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Thelma Fenster and Carolyn P. Collette, eds., *The French of Medieval England: Essays in Honour of Jocelyn Wogan-Browne*. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2017. xvii + 340 pp. Illustrations, bibliographies, and index. \$99.00 U.S. (cl). ISBN 978-1-84384-459-4.

Review by Claire M. Waters, University of California at Davis.

This volume of essays both celebrates and demonstrates the current vitality of the French of England as a scholarly field, a vitality that, as contributors note and many readers will already know, owes a great deal to Jocelyn Wogan-Browne. Throughout its sixteen essays—accompanied by a foreword, an introduction, and an afterword—the book conveys how the internal variety, networks of collaboration and exchange, and multilingual contexts that characterize the versions of French used in the British Isles in the later Middle Ages are echoed in the field that studies them, and exemplified in the life and work of Wogan-Browne herself. Indeed, the prefix “multi” serves well to convey the overall spirit of the book: many contributors, many collaborations, many languages and ways of using them.

The volume also offers reason to hope that the French of England, formerly often seen as the cuckoo in the English nest or a neglected stepchild of proper continental French, is finally becoming fully and consistently part of the study of later-medieval culture in the British Isles. This is evident both in the disciplinary range of the essays themselves, which engage with literary studies, codicology, sociolinguistics, economic and legal history, and translation theory among others, and in the varied scholarly profiles of their authors, only some of whom are centrally or primarily situated in what is still sometimes called Anglo-Norman studies. (Finding a brief and accurate name for the French[es] of the British Isles is a continuing difficulty, though most contributors embrace Wogan-Browne’s “French of England” coinage.) The disciplinary settings and history of Anglo-French are most directly addressed in the introduction and the essay by Richard Ingham, though they are touched on in many places—a testament to the ongoing centrality of such issues in this field. This volume and other recent work, however, from that of Wogan-Browne herself and the contributors to this volume, as well as many of those in the *Tabula Gratulatoria*, to recent clusters of journal essays, suggest that the day may come when the “fair field needing folk” will be full enough, and well-integrated enough, that its place at the table no longer needs addressing.^[1] (One might wonder, however, if there is some sort of backhanded comment in the fact that the trilingual manuscript page featured on the book’s cover is presented so that Middle English is at the center, with French and Latin off to the side: perhaps only that linguistic preeminence dies hard.)

The book's foreword, by Felicity Riddy, offers a lively overview of Wogan-Browne's life and work that also surveys the field she has done so much to enrich; the importance of multilinguality, multinationality, and collaboration in Wogan-Browne's biography blends seamlessly into the concerns of that field. In their introduction, meanwhile, Carolyn Collette and Thelma Fenster briefly review the nomenclature, key figures, and recurrent concerns of the field, arguing against versions of the "story of English" that see French as acting for itself rather than acknowledging human language users. They note the wide generic and contextual range of formative work in the field (particularly that of Ruth J. Dean), but also acknowledge the importance of women's spirituality in particular to the work of Wogan-Browne, noting that, like the French of England itself, texts in this area had often been overlooked. While a few of the essays in the volume—those of O'Donnell, Ingham, Watson, Baswell, and Fenster—engage directly with the devotional and/or gendered contexts central to much of Wogan-Browne's work, the volume as a whole responds more to her energetic recovery of under-studied materials in overlooked places, the role of archival and manuscript material in helping to establish reception and context, and, again, the "multiple dynamics at play within a multilingual culture" (p. 9).

The emphasis throughout the volume on collaboration and exchange is borne out in practice by the manifold constellations in which these essays might be grouped (some but not all of which are highlighted by the order of the pieces). I suggest below some such points of contact by way of conveying what the book contributes, in both spirit and content, to the study of Insular French and to our broader understanding of not just late-medieval Britain but modern disciplinary formations.

Robert M. Stein's (sadly posthumous) contribution begins by noting the "double-crossing between nations and disciplines, France/England; History/Literature" invited by a 2013 conference that Wogan-Browne organized, and those foundational crossings (or conjunctions) are evident in most of the essays. Not surprisingly, however, many of them engage centrally with literary or devotional poetry, though with varying emphases. Thomas O'Donnell, Emma Campbell, and Monika Otter all focus intently on the fine grain of translation, whether the unexpected solidarities that O'Donnell elicits from the interplay of French, Latin, and their English contexts in Philippe de Thaon's *Comput*, the limitations Campbell sees in thinking about translation as primarily "the preservation or assimilation of difference" (p. 53) based on her reading of Philippe de Thaon's *Bestiaire* and Marie de France's *Bisclavret*, or the "playful" quality of two *contrafacta* of a Latin *planctus*, which Otter reads not as translations one of another, but perhaps as the creation of a multilingual speaker. Otter and Campbell engage productively with modern translation theory from different angles: whereas Campbell emphasizes the role of foreignness and assimilation in translation theory's account of source-to-target language translation, Otter sees recent translation theory as adopting a more fluid, and medieval, account of translation/adaptation and suggests that "lowly textual translation between languages" (p. 57) continues to deserve our attention.

O'Donnell's attention to the French of England as a "linguistic gathering place for immigrants, émigrés and pastors" (p. 33) begins another thread among the literary essays, that of perhaps unexpected affinities among groups that scholarship has tended to separate. He shares this expansive view with Andrew Taylor, who notes the unexpected appeal of the *Chanson d'Aspremont*, a *chanson de geste* about Charlemagne, for both the monks of St. Augustine's, Canterbury and, potentially, three successive English kings who may have seen the French ruler as a model, and Richard Ingham, who challenges the "orthodox high versus low social-status

account of lexical influence on English” (p. 135) through an examination of extensive lexical loans from French to English in the *Early South English Legendary*, arguing that there was a high-status register in “ordinary” English that could have been used by a very wide range of people, including the monolingual. Nicholas Watson, in turn, reads *Piers Plowman* as a response to and reimagining of Robert Grosseteste’s *Chateau d’Amour* that continues the earlier text’s “experimentalism” while reworking Grosseteste’s idealized Virgin into the far more ambiguous but nevertheless essential figure of the protagonist Piers. All these essays bring back into the same frame audiences or works that had more shared linguistic or conceptual territory than we sometimes imagine.

R. F. Yeager, discussing John Gower’s *Traitié selonc les auctours pour essampler les amantz marietz*, echoes Watson’s larger point about the benefit to medieval English studies generally of taking more serious account of French, with particular reference to Gower’s French corpus. He offers a close reading of Balade II to demonstrate the “aesthetic and allusive confrontations” (259) of the work, its use of poetic resource and theological reference in the service of “lay[ing] out a logical rationale for marriage and marital fidelity” (p. 261). The gender issues Yeager raises are also central to Fenster’s account of three works—Sanson de Nanteuil’s *Proverbes*, the *Enfaunces Jesu Crist* in Selden supra 38, and the Neville of Hornby Hours—probably commissioned by women and seemingly “oriented in whole or in part toward children” (p. 177); these texts and some of their manuscript images shed light on the creation of cultural stereotypes about Jews. Christopher Baswell uses the recognized networks of patronage, female community, and location that run through and around the Campsey manuscript of saints’ lives to contextualize its densely resonant series of engagements with disability, most centrally in the *Vie seinte Osith*. These go beyond standardized miracles of healing, often reinforcing (if sometimes violently so) the integrity and power of saintly feminine *familiae* and showing how variously-abled bodies express liminality but also generate community, giving disability an enabling role in the constitution of saintly households.

The saintly power struggles that Baswell notes on a literary level resonate with another thread in the collection, that of politics. Thus, in addition to Campbell’s attention to sovereignty and (pre)colonial translation or Taylor’s reading of regnal and dynastic imaginaries, we have Fiona Somerset’s account of four poems (or rather, two versions of each of two poems) that engage with the cross-lingual concept of consent. She shows the shifting but often collective nature of the blame they assert for the current dire state of holy church, in which not just king and pope but also high-ranking churchmen and even the people of the realm have a share. Stein, meanwhile, casts one of the most capacious geographical and generic nets in the volume, arguing that the poetry of Bertran de Born and the marriage of Johanna (daughter of Henry II and Eleanor) to William II of Sicily offer a view of the “multiple identities and conflicting identifications” (p. 275) that characterized Norman and Angevin rulers, in contrast to the “genealogical simplification” (p. 277) and nation-centering preferences of continental French rulers. He also, like Campbell (in translation theory) and Baswell (in disability studies) offers a theoretical intervention, suggesting that the multiple identities of Anglo-French rulership open a new angle onto questions of state formation, an alternative to the “materialized imaginary fiction[s]” (bloodline, miracle-working body, Eucharistic host; p. 273) that continue to shape our understandings of what makes a nation.

Stein’s embrace of the cross-disciplinary and cross-genre tendencies of the volume should draw attention to the affinities between the more historical or sociolinguistic essays and those that center on literary texts. The range of linguistic register that Ingham shows in the *Early South*

English Legendary, for example, and the widespread familiarity with French lexis that it suggests, have a geographical echo in the essay by Serge Lusignan, which examines the extensive use of French in documents relating to the Anglo-Scottish Wars of 1295–1315 preserved in the *Chancery Miscellanea Scotland*. He notes not only the penetration of writing into everyday transactions of war, such as arrangements for troops' food and equipment, but also the penetration of French into the north of England and Scotland, and makes the fascinating suggestion that on the whole, in this archive, "French was preferred for *informative* discourse while Latin dominated in the case of *performative* discourse" (p. 124). The presence of spoken French in areas well beyond London and environs is also demonstrated in Maryanne Kowaleski's essay on French-speaking immigrants to Devonshire recorded in the "alien subsidy" tax accounting of 1440, many of whom lived in small towns and villages, making for a perhaps surprising "spoken presence of French in a non-literary and rural milieu" (p. 217). At the same time, larger clusters of immigrants in coastal farming communities constituted a substantial linguistic network in certain areas, one that, thanks to trade and ongoing immigration, would have remained in contact with various continental dialects. W. Mark Ormrod, in turn, uses the cases of two French merchants in Salisbury who were caught up in a 1346 seizure of goods in response to French piracy to explore the means by which non-native speakers might establish their claims to certain protections. One of the merchants had been formally granted the freedom of the city of Salisbury and was considered one of their own, but the other rested his hopes in part on the assertion that he had come to England to improve his English, which ultimately was indeed judged to offer a "justification for political inclusion" (p. 204) that exempted him from the seizure. This pragmatic and nuanced view helps explain the ongoing use of Anglo-French in periods of international conflict: English and French were not "monolithic entities spoken, as it were, in opposition to each other" (204), a point that harks back to O'Donnell's account of trilingual contexts for the *Comput* or Otter's account of the *planctus*.

The cross-Channel affiliations and exchanges that Kowaleski and Ormrod examine in linguistic and economic contexts, and that Somerset, Taylor, and Stein point to in literary accounts of kingship, continue to resonate well beyond the Middle Ages and to shape the field of Anglo-French Studies. Paul Cohen considers how early-modern French authors viewed Edward III's 1362 Statute of Pleading, which required that oral courtroom arguments be made in English. Rather than casting this as a defeat for French, they admired it for the access it gave the English to their own legal system, one that foreshadowed the "edifying example of linguistic accommodation" (p. 237) presented by the 1539 Ordinance of Villers-Cotterêts, which required legal documents to be drafted in French, not Latin. Both statutes valued the linguistic needs or rights of subjects over the monarch's "linguistic prerogative" (p. 238), and taking account of contemporary authors' use of the English example challenges the view of the 1539 Ordinance as part of a heavy-handed effort at centralized language control. A different mode of French-English rapport is evident in Russell's review of the extraordinary career of Paul Meyer, the tireless hunter of Anglo-French texts. Russell sets Meyer alongside his colleague and friend Gaston Paris, arguing that Paris's "centripetal" desire to establish an essential French national identity was balanced by Meyer's "centrifugal" interests in the far-flung developments of *francophonie* in England, Provence, and Italy. Though Meyer sometimes shared the dismissive tone toward Anglo-French that prevailed in French scholarship of the time, on the whole he embraced a sense of "multiple literacies and multiple identities" (p. 256), putting contemporary scholarship in debt to his extraordinary discoveries and offering a model for the spirit in which these should be pursued.

The essays are all substantive and thoughtful, the volume elegantly produced and edited to a high standard, with a useful index and bibliography as well as an impressive list of Wogan-Browne's own publications and presentations. The enterprise as a whole does due honor to its dedicatee and helps to extend the influence of her extraordinary career.

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Paul Cohen, "Fashioning a Useable Linguistic Past: The French of Medieval England and the Invention of a National Vernacular in Early Modern France"

Delbert Russell, "Admiring Ambivalence: On Paul Meyer's Anglo-Norman Scholarship"

R. F. Yeager, "Twenty-First Century Gower: The Theology of Marriage in John Gower's *Traitié* and the Turn toward French"

Robert M. Stein, "*Royaumes sans frontières*: The Place of England in the Long Twelfth Century"

Robert W. Hanning, "Afterword"

NOTES

[1] See particularly the collection *Language and Culture in Medieval Britain: The French of England c.1100–c.1500*, edited by Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, Carolyn P. Collette, Maryanne Kowaleski, Linne R. Mooney, Ad Putter, and D. A. Trotter (York: York Medieval Press, 2009), and the forthcoming volume in the Oxford Twenty-First Century Approaches to Literature series *High Medieval: Literary Cultures in England*, edited by Jocelyn Wogan-Browne and Elizabeth Tyler (Oxford University Press, forthcoming); the essays on "Competing Archives, Competing Histories" in *Speculum* 90.3 (July 2015): 635–700; the essays on "Langland and the French Tradition" in *Yearbook of Langland Studies* 30 (2016): 175–305. Thanks in good part to the foundational work of Ruth J. Dean and her contemporaries, the situation lamented in her essay "A Fair Field Needing Folk: Anglo-Norman," *PMLA* 69.4 (September, 1954): 965–78 no longer obtains.

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