

**Jean-Michel Picard, Tadhg O’Keeffe, Paul Duffy (ed.),
From Carrickfergus to Carcassonne. The Epic Deeds of
Hugh de Lacy during the Albigensian Crusade, Turnhout
(Brepols) 2017, XXII–358 p., 24 b/w fig., 5 maps, 22 col. pl.
(Outremer. Studies in the Crusades and the Latin East, 5),
ISBN 978-2-503-56781-5, EUR 89,00.**

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A substantial literature surrounding the Albigensian Crusade has emerged over the past decade. Some of this work continues to trade in stereotypes and sensationalism, while other contributions seek to reevaluate the conflict in terms of its ideologies, prosecution, or wider context. This volume, a collection of papers delivered at joint conferences held at Laurac and Carrickfergus in 2015, happily attempts the latter in relation to Hugh of Lacy, an Anglo-Norman baron who pursued an adventurous career in both Ireland and the Midi (the south of modern France) as earl of Ulster and Albigensian crusader. Like the recent works of Colin Veach and Daniel Brown (who appears in this collection), it demonstrates the broad connexions of the Albigensian Crusade with the British Isles and promises to make the reader reconsider the role and importance of Hugh of Lacy in both the Midi and Ireland. Unfortunately, it is not entirely successful in this laudable aim.

For one, by a generous definition, only a little over half the sixteen chapters discuss Hugh of Lacy in anything but the most tangential terms. Three are dedicated to the »Cathar« heresy. The introductory chapter, by the editors, sets out to give a *précis* of the movement. Though perhaps not strictly necessary in a work about Hugh of Lacy – who does not appear in contemporary sources as directly engaged with heresy or its persecution – it might nevertheless provide helpful context, if its historiography were not so out of date. This reviewer was surprised to find how much he missed the appearance of references to historians like Robert I. Moore, Monique Zerner, or Mark Gregory Pegg (who is cited elsewhere among footnotes, including in a chapter by Paul Duffy, one of the editors).

One need not subscribe to their extreme conclusions to recognise that they have helpfully nuanced the field of heresy studies such that one can no longer claim that medieval dualists were directly descended from antique Manichees, as Duffy and Brown suggest in another chapter. Contributions by the francophone scholars Pilar Jiménez Sanchez and Anne Brenon are more responsible, if less adventurous. Sanchez’s summary of the emergence and spread of dualist heresy in the 12th and 13th centuries throws into sharper relief the problems with the inexperienced introductory chapter, while Brenon discusses the content and provenance of a »Cathar« manuscript, written in *langue d’oc*, in the library of Trinity College, Dublin. The latter chapter is especially interesting, even if one might have liked to see its implications – particularly the significance of its Waldensian provenance – pushed further.

Assorted other chapters provide context for the world of Hugh of Lacy. Continuing the theme of vernacular medieval texts in Ireland that have little to do with Hugh himself, Jean-Michel Picard discusses the



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circulation of French writings around the island in the 13th century. While frequently associative rather than argumentative, Picard's illumination of the role played by French across multiple social strata helpfully challenges assumptions about Anglo-Norman settlement. Elsewhere, Jean-Louis Gasc and Jean-François Vassal examine two of Hugh's companions on the Albigensian Crusade: Simon of Montfort and Peter of Voisins, respectively.

Like Sanchez's contribution, these provide useful milk for the newcomer, but offer little meat for the presumed specialist audience of the volume. Vassal's contribution, commendable in its object of illuminating a neglected figure, also contains some problematic errors of fact, in part due to his reliance on secondary sources that often let him down – such as the 19th-century Protestant polemicist and romantic fantasist Napoléon Peyrat. On the other hand, the study by Lucien Aries of the 1219 battle of Baziège, in which Hugh of Lacy fought, offers an ingenious pinpointing of the battlefield based on contemporary reports.

Unsurprisingly, given that two of the three editors are archeologists, such engagement with landscape and material history is a prominent feature of the volume. However, these original and occasionally revisionist contributions largely downplay Hugh of Lacy's importance to the development of the material record. Ruairí Ó Baoill's intriguing survey of medieval remains at Carrickfergus dedicates less than a paragraph to Hugh's actual tenure of the town, noting only that he patronised and was buried in a no-longer extant friary. John of Courcy and the English Crown, Hugh's predecessor and successor, seem to have been much more involved in the growth of Carrickfergus. Daniel Tietzsch-Tyler reinforces this impression with his redating of the outer gate of the town's castle as a royal—rather than comital—project, undertaken whilst Ulster was confiscated. What impact Hugh may have had seems largely negative: Tadgh O'Keefe argues that the warfare resulting from his return from exile in the Midi in 1223 scuppered his elder brother Walter's ambitious plans for the development of Trim (co. Meath).

Two chapters in this archaeological group stand out. Jean Catalo's description of the excavations of the Château Narbonnais at Toulouse is a fascinating reconstruction of the castle's history and clarifies the confusing development of this important but now sadly lost monument. Philip MacDonald's judgement of »Hugh de Lacy's Contribution to Dundrum Castle« returns a verdict of »not guilty«, confirming the picture drawn by his colleagues. However, his chapter is a model of responsible scholarly restraint, explicitly resisting the urge – to which Paul Duffy unfortunately succumbs in his own chapter, as he tries to make Hugh the conduit for »Capetian« influence on Anglo-Irish castle-building – to assume that architectural trends only flowed through »great men« identifiable in the documentary record.

We are thus left with three chapters discussing Hugh of Lacy himself. The first, by Duffy and Brown, usefully sets the scene, though the quest for scarce information about Hugh leads them incautiously to accept insights into his opinion and character from the testimony of the »Canso de la cruzada«, a literary anti-crusader source whose anonymous author would have had no way of knowing what was happening in the crusader camp and was not anyway interested in authentic recorded speech. Brown's independent chapter argues that Hugh was an »assimilating« rather than »colonising« lord in both Ulster and the Midi. Though admirably attempting to deal with the limited sources available, Brown



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misunderstands some important Albigensian documentary evidence, which undermines his picture of Hugh as an accommodating lord with a *laissez-faire* attitude to government. More likely, Hugh was constantly in the saddle conquering and reconquering his territories and therefore had a limited impact on their quotidian administration.

Finally, David McIlreavy reinterprets Hugh's invasion of Twescard in 1223–1224 as the lynchpin of his strategy to recover Ulster, placing it within the context of the complicated struggles under the English minority government. This account is especially welcome, as, for the first time in the collection, the reader discovers convincing new evidence of Hugh as a bold actor, striking out to take destiny into his own hands. McIlreavy's Hugh is one who makes sense in the established picture of a baron on the make, daring to an earldom in Ireland or a crusader lordship in the Midi.

Unfortunately, smaller problems crop up throughout the volume. Simon V of Montfort, the Albigensian crusader and Hugh's lord in the Midi, is consistently misnumbered, despite a footnoted protest by Gasc and the establishment of the correct Montfort lineage among Anglophone historians since 1929¹. More irritating is the abundance of typographical errors; there are multiple occurrences in every chapter. It is extremely laudable and this reviewer is very grateful that Brepols – almost alone among academic publishers – continues to produce conference proceedings, especially bilingual ones, but one wishes that more care would be taken to provide a clean product, particularly given the price.

Hugh of Lacy was a remarkable baron of the adventuring type. But despite a few excellent contributions, this collection struggles to cohere around its professed subject and ultimately does little to justify its title's description of his career as filled with »epic deeds«, particularly during the Albigensian Crusade. No doubt there is more to this story of Hugh as dynamic warrior and lord, but the reader will catch only snatches of it in these pages.



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¹ George E. Cokayne, *The Complete Peerage of England, Scotland, Ireland, Great Britain, and the United Kingdom*, ed. V. Gibbs et al., revised edition, London 1929, vol. 8, p. 716 n. e.