were expressing ideas shared by the lay or border-zone people who read their writings and venerated those saints.) These are good working hypotheses, and in articulating them Kieckhefer is clarifying the whole problem of how to study the relation between sanctity and historical context. But they remain hypotheses. To prove them would, as he says, require a different kind of analysis, one that would look more closely at the distinctive features of saints from different regions and social classes and undertake detailed studies of individual saints and small groups. Such an analysis would also have to be less impressionistic than Kieckhefer's in identifying the themes of fourteenth-century piety, more empirical in dealing with social data, less vague about how "representative" cases are selected. It would have to be clearer about its conception of lay piety: Peter of Luxembourg wanted to enter a monastery and became a canon and a cardinal; Clare of Gambacorta was a Dominican nun. At least as many of Kieckhefer's other examples were clerics as were lay people. Most of their biographers were clerics. Kieckhefer may well be right that the clerical and lay mentality were becoming more alike, but to base this assertion upon an analysis of what clerical hagiographers said about the sanctity of either clerics or lay people is a dubious way to proceed. Finally, the analysis should be more precise in its use of the notion of the saint as outsider. Is this a reference to the saint's location in a community, social status, or religious extremism? Kieckhefer's discussion of the outsider as well as of society's ambivalence in its perception of sanctity is too protean, meaning whatever he wants it to mean in a particular case.

Notwithstanding such problems, this is an important addition to the literature on fourteenth-century piety. Kieckhefer deals sensitively and sympathetically with a cast of characters who have usually been dismissed as bizarre or pathological, and he succeeds in making them more accessible to us than anyone has done previously. His efforts at explanation, at placing fourteenth-century piety in its social and religious milieu, are not altogether successful, but to say that he raises more questions than he answers is perhaps a forgivable cliché since it is meant as a compliment. Kieckhefer's answers are intelligent, however tentative, and the questions his work raises point us in the directions we must go to resolve the problems of the relation between late-medieval religion and society.

DONALD WEINSTEIN
University of Arizona

V. A. KOLVE, *Chaucer and the Imagery of Narrative: The First Five Canterbury Tales.* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1984. Pp. xiv, 551; 175 black-and-white illustrations. $39.50.

THIS BIG, generous book does three main things at once. It is a study of the "iconography of Chaucer's narrative" that makes unusually rich use of medieval graphic materials; it is an elegant, close reading of the first five Canterbury tales; and it offers an argument for a substantially new view of Chaucer's intended design of the whole.

Following leads provided by Charles A. Owen, Jr., and John Leyerle, Kolve gives newly central place to the function of certain special "narrative images" in Chaucer's poetry. There are usually no more than one or two per poem. Characteristically originating in the "mimetic texture" of the work, such images stand out from the others because of a special resonance, a special iconographic power. They penetrate

the work, contribute deeply to its theme, and under appropriate conditions can point beyond the work to deeper significances fed by medieval iconographic tradition.

The job of studying these images is particularly difficult. It takes special literary sensitivity to be able to explain with any security why one image is important and another is not. It also takes a strong control of iconographic tradition in literature and in art, for the traditions of meaning in which these images belong were continuously accessible to Chaucer and his audience in both forms. Kolve is very well up to the job. For the tradition in written form he uses Chaucer's whole oeuvre, his known reading, and texts likely to have been known by his audience. For visual materials he necessarily goes farther afield. Anyone who has tried to find even a single likely instance of Chaucer's own response to the visual art of his time will testify that apposite materials are maddeningly scarce; many of his most vivid images seem to come directly from his reading. So here the question is not that of locating precise sources; one deals, at best, with the relevant iconographic traditions, and for these Kolve legitimately ranges widely, particularly into continental art of the fifteenth century, which dependably preserves traditions which must have been current earlier.

Though Kolve reads from the stance of a Christian, and readily includes in his armory the specifically Christian meanings of Chaucer's images, his method is far from that of routine "exegetical" criticism. He does not limit the meanings of the images (or of the poems) to those of the charity-cupidity axis, but is aware of alternative traditions of meaning that a given image can evoke. Thus the horse in medieval iconography can signify simply the useful animal; or animal nature, lack of restraint, the opposite of prudence or control; or specifically sexual appetite. This last significance may in turn carry in one tradition full moral disapproval (as in *Piers Plowman*), in another tradition some moral ambiguity (as in *Le roman de la Rose*), and in another what amounts to approval (as in Guillaume IX). Kolve also has the literary tact, essential to a mature reading of Chaucer, to know when the potential iconographical significance is turned off. It makes the book a particularly valuable example of method in iconographic criticism.

The power of the image in Chaucer is partly to be explained by the extraordinary emphasis that medievals placed on image making as a mental process. The book opens, accordingly, with a survey of the place of imaginative visualization in medieval epistemology. Conceiving materials visually was a widely used means of remembering, but it was also a means of knowing and a means of poetic making. Kolve cites striking evidence (both literary and visual) to show how much for literate persons reading poetry was the equivalent of "seeing" it, and he rightly emphasizes the importance of this kind of seeing for the medieval audience of listeners.

We shall probably never have a definitive list of the "narrative images" in Chaucer as long as differing readings of the poems exist. The value of the idea depends, rather, on how well the critic's nomination of a given image or images helps explain the meaning and organization of the poem. In this sense Kolve's choices are cogent and powerful; they truly organize, but do not limit, his readings. For the Knight's Tale they are the prison/garden and the amphitheater. The extra resonance of the first image is with the poem's theme of freedom, that of the second with its theme of order. In the Miller's Tale the key images are the would-be lover Absolon on his knees in a posture of adoration and "old John as the new Noah preparing for a second Flood." Kolve's detailed study of how Chaucer prevents these images from evoking suggestions of religious truth — how the fabliau's morality is made to feel "oddly innocent" set in a field of imagery evoking youthful animality and play — is one of the critical triumphs

of the book. The analysis of the images of Death-as-Tapster and of the unbridled horse allows Kolve to go deeply into the special element of self-portraiture in the Reeve's Tale and into the special flavor of its carnality. In the images of the rudderless ship and of the sea in the Man of Law's Tale he find iconographic dimensions so broad as to support a fully fourfold allegorical exegesis. The brief, unfinished Cook's Tale provides no narrative images. But Kolve makes an interesting case for its incorporating a relatively respectable, bourgeois London tradesman's morality alongside that of the drunken churl we know mainly from later passages.

In dealing with the place of these tales in the ordonnance of the whole work, Kolve is much concerned that the Cook's Tale's unfinishedness not be taken to mark an ending, whether it be of MS fragment A, or of the first day's pilgrimage, or even of that day's storytelling. For it is essential to his view that the Man of Law's Tale, which is almost always regarded as a separate fragment, be incorporated into A, to become its moral and artistic culmination, prefiguring the overall pattern of the *Canterbury Tales*. As the Parson's Tale and the Retraction supply Christian correction to the whole, so the Man of Law's Tale addresses itself to the lapse that the irremediably pagan Knight's Tale points to by omission and that the intervening fabliaux only make more acute. The Man of Law's Tale is a "provisional palinode," the first of a series.

This idea depends on Kolve's accepting the currently prevalent assumption that the pilgrimage is a predominantly Christian action which Chaucer came to view as ending in Canterbury (or the New Jerusalem). It depends too on his reading of the Knight's Tale's morality as pathetically and conspicuously incomplete because it excludes the idea of redemption. And it is strengthened by a relatively high valuation of the art of the Man of Law's Tale. Take exception to any of these — I have trouble with all of them — and the thesis loses some of its logic. Less convincing yet is the uncharacteristically forced reading of the Man of Law's introduction, which begins with the host's exhortation to the pilgrims to stop wasting time. In context the speech is much more likely to mean "It's time we started telling tales" than (as Kolve would have it) "It's time we heard a tale of a different kind." The reading offers us a strange characterization of Harry Bailly as Christian censor and moralist. In any case, whether the Cook's Tale was finished or not, there is nothing in the text that explicitly connects the Man of Law's Tale to fragment A. Indeed, the location of such an unconnected piece in the earliest manuscripts may itself be quite fortuitous.

Except where he briefly succumbs to the hopeless old game of constructing a calendar for the pilgrimage, Kolve gives us an acute and judicious reading. It is detailed, leisurely, and lavish in its documentation, but consistently interesting, full of small gems of observation, continuously aware of nuance, and generous in its exposition of plausible contrary readings. It handsomely fulfills the author's expressed hope — "to read in *The Canterbury Tales* more richly."

CHARLES MUSCATINE
University of California, Berkeley

ANGELIKI E. LAIOU-THOMADAKIS, *Peasant Society in the Late Byzantine Empire: A Social and Demographic Study*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977. Pp. xiv, 332; 2 graphs, 2 maps, 48 tables. $20.

THIS STUDY is the first attempt ever made to explore the interaction of social, economic, and demographic forces affecting the life of the Byzantine peasantry in the