The publication of this chronicle completes the translation of three major primary sources for the Albigensian Crusade. For far too long, students were unable to read any major documentary material in English on this topic. In 1996, Janet Shirley published *The Song of the Cathar Wars. A History of the Albigensian Crusade,* (Scolar Press, Aldershot). Two years later, W.A. and M.D. Sibly published *The History of the Albigensian Crusade. Peter of les Vaux-de-Cernay,* also with the Boydell Press. Now we have the writings of William of Puylaurens to complete the documentary survey.

Shirley's translation covers the years 1214-18. The poem was apparently written by someone named William of Tudela and continued by an anonymous writer who composed the last two-thirds of it. William supported the papacy while the continuator was firmly on the side of the people of southern France (Shirley, 2).

The history by Peter of les Vaux-de-Cernay was written between 1212 and 1218 by a young Cistercian monk who participated in the crusade and later became bishop of Carcassonne (Sibly, and Sibly, *History,* ix) Since Peter's family was closely connected with that of the leader Simon of Montfort, this history is inevitably written from the point of view of the crusaders, not the Cathars.

The chronicle under review covers a much wider time-span, "from the twelfth century to the mid-1270s" (xv). William of Puylaurens was himself from Toulouse, a hotbed of Cathar sympathizers, serving under two of its bishops, "and later Count Raymond VII" (xv). As stated by the editors, this latest translation lacks the focus on detail found in the earlier two works, given its coverage of about a century of southern French history rather than only a few years. It is, nevertheless, of considerable importance to historians interested in this matter since it covers matters occurring after the 1218 ending of the other two documents. William's writing is essential to an understanding of the functioning of the Inquisition in this area and Languedoc in general. Since William had served in Toulouse under bishop Fulk and bishop Raymond de Falgar, his view is obviously like that of Peter of les Vaux-de-Cernay, resolutely on the side of the church.

Shirley, and W.A. and M.D. Sibly are all skilled translators. The present chronicle was translated into English from the version collated by Jean Duvernoy in 1976, reprinted in 1996 in Toulouse. The editors' aim here is "to produce a version in readable modern English which will at the same time closely reflect the sense of the Latin" (xvii). Although William's name does not appear in the chronicle, it appears on the earliest manuscript of it (xx). He is quite well known from his appearance in a number of contemporary documents (xx-xxii).
A look at a well-known event from the three sources indicates just how useful it is to have more than one account. In Shirley’s *Song of the Cathar Wars* (19-22), we find that after the departure of the viscount and the Jews, who rode out together, the bishop pleaded with the townspeople to come to an agreement with the crusaders instead of facing inevitable slaughter. The people responded that “they would rather be drowned in the salt sea than take his advice;” they also refused to pay off the crusaders laying siege to the town (19). Inevitably, some of the crusaders’ servants, or camp followers, penetrated into Beziers, grabbing up any riches they could find and slaughtering all they encountered. Furious when the nobles arrived threatening to take away their booty, the servants allegedly set fire to the town completing the massacre.

This same event seen in Peter of les Vaux-de-Cernay (48-51) begins with the statement that “Beziers was a most notable city, but entirely infected with the poison of heresy” (48). Not only were the citizens “heretics, they were robbers, lawbreakers, adulterers and thieves of the worst sort, brimful of every kind of sin” (48-9). This version confirms the flight of Count Roger who had earlier promised to protect the citizens. The bishop was asked by the crusaders to tell the sincere Catholics that they must hand over the heretics and/or leave the city. "Instead, they set themselves up against God and the Church, made a covenant with death and chose to die as heretics rather than live as Christians..."(50). This redaction confirms the entry of the servants into Beziers, who then killed most of the citizens, later setting fire to the town.

William of Puylaurens (33) appears to confirm the other versions as he stated that inhabitants of Beziers were “bereft of divine guidance” hence unable to withstand the crusaders’ attack. He adds that the death of thousands in that place was vengeance from the Lord because they had murdered lord Trencavel on that same feast day (the Feast of Mary Magdalene). As the editors stated (33, n.6), William appears to be following the account of William of Tudela here.

In spite of the similarity of the three versions of the same event, each one offers some information not present in the other two. It would be most instructive to ask students to compare the same events in each of the three, although, unfortunately, this would only be possible for events occurring prior to 1218.

The *History of the Albigensian Crusade* terminates with the information that in 1218 Prince Louis of France “took the cross, for the glory of God and the suppression of heresy in the Toulouse area...” (278-9). *The Song of the Cathar Wars* also ends with the news that the son of the king of France was coming to assist the Albigensian crusade “and so many troops that no man alive can reckon up their thousands and hundreds. The cardinal from Rome too, he comes proclaiming that death and slaughter must lead the way...there shall remain no living man, neither noble lady, girl nor pregnant woman, no created thing, no child at the breast, but all must die in fire and flames” (193-4). William appears to treat the arrival of Prince Louis with far more skepticism, noting that after laying siege to Marmande and Toulouse he “left the siege. He had achieved little, since his adversaries had mounted a courageous and effective defence...he himself returned to France” (64-5). One must admit, of course, that William was writing after the crusade was over and with the considerable assistance of knowing the outcome. His opinion of Louis once he succeeded to the throne as Louis VIII appears to differ since William wrote that the king was “blessed by God” (71), and like his father possessed of a seemingly enormous army. His account of Louis VIII’s death describes him as exceedingly pious and true to his faith (74).

The bloodthirsty events covered by William in the late 1220s show a bleak picture as in his rendition of the murder of captives, including some who were impaled on stakes (76). On the other hand, the bishop of Toulouse is described as courageously saving women and children from death (76). Another account from 1228 describes the systematic destruction of the vineyards around Toulouse for a period of three months (78).

William offers a vivid account of the events surrounding the signing of the Treaty of Paris in April, 1229 including the humiliation of the Count of Foix who appeared “led to the altar naked, in only his shirt and breeches” (80). In the same year, William tells his readers about the beginning of the first inquisition “to deal with those suspected of heresy” (83). He explains that the suspects were shown a list of names and asked if any of them were enemies of theirs. Since the suspects had no knowledge of whether these persons had given any evidence against them, they were seemingly confounded by this maneuver and “[a]ccordingly they withdrew from their attempts to use the law and finally submitted to the legate’s will” (84-5). Further information on the workings of the Inquisition is provided in Chapter XLII which discusses workings of the “papal or Dominican Inquisition” and the problems encountered in setting it up in the Toulouse region (91-3). James Given, *Inquisition and Medieval Society*, (1997) is an excellent companion to this section of the chronicle.

Chapter XLIV recounts the siege and capture of Montsegur and the burning of two hundred heretics who refused to recant (107-8). Chapter XLVII explains how in spite of courageous efforts by the king of France, severe illness greatly handicapped French forces and led the king “to abandon his undertaking” and to be captured by the enemy (115-16). After a brief discussion of rebellion in England, chapter XLIX recounts king Louis IX’s final tragic crusade to Tunisia culminating in his death (121). The final chapter, L, explains how the new king of France, Philip III, led an army into the Toulouse region taking action against the count of Foix and taking him prisoner.

The book is completed by four appendices, a report by two papal legates to Innocent III; excerpts from documents showing the attitude of Philip Augustus and Louis VIII to the Albigensian Crusade and the policies of Honorius III; a translation of the Treaty of Paris of 1229, partly summarized; and finally letters on the Inquisition by Gregory IX plus a note regarding his dealings with count Raymond VII of Toulouse. An excellent and up-to-date bibliography and a very good index to persons and places follow. The superb footnotes, sometimes amounting to a half-page of small print text are tremendously useful and thorough, often providing scholars’ differing views on the events or persons appearing in the chronicle.
As a complement to the other two chronicles on this subject, and in its own right as a vivid primary source, no scholar interested in the crusades, nor any university library where the subject is taught, can afford not to buy this book.