This is the first-ever history of the literary theory and criticism produced during the Middle Ages that covers all the main traditions in Latin, the major European vernaculars, and Byzantine Greek. Starting with sections on the rich array of materials found within the study of grammar and the formal ‘arts’ of poetry, letter-writing and preaching, it proceeds to offer a full description of the Latin commentary tradition on classical and classicising literature, followed by explanations of medieval views on literary imagination and memory, and the ways in which certain texts were believed to achieve moral profit through pleasure. The remainder of the volume, and its largest part, is taken up with accounts of the diverse theoretical and critical traditions which developed in the vernacular languages, ranging from Medieval Irish to Old Norse, Occitan to Middle High German. Since many of the most significant developments occurred in Italy, a series of chapters is devoted to the contributions made by Dante and the commentators on his *Commedia*, the debates on Latin versus vernacular, and humanist views on poetry and prose. Finally the volume moves from the Latin West to Greek Byzantium, to review the attitudes held there concerning literature and its various uses.
The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism

FOUNDING EDITORS
Professor H. B. Nisbet
University of Cambridge
Professor Claude Rawson
Yale University

The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism provides a comprehensive historical account of Western literary criticism from classical Antiquity to the present day, dealing with both literary theory and critical practice. The History is intended as an authoritative work of reference and exposition, but more than a mere chronicle of facts. While remaining broadly non-partisan it will, where appropriate, address controversial issues of current critical debate without evasion or false pretences of neutrality. Each volume is a self-contained unit designed to be used independently as well as in conjunction with the others in the series. Substantial bibliographical material in each volume provides a foundation for further study of the subjects in question.

VOLUMES PUBLISHED
Volume 1: Classical Criticism, edited by George A. Kennedy
Volume 2: The Middle Ages, edited by Alastair Minnis and Ian Johnson
Volume 3: The Renaissance, edited by Glyn P. Norton
Volume 4: The Eighteenth Century, edited by H. B. Nisbet and Claude Rawson
Volume 5: Romanticism, edited by Marshall Brown
Volume 7: Modernism and the New Criticism, edited by A. Walton Litz, Louis Menand and Lawrence Rainey
Volume 8: From Formalism to Post-Structuralism, edited by Raman Selden
Volume 9: Twentieth-Century Historical, Philosophical and Psychological Perspectives, edited by Christa Knellwolf and Christopher Norris

VOLUMES IN PREPARATION
Volume 6: The Nineteenth Century, edited by M. A. R. Habib
The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism

VOLUME 2
The Middle Ages

Edited by

Alastair Minnis and Ian Johnson
Contents

List of contributors viii
List of abbreviations xiv
Acknowledgements xvi

Introduction 1
Alastair Minnis and Ian Johnson

I THE LIBERAL ARTS AND THE ARTS OF LATIN TEXTUALITY

1 Grammatica and literary theory 15
Martin Irvine with David Thomson

2 The arts of poetry and prose 42
J. J. Murphy

3 The arts of letter-writing 68
Ronald G. Witt

4 The arts of preaching 84
Siegfried Wenzel

II THE STUDY OF CLASSICAL AUTHORS

5 From late Antiquity to the twelfth century 99
Winthrop Wetherbee

6 From the twelfth century to c. 1450 145
Vincent Gillespie

III TEXTUAL PSYCHOLOGIES: IMAGINATION, MEMORY, PLEASURE

7 Medieval imagination and memory 239
Alastair Minnis

8 The profits of pleasure 275
Glending Olson
### IV Vernacular Critical Traditions: The Early Middle Ages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Medieval Irish literary theory and criticism</td>
<td>291</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Patrick Sims-Williams and Erich Poppe</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Anglo-Saxon textual attitudes</td>
<td>310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Ananya Jahanara Kabir</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Literary theory and practice in early-medieval Germany</td>
<td>324</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>John L. Flood</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Literary criticism in Welsh before c. 1300</td>
<td>333</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Marged Haycock</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Criticism and literary theory in Old Norse-Icelandic</td>
<td>345</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Margaret Clunies Ross</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### V Vernacular Critical Traditions: The Late Middle Ages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Latin commentary tradition and vernacular literature</td>
<td>363</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Ralph Hanna, Tony Hunt, R. G. Keightley, Alastair Minnis and Nigel F. Palmer</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Vernacular literary consciousness c. 1100–c. 1500: French, German and English evidence</td>
<td>422</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Kevin Brownlee, Tony Hunt, Ian Johnson, Alastair Minnis and Nigel F. Palmer</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Occitan grammars and the art of troubadour poetry</td>
<td>472</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Simon Gaunt and John Marshall</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Literary theory and polemic in Castile, c. 1200–c. 1500</td>
<td>496</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Julian Weiss</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Literary criticism in Middle High German literature</td>
<td>533</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Nigel F. Palmer</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Later literary criticism in Wales</td>
<td>549</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Gruffydd Aled Williams</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### VI Latin and Vernacular in Italian Literary Theory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Dante Alighieri: experimentation and (self-)exegesis</td>
<td>561</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Zygmunt G. Barański</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Contents

21 The Epistle to Can Grande  
**Zygmunt G. Barański**  
583

22 The Trecento commentaries on Dante’s *Commedia*  
**Steven Botterill**  
590

23 Latin and vernacular from Dante to the age of Lorenzo  
(1321–c. 1500)  
**Martin McLaughlin**  
612

24 Humanist views on the study of Italian poetry in the early Italian Renaissance  
**David Robey**  
626

25 Humanist criticism of Latin and vernacular prose  
**Martin McLaughlin**  
648

**VII BYZANTINE LITERARY THEORY AND CRITICISM**

26 Byzantine criticism and the uses of literature  
**Thomas M. Conley**  
669

*Bibliography* 693  
*Index* 816
Contributors

Zygmunt Barański, Serena Professor of Italian in the University of Cambridge and Fellow of New Hall, has published extensively on Dante, medieval poetics, fourteenth-century Italian literature, and modern Italian literature and culture. He is editor of the interdisciplinary journal *The Italianist*.

Steven Botterill is Associate Professor of Italian Studies and Associate Dean of the Undergraduate Division at the University of California, Berkeley. He is the author of *Dante and the Mystical Tradition: Bernard of Clairvaux in the ‘Commedia’* (1994), of an edition and translation of Dante's *De vulgari eloquentia* (1996), and of numerous articles on Dante and other medieval topics. Appointed editor-in-chief of *Dante Studies* in 2003, he is currently working on a book to be called *Dante and the Language of Community*.

Kevin Brownlee is Professor of Romance Languages at the University of Pennsylvania, where he teaches medieval French and Italian literature, and is Graduate Chair of Italian. He is the author of *Poetic Identity in Guillaume de Machaut* (1984) and *Discourses of the Self in Christine de Pizan* (forthcoming), as well as numerous articles on Dante; currently he is working on a study of Jean de Meun’s *Roman de la Rose*. His most recent co-edited volume is *Generation and Regeneration: Tropes of Reproduction* (2001).

Margaret Clunies Ross is McCaughey Professor of English Language and Early English Literature at the University of Sydney. Among her most recent publications are *Prolonged Echoes: Old Norse Myths in Medieval Northern Society* (2 vols., 1994 and 1998), *The Norse Muse in Britain, 1750–1820* (1998), and *Old Icelandic Literature and Society* (2000). She is one of five general editors of a new edition of the corpus of Old Norse skaldic poetry and has a new book, *A History of Old Norse Poetry and Poetics* (Boydell & Brewer, forthcoming).
Notes on contributors

**Thomas M. Conley**, Professor of Speech Communication, the Classics, and Medieval Studies at The University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, is the author of numerous studies on Byzantine rhetoric and culture, including 'Practice to Theory: Byzantine “Poetics”' and *Byzantine Culture in Renaissance and Baroque Poland* (1994).

**John L. Flood** is Emeritus Professor of German in the University of London. He has published widely in such fields as the history of the German language, medieval and early modern German literature, the history of the book, and the history of medicine. His books include *Die Historie von Herzog Ernst* (1991), *The German Book 1450–1750* (1995), *Johannes Sinapius (1505–1560), Hellenist and Physician in Germany and Italy* (1997), and he is currently preparing a bio-bibliographical handbook on Poets Laureate in the Holy Roman Empire.


**Vincent Gillespie** is J. R. R. Tolkien Professor of Medieval English Literature and Language at the University of Oxford and a Fellow of Lady Margaret Hall. His publications include an edition of the late-medieval library catalogue of Syon Abbey (2001), studies of devotional writing in England, essays on the problems of mystical language, and explorations of the history of the book in medieval England.

**Ralph Hanna** is Professor of Palaeography in the University of Oxford, and Tutorial Fellow in English at Keble College. He has published widely on Middle English texts and their manuscripts, especially on the relation of Late Latin and vernacular cultures in the fourteenth century.

**Marged Haycock**, Reader in Welsh Language and Literature in the University of Wales, Aberystwyth, is the author of *Blodeugerdd Barddas o Ganu Crefyddol Cynnar* (1994) and co-editor of *Cyfoeth y Testun* (2003), a volume of textual criticism in memory of J. E. Caerwyn Williams. She is preparing a study and edition of the poems in the Book of Taliesin.
x Notes on contributors

Tony Hunt, a Fellow of the British Academy and Besse Fellow in French, St Peter’s College, Oxford, was formerly a British Academy Research Reader and Visiting Professor of Mediaeval Studies at Westfield College, London. He has published widely on Chrétien de Troyes, Medieval Latin, Anglo-Norman and vernacular medicine, as well as a monograph on Villon.

Martin Irvine is the Founding Director of the Communication, Culture, and Technology Program at Georgetown University, where he is also an Associate Professor. He has published on medieval literary theory and grammatica, semiotics, Abelard and Heloise and gender theory, and on the Internet and Web technology in higher education. Current interests include media theory and contemporary visual culture.

Ian Johnson is Senior Lecturer in English at the University of St Andrews, where he has taught since 1985, and General Editor of Forum for Modern Language Studies. He has published widely on medieval literary thought and translation, versions of Boethius, and gender. Currently, he is working on academic literary discourse in relation to the Middle English Lives of Christ.

Ananya Jahanara Kabir is a Lecturer in the School of English, University of Leeds. Her publications include a monograph, Paradise, Death and Doomsday in Anglo-Saxon Literature (2001), a co-edited collection of essays, Postcolonial Approaches to the European Middle Ages (2004), and articles on textuality, transmission and reception of medieval culture. Current research involves the overlap between the medieval, the postmodern and the postcolonial, and the relationship between medievalism and British imperialism.

Ron Keightley was Professor of Spanish at Monash University (Melbourne), 1972–92. He has published several articles on medieval and Renaissance narrative, and on translations of and commentaries on Boethius and Eusebius, in Spanish and Catalan, in addition to material on Latin American Literature. Currently he is working on a database for the Benedictine monastery at New Norcia (Western Australia), covering the period from 1855 to 1880.

John Marshall is Emeritus Professor of Romance Philology in the University of London (Westfield College). His publications include editions such as The Razos de trobar of Raiman Vidal and Associated Texts (1972) and The Donatz Proensals of Uc Faidit (1969) as well as numerous
Notes on contributors

articles on medieval Occitan poetics, grammar and literature and on Old French literature.


**Alastair Minnis** is a Humanities Distinguished Professor at Ohio State University, having previously taught at the Universities of York and Bristol and at Queen’s University, Belfast. He is the author of, among other works, *Medieval Theory of Authorship: Scholastic Literary Attitudes in the Later Middle Ages* (1984), editor, with A. B. Scott, of *Medieval Literary Theory and Criticism c. 1100–c. 1375: The Commentary Tradition* (1988), and General Editor of *Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature*.


**Glending Olson** is Professor Emeritus and former Chair of the Department of English at Cleveland State University. He has published *Literature as Recreation in the Later Middle Ages* (1982) and co-edited, with V. A. Kolve, *The Canterbury Tales: Nine Tales and the General Prologue* (1989). He has held fellowships from the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Guggenheim Foundation.

**Nigel F. Palmer** is Professor of Medieval German Studies at the University of Oxford. He is the author of numerous studies on Medieval German literature and culture, and has a particular interest in the fields of codicology, late-medieval prose, and the literature of the Cistercian order. His most recent books are a study of the library of the abbey of Eberbach, Rheingau (1998) and an edition of the Fifteen Signs before the Last Judgement in German (2002).
Erich Poppe is Professor of Celtic Studies and General Linguistics at the Philipps-Universität Marburg. He is the author of *The Irish Aeneid: The Classical Epic from an Irish Perspective* (1995) and articles on Medieval Irish and Welsh literature and language, as well as co-editor of *The Legend of Mary of Egypt in Medieval Insular Hagiography* (1996) and *Übersetzung, Adaptation und Akkultiration im insularen Mittelalter* (1999).

David Robey is Professor of Italian at the University of Reading and Emeritus Fellow of Wolfson College, Oxford. He has published on fifteenth-century humanism (educational and poetic theory), language and style in Dante and Renaissance narrative poetry, the computer analysis of literature, and modern critical theory, and was joint editor of *The Oxford Companion to Italian Literature*. He is author of a computer-based study on Sound and Structure in Dante’s *Divine Comedy*, and is currently extending this work to include the major narrative poems of the Italian Renaissance.

Patrick Sims-Williams is Professor of Celtic Studies in the University of Wales, Aberystwyth. His publications include *Religion and Literature in Western England, 600–800* (1990), *Britain and Early Christian Europe* (1995), and *The Celtic Inscriptions of Britain: Phonology and Chronology, c. 400–1200* (2003), and he is the editor of *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies*. Currently he is working on ancient Celtic place-and personal names and on medieval literary connections between Ireland and Britain.

David Thomson is Archdeacon of Carlisle. His publications include *A Descriptive Catalogue of Middle English Grammatical Texts* (1979) and *An Edition of the Middle English Grammatical Texts* (1984).

Julian Weiss is Reader in Medieval and Early Modern Spanish Literature in the Department of Spanish and Spanish American Studies, King’s College London. His publications include *The Poet’s Art: Literary Theory in Castile, c. 1400–60* (1990) and *Poetry at Court in Trastamaran Spain: From the ‘Cancionero de Baena’ to the ‘Cancionero general’* (1998, co-edited with E. M. Gerli).

Notes on contributors


Winthrop Wetherbee is Avalon Foundation Professor in the Humanities at Cornell University. His publications include a translation of Bernard Silvester’s Cosmographia (1973, 1990), an edition and translation of Johannes de Hauvilla’s Architrenius, a monograph on Chaucer’s Troilus and Criseyde (1984), and an introduction to the Canterbury Tales (1989).

Gruffydd Aled Williams is Professor of Welsh at the University of Wales, Aberystwyth. He is the author of Ymryson Edmund Prys a Wiliam Cynwal (1986), has contributed to published editions of twelfth- and thirteenth-century Welsh poetry, and has published many articles on medieval and Renaissance Welsh literature. He is Editor of Llên Cymru.

Ronald G. Witt is William B. Hamilton Professor of History at Duke University. He is the author of Coluccio Salutati and his Public Letters (1976), Hercules at the Crossroads: The Life, Work, and Thought of Coluccio Salutati (1983), and ‘In the Footsteps of the Ancients’: The Origins of Italian Humanism from Lovato to Bruni (2000). He has just completed a book on Latin culture in Italy from 800 to 1250 entitled The Italian Difference: The Two Cultures of Medieval Italy.
Abbreviations

AHDLMA  Archives d’histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Âge
ANTS  Anglo-Norman Texts Society
BGPM  Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie des Mittelalters
CCCM  Corpus Christianorum, continuatio medievalis
CCSL  Corpus Christianorum, series latina
CFHB  Corpus fontium historiae Byzantinae
CHLMP  The Cambridge History of Later Medieval Philosophy
ChR  The Chaucer Review
CIMAGL  Cahiers de l’Institut du moyen âge grec et latin
CP  Classical Philology
CSEL  Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum latinorum
EETS ES  Early English Text Society, Extra Series
EETS OS  Early English Text Society, Original Series
EETS SS  Early English Text Society, Supplementary Series
FRB  Fontes rerum byzantinarum, ed. V. Regel and N. Novasadskij (1892–1917; rpt. Leipzig, 1982).
Hist. ling.  Historiographia linguistica
HTR  Harvard Theological Review
JEGP  Journal of English and Germanic Philology
MÆ  Medium Ævum
### List of abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MGH</td>
<td>Monumenta germaniae historica</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MGH AA</td>
<td>Monumenta germaniae historica, auctores antiquissimi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M&amp;H</td>
<td>Medievale et humanistica</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MLN</td>
<td>Modern Language Notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MLQ</td>
<td>Modern Language Quarterly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MLR</td>
<td>Modern Language Review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MP</td>
<td>Modern Philology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MS</td>
<td>Mediaeval Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notices et extraits</td>
<td>Notices et extraits des manuscrits de la Bibliothèque nationale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PBB</td>
<td>Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur (Tübingen).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PMLA</td>
<td>Publications of the Modern Language Association of America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RP</td>
<td>Romance Philology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RR</td>
<td>Romanic Review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RTAM</td>
<td>Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAC</td>
<td>Studies in the Age of Chaucer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SATF</td>
<td>Société des anciens textes français</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMC</td>
<td>Studies in Medieval Culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SP</td>
<td>Studies in Philology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>StLV</td>
<td>Bibliothek des Litterarischen Vereins in Stuttgart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAPA</td>
<td>Transactions of the American Philological Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TSL</td>
<td>Tennessee Studies in Literature</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Acknowledgements

On the completion of the present book, which has taken many years to grow into its state of completion, the editors wish to extend their warmest thanks both to those longstanding contributors who in the early stages laid its foundation by producing chapters and materials for comment and compilation, and to those who joined the team of contributors quite recently and filled in major gaps in its coverage. Winthrop Wetherbee, the author of Chapter 5, wishes to acknowledge the original contribution of the late Judson Boyce Allen, who was to have been his collaborator in chronicling the medieval study of classical authors. We can only regret that Professor Allen was unable to set his own hand to a task for which he was so uniquely qualified.

The editors are grateful to Oxford University Press for permission to publish extracts from A. J. Minnis and A. B. Scott with D. Wallace (eds.), Medieval Literary Theory and Criticism, c. 1100–c. 1375: The Commentary-Tradition (1988; rev. edn, 1991, rpt. 2001), and to Indiana University Press for permission to publish a passage from Guido delle Colonne, Historia destructionis Troiae, translated by M. E. Meek (1974). We owe a special debt to James Simpson for early work, material and suggestions concerning Chapter 15. David Robey’s chapter (Chapter 24) is a revised version of an earlier article, ‘Humanist Views on the Study of Poetry in the Early Italian Renaissance’, History of Education, 13 (1984), 7–25. It is reprinted here by kind permission of the journal’s editor. The contribution of the founding editors of the Cambridge History of Literary Criticism, H. B. Nisbet and Claude Rawson, in helping to specify and approve the shape of this volume, and in advising on preliminary synopses of the contributions, is warmly acknowledged.

Alastair Minnis
Ian Johnson