

gripping essay on the crucial Battle of Bryn Glas—in which Glyndŵr crushingly defeated a much larger English army under Sir Edmund Mortimer—carefully explores the battle site in order to explain its outcome using military, rather than moral, judgments; while his “An ‘Amazing’ Claim: *The Tripartite Indenture*” places Glyndŵr in his political context, exploring his proposed division of Britain into three confederated states as “a breathtaking step in his political efforts to stabilize an independent Wales” (491).

Helen Fulton addresses both Owain’s skill as a statesman and literary reputation in “Owain Glyndŵr and the Prophetic Tradition”, arguing that “rumors of Owain’s belief in prophecy have been greatly exaggerated” (475) and that he had, rather, “a keen awareness of the role prophecy played in the public imagination in conferring legitimacy on those who prepared to acknowledge its truth value” (485). The literature of the rebellion is also explored by Bollard’s “Owain Glyndŵr and the Poets”, a comprehensive survey of contemporary Welsh verse concerning Owain, while Williams’s substantial essay on “The Later Welsh Poetry Referencing Owain” traces his considerable literary afterlife. Alicia Marchant’s “A Narrative Approach to Chronicles” unpacks the partisanship and rhetorical sophistication of deceptively straightforward contemporary chronicles, while William Oram’s “What Did Shakespeare Make of Owain Glyndŵr?” surveys Glyndŵr’s perhaps most familiar characterization to the English-speaking world. Finally, Elissa R. Henken’s impressive “Owain Glyndŵr in Folklore and the Popular Imagination” traces collective Welsh memories of Glyndŵr’s rebellion through the twenty-first century.

While an enormous amount of work has gone into this *Casebook*, the volume itself makes clear how much exciting work on Owain Glyndŵr’s life, military legacy, and literary reputation remains to be done. This *Casebook* is, and will remain, the essential tool with which to do it.

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PHILLIPS, Kim M. *Before Orientalism: Asian Peoples and Cultures in European Travel Writing, 1245–1510*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014. ISBN 978-0-8122-4548-6. Pp. 314. \$79.95.

*Before Orientalism* addresses an important debate within cultural studies of East-West relations, specifically concerning the genre of travel writing during the medieval period (which Phillips limits to 1245–1510). Phillips

attempts to answer whether medieval travel writing on Asia can be considered Orientalist in nature, as per the theories laid out by Edward Said. Phillips argues that although it can surely be said that a type of medieval Orientalism did exist (especially in encounters between Christians and Muslims), medieval European representations of Asia were distinct, implying that Orientalist theories are not adequate here. It is essentially *before* Orientalism, hence the title.

The text is organized logically into two parts, making the whole of the argument easy to follow. The first part of the book is dedicated to theoretical, textual, and biographical information consisting of the following chapters: Chapter 1 “On Orientalism”, Chapter 2 “Travelers, Tales, Audiences,” and Chapter 3 “Travel Writing and the Making of Europe”. Some of the main authors and texts dealt with in *Before Orientalism* are John of Plano Carpini, *Ystoria Mongalorum* (1247), Marco Polo, *Le Divisament dou monde* (c. 1298), Ricold of Monte Croce, *Liber peregrinacionis* (c. 1301), John of Monte Corvino, *Letters* (c. 1305–06), Odoric of Pordenone, *Relatio* (c. 1330), Heteoum of Armenia, *La flor des estoires de la terre d’Orient* (1307), Niccolò dei Conti, *India Recognita* (1492), Ludovico de Varthema, *Itinerario* (1510), and *The Letter of Prester John*.

The time period that Phillips studies (1245–1510) is determined by the texts themselves: travel writing. One of the first and very important examples of travel writing in the medieval period, of someone that actually traveled to Asia is Carpini’s *Ystoria*, based on his journey of 1245 into Mongol territory. And all the works studied are either first-hand or dictated accounts of Europeans who either traveled or claimed to have traveled to Asia. Many of the books were the most widely disseminated and popular books of their time period. Given these factors, Phillips choice of texts, beyond being very extensive and complete, is very logical.

The second part of the text is divided into important themes in medieval traveler’s writings, with a chapter dedicated solely to each topic: Chapter 4 “Food and Foodways”, Chapter 5 “Femininities”, Chapter 6 “Sex”, Chapter 7 “Civility”, and Chapter 8 “Bodies”. Phillips also provides an afterword where she reiterates her arguments and conclusions, but also based on these, she posits a new branch of study called “precolonial studies”. She then closes her study modestly stating her hope that *Before Orientalism* has broken with traditional methods of studying the Medieval period that work only within a single literary tradition and which only focus on one language or culture; things that her text most certainly doesn’t do.

Phillip’s main argument is that Western perspectives in medieval encounters with the East were different from modern Orientalism because

medieval writers did not approach the East from the position of what would later become the supposed hegemonic European universal Self. That identification did not yet exist, nor had a colonialist impulse yet developed during that time period. Instead Phillips demonstrates throughout the book that medieval writers' representations of Asia are not only diverse but also contain moments of praise, recognition of oneself in the Other, curiosity, and a genuine desire to learn from the Other. Furthermore, in those moments where images of Asia could be mistaken for being Orientalist Phillips makes a worthy attempt, sometimes more convincingly than others, to discredit that idea by providing close readings of texts and thorough explanations of the historical context to show other possible motives behind that representation. For example, in her discussion of the medieval representation of food and eating habits of the Mongols (Ch. 4), Phillips shows that the repeated emphasis on Mongols going long periods of time without eating, and consuming vermin and 'filthy' animals when they did eat, confirmed an already established mindset towards the Mongols, the revered and feared invaders, as hardy and ferocious. The image, an interesting and complex mix of awe and disgust, worked as a warning to be wary of this tribe of people who, in that historical moment, could invade at any moment. Thus it did not function as a moralizing or civilizing trope.

It is this type of analysis that Phillips carries out in the entire book with great success. However, on some points, especially in relation to modern Orientalism, her approach seems narrow at times. Absent from her discussion of Said, for example, is his differentiation between *manifest* and *latent* Orientalisms. In her analysis of sex in medieval writing (Ch. 6), Phillips tends to only look at the topic in all its different manifestations through a binary lens: whether it is represented in a way that allows the Western writers to portray the East as inferior. What she doesn't talk about is how in modern Orientalism the East is not only seen as inferior but as often (sexually) desirable, and how that played symbolically into the Western psyche. Based on the common allegory of land/woman, in Orientalism there is created and justified at the same time in the subconscious the idea of conquering and possession of the desired sexual object/nation. When Phillips talks about the lack of desire to possess in medieval texts, she refers exclusively to Europe's inability to militarily possess colonies in the East. What about the fantasy or desire to possess land symbolically through the physical possession of Eastern women? How does that play out in medieval texts, if it existed, and how might it have carried over into modern forms of Orientalism?

Another criticism is that in arguing that all elements she investigates are pre-Orientalist, Phillips avoids the possibility that they are two things at the same time: pre-Orientalist *and* the beginning of Orientalist imaginings. In other words, she avoids talking about certain depictions as possibly being precursors to (the beginnings of) what would later become a more aggressive form of Orientalism. Instead of using the idea of medieval or “before Orientalism” as completely different from modern Orientalism, in certain cases it may be more productive to talk about “before Orientalism” as different, but also as the point from which modern Orientalism would grow. Aside from these small defects, *Before Orientalism* is an excellent study of medieval literary representation of Asia with well-researched argumentation that shows quite convincingly that what happens before modern Orientalism is truly a different phenomenon.

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