

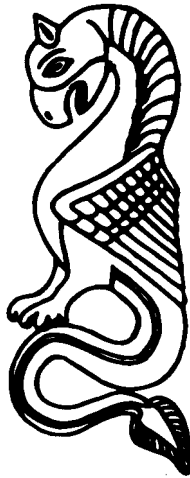
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the same, just as her discussion of the deafness of the Wife of Bath on pp. 67–70 benefits from Metzler’s work.¹ One of her few moments of engagement with Metzler’s book is to declare it a ‘defense of the power of such a small component of medieval society’, the ‘small component’ here being the authors of medical texts, which is a little mystifying (p. 6). Chasing the reference only leads to Metzler’s discussion of the problems and benefits of using said sources as historical documents, a discussion necessary in most historical studies, and to the question of whether such a small sample size can lead to a secure understanding of medieval medical discourse (Metzler, p. 66). One suspects that Pearman’s phrase is simply an unfortunate one, but since she then rehearses something of the discussion without further referencing Metzler, it sounds as though Metzler has been dismissed. Other infelicities occur: for example, she mistakes the British scholar Myra Stokes for the non-existent “Myra Tokes” throughout her discussion of *Sir Launfal*, and in the bibliography.

However, overall this is a smart, socially engaged addition to both Disability Studies and medieval literary criticism.

CORY JAMES RUSHTON

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The Doctrine of the Hert: A Critical Edition with Introduction and Commentary. Edited by Christiania Whitehead, Denis Renevey and Anne Mouron. Exeter: Exeter University Press, 2010. Lxxv + 234 pp. Hardback ISBN 9780859898218, £55. Paperback ISBN 9780859897785, £16.99

The Doctrine of the Hert is a fifteenth-century Middle English translation of the thirteenth-century *De doctrina cordis*, a treatise which was disseminated widely in Latin (in more than 200 manuscripts in different formats) and several vernacular languages. However, despite its importance as a pan-European devotional phenomenon in late medieval Europe, the treatise has escaped widespread scholarly attention. The authorship of *De doctrina cordis* is still debated, though opinion tends to favour either Hugh of St-Cher (d. 1263), a Dominican theologian from Paris, or the Cistercian Gerald of Liège. Scholars agree that it is likely to have been written in Liège or its environs in the mid-thirteenth century.

Although the editors register their indebtedness to Mary Patrick Candon’s edition, ‘*The Doctrine of the Hert*, Edited from the Manuscripts with Introduction and Notes’ (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Fordham University, 1963), which used Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud Misc. 330 as the base manuscript, their newly edited Middle English text is innovative, not only in its different choice of base manuscript, Cambridge, Fitzwilliam, MS McClean 132, but in how it illuminates the devotional context and significance of a comparatively neglected Middle English translation. The text is accompanied by a full textual commentary, which includes meticulous comparison with the Latin text (with acknowledgement to Guido Hendrix for the references in support of Hugh of St-Cher’s *Postillae* as a potential source), and is followed by modern English translations of Latin and medieval French extracts—accurate work by Anne Mouron. Together with this commentary and useful Middle English glossary, the edition should prove invaluable for both advanced scholars and readers new to late medieval devotional writings.

¹ Irina Metzler, *Disability in Medieval Europe: Thinking about Physical Impairment During the High Middle Ages, c. 1100–1400*, Routledge Studies in Medieval Religion and Culture, 5 (London and New York: Routledge, 2006).

The reader will also find much of interest in the introduction, which deals with a variety of topics ranging from the structure and content of *De doctrina cordis* to its devotional context. Since the field of vernacular religious writings has received increasing scholarly attention in recent years, the introduction contextualises the Middle English *Doctrine* in the translation culture of late medieval Europe. By means of comparative analysis with its source, the editors come to the conclusion that the Middle English *Doctrine* is ‘an adaptation rather than a translation of the Latin text’ (p. xi). For example, the translator omits patristic references, and frequently makes changes in the English translation that suggest he had a non-*litteratus* audience in mind. Moreover, the Middle English text invites the reader to simply read rather than meditate: reading the Middle English text was ‘not so much an intellectual exercise demanding reflection and meditation as a practical one’ (xxxvii). Indeed, the Middle English *Doctrine* was written for a female audience. As most of the manuscript evidence indicates, it was directed in particular to religious sisters (‘mynchen[s]’). The Middle English prologue substituted for its Latin prologue explicitly addresses a community of nuns, ‘unkunnyng’, simple souls. Also of interest to researchers into female lay piety is the recording of a (now lost) manuscript of the *Doctrine* in the will of a Norfolk gentry widow, Margaret Purdans.

Structurally, the *Doctrine* follows the Latin treatise’s division into seven books: each book describes a means by which the heart should prepare for God, which is linked to one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. The first book, which comprises more than half of the *Doctrine*, deals with the preparation of the nun’s heart through the Spirit’s gift of dread. It is followed by books on guarding the heart with the gift of pity (although in *De doctrina* the heart is guarded by the gift of *scientia*, p. 138, n. 1), opening the heart with the gift of knowledge, keeping the heart stable with the gift of fortitude, giving the heart to God with the gift of counsel, elevating the heart with the gift of understanding and detaching the heart with the gift of wisdom. Organization of the Latin *doctrina* around the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit recalls preaching material and evinces the influence of thirteenth-century academic practices and the treatise’s function as a catechetical aid. Even as an adaptation of this arguably more rigorous theological enterprise, the *Doctrine* reveals generic affiliations with devotional prose, penitential writings, sermons and guides for the spiritual life.

Various themes and images in the treatise are of particular interest from an aesthetic and devotional perspective. A bewildering and sophisticated array of allegories representing the heart helps us to understand medieval conceptualizations of spiritual interiority and consciousness. Some of these images — the heart as household, as besieged castle, and as book — are familiar. More startling perhaps is the *Doctrine*’s use of culinary imagery, which culminates in the roasting of the devout heart for Christ, as honoured guest, to eat (pp. 22-26), which invites us to appreciate a sophisticated interplay of eucharistic symbolism and popular piety.

It is noteworthy that the editors have also edited an accompanying volume of critical essays, *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: Exeter University Press, 2010), which explores the Latin and vernacular versions of *De doctrina cordis* in a pan-European devotional context. The edition and the *Companion* together deepen our understanding of the ‘hert’ in its various manifestations in the devotional literature of late medieval Europe. On the whole, this edition will prove its value not only to those who are interested in vernacular translation but to anyone who investigates late medieval devotional texts, their translation and readership, and the politics of vernacular theology. Last (but not

least), we have to thank the scholarship and teamwork of the three editors, for producing not only a fine critical edition, but an illuminating account of Middle English devotional translation.

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Sandra Ballif Straubhaar, *Old Norse Women's Poetry: The Voices of Female Skalds*. Library of Medieval Women. Cambridge: Brewer, 2011. 158 pp. ISBN 9781843842712. £60

This volume brings together an extensive collection of verse attributed to women poets in Old Norse-Icelandic texts from a wide range of sources and periods. We find stanzas from *Heimskringla*, *Hjalmpés saga ok Qlvis*, old and young skaldic verse, eddic poetry and almost everything between, spoken by queens and ogresses alike, demonstrating the breadth of the extant poetry attributed to women. The translations — first, poetic and figurative verse, and second, literal and straightforward prose — are generally accurate, and, moreover, they ingeniously convey to a non-specialist not only the content of the verse, but the characteristic features of *dróttkvætt* and eddic metre. For all these reasons, this volume, which entices the reader into the intriguing world of Old Norse-Icelandic women's poetry, lucidly introduced and translated by Straubhaar, will be valuable for a number of audiences.

The book is arranged into six sections with verses by women from a continuum of categories, ranging between those who probably existed and did compose the stanzas attributed to them in the sources; 'quasi-historical' women, mainly from the *Íslendingasögur*; legendary figures such as Brynhildr and Hervor; and those many elusive female characters from across the corpus who are in some way 'Other', such as human women uttering magic spells and prophecy, or those depicted as monstrous, such as giantesses and even *finngálkn* (a hybrid horse-human creature). There is a special chapter for women's dream-verse, containing doom-laden poems from the *Sturlunga* compilation, a relatively neglected source, both with regards to female characters and poetry. A brief introduction outlines the collection's scope and approach, as well as basic aspects of eddic and *dróttkvætt* style and metre, and the book also includes a glossary of names and a timeline of Old Norse-Icelandic literature. These tools are intended to assist students and novices to the field to analyse the verses, whereas they are also encouraged to seek them out in their original saga context. In fact, it is doubtful if much of the poetry makes sense without it, and the full exchanges — often with men — that give rise to the verses, but Straubhaar does her best to solve this problem by giving brief background information and narrative context before each poem. The gist of each stanza is also distilled in a line or two, followed by a double translation in verse and prose, with the aim to communicate both the complexity of the metre and the poems' content and poetic diction (their kennings and *heiti*). At times, Straubhaar unpacks ambiguous words, comments on the style or speculates further on the poet's background, e.g. in her lively discussion of Jórunn *skáldmær*; these informative and engaging passages illuminate the verses, and I found myself wishing there had been more of them, with fuller and more up-to-date references to secondary literature.

The book's two greatest strengths are its translations, and its breadth of sources. It thus succeeds first on a practical level, compiling in one volume, and translating into English, women's poetry from all over the Old Norse-Icelandic corpus — a collection which would otherwise be a huge undertaking even for a specialist to access. Second, bringing together