

also had a poor view of the nature of the matter out of which we are made, blaming it for many of the bad things that happen to us. Gersonides's point is that we are limited by the nature of not being entirely spiritual: matter could have been different, but then we would have been different, and we are instead the sorts of creatures that God wished to create, not things made out of a radically different sort of matter.

This suggests the basic distinction between the styles of Maimonides and Gersonides: the latter tends to avoid more complex ways of understanding the world and our role in it in favor of simpler and more direct explanations. Perhaps Gersonides was influenced by his scientific background, but there were other scientists at the time who went in different directions, so that cannot be the whole explanation. For that matter, Maimonides himself was hardly ignorant of science. Gersonides also has a much clearer style than Maimonides, and that clarity had a limiting impact on the content of his thought: he was not prepared to go further into the philosophical depths that Maimonides and Averroes established. There is also a quickness to Gersonides's thought that sometimes resembles nothing more closely than superficiality; it would have been useful for Feldman to have intervened occasionally in the arguments and point to winners and losers.

These are precisely the points that one is encouraged to make by the clarity and accuracy of Feldman's commentary. His book will be the standard work on Gersonides for a very long time indeed.

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ABIGAIL FIREY, *A Contrite Heart: Prosecution and Redemption in the Carolingian Empire*. (Studies in Medieval and Reformation Traditions, 145.) Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2009. Pp. xvii, 293; 4 black-and-white figures and 1 map. \$138. ISBN: 978-9004178151. doi:10.1017/S0038713412000243

In the introduction to *A Contrite Heart* Abigail Firey explains her endeavor and intent by way of a vivid metaphor: "A venture in finding lost keys and oiling sticky hinges, its hope is that the glimpses of the places behind hitherto closed doors will inspire others to go further" (p. 6). The realm her book reveals behind those long-locked, creaky doors, however, is at first glance a rather uninviting one: excavations of deep foundations (pp. 4–5), a strong cord (p. 5), a final scaffold (p. 101), webs of procedure, language, relationships, and obligations (pp. 59, 187, 222), mice in soup (p. 63), a morbidly venomous spider (p. 82), the desperate muttering of a discouraged man (p. 59), the mortification of flesh (pp. 204–5), pollution and contagion (p. 67), the mentally unhinged (p. 205), and a monstrous hybrid (p. 30) all confront the intrepid explorer. Firey's challenging study not only grants access to this seemingly nightmarish scene (the first among its many virtues) but even makes a compelling case for paying close attention to what one finds there (however offensive), for thinking seriously about its intra- and intertextual form and function, and for taking stock of its place in the perennial historical dialectic between notions of self and society. Her conclusion shows the dividends—and the stakes—of doing so: amid the many grim manifestations of moral and material invasion, excavation, and coercion during the ninth century, an unyielding source of hope and courage for the individual appeared as well—the private conscience. Whether and to what extent this "hopeful" narrative of resistance relies on a teleological story about the relationship between freedom and tyranny and between the individual and the community depends on one's views regarding the transhistorical meaning, constancy, and value of those concepts. Making things even more complicated, Firey's study itself problematizes modern assumptions about such transhistorical meaning, constancy, and value. Put another way, *A Contrite Heart* is an unassuming book with radical implications.

In the brief, dense introduction Firey outlines the themes and methodology of her study, which over the course of five chapters treats the melding of juridical and religious ideas under the Carolingians, the impact of this synthesis upon notions of public and private, and, coming full circle, the ways that changes in public/private distinctions in turn affected legal claims, domains, and procedure. To situate and justify her project, she offers summary reflections (all deserving more extensive analysis) on the short shrift scholars have long given to Carolingian legal history; the relationships among Carolingian popular piety, unwritten precepts, and statutory law; the many difficulties of recovering meaning from early-medieval discourse; and the modern hermeneutical tools of anthropology and linguistic and literary-critical theory, and their limits.

Chapter 1, “The Protection of Privacy: Secrets and Silence,” looks to the famous divorce case of King Lothar II and Theutberga in 860 as a way to refract the interdependent ideas of privacy, conscience, and truth and to observe with greater precision how they shaped juridical reasoning. By carefully deconstructing the three reports of the divorce, as preserved within Archbishop Hincmar of Reims’s own lengthy analysis of the case, Firey reveals the ways that the ritual of penance could simultaneously be treated with great solemnity and be shrewdly manipulated, both by those who directed it and by those who performed it. To Carolingian interpreters and exegetes, the fraudulence of Herod’s tears over John the Baptist’s execution stood opposite the sincerity of Susannah’s heart in the face of false accusations as powerful reminders of the equivocal relationship between exterior and interior.

In her second chapter, “The Public Welfare: Pollution and Purgation,” Firey traces the boundaries of individual moral behavior, the testing of those boundaries, and the consequences of transgressing them in the ninth century; tracks the concomitant growth of the Carolingian clergy’s moral oversight and efforts at correction; and argues that such boundaries and their oversight increasingly began to “migrate into,” merge with, and markedly change an existing, active, parallel body of public jurisprudence. For her analysis she relies principally on penitentials and their representations of polluting situations (which Firey suggests were in fact devised as hypothetical juridical exercises), but she also devotes considerable attention to Rudolf of Mainz’s *Vita Leobae*, Amulo of Lyons’s *Adversus Iudaeos*, Hrabanus Maurus’s commentary on Leviticus, and several moral and homiletic texts of Gregory the Great.

Chapter 3, “Authority and Piety,” looks more closely at the melding of the juridical and spiritual realms of Carolingian governance. Here Firey attempts to chart the rise of the practices of penance and confession within—indeed, she presents them as an essential and revealing part of—the new, hybrid domain of “religious jurisprudence.” Pushing the limits of what the available source material will yield, she tries to identify the fertile ground within which this hybrid grew, “to determine what sort of precedents for penitential orientation might have already been present before the programme of religious education developed during Charlemagne’s reign” (p. 111). Using two case studies of episcopal treatment of popular belief and heresy—the pastoral self-consciousness and praxis of Bishop Boniface of Mainz in the eighth century and that of the Lyonnaise bishops Agobard and Amulo in the ninth—Firey demonstrates that the bishops’ different methods of combating the problem signify an evolution in the understanding of ecclesiastical authority with respect to the hierarchy of the church, the laity, and written law. Over the course of a century, correction in juridical terms of prosecution, punishment, and suffering and in pastoral terms of contrition, confession, and rehabilitation gradually converged in the practice of penance, and not only for reasons of conceptual economy: “As an error of belief and a sin against God, heresy called for a measure of sacral atonement and conversion, and those meanings were inherent in penance” (p. 157). That such error was recognized as a problem dire enough to be deserving of this “sacral call,” argues Firey, was due less

to an actual growth in heterodoxy than to an escalation in imperial surveillance and intervention at the local level and to an increasing concern about the relationship between the spiritual health of the individual and that of the realm as a whole.

Focusing even more tightly on the ideological and legal revolution she calls “Carolingian penitentialism” (p. 208), in her fourth chapter, “Empire and Education,” Firey examines the growth in imperial surveillance of and care for the individual’s soul, its implications with respect to local authority, and what forms this burgeoning moral-spiritual stewardship took, informed as it was by the discourse of penance. Central to the scrutiny of the realm’s subjects was the “scheme” or “system” of the seven (or eight) capital vices, a diagnostic template not only used by ecclesiastics to structure and guide their therapeutic ministry but also increasingly adopted and applied by the laity upon themselves and others as a disciplined means of introspection and prosecution. This expansion of spiritual authority to the laity occurred in concert with the growing needs of (and requisite roles associated with) a new judicial forum that rapidly gained currency within Carolingian legal-penitentialist discourse: the court of conscience. Through a fascinating discussion of the Carolingian reception, appropriation, and careful invocation of scriptural and patristic texts on morals, the interior, and the contemplative life, Firey illustrates how “complex and varied intellectual resources could be brought to bear upon imperial directives” (pp. 193–94), facilitating and ennobling the work of “a court and governing cadre engaged in transforming autonomous polities into empire and incorporating communities into new systems of supervision” (p. 190). In other words, Charlemagne’s imperial project of political transformation and incorporation at once informed and was enabled by a parallel ecclesiastical (and increasingly lay) project dedicated to the policing and mastery of the self. Inherent in this method, and a constant cause of concern, was the possibility that the individual will might perversely “turn the court of conscience into a site of unchoreographed theatre or of usurpation of pastoral, judicial, or political authority” (p. 198). According to Firey, this misgiving explains the equally constant presence of fearmongering and haranguing upon the righteousness of obedience. Such unbridled “inspiration” would be checked before it could begin.

Chapter 5, “Contestation, Co-operation, Coercion, and Resistance,” concludes the study through a series of systematic moves signaled in its title. Turning to the councils of Reims and Arles in 813, Firey shows that the ideology of penitentialism, despite its imperial and episcopal promotion, was not universally accepted: there were some who worried about and protested what they considered the overreaching of pastoral care into private domains reserved for God’s authority and judgment alone. Nevertheless, by the mid-ninth century, the spiritual ministry of ecclesiastics had assumed a juridical character that placed it in competition with secular courts “in its consideration of offenses, adjudicants, processes, and penalties” (p. 212). To a certain extent, this competition gradually gave way to negotiation and cooperation between the two spheres, their jurisdictions, and their personnel, if the remarks of Hincmar of Reims are any indication. Still, with its formidable instruments of invasion and coercion—the forensic tool of the seven deadly sins and Petrine armory of binding, loosing, and excommunication—doubt remained over the potential abuse of the spiritual ministry. To underscore both the success of penitentialism and the anxiety over its (mis)implementation, Firey invokes and explicates Hrotswitha of Gandersheim’s mid-tenth-century play *Paphnutius*, which pits a confessor’s steely ministry against a penitent’s passionate contrition. Despite being the object of monstrous oppression and degradation, Thais, the play’s penitent, refuses to be victimized, instead relying on her own moral authority and humbling herself still further, thereby affirming “that in penance, power resides with the penitent, not with the confessor” (p. 232). Such autonomous moral authority, such Christian conviction, when seated in the court of conscience, alone before God’s judgment, would assume great significance in the centuries to

come, concludes Firey. Increasingly embedded in Western discourse, it grew from the seed of Carolingian penitentialism into the fruit of conscientious objection and faith in the transcendent value of free will.

A *Contrite Heart* is certainly a book for specialists. It operates largely on two levels: at the micro level of manuscript and text analysis and at the macro level of very broad concepts, ideas, and discourses. More specifically, within this division the emphasis falls largely on the “macro”; Firey has already covered the “micro” side in depth in a series of previously published articles. One of the unfortunate consequences of this structural decision—or publishing convention—is that little in the way of historical or historiographical context is supplied to situate her arguments and lend them the force and relevance they might otherwise have. In short, much is left unsaid. This reticence is perhaps most problematic when Firey makes what may be her most controversial assertion, one on which much of the book is based: that those who “compiled, composed, and debated law in the Carolingian realms” were “jurists” and “pastoral lawyers” (pp. 2, 11). I suspect few will be convinced that the benefits of using such terminology, which she outlines in brief (p. 2), outweigh the cost of anachronism. That is unfortunate, for reticence does not make an assertion wrong. On the contrary, there is much to Firey’s prying study to recommend it. Just make certain to have an extra tin of oil and a spare set of keys.

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YASMINA FOEHR-JANSENS, *La jeune fille et l’amour: Pour une poétique courtoise de l’évasion*. (Publications Romanes et Françaises, 249.) Geneva: Droz, 2010. Paper. Pp. 223; 1 black-and-white figure. €50. ISBN: 978-2600013918.
doi:10.1017/S0038713412000255

Yasmina Foehr-Janssens’s study takes as its point of departure a single narrative moment, often repeated. Thisbé, Iseult, and the anonymous *malmariée* in Marie de France’s *Guigemar* each takes flight in pursuit of her beloved. This act is the signifying gesture through which both liberty and desire are enacted: “La pucelle au pied léger, tel est bien l’emblème tenu que nous procure notre enquête sur les formes de la passion juvénile” (p. 39). In short, Foehr-Janssens is in pursuit of a desiring female subject in the French courtly literature of the twelfth century.

The book’s first section comprises two chapters, one devoted to *Pyrame et Thisbé*, the other to the *Conte de Floire et Blancheflor*. Both narratives confront what happens when two children grow up loving each other, but their devotion yields no suitable marriage. Both texts privilege a representation of the two lovers as “une image de complémentarité parfaite” (p. 37), although to very different ends.

Thisbé’s flight takes her from the confinement of paternal rule out to an exterior space ruled by sexual desire. In Foehr-Janssens’s reading, the *lai* preaches the inherent menace of sexuality (p. 65). Like *Tristan et Iseult*, *Pyrame et Thisbé* explores the complicity between Eros and Thanatos and proves the fascination of their joining (p. 46). The value of *Pyrame et Thisbé* as a narrative model comes directly from the lovers’ death, and one of the chapter’s strengths comes from the author’s examination of the gendered legacies of their respective suicides.

The dignity and innocence of the children’s love in the *Conte de Floire et Blancheflor* resist the notion that love is the prerogative of the nobility and demonstrate instead that love ennobles. The tale’s portrait of the balance between its two lovers challenges the boundaries between heterosexual love and the homosocial values of *amicitia*. Despite its portrait of the pair’s “idyllic” love, the narrative “ne fait nullement mystère de la violence qui s’exerce sur les femmes dans le monde féodal” (p. 90); the circulation of *Blancheflor*