

*The Doctrine of the Hert: A Critical Edition with Introduction and Commentary.* Edited by Christiania Whitehead, Denis Renevey, and Anne Mouron. Exeter Medieval Texts and Studies. University of Exeter Press, 2010. Pp. lxxv + 234. ISBN: 9780859897785.

*A Companion to The Doctrine of the Hert: The Middle English Translation and its Latin and European Contexts.* Edited by Denis Renevey and Christiania Whitehead. Exeter Medieval Texts and Studies. University of Exeter Press, 2010. Pp. x + 294. ISBN: 9780859898218.

THESE TWO COMPLEMENTARY volumes together fill a major gap in the ever-burgeoning fields of late medieval devotional literature and of medieval women's spirituality. The first, a critical edition of the fifteenth-century Middle English adaptation, for an audience of religious women, of the thirteenth-century Latin devotional text *De doctrina cordis*, makes this important text available in print for the first time. The second, a companion volume of essays edited by two of the three scholars who also edited the text, considers various aspects of the Middle English version itself in greater detail and situates it in several contexts, with discussions of the Latin text and of several continental translations thereof. Both volumes should be part of any research collection focused on medieval devotional literature, especially that written for women.

The Latin *De doctrina cordis* was a popular work: we have evidence (extant manuscripts or catalogue information) of over 270 manuscripts of both longer and shorter versions as well as of excerpts. It is a lengthy consideration, in seven books further subdivided into chapters, of seven aspects of the worshipper's heart, each linked to one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Vernacular versions were less widely copied, but were also used, as the *Companion* makes clear, by a variety of audiences in a number of different ways.

The Middle English adaptation, extant in four manuscripts, is an abridgment rather than a translation *per se*. This edition, expert throughout, consists of, first, an introduction (ix-lxxv) touching on matters of authorship, audience, theology, dissemination, and literary interest as well as linguistic and codicological considerations, and includes a bibliography; second, the Middle English text (3-92), a critical edition based on Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum, MS McClean 132, ff. 1r-93v, recording manuscript characteristics in footnotes; third, the textual commentary (93-181), discussing the changes to the Latin text (primarily omissions) made by the translator, sources (including generous selections from Hugh of St. Cher's *Postillae*), unfamiliar cultural references, etc.; fourth, variant readings (182-202), including all substantive variants among the

manuscripts; fifth, an index to scriptural quotations in both Latin and English (203-6); sixth, an appendix containing the prologue to the shorter Latin text (207-8); seventh, another appendix containing the Latin table of contents (209-12); and eighth, a glossary of Middle English terms (213-34). In short, this volume in itself (which is available in paperback) contains all the basics necessary for either scholarly or classroom use: it is thorough enough to be used for scholarly analysis, and user-friendly enough to be assigned on graduate or even advanced undergraduate syllabi.

This edition expands the corpus of Middle English devotional literature for women in an important and dependable fashion, for gender is a major consideration throughout the Middle English version, like the Latin: the Middle English text is directly addressed to a female readership (“Religious sister” in its opening address, 5), and its chapter headings are concerned with the ideal behavior of “a mynche,” that is, a nun. Book One in particular, which takes up the first half of the text, draws on domestic imagery of the house, the kitchen, and the bride to formulate its allegories of the preparation of the heart to receive Christ. Although addressed to nuns, the manuscript evidence discussed in the introduction also makes it clear that, in a pattern we have come to recognize as typical, this text traveled between the convent and the laity, and indeed between women and men. This may be a symptom of what one contributor to the edition’s companion volume, Anthony John Lappin, calls the “medieval unfussedness about the application of gendered metaphors and allegories to and for the opposite sex” (*Companion*, 242).

Although, as I have suggested, the Middle English edition includes everything needed for the study of this text, scholars working in the relevant areas will want to own this *Companion* as well. It consists of an introduction and three sets of essays. The first two essays deal with the Latin *De doctrina cordis* from the point of view of authorship and of function. The next four focus specifically on the Middle English version, including considerations of translation issues, the role of scripture, domestic and culinary metaphors, and manuscript contexts. The last four essays take up the other vernacular translations, French, Dutch, German, and Spanish.

The contributions on the Latin and Middle English texts consider in greater detail some of the issues addressed in the introduction to the edition. Nigel Palmer’s article on the authorship of the Latin text, for instance, marshals all available evidence and opts for Gerard of Liège as author rather than Hugh of St. Cher, while Catherine Innes-Parker addresses issues of the various possible audiences and functions of the Middle English text in its different manuscript

contexts. Gender plays an important role in the *Companion* as it does in the edition. Vincent Gillespie contributes an essay exploring the feminine domestic imagery mentioned above, while other contributors like Lappin take note of the vernacular versions' adaptations for different gender positions: the Spanish version, for example, envisions its readers as male religious (*Companion*, 244) and changes the text accordingly.

One might argue with a few of the editors' and authors' choices. An Italian translation of *De doctrina* is mentioned at several points, but no essay is devoted to it, nor is there any substantial consideration of it in the others. Another curious omission may be found in Anne Elisabeth Mouron's contribution on the French translations: she mentions one French manuscript in which the text, intriguingly, "has been changed considerably" (*Companion*, 186), but which, for that very reason, she oddly dismisses from consideration. As many of the other essays make plain, these changes in a text may prove to be of the greatest interest in thinking about a given manuscript's audience and function. The overall structure of the volume might be questioned as well: reading it through from beginning to end, it seems that the very specific considerations of the Middle English text in part two might more logically have followed the more general comments on the other vernacular versions in part three. Similarly, the more general discussion of the Augustinian Windesheim Chapter's reform movement in Karl-Heinz Steinmetz's essay on the German translations might prove useful in reading Marleen Cré's on the Dutch translation, which however precedes Steinmetz's contribution.

However, except perhaps for the omission of the Italian version from consideration, these are very minor matters. Students of medieval devotional literature and of medieval women's spirituality will want to own the *Companion* as well as the edition of *The Doctrine of the Hert*.

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