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Reviews

The goal of the Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages project is to replace Finnur Jónsson's standard edition, *Norsk-islandske Skjaldedigtning*, with a modern edition of the skaldic poetry corpus. This edition attempts to displace Finnur's single, authoritative readings with fidelity to manuscript sources, as well as an awareness of the ambiguity and multiplicity of many of these sources. The edition is thus based on a thorough assessment of all known manuscript evidence, as well as a review of previous editions and commentaries. The project also includes a searchable electronic edition where further material, including manuscript images, is available. In its printed form, of course, the thoroughness of this editing project can become overwhelming to the non-expert. To take a straightforward example, the poetry is examined stanza by stanza, with appended translation and commentary; a broader readership might find it more helpful to be presented with entire poems. All in all, however, this edition is another fine product of a meticulous and painstaking editorial project, a remarkable achievement, and a testimony to the dedication of its editors.

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Texts and Traditions of Medieval Pastoral Care: Essays in Honour of Bella Millett. Edited by Cate Gunn and Catherine Innes-Parker. Woodbridge: York Medieval Press, 2009. xx + 217pp. ISBN 9781903153291. £50

These thirteen essays dedicated to Bella Millett, aptly described by Derek Pearsall in his warm-hearted preface as a 'wonderful scholar' (p. xiv), are complemented by a list of publications by the dedicatee on pp. xv–xvii. In their equally warm introduction Cate Gunn and Catherine Innes-Parker refer to Millett's approach as 'magisterial, thorough and correct, yet acknowledging variations; never boastful but always respectful of her material; never assuming knowledge in her readers; but never patronizing' (p. 1). Anyone who has had the privilege of being associated with Bella Millett or of using her publications will easily endorse this view. In these publish-or-perish times when far too much is produced far too early without adequate time for the ripening of ideas or the full testing of hypotheses one is struck more by the quality and impact (to use a modern buzzword in its proper sense) of her publications than their quantity — though this is not unimpressive, either. Bella Millett has never shied away from the difficult or the intractable in her work, and many of us who share Pearsall's view of *Ancrene Wisse* as being 'one of the great achievements [...] of all English prose' (p. xiv) are grateful for the time and scholarly energy she has spent editing this and related works both in traditional and electronic modes. The contributions here largely succeed in continuing this tradition of exacting scholarship.

The essays are set out in a broadly chronological order and seek to reflect Millett's own interests as well as representing some of the best of the work being currently produced. Because the volume has a theme (even if sometimes loosely interpreted), it does not suffer from the usual problem that besets *Festschriften*, where well-meaning contributors produce material that has been lying about in their bottom drawers waiting for some opportunity to be published but bears no relation to the dedicatee. The book opens with E. A. Jones's '“Vae Soli”: Solitaries and Pastoral Care' and closes with Alexandra Barratt's '“Take a Book and Read”: Advice for Religious Women'. In between there is a wide range of material: 'Scribal Connections in Late Anglo-Saxon England' (Elaine Trehearne); 'Gerald of Wales, the *Gemma*

Ecclesiastica and Pastoral Care' (Brian Golding); 'Time to Read: Pastoral Care, Vernacular Access and the Case of Angier of St Frideswide' (Jocelyn Wogan-Browne); 'Lambeth Palace Library MS 487: Some Problems of Early Thirteenth-century Textual Transmission' (Ralph Hanna); 'Pastoral Texts and Traditions: the Anonymous *Speculum Iuniorum* (c. 1250)' (Joseph Goering); 'Reading Edmund of Abingdon's *Speculum* as Pastoral Literature' (Cate Gunn); 'Middle English Versions and Audiences of Edmund of Abingdon's *Speculum Religiosorum*' (Nicholas Watson); 'Terror and Pastoral Care in *Handlyng Synne*' (Robert Hasenfratz); 'Prophecy, Complaint and Pastoral Care in the Fifteenth Century: Thomas Gascoigne's *Liber Veritatum*' (Mishtooni Bose); 'Pastoral Concerns in the Middle English Adaptation of Bonaventure's *Lignum Vite*' (Catherine Innes-Parker); and 'Prayer, Meditation, and Women Readers in Late Medieval England: Teaching and Sharing through Books' (C. Annette Gris ).

Throughout the book the reader is enlightened by all sorts of thought-provoking arguments, from Treharne's superlative consideration of scriptoria and localization in late Anglo-Saxon times to Barratt's genuinely insightful consideration of prescribed (and proscribed) reading for women religious. There are engaging asides at every turn: for instance, Goering's illuminating comment that the author of the *Speculum iuniorum* was probably a Dominican because of his repeated use of the term 'frater', which is 'a term not used of the Franciscan friars' (p. 91). The authors do not shy away from the difficult or the unfashionable, as seen in Bose's essay on Gascoigne, an author more known about than read. Here she bravely engages with Gascoigne's longest dissertation on reform, the *Super flumina*, in a robust attempt to demonstrate 'how capacious a discourse orthodox reform remained in England during this period' (p. 154).

Some authors pursue their themes with a relentless drive: for example, from his opening arresting sentence '*Handlyng Synne* is a scary text' (p. 132) Hasenfratz concentrates on Mannyng's use of exempla to promote servile fear, which is surely far from unique. Hanna's goal too is clear from the outset with his crude upbraiding of M. R. James who 'made a complete dog's breakfast of the collation' (p. 82) of London, Lambeth Palace Library, 487. Those of us who grew up on Dobson's 'AB language' have to pay close attention to this densely and tightly argued essay in order to decide whether we are convinced that the Lambeth example disrupts such theories of close textual communities.

Overall it is hard to be critical of these essays and it might only be said that parts of some need a little refining. For instance, Jones's essay, which ranges admirably broadly, also unfortunately engages in some odd chronological leaps. Despite some interesting local details, it is unnecessarily coy about the manuscript identity of John Gysborn's book, London, British Library, Sloane 1584, which contains the *Rule of St Celestine* (p. 18). Other essays need a little more application. For example, Gris 's essay, which is otherwise fluently argued, is sometimes derivative and insufficiently nuanced. In noting how London, Lambeth Palace Library, 546 'shows us women taking active roles in their devotions — as healers, scribes, visionaries, witnesses and practitioners' (p. 187) she draws a veil over the important part played in this manuscript by male scribes such as Willam Darker, the Carthusian of Sheen.

Some of the most rewarding essays are those that introduce little-known material (or at least little-known to this reviewer) or give new information about familiar texts. In the first category are Golding's clear and focused discussion astutely reappraising the scholarly credentials of Gerald of Wales in his *Gemma ecclesiastica*, long held to be simply a pastoral work for Welsh clergy, and Wogan-Browne's clear explanation of the ways in which the Augustinian canon Angier fitted out his 20,000 lines of French verse translation from

Gregory's *Dialogues* for his multiple audiences. In the second is Innes-Parker's comparison of the well known Passion text in Cambridge, St John's College, G. 20 (and New York, Columbia University, Plimpton 256) with its now identified Latin source, Bonaventure's *Lignum vite*. Equally engaging are the two essays by Gunn and Watson that give different perspectives on essentially the same topic: Edmund of Abingdon's *Speculum religiosorum* in its Latin and English incarnations.

As with any collection of essays there are a few minor typographical errors, but editors feel uncomfortable enough when they find mistakes themselves without reviewers compounding matters by pointing them out. I mention just one, not so much for the editors as for the publishers. Repeatedly (for instance, pp. xiii and xv) we have to suffer the affront of '*Hali Meithhad*' minus its eth. It is about time that a reputable publishing house like Boydell and Brewer should consistently use the full range of Old English and Middle English letter-forms. It is particularly unfortunate to see this 'modernization' in a volume dedicated to a scholar who values accuracy and authenticity above all. This aside, the editors, the contributors, and the publisher are to be congratulated on a fine volume worthy of a fine scholar, Bella Millett.

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Tory Vandeventer Pearman, *Women and Disability in Medieval Literature*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010. xiv + 206 pp. ISBN 978-0-230-10511-9. £55.

This book is an interesting and worthwhile contribution to the growing field of Medieval Disability Studies, covering a wide range of late Middle English texts. After a mildly polemical but interesting introduction, the chapters are concerned with reproduction as disability in Chaucer's 'Merchant's Tale' and *Dame Sirith*; disabilities that result from domestic abuse in the *Book of the Knight* and 'The Wife of Bath's Prologue'; physical disability resulting from punishment in supernatural texts like *Sir Launfal*, *Bisclavret*, and Henryson's *Testament of Cresseid*; and a final return to disability and the procreative body in the *Book of Margery Kempe*. Throughout the book, Pearman does an exemplary job of delineating the parameters of the various debates informing and complicating her project, and locating herself explicitly within those debates (as in the very good discussion of reproduction, disability and the grotesque that opens the first chapter).

Pearman's project's 'main objective is twofold: by using the gendered model, it theorizes the ways in which medieval authoritative discourse produces the categories of "woman" and "disabled" as inevitably linked, and it examines how those links function within and even shape the production of literary texts' (p. 13). This emphasis on the combination of the Aristotelian idea that women were 'undercooked' men with the tradition of specifically Judeo-Christian misogyny rooted in ancient stories of apples and gardens is not really new to Pearman: she acknowledges that Rosemarie Garland Thomsen and Felicity Nussbaum have worked in this area. What is new in Pearman, perhaps, is the turn to the literary as a way of getting at complex issues of gender, health, and representation. Of course, Pearman is not alone in this, following the work of scholars like Sharon L. Snyder and David T. Mitchell.

This generally excellent book shows signs of a growing and problematic split between the British and American academies in medieval Disability Studies. Surely Pearman's chapter on reproduction as disability would have benefitted from engaging Irina Metzler's discussion of