaphysical order of which the physical universe itself is an imperfect rendering" (p. 117). Cornish agrees with Attilio Mellone that Alpetragius was Dante's source.

The last chapter, "Planets and Angels: *Paradiso* 29," is undoubtedly the best; an earlier version appeared in *Dante Studies* 108 (1990). Here, better than anywhere else, Cornish shows how astronomy provides the poet with a simile that illustrates and illuminates a difficult point of theology. Beatrice reveals to the pilgrim that, after God created the angels, Lucifer and the other fallen angels "disturbed the substrate of your elements" before you could count to twenty (*Paradiso* 29.49). The count, however, measures the time it took them to fall to earth, not the time it took them to will evil, for according to Aquinas, improving on Augustine, there was no interval of chronological time between the angels' creation and fall; instead, the two events were simultaneous, although one moment was logically prior to the other. Just as the light of the rising sun can be blocked by an obstacle, so the ill will of the bad angels cut them off from God. Cornish's point is that this view is mirrored in the canto's opening simile (lines 1–9), in which the sun and moon are balanced on opposite horizons for only one moment of time, which is, moreover, a moment of total lunar eclipse, echoing Aquinas's analogy.

The foregoing summaries cannot convey the wealth of the argumentation, which typically seeks to establish the theological and philosophical concepts that Dante sought to illustrate by poetic analogies to celestial phenomena. This approach leads Cornish to neglect the stars' collective role as Nature and instead to stress that they are imperfect physical exemplifications of ideas originating in the divine mind; accordingly, she favors Neoplatonic authors, and especially Plato and Augustine, both of whom Dante cited infrequently. Technical astronomy, on the other hand, is kept to a minimum, but when needed it is expounded clearly and precisely, with helpful diagrams. The author's doctoral dissertation, on the *Comedy*'s astronomical exordia (Stanford, 1990), provides the core of the book, but it has evidently been enlarged and embellished with insights gleaned during a decade of wide reading in current scholarship in English, Italian, and French (but not German—Georg Rabuse is the most remarkable omission).

Cornish's prose, though lightly spiced with jargon, is generally concise and crystalline; the line of her argumentation, however, is not always clearly articulated (e.g., chapters 4 and 5). The notes and text are in constant dialogue, which the publisher has rudely interrupted by needlessly opting for endnotes. An index and bibliography would also have been a welcome addition. The proofreading has been meticulous, with two exceptions, both in note 24 on page 182 (for "Bara Nski" read "Barański").

Overall, Cornish has given us a learned and stimulating set of essays. Often her achievement has been to draw together scattered interpretations and insights that she coordinates to illustrate Dante's poetic use of astronomy; occasionally, as in chapter 8, her interpretation seems definitive, but more usually her success is to expand our understanding of how Dante's poetry works. Still, hers is only one way of "reading Dante's stars."

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DAVID CROUCH, *The Reign of King Stephen, 1135–1154*. Harlow, Eng.: Pearson Education, 2000. Pp. xiv, 384; 2 maps and 1 genealogical table. £55 (cloth); £17.99 (paper).

Broad studies of Stephen of Blois, king of England from 1135 to 1154, have been few. The earliest modern study, J. H. Round's *Geoffrey de Mandeville* (1892), centered not on the king but on one of his controversial earls as a way of illustrating (and condemning) Stephen's misrule. In 1970 H. A. Cronne made continuity of institutions the centerpiece of

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his assessment and selective refutation of Round's "Anarchy of Stephen." K. J. Stringer's 1993 study is a useful and fresh analysis of the crisis, not a biography. The book most like the one under review, R. H. C. Davis's brief *King Stephen* (3rd ed., 1990), for all its merits, nevertheless offers no satisfactory appraisal of Stephen; instead, Stephen is a mere man of "little judgement," not a "hero," who seized the throne when a "king of heroic proportions" was needed. David Crouch's book attempts and achieves much more and provides the most careful analysis of Stephen to date. Using the narrative sources with care and drawing liberally from both his great store of knowledge of the charters and the abundant new research of the 1980s and 1990s, Crouch has drawn a striking portrait of the man who became king and ruled Normandy for a time and England through the kingdom's long civil war. This was no time of anarchy for Crouch. The English, he points out, never lost sight of who should have been in power, meaning that even when there was no effective government, the people knew who that government should be: the king. Instead of anarchy, the reign was a trial of King Stephen's ability to rule as had his uncle, the powerful Henry I. Crouch's Stephen made the attempt and failed: "There seem to have been intellectual limitations which inhibited Stephen from any creative ability with the raw materials of politics. His record proves that he was unable to sustain any world-view, nor could he visualise the consequences of his actions for others" (p. 341). Crouch's perspective offers similar enlightenment on almost all aspects of the reign.

This unfortunate monarch was born around 1096 and seized the throne in 1135, the beneficiary of circumstances Crouch lays out with some care and insight, asking always whether Stephen and his contemporaries were aware that in this grand chess game of succession and control pieces were being moved and removed. The biographical chapters, which constitute the vast majority of the book, take us through the moves while commenting on the questions historians have asked about Stephen's reign. For instance, did J. C. Holt's "tenurial insecurity" make the civil war inevitable or, rather, make it impossible for Stephen to control his baronage? Crouch's answer offers a smart alternative though with a warning label. He rightly places tenurial insecurity earlier and replaces talk of honors with affinities, borrowed with wisdom from analyses of later medieval society. His evaluation of the desire of barons to hold together and increase their estates and power is a more nuanced explanation for much of the local action in England that too readily gets subsumed under the title "war" or "anarchy," and so linked wrongly to national issues. Crouch here warns against any determinist approach. Few would disagree with that in principle. It may be, however, that it is more Crouch's desire to judge Stephen rather than the times that has directed his mind on this point, to which I will return.

What marks Crouch's analysis as special is the emphasis he gives to Stephen's failures in Wales and Normandy (chapter 3 and passim). He labels earlier accounts Anglocentric and argues that England itself was only "one factor in a large equation" governing the events of Stephen's reign. In Wales and Normandy, crises early in the reign "unmasked Stephen's most serious weaknesses" (p. 50). To elevate the borders, Crouch suppresses the center: England's disorder immediately following 1135. There he finds no "widespread violence," just "insecurity and nervousness" (p. 53). While attending to these, Stephen ignored a Welsh uprising and left his Marcher lords to fend for themselves (and die). The survivors nursed their bitterness, and during the war between Stephen and Mathilda, they quickly turned against the king and may have ensured his defeat at Lincoln in 1141 and slow political wasting thereafter. In fact Crouch traces the demise of English power in Wales for the next century and a half to Stephen's "nonchalant" failure. This is an important argument and will need to be considered seriously by all subsequent work on the reign.

On Normandy, however, Crouch is less persuasive. By Crouch's own account, Stephen did a reasonably good job there in 1137–38 and had eliminated almost any support for Mathilda and Geoffrey except in Argentan and a few unhappy minor lordships. Stephen's

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fault would appear to be that he left Normandy without providing adequately for its defense, and so his opponents were able to invade the duchy and win control of it between 1140 and 1144. Here "Stephen's failure to understand and resolve the problem eventually caught him out" (p. 71). Mathilda gathered forces from Normandy and Anjou, used Normandy as a staging area, and invaded England. By losing Normandy, Stephen lost as well the ability to easily threaten Anjou. Crouch thinks Stephen could and should have forestalled this.

Is this a fair criticism? Ought we to blame Stephen for not having foreseen his future problems? These questions lead me to my only serious criticism of the book. Perhaps too often in this study do we hear of "blame." These frequent appearances may simply be the consequence of Crouch's attempt to say something more about Stephen the man, an actor or agent in his reign, but they are narrowly applied to Stephen's attempt to rule in the manner of Henry I. Where Stephen failed to do so as effectively, he is at fault. Crouch tries to mitigate Stephen's failures by considering his qualities as a whole, evaluated in twelfth-century Anglo-Norman terms. Crouch aims for balance; Davis's judgments of Stephen as perfidious he calls harsh, pointing out that "few politicians who exercised such power as he did could stand immaculate before the tribunal of history" (p. 99). In particular, in the final section of the book the king's relationship with the church is brought out of reserve to rescue Stephen from condemnation. Here Stephen is pious, respectful, and "in search of a more personal holiness" (p. 315), seeking out on one occasion a "redoubtable rustic prophet" (p. 316) and full of admiration for the military order of the Temple. As Crouch claims, "Stephen showed that he understood something of what had been preached in Galilee a thousand years before" (p. 318). This is not the usual picture of Stephen. Here I feel Crouch has gone beyond his use of twelfth-century standards to judge this twelfth-century king. In his concluding chapter Crouch writes that "we must first blame Stephen the man for not being aware of his limitations, and then we must exonerate him, because ill-judged ambition is by no means an uncommon fault in humanity" (p. 341). Even as a metaphor, such talk of blame and exoneration is out of place in historical scholarship. Crouch certainly *explains* Stephen: his circumstances, his character, and his motivations. Personal judgments and absolution only detract from the force of those conclusions.

This is a useful and timely book, bringing together the currently unfolding view of mid-twelfth-century England and directing it toward the crucial question of the causes and consequences of England's nineteen years of tension and warfare from 1135 to 1154. It goes probably about as far as we ever can with this neglected king.

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PHILIP DAILEADER, *True Citizens: Violence, Memory, and Identity in the Medieval Community of Perpignan, 1162–1397.* (The Medieval Mediterranean: Peoples, Economies and Cultures, 400–1453, 25.) Leiden, Boston, and Cologne: Brill, 2000. Pp. xiii, 280; 12 black-and-white figures and 3 tables. $102.

True Citizens is a useful contribution to the rapidly growing body of historical literature on medieval Aragon, Catalonia, and Majorca. The title does not reflect the real strengths of the book, namely, its contribution to political and institutional history and the author's deft handling of charters and other forms of administrative evidence from the twelfth to the late fourteenth centuries. Of the themes promised in the subtitle, the only one to emerge consistently and productively is violence, in the form of the *ma armada,* medieval Perpignan's "communal cavalcade." This vengeance-taking body, created in the image of the aristocratic cavalcade, was the product of an unusual concession by Perpignan's counts and kings which allowed a large measure of legitimate coercive force to the town itself.

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