

The French of Medieval England: Essays in Honour of Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, edited by Thelma Fenster and Carolyn P. Collette. Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer, 2017. Pp. xvii + 340; 6 b/w illustrations. ISBN: 9781843844594.

This festschrift volume, in honor of so well-known a scholar as Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, brings together a remarkably insightful collection of essays from a variety of disciplines. Furthermore, as these articles illuminate the current state of affairs concerning the studies of the French of England (also known as Anglo-Norman) from literary, historical, and political points of view, they provide sufficient overview of past scholarship to orientate even a newcomer to the field. Scattered throughout are fond memories of the contributors, attesting to Wogan-Browne's personal as well as academic importance in bridging disciplines as she essentially established studies of the French of England over the course of her career.

In the interest of space, I will provide a brief overview of the essays before concentrating on those which explicitly address questions of women and gender. The first five articles, by Thomas O'Donnell, Emma Campbell, Monika Otter, Fiona Somerset, and Andrew Taylor, study the various implications of bi- and trilingual manuscripts within their societal context, concluding that far from previous conceptions of either English or French being the dominant language and acts of translation reflective of that power imbalance, many of the Anglo-Norman writers in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries took advantage of their bilingual capabilities shifting between languages essentially at will, depending on the ideas they wished to express, expecting that their audience would be able to follow in either (or both) languages. Serge Lusignan goes somewhat farther afield in considering French in Scotland, as preserved by communications from the Anglo-Scottish wars at the turn of the fourteenth century, while Richard Ingham looks to religious texts as evidence of the spread of, and preference for, French terms for a series of related abstract concepts. While Nicholas Watson considers Langland as a reader of and respondent to the continental French literary tradition, R. F. Yeager offers a close reading of a poem from Gower's own Anglo-Norman oeuvre. Christopher Baswell treats disability in several female saints' lives gathered in the Campsey Manuscript, followed by Thelma Fenster's article addressing the treatment of Jews in manuscripts meant for women educating their children. The eleventh through the fourteenth articles, by W. Mark Ormrod, Maryanne Kowaleski, Paul Cohen, and Delbert Russell, consider language's functions in defining statehood and national identity in the fourteenth through the nineteenth centuries. The final

essay is a lightly edited conference presentation by the late Robert M. Stein, in which Stein examines *cansos* by troubadours Bertran de Born and Bernard de Ventadorn for their evocations of the Young King Henry's Englishness.

Campbell's article, "The Scandals of Medieval Translation: Thinking Difference in Francophone Texts and Manuscripts" (38–54), offers in its last section an unexpected reading of Marie de France's translation claims in the prologue to her *lai* "Bisclavret." Rather than accept the interpretation of Marie's choice to translate the *lais* from Breton to Anglo-Norman, that is, from one vernacular to another, as "a less hierarchical form of translation which . . . carves out a space for a female writer in a discourse dominated by male clerics," Campbell proposes instead to understand it "as a gesture of political and ideological appropriation that incorporates these stories into the francophone Angevin *imperium*" (50). In her exploration of the signifying possibilities of the various terms for "werewolf" and Marie's preference for the Breton term throughout her *lai*, Campbell positions Marie as a politically savvy courtier, delivering a collection of tales designed to appeal to its royal readers on multiple levels.

Baswell's "Disability Networks in the Campsey Manuscript" (157–74) proposes an intriguing reading of female saints' curing and dispensation of disability as another network linking several of the *Lives* in London, British Library, MA Additional 70513, which also seems to have connections to Isabella, Countess of Arundel. Baswell's analysis of Osith's hagiography is particularly compelling, as he concludes that Osith uses disability to protect the saint's female community. This interpretation occasionally stretches the metaphor a bit far. For instance, in Osith's martyrdom, she carries her own head into the church that she had previously founded, depositing the head at the altar and, with her hands, leaving bloody trails on the pillars framing the way to it, thereby establishing it as a particularly feminine space, which Baswell reads as "an architecturalized hymen" (165) and Osith, "virago-like possessor of the church" (167), claiming the building by the blood of that "hymen." Nonetheless, Baswell's evocation of similar cures and distributions of disability in various forms by Osith, Modwenna, and Audrey provides an eminently useful example of the fruitful possibilities for research at the intersection of disability, feminist, and hagiographical studies.

Fenster's article, "English Women and their French Books: Teaching about the Jews in Medieval England" (175–89), offers a fascinating glimpse into the role of thirteenth- and fourteenth-century mothers in inculcating anti-Semitic sentiment in their children. In her analysis, which centers on the *Proverbes de Salomon*, the *Enfaunces de Jesu Christ*, and the Neville of Hornby Hours, Fenster aptly demonstrates that "teaching children to fear the Jews as their enemies

and the enemies of Christendom was . . . an integral part of maternal nurturing” (177). She does so through a combination of close reading and analysis of the illuminations accompanying the latter two works. Those in the *Enfaunces* are simplistic but function nevertheless “as a pictorial gloss” (184) eventually replicated elsewhere, including in wall tiles; in the Hornby Hours, the elaborate miniature of the Jewish children transformed into pigs is appropriately “read” by the horrified young girl in the margin of the folio. Fenster also reminds us that such texts, even when explicitly aimed at children, would have been read by older people as well—like their mothers. Finally, she offers a thematic tie to Baswell’s article in her mention of the Virgin Mary’s significance in another work, Adgar’s *Le Gracial*, where Mary embodies “a duality of salvation and menace” much like that of Osith.

Bookending the collection are Felicity Riddy’s forward, Carolyn Collette and Fenster’s introduction, and Robert W. Hanning’s afterword, all of which serve to highlight yet again the breadth of Wogan-Browne’s contributions to studies of the French of medieval England in terms of her written production and the network of colleagues, students, and friends that she has inspired during the course of her career. In short, this volume is a collection of essays worthy of the woman who inspired it, and of great interest to scholars of literature, history, language, and culture—on both sides of the Channel.

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