

employs the figure of the prostitute which “approaches the feminine only by creating a procuress with no personal desires or attributes of her own and who is controlled and altogether obscured by the associations of the poetic tradition that Buchanan uses to construct her” (207). Thus, the masculine poetic tradition inhibits the employment of the female body to speak for herself. Elizabeth Richmond-Garza’s “‘She Never Recovered Her Senses’: *Roxana* and Dramatic Representations of Women at Oxbridge in the Elizabethan Age” likewise examines how women are made a discursive object, in this case for playwright William Alabaster to comment on the legitimacy of Elizabeth’s queenship and the issue of divorce itself through an Orientalist construction both of the female body and of the East.

*Sex and Gender* concludes with Holt Parker’s “Latin and Greek Poetry by Five Renaissance Italian Woman Humanists,” an exciting introduction to female literary figures eclipsed by a masculinist heritage, including Angela Nogarola, Isotta Nogarola, Costanza Varano, Alessandra Scala, and Fulvia Olympia Morata. With brief introductions to the women and their works, Parker brings a wide array of forgotten and obscured poets into critical focus. Indeed, any graduate student interested in the Latin Renaissance and in need of a dissertation topic should immediately consult Parker’s “Directions for Future Research” for fertile suggestions of necessary scholarship. The essay is a fitting conclusion to a collection which is at its best when it faithfully adheres to its declared mission: to reclaim lesser-known texts obscured by a sexist scholarly tradition and to explore how these texts participate in or resist anti-feminist patriarchal codes.

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Joan Young Gregg, *Devils, Women, and Jews: Reflections of the Other in Medieval Sermon Stories*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997. x + 275 pp.

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This book pursues a double agenda. On the one hand, it presents modernized English texts of eighty-three exempla whose central subject is devils, women, or Jews. On the other hand, in an opening chapter and in extensive discussions introducing the three groupings of texts (one each on devils, women, and Jews), Gregg argues that “the popular homiletic exemplum [is] irreplaceable as a cultural artifact” because it “allows us to witness the interchange between popular and scholarly theology and, in doing so, permits us to discover those

unselfconscious cultural notions that, by their frequent hearing and retelling in narrative context, became imprinted on the medieval mind" (3-4). More specifically, "medieval homiletic narrative speaks to us of an unholy trinity" of devils, women, and Jews, "a dark and distorted reflection of the orthodox trinity of Christian doctrine" (4).

The two goals of Gregg's book stand in a somewhat dissonant relation to each other. While the discussion of the exemplum tradition and of the functioning of otherness within that tradition considers European culture as a whole, the texts Gregg brings forward are almost completely from fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Middle English sources—*An Alphabet of Tales* (EETS, os 126–27), *Mirk's Festial* (EETS, es 96), *Jacob's Well* (EETS, os 115), *The Early English Versions of the Gesta Romanorum* (EETS, es 33), *The Book of the Knight of La Tour-Landry* (EETS, os 33), *English Metrical Homilies from Manuscripts of the Fourteenth Century* (Edinburgh, 1962), *Three Middle English Sermons from the Worcester Chapter Manuscript F.10* (Leeds, 1939), and *Robert of Brunne's Handlyng Synne* (EETS, os 119, 123). (The texts that provide most of Gregg's material are listed first here, with exempla from *An Alphabet of Tales* and *Mirk's Festial* constituting more than half those presented.) While, given the sheer volume of the late-medieval exemplum literature, the decision to limit the texts to English materials is an understandable one, Gregg never explicitly signals it in her discussion. She in fact never makes explicit her criteria for selecting material, though sometimes her decisions are puzzling and in need of explanation: for instance, exemplum W3 ("A Knight's Two Wives") is excerpted from a story in *The Book of the Knight of La Tour-Landry* where a knight marries *three* times; Gregg, for some unexplained reason, includes only the accounts of the first and third wives. Having limited the texts selected to English examples, Gregg does not consider whether English exemplum collections and stories are in any ways eccentric, not representative of the broader European tradition. While many of the exempla presented *are* widely distributed in Europe, originating in the Latin *Vitae patrum*, *Legenda aurea*, *Gesta Romanorum*, *Alphabetum narrationum*, or *Dialogus miraculorum* of Caesarius of Heisterbach, and having analogues in the vernacular European languages, one still wonders whether and how the English collections Gregg depends upon reflect more local or national circumstances.

The discussion throughout *Devils, Women, and Jews* tends to be generalizing, repeatedly invoking "the medieval mentality," "the medieval mind," "the medieval eye," "the medieval imagination" (all these examples from two pages of discussion, 18–19) as though each of these were singular and uncomplicated. While one welcomes the observation that underlies the book's overall conception—that there are significant similarities, overlaps, and reinforcements in how Christian orthodoxy, as it represented itself through exempla, othered Jews, women, and devils—Gregg pursues this observation in ways that tend to

level *differences* among the three groups, with the various others treated by Gregg becoming more or less interchangeable: "It is precisely in this concatenation of traits [grotesque ugliness, a perverse nature, and foul acts] that the devil becomes fused in the popular exemplum with those other two figures of alterity, women and Jews" (35), "In medieval homiletic narrative and popular art, the images of women, as of the devil and the Jew, were marked by predatoriness, voraciousness, and assault" (93).

Gregg's explanations of mainstream Christian attitudes toward women, devils, and Jews in fact tend repeatedly to appeal to the same psychic and social processes—otherness, liminality, and projection. Using an understanding of otherness indebted largely to Sander Gilman, and treating otherness in relation to a conception of liminality never fully explicated or moored to the extensive anthropological work in this area, Gregg over and over explains Christian constructions of the other as the effect of "the mechanism of projection": "Through this unconscious psychological process, the individual, having been taught that certain feelings or desires are unworthy, becomes conflicted over them, and to escape the pain this conflict engenders, he or she denies such feelings by detaching them from the self and projecting them on to an external Other. It is neither fanciful nor frivolous to accord this phenomenon centrality in the medieval perception of devils, women, and Jews" (19–20). This framework of explanation frequently leads Gregg to formulations that are either overly simple or deeply problematic. Thus, with respect to Jews, Gregg argues, "Like tribal youth gathered at the threshold of a distant encampment awaiting the rite of passage that would make them men and allow them full adult participation in their society, Jews in medieval Christian Europe were excluded from meaningful engagement with their society unless or until they would convert and be baptized in the Christian faith" (172). A model of liminality, however, simply does not work for Jews who—unlike teenagers going through a rite of passage—are never, *as Jews*, to be integrated into Christian society. (Gregg seems to assume that "their [Jews'] society" is *Christian* society and doesn't admit here that medieval Jewish communities had their own social forms, rules, and ways of belonging.) With respect to the formation of a misogynistic Christian tradition, Gregg argues, using the work of Michael P. Carroll (*The Cult of the Virgin Mary*, 1986), that "the male's guilt-inducing sexual desires resulting from an unsuccessful negotiation of the Oedipal complex became a widespread phenomenon in Christian lands during patristic times due to economic circumstances that left many families without fathers at home":

Thus, the son's wrongful sexual desire for his mother and his rivalry with his father could not be resolved normally through gradual identification with the male parent and the transfer of sexual desire to other, appropriate women. Unacknowledged, unexpressed, and

repressed, this forbidden sexual desire evolved into an unassuageable guilt, with a corresponding obsession with bodily purity and a desire for punishment in the form of physical deprivation and pain. A further means of dealing with this psychically intolerable guilt was to project it onto the object causing it, that is, women . . . [I]t is to this nexus of personal psychology melded with church theology that we must look in order to rightly understand the reiterated cluster of misogynist motifs that permeate medieval pulpit narrative. (91–92)

But is the psychological model invoked in fact adequate to explain the pervasive and institutionalized presence of misogyny in Christianity? (And shouldn't Gregg here grapple with the work of Peter Brown on "sexual renunciation in early Christianity?")

While I do not find Gregg's formulations "fanciful" or "frivolous," I am concerned that so many *dissimilar* phenomena are treated within a single explanatory framework. Is the projection that might operate from the "center" of Christianity in relation to a metaphysical entity (the devil) the same as that at work in relation to a human religious/racial other (the Jew) or a gendered other ("woman")? Are all of these three figures "liminal" or "other" in the same ways? Gregg's discussion repeatedly suggests that they are. And yet, how can they be? Christian women stand in a very different relation to the orthodox Church than do Jewish men or women (or, for that matter, devils). The preaching and exempla directed *against* women are, after all, at least partly addressed *to* women—not the case with sermons and stories about devils or Jews. Don't we need to think the otherness of each of these others in particular ways? Much feminist work (and much work in critical race theory, postcolonial studies, queer studies) would suggest that we do; gender, race, religion, class, sexuality, while all perhaps involving certain common processes of othering, do not necessarily operate in parallel to each other. But Gregg's discussion, though focused in significant part on women, never engages either with the feminist theory that would point toward a complication in our thinking of otherness or with the extensive feminist historical work that has enriched our understanding of medieval women's lives and, more specifically, their relations to Christianity. Thus, while Gregg does cite Susan Stuard's 1976 *Women in Medieval Society*, Marina Warner's 1983 *Alone of All Her Sex*, and Lene Dresen-Coenders's 1987 *Saints and She-Devils: Images of Women in the 15th and 16th Centuries*, she never refers to the work of Caroline Walker Bynum, E. Ann Matter, Karma Lochrie, Kathleen Biddick, Nancy Partner, Dyan Elliott, Judith Bennett (the list could go on). The point is not just that Gregg's scholarship is out of date, but that her view of medieval women's positioning vis-à-vis the Church is much less nuanced, complex, and rich than it might be.

*Devils, Women, and Jews*, then, brings forward some valuable material: it is interesting, indeed, to read in a concentrated way exempla that represent the disparate figures of devil, woman, and Jew. Certainly, many of the exempla here would be useful in classroom contexts, presenting, as Gregg suggests, material that would have been part of a common learned/popular medieval Christian culture. And Gregg's modernized texts are readable and generally accurate to their originals (though sometimes they diverge from the Middle English texts in ways that Gregg does not note or explain). Nevertheless, for a full understanding of this material, and of the complexities of overlap *and difference* among representations of women, Jews, and devils, we will need to turn elsewhere.

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