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Tolan, John V.. *Saracens: Islam in the Medieval European Imagination*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2002. Pp. xxiii, 372. ISBN: 0-231-12333-7.

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It is a pleasure to read John Tolan's new book, a survey of western (and some eastern) attitudes toward Islam and Muslims from the seventh to the thirteenth centuries. The book is certainly a survey (that is, a synthesizing overview), with all the positive and negative aspects that the genre entails. It will be a very useful addition to undergraduate and graduate reading lists in courses on medieval history, comparative religion, and the history of cultural encounters. Tolan has already contributed a great deal to our knowledge of western views of Islam and the assimilation of Arab culture in Spain, not only in his book on *Petrus Alfonsi and His Medieval Readers* (Gainesville, 1993), but also in the useful collection of essays edited by Tolan under the title *Medieval Christian Perceptions of Islam* (New York, 1996) and a number of articles published in both French and English.

The book is organized into three main sections: "Foundations," centered on the seventh and eighth centuries; "Forging Polemical Images," on the eighth through twelfth centuries; and "Thirteenth-Century Dreams of Conquest and Conversion." The chronological asymmetry of this structure necessarily gives a great deal more weight to the thirteenth-century texts discussed here; in fact, the third section is by far the longest in the book. As a result, the treatment of the material from the seventh through twelfth centuries is necessarily rather selective and sometimes a bit sketchy. This is not necessarily a fault in the book, but rather a consequence of the survey format: it will facilitate use of *Saracens* by students new to the field, but may be titillating rather than satisfying to more advanced readers.

Part One, "Foundations," includes a brief overview of the early development of Islam (the 'truth' behind the myth, as it were) in order "to present the Koranic and traditional accounts of events in Muslim history...that are subsequently reused, twisted, and attacked by many Christian writers" (22), along with an account of "Early Eastern Christian Responses to Islam" featuring important and influential texts such as the Apocalypse of pseudo-Methodius, the *De Haeresibus* of John of Damascus, and the *Risalat al-Kindi*. Part Two, "Forging Polemical Images," explores the two main strands in western depictions of Islam: the characterization of Muslims as polytheistic

idolaters on the one hand, and the depiction of Muhammad as a war-mongering heresiarch on the other. After a consideration of Muslim Spain during the thirteenth century, Part Three turns to the role of the religious orders in the shaping of pre-modern views of Islam, in "Franciscan Missionaries Seeking the Martyr's Palm" and "The Dominican Missionary Strategy," and concludes with a chapter devoted to the remarkable Ramon Llull. Tolan's detailed treatment of the Franciscans and Dominicans contrasts with his more general discussions of the earlier Middle Ages, perhaps setting the stage for his anticipated next project on the encounter of St. Francis of Assisi with the Egyptian Sultan al-Kamil (336, n. 5).

The natural position of *Saracens* in a course syllabus will be in place of Norman Daniel's books on the depiction of Muslims in medieval literature and polemic, especially *Heroes and Saracens* and *Islam and the West: The Making of an Image*. Tolan explicitly (and gracefully) stakes out this territory in his introduction, suggesting that he "hope[s] to complement, rather than replace, the work done by Daniel" by revealing "why Christian writers presented Islam in this way" and "what ideological interests these portrayals might have served" (xvi-xvii). In his effort to situate portrayals of Islam in their ideological context, Tolan makes reference intermittently throughout the book to Edward Said's *Orientalism*, noting correspondences between medieval hostile depictions of Islam and modern anti-Arab polemic. For example, he suggests that the "ideological underpinnings of French and British colonialism in fact have their origins in the defensive reactions of Christian 'orientals'" in Syria, Palestine, and Byzantium (67), while the Spanish chroniclers of the Christian martyrs of Cordoba, who "oppose the Muslim triumphalist view of history with an apocalyptic vision promising Christian vengeance," bear a close resemblance to the modern "resistance cultures" described by Said, which generate "a historiography of resistance to oppose the triumphalist historiography of the dominant regime" (91). A slightly more sustained consideration of the usefulness of Said's theories to the medieval context appears in Tolan's conclusion (280-81); in the classroom setting, however, the relationship of the theoretical paradigms set out in *Orientalism* and *Culture and Imperialism* to medieval perceptions of Muslims is likely to generate a more complicated level of debate.

In a book designed to be especially useful to students, it is regrettable that the notes sometimes lead to less than optimal reference works. For example, citations of the Hereford map refer not to Scott Westrem's excellent edition of the map legends (*The Hereford Map* [Turnhout, 2001]), or even to earlier published books on the topic, but rather to Michael Camille's *The Gothic Idol* (Cambridge, 1989); citations of The Book of John Mandeville refer not to any of the editions of the work, or to the useful studies of Mandeville by Christiane Deluz or Iain Higgins, but (once again) to Camille (319, n. 95; 320, n. 98). Similarly, a whole series of citations concerning the depiction of Muslims in Middle English literature direct the reader to an unpublished 1969 dissertation rather than to modern editions of the plays and saints' lives discussed in the text (321, n. 111-119). On the Latin translation of the important and widely disseminated Apocalypse of pseudo-Methodius, it would have been more useful to cite the lengthy and detailed scholarly introduction to the facing-page Greek and Latin edition of W.J. Aerts and G.A.A. Kortekaas (*Die Apokalypse des pseudo-Methodius: Die aeltesten griechischen und lateinischen Uebersetzungen* [Louvain, 1998]), rather than "Guzman, 'Reports of Mongol Cannibalism'" (104 and 312, n. 140). (This edition should also have been cited at 296, n. 25.) In general, there is some tendency to cite secondary sources in place of (rather than as a supplement to) primary sources, so that an instructor using *Saracens* in a course would want to offer a

supplementary bibliography. Perhaps some of these cases could be corrected in a future edition of the book.

The one feature of *Saracens* that is truly frustrating is the book's lack of a complete bibliography (only a list of selected readings, keyed to the chapters, is provided). This is unlikely to have been the choice of the author, but rather of the press which, like other university presses, is eager to keep page counts low and publication costs at a minimum. Nonetheless, the lack of a bibliography is very inconvenient to the reader trying to track down the source of a reference cited in Tolan's copious notes. This task is made still more difficult by the fact that several errors have crept into the notes, so that a single article sometimes appears under more than one title: for example, Bat-Sheva Albert's "De fide catholica contra Judaeos d'Isidore de Seville" appears as "Albert, 'Isidore'" at 290, n. 63, but as "Albert, 'De fide'" in several other citations. Other sources of confusion in the notes would, again, have been remedied by the inclusion of a bibliography: the reader can assume that Peter the Venerable's Letter appears in the *Schriften zum Islam* edited by Gleis, which is cited as the source for Peter's *Summa totius haeresis Saracenorum* -- but no source for the letter is explicitly offered. The notes include other mysterious errors as well: for example, the invitation at 314, n. 26 to "see this chapter, note 8" actually refers to note 19 (I think). Either the press or the author must have an excellent spell-check program, because the text is remarkably clean, except for errors in bibliographical citation ("Irfad Shahid" for "Irfan Shahid" [287, n. 25], "Gerard Braut" for "Gerald Brault" [312, n. 1]) or usage ("principle" for "principal" [18], "in tact" for "intact" [36], "exemplar" for "exemplary" [213], etc.). It would be wonderful to see these errors corrected in a future edition of a work that will surely be an essential component of course syllabi in years to come.

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