

of Margaret should they so wish. Overall, this collection is a must for those interested in the politics of late medieval England, and gender and rulership.

Gabrielle Storey

University of East Anglia/University of Winchester

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The Mélusine Romance in Medieval Europe: Translation, Circulation, and Material Contexts, by Lydia Zeldenrust. Studies in Medieval Romance. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2020. Pp. xii + 272. ISBN: 9781843845218.

There has been a recent, and most welcome, uptick in Mélusine studies, with Donald Maddox and Sara Sturm Maddox's translation into English of Jean d'Arras's *Mélusine, or the Noble History of Lusignan* and *Mélusine's Footprint: Tracing the Legacy of a Medieval Myth*, edited by Misty Urban, Deva F. Kemmis, and Melissa Ridley Elmes.¹⁰ Lydia Zeldenrust's *The Mélusine Romance in Medieval Europe* is a welcome addition to this conversation, providing an examination both textual and geographic of the story and its many variations, and identifying it as a transcultural, pan-European narrative responsive to the concerns of temporality and geography.

The book begins with an introduction which situates this volume in the context of Mélusine studies through the trope of mutations, making a valuable comparison between Mélusine's shifting character and the narrative's movement through time and space. The book is then divided by country/language, with chapters on the French, German, Castilian, Dutch, and English Mélusines; within each part are sections examining manuscripts and editions followed by more the-

¹⁰ *Mélusine, or the Noble History of Lusignan*, trans. Donald Maddox and Sara Sturm Maddox (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014); Misty Urban, Deva F. Kemmis, and Melissa Ridley Elmes, eds., *Mélusine's Footprint: Tracing the Legacy of a Medieval Myth* (Leiden: Brill, 2019).

oretical investigations of the varieties of Mélusine's monstrosity. This organization allows scholars easy access to the material whatever their field—whether one is particularly interested in manuscript intersections, circulatory practices, or the more material contexts of the title, each part is easy to locate. Finally, an appendix lists all the manuscripts and printed editions of the various Mélusines discussed in the volume, and a scholarly bibliography concludes.

This book essentially offers two parallel and intertwined narratives: the story of the *Mélusine* text, which Zeldenrust shows to be as much a story about people as it is about books, an “uncovering” of “how different agents—translators, scribes, printers, illuminators, woodcutters, patrons, booksellers, and book owners—played a role in the transregional spread of this romance and influenced how Mélusine's multifaceted character was transmitted across multiple languages” (4), and of the variations of “Mélusine's shapeshifting nature and her monstrous animal-human hybrid form” (4). Her attention to Mélusine's monstrous sons is a particularly valuable addition to the theoretical sections, given how little attention they have received compared with their mother. The narrative of textual production that Zeldenrust teases out is decidedly non-linear, and it allows her to ask a series of questions:

How do translators treat Mélusine's multifaceted character, and especially her hybrid nature? Are some of Mélusine's aspects highlighted more than others? Can we determine if a translator's cultural and literary surroundings had an influence on the reworking of Mélusine's character? What impact does the romance's gradual transition from manuscript to print have on the way we encounter Mélusine's ambiguous figure, especially in terms of the iconographical depictions? What happens to the descriptions and depictions of Mélusine's sons, and how does this reflect on their monstrous mother? Are there any differences in the way the sons' monstrous nature is treated compared to that of their mother? Finally, what difference does it make to look at the different *Mélusine* versions together, and to consider both text and image, and manuscript and early printed sources? (6)

This is an ambitious set of questions, and the book is unable to answer all of them equally. Since so much scholarship has examined Mélusine's hybrid identity, what this volume adds to that conversation is more breadth than novel insight; Zeldenrust is correct that much Mélusine scholarship has focused on the French "originals" (or the Middle English "translations"), so her investigation of the German, Dutch, and Castilian versions adds material to the conversation and certainly shows the range of possibilities available given Mélusine's admixture of human, monster, and fairy. She also does a valuable job showing its implications—some textual (how translators and redactors were able to make a text speak to their own audiences); others more theoretical. It's also valuable to consider, as she does, how changes in medium, literary conventions and interests, varying cultural and social landscapes, and even different religious commitments might alter the narrative and the presentation of the main character. For instance, the Castilian version spotlights the wedding of Melosina and Remondín, transforming it from a sumptuous delineation of Mélusine's wealth and splendor to a detailed picture of a Catholic wedding ritual. Apart from separating Mélusine from other demonic women who turn into serpents when entering a church, this also suggests an interesting act of transmission—the author may well have been responding to a woodcut in an edition of Jean d'Arras's text depicting the wedding and therefore implying a more significant import than it has in the original story itself.

These investigations of difference between the portrayals, traced both theoretically and textually, as well as the extended discussions of Mélusine's sons, were for me the most intriguing and significant portions of Zeldenrust's book. If the discussions of Mélusine's hybrid character seem familiar in their echo of previous scholarship, the way she fits these together across time and space is new. The textual histories will appeal to historians of the book, dealing as they do with manuscripts, illustrations, early printed editions, and intersections. The traceability of the narrative's transmission across Europe makes it stand out from so many other medieval examples whose histories are far more murky—although the translation and adaptation narrative is by no means unidirectional from language to language, geography to geography, medium to medium. Despite a somewhat small range of examples, it shows how diverse the telling of a single story in multiple contexts can be.

The “pattern of radiant translations” (226) after printed editions became available shows the necessity of considering traditions beyond the original manuscripts in understanding Mélusine’s (or the Mélusine Romance’s) complex history.

The Mélusine Romance in Medieval Europe: Translation, Circulation, and Material Contexts is a valuable addition to *Mélusine* scholarship in its breadth and its focus due to those contexts it offers in its title. The *Mélusine* romance, Zeldenrust notes, “is as adaptable as Mélusine herself” (223), and this volume expands scholars’ knowledge of, and access to, its full tradition.

Angela Jane Weisl

Seton Hall University

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