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Burrow, J. A. *Gestures and Looks in Medieval Narrative*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002. xi, 200 pp. US.\$ 55 ISBN 0-521-81564-9

J. A. Burrow's book on the representation of non-verbal communication in medieval English, French, and Italian literature is an important interdisciplinary contribution to our understanding of medieval culture. Burrow deploys a substantial (though presumably lay) understanding of recent discoveries from the disciplines of biology, sociology, and psychology about the ways human beings in various cultures communicate. He brings that understanding to bear on the details of medieval narratives, linking communication theories and medieval studies in novel ways. This combination will be helpful to scholars of all of the medieval European literatures, for it provides a guide to specific kinds of non-verbal communication while also establishing the groundwork for further investigation of textual representation of non-verbal communication.

Throughout, Burrow wisely narrows his focus to signs made to convey a specific meaning—those, that is, with “*voluntas significandi*,” as Burrow terms it, following Augustine in *De Doctrina Christiana*. This still leaves him with a wide range of gestures and looks to discuss—from arms akimbo to looking askance, pointing, and smiling, to name only a few of the fifty or so signs listed in the index. In his first three chapters Burrow seeks to decode medieval references to these signs. Basing his interpretation on modern understanding of non-verbal communication and careful philological investigation, he explains how medieval readers might have pictured the gestures and looks they found described in writing and how they might have interpreted their meanings.

Burrow reminds his readers that our already culturally-determined modern understanding of such signs may differ still again from medieval understandings, but he nevertheless presents a compelling case that his readings of medieval signs are historically justified. His work is also complicated by the breadth of linguistic evidence he considers; again, Burrows convinces me that he has the details correct. Both the risk of anachronism and the complexity of lexicon firmly justify Burrow's book, for without studies such as this we are probably all too facile in our reading of medieval descriptions of non-verbal communication.

Burrow seems most comfortable with English lexicon; most of his work has been in late medieval English literature, and his training in that field is apparent throughout. Nevertheless, he is obviously a proficient reader of French and Italian texts, and he makes frequent enough reference to terms and texts in these languages that specialists will have little trouble generalizing Burrow's points and discovering further similarities and differences between English and continental gestures and looks, beyond those he has already sniffed out.

The book's final two chapters offer readings of specific texts. First, Burrow considers Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*—which he reads against its source, Boccaccio's *Il Filostrato*—and the anonymous *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*.

His reading of *Troilus* and *Filostrato* is particularly welcome because it brings out the ways Chaucer adapted the text by adding and altering the gestures and looks described in it. The reading of *Sir Gawain* is equally adept and especially helpful in decoding the complexities of the non-verbal communication between Gawain and Bertilak and his wife; further discussion of the possibility that Gawain's relationship with Bertilak is to be understood as homoerotic in its gestures (a reading Burrow dismisses too quickly) would have been helpful.

Then, Burrow applies his methodology to the *Commedia Divina*. He discovers in the poem an unexpectedly rich variety of gestures and looks; in some of the encounters with the shades, he argues, the description of such non-verbal signs provides the bulk of the poem's meaning. Burrow also shows how Dante has used his technical knowledge of such signs, probably acquired from such scholastic treatises as the *De Modis Significandi* of Martin of Dacia, within the tight and compressed diction of the *Commedia*. Specifically, Burrow shows how the description of these signs sheds light on Dante's relationship with both Virgil and Beatrice. More generally, Burrow argues, the poem explores the ways that non-verbal communication facilitates or enhances human communication and the ability of visual and textual artists to depict such signs. Burrow's discussion of the "visible speech" in *Purgatorio* X is particularly revealing of the poet's negotiation of such matters.

Burrow's book will prove to be of lasting value in helping modern interpreters of these works and many others understand some of their finest points and those most open to anachronistic misinterpretation. Burrow also extends the range of interdisciplinary readings of the Middle Ages and reminds us how illuminating it can be to use the physical and social sciences to understand medieval literature.

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Azzetta, Luca. *Ordinamenti, provvisioni e riformazioni del Comune di Firenze volgarizzati da Andrea Lancia (1355-1357)*. Venezia: Istituto Veneto di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti, 2001 (Memorie. Classe di Scienze Morali, Lettere ed Arti, XCIX). Pp. ix, 310.

Il titolo forse non è ingannevole, perché la parte più consistente del volume, da pagina 127 a pagina 252, è effettivamente occupata dall'edizione dei testi volgarizzati dal famoso notaio fiorentino; tuttavia è un titolo che probabilmente non invoglia il comune studioso di letteratura italiana, il quale potrebbe credere di trovarsi di fronte a un'opera per specialisti, o addirittura per iper-specialisti di storia del diritto o di storia delle istituzioni politiche o eventualmente di volgarizzamenti trecenteschi. Beninteso, c'è anche questo; anzi, se si guarda al numero delle pagine, questo è l'elemento senza confronto preponderante: perché all'edizione vera e propria dei testi occorre aggiungere il glossario (253-268) e gli indici degli antroponimi (269-270) e dei toponimi (270-310: l'esorbitante differenza di ampiezza mostra che in scritture di questo tipo le località —città, paesi, quartieri, pievi— sono molto più significative delle persone che vi abitano); ma bisogna