The Encyclopedia of Medieval Literature in Britain. Edited by Siân Echard and Robert Rouse. 4 volumes. The Wiley-Blackwell Encyclopedia of Literature. Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2017. Pp. xcv + 2168. ISBN: 9781118396988. Online at the Wiley Online Library. ISBN: 9781118396957 (ebook).

The Wiley *Encyclopedia of Medieval Literature in Britain* is the product of a collaborative undertaking on a massive scale. General Editors Siân Echard and Robert Rouse were joined by Associate Editors Jacqueline A. Fay, Helen Fulton, and Geoff Rector and over 400 Contributors in the production of this reference work of 733 entries of varying lengths and of high quality throughout; commendably, the contributors include graduate students, independent scholars, and professors emeritus as well as tenured and tenure-track professors. The fruit of their collective labor is a deeply capacious and informative reference work that yields answers (and, even better, further questions) to almost anything one asks of it.

In its printed form, the *Encyclopedia* spans four volumes, which proceed alphabetically; in its online e-book form, which is the version under review here, one has the option of browsing the material alphabetically or by topic. Alphabetically, there are a large number of articles under every alphanumeric category except "Q," "X," "Z," and "0-9." Topically, the three main divisions are necessarily broad: "Historical," "Languages and their Literatures," and "Literary." The first umbrella topic of "Historical" is subdivided into "Book History," "General," "Historical Events," "Material Culture," "Place," "Political Figure," and "Religious Figure." The second umbrella topic of "Languages and their Literatures" comprises "Cornish," "French (Continental and Insular)," "Gaelic," "Irish," "Latin (Classical and Insular)," "Middle English," "Old English," "Scots," and "Welsh." The third umbrella topic of "Literary" consists of "Form," "Genre," "Legendary Figure," "Middle English," "Old English," "Trope," and "Welsh." Each *Encyclopedia* entry concludes with a "see also" list of related entries, a list of references, and suggestions for further reading. Online, one has the option of reading the entries as a PDF or through the Wiley Online Library interface; in the latter format, the "see also" entries are helpfully hyperlinked in order to facilitate reading around within the material. The print version includes an impressive index, a rarity for a reference work; it is important to note that the print index covers much more material than do the ebook's topic headings, a point to which I return below, and that this index is not available as part of the ebook.

In the "Introduction" (available as a PDF under "More from this reference work"), Echard and Rouse note that in setting the project's scope and bounds as they have, they "challenge and revise the terms 'British,' 'English,' 'Medieval,' and 'Literature'" (xc), and these challenges and revisions are visible at virtually every turn. The *Encyclopedia* takes as its subject literature from 449 to 1541, has as its guiding principle "the undeniable multilingual and intercultural environment of the literatures of medieval Britain," and recognizes as an undercurrent a "sensitivity to the recent materialist turn in early literary studies" (lxxxviii). These structural decisions have the happy and intended consequence of bringing into the fold more material than is usually considered in tandem, and the resulting compilation is rich, varied and interrogative in nature. This is a reference work with an argument: it broadens the horizons of its subject by showing how much they already have been expanded, by many scholars in many fields, and demonstrates that the work of extending them can be continued. This *Encyclopedia* presents, in the way that only a reference work with an authoritative title can, this variegated version of medieval British literature as the "new normal."

Readers of *Medieval Feminist Forum* may be especially interested in the work's handling of women and gender. The individual coverage of these topics is very good. Women from both the literary and historical records feature; one finds entries on "Marian literature," "Marie de France," "Matilda, Empress," "Medb," and "Melusine" before being halfway through the letter "M." Several of the suggestions for further reading in these entries gesture outward to questions of gender, but in the main they hew quite closely to the topic of the entry. Gender in the literature of the British Middle Ages is not treated in a separate entry, which may have been a prudent choice, given how huge the topic is; monographs and edited collections devoted to the subject are able to be more comprehensive. Yet, considering that other large categories—such as "Death," "Orality," and "Britain, Idea of"—are the subject of valuable entries, one wonders whether "Women" or "Gender" might not have also merited a broad précis, or (more easily) several: "Gender in Middle English Literature," "Women as Literary Patrons," and so on.

Indeed, additional topics that may have deserved an *Encyclopedia* entry (or at least a heading in the ebook topic list) do come to mind, but this train of thought is perhaps inevitable and certainly unfair, given the *Encyclopedia*'s remarkably broad range of coverage. Another example might be the work's treatment of multilingualism and multilingual texts. Echard and Rouse have privileged the plurality of languages of medieval British literature to an exceptional degree,

and the range of individual entries is accordingly large: "macaronic texts," "French lives of Thomas Becket," "Hebrew," and "Old Norse in England," to name only a few entries from only some of the languages covered in the work. Multilingualism *per se*, however, is not the subject of an entry. (It receives its most sustained discussion as a concomitant in the "Translation" entry.) This is a minor quibble, and the *Encyclopedia*'s entries go above and beyond in collectively serving as overwhelming evidence of the linguistic status quo in medieval Britain. But it may be the case that several of the conceptual and theoretical frameworks that can be used to approach and interpret medieval British literature—such as, but not limited to, perspectives that foreground feminism and multilingualism—remain more implicit than explicit and are thus most evident in the breadth of entries. Students and scholars interested in some of these frameworks will have in the electronic version of the *Encyclopedia* a wealth of information at their fingertips—once they have an idea of which specific entries they might consult. I should mention again that it is the electronic version of the *Encyclopedia* that is specifically under review here. In the print version, e.g,. "gender roles" and "multilingualism" are both substantial index entries, and their existence goes a long way toward insulating the print version from my above observations. In terms of the ebook, as helpful as the topic headings are, one wishes that Wiley had also made Echard and Rouse's print index—itself nearly 200 pages, it is really quite extraordinary in its feats of synthesis—available and usable online. This is especially true because the *Encyclopedia* is sure to be consulted frequently, if not most frequently, in its electronic form.

The Encyclopedia of Medieval Literature in Britain is a magnificent achievement. In the amount of information it holds and in its critical orientation, it is well positioned to steer and to inform future research. It deserves to be among the first ports of call for someone looking to gain familiarity with an unfamiliar topic and to survey what scholars now recognize as the lush landscape of medieval literatures in Britain.

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