Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, Thelma Fenster, and Delbert Russell, eds. and trans., *Vernacular Literary Theory from the French of Medieval England: Texts and Translations, c.1120-c.1450*. Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2016. 610 pp. $115.00 U.S. (hb). ISBN 9781843844297; $34.95 U.S. (pb). ISBN 9781843844907.

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At its heart, this volume is a capacious anthology of medieval vernacular literary theory from the French of England. It offers excerpts from some fifty-five texts, carefully chosen to foreground moments when medieval texts self-reflexively discuss their "origins, circumstances, strategies, source materials, purposes and audiences" (back cover). Beyond this rich center, the volume offers a wide range of additional resources including detailed introductions, two critical essays, maps, manuscript images, an innovative glossary, a historical, linguistic, and literary timeline, and bibliographies of primary and secondary texts. Careful cross-referencing within the volume and meticulous references to additional scholarly resources allow the reader to pursue research projects within and outside of the present volume. The anthology is an extraordinary contribution to scholarship and will doubtless serve as an indispensable resource for students and scholars of the French of England, medieval multilingualism, England's literary and cultural history, and European Francophone culture.

The general introduction to the anthology sets the collection in a wider scholarly context and articulates the scope and goals of the project. Building on recent scholarship that has abandoned the "one language, one nation, one literature" model, the anthology argues that French has multiple locations in the Middle Ages, with England representing an important center of French-language writing (p. 1). The term "French of England" is designed to embrace "'internal' and 'external' French: that is, French-language texts composed in England (usually referred to in scholarship as Anglo-Norman), texts from England that moved into Europe and the Mediterranean, and texts that came into England from regions outside it" (p. 3). Within this large corpus, the anthology focuses on collecting examples of vernacular literary theory, choosing items that exhibit "textual self-consciousness and strategic interpellation of audience and circumstance" (p. 4).

Like its predecessor, *The Idea of the Vernacular: An Anthology of Middle English Literary Theory, 1280-1520*,[1] the current volume is organized according to the principle of "situatedness" (p. 3). The French texts included in the volume are grouped not by genre or geographic region but according to how they self-reflexively meditate on their positioning within a larger linguistic, socio-cultural, material, or literary-historical context. Part I, "On Language," collects texts which

reflect on linguistic choice. These texts often position French as a language of access which opens a literary text to a non-Latinate audience. Some texts in this section compare insular and continental French while others invoke languages such as Greek, Hebrew, and Arabic in order to access specific knowledge bases. Part II, "Authorship and Patronage," includes texts that meditate on the social conditions of textual production. Overall, the texts in this section suggest that patronage, whether actual or aspirational, had more authority in medieval texts than the identity of the writer. Female patronage emerges as a particularly important category, with writers invoking the Virgin Mary, female saints, and contemporary queens and ladies as supporters of texts. Part III, "The Conduct of Reading, Hearing and Seeing," includes selections which explore "the various modes of access envisaged by texts and adopted by users" (p. 151). The excerpts in this section describe relationships between audience and text. Audiences are imagined as reading, hearing, and seeing texts and writers urge audience members to receive texts in a particular way, whether listening with attention or gaining pleasure and profit from the text. Writers also sometimes encourage readers to use the format or illustrations of a book to direct and focus their reading. In Part IV, "Forming Audiences and Creating Textual Communities," texts "meditate on audiences and their formation as textual communities" (p. 249). The excerpts in this section construct and invoke a wide range of textual communities. Some communities are connected to specific genres or geographical locations while others are imagined as a transregional francophone community or a global Christian audience. Part V, "The Lineage of the Text," surveys the various modes used to situate a text within a literary or cultural genealogy. Some texts in this section use Latin and/or a classical lineage to authorize a French text while others explore the role of Hebrew in the textual and cultural lineage of Christianity. Some texts position themselves within a generic lineage, such as romance, and others represent the family lineage of a patron. The texts included in the five sections of the anthology date from the twelfth to the fifteenth century, fall into numerous genres such as romance, Biblical commentary, historiography, linguistic manuals, and civic documents, and cover a wide range of geographies including England, Normandy, Northern France, and Ireland. The decision to organize texts according to how they theorize about the circumstances of literary production is innovative and generative, demonstrating how literary discourses and techniques cross generic, regional, and temporal boundaries.

Each textual entry in the anthology is surrounded by a robust critical apparatus which situates the primary text within a historical, regional, and manuscript context and references existing editions and relevant scholarship. The emphasis on material context is especially useful. Each text is presented as a single manuscript edition, with attention paid in the headnote to the physical features of the source manuscript. The sense of connection to the manuscript page is emphasized by the strategic presentation of manuscript images. For example, the inclusion of a penitential diagram from the Lamberth Apocalypse (p. 177) demonstrates the process of visual literacy, a mode of access theorized by several texts in Part III.

In addition to the framing offered by the headnote for each text, other resources in the volume provide further critical context and comparative opportunities. The general and section-specific introductions (summarized above) guide readers to notice points of commonality and disjunction between texts within each section and to attend to connections between different sections of the anthology. Additionally, Part VI, "Essays and Resources," includes two informative essays, the first providing an overview of the status and uses of French in England over the course of the Middle Ages, and the second detailing the uses of poetry and prose in the French of England. This final section also includes a selection of Middle English texts, specifically texts which

translate and adapt French excerpts found earlier in the anthology. The inclusion of this section allows for comparative analysis, guiding the reader to see how French and Middle English prologues draw on a common toolbox of vernacular literary theory but often choose to deploy different techniques. For example, a Middle English prose adaptation of Robert of Greatham's *Miroir ou Evangiles des domnees* omits the French text's reference to the patroness Lady Aline and instead introduces Latin scriptural quotations to authorize the text and bring the text into closer alignment with late-medieval sermon collections.

The anthology is clearly organized and facilitates easy use through careful cross-referencing. Texts included in the volumes are referenced parenthetically in bold when appropriate, creating the sense of a vast network of interlocking texts. The signaling of these links invites the reader to move through the volume non-linearly, pursuing a topic of interest through various selections in the volume. For example, if a reader wishes to explore the topic of female patronage, she or he can analyze the entries identified in the introduction to Part II (entries 9, 10, 11a, 11b, 12, 13, & 14) as well as the conveniently cross-referenced entries found in other sections of volume (6, 7a, 20a, 21, 24b, 39, & 42). This allows the researcher to see how models of female patronage are used across genres and time periods and how these models are deployed in conjunction with other authorizing techniques. The set-up of the glossary invites a similar mode of focused reading. For example, a reader who takes an interest in the word *romanz* can trace this term through excerpts in the anthology and consider its various usage. Similarly, a reader might track the representation of female patrons by exploring the use of the term *dame* in a number of sources. These and other features open the book to pedagogical uses. The collection would be especially useful in a graduate or undergraduate research seminar or an introduction to literary theory. Students might be asked to trace a French literary term included in the glossary through several texts in the volume or mount a comparative analysis of two or more texts. For example, the headnote for entry 1 (*About Britain which is now called England*) encourages the reader to compare this text to entries 16 and 42, excerpts from the *Scalacronica* and *The Mohun Chronicle*.

The volume's ease of use might be improved by the inclusion of English titles in the headnotes of each entry. Translations of French titles into English are present in the Table of Contents but not throughout the volume. The organization of items within the volume might be made slightly more consistent. Sub-groupings of texts are sometimes clearly defined, as in "7. Manuals for Conversation and Composition," while the uniting features of other subsections are not noted. These are small concerns however within a volume that is a pleasure to use. The decision to present French text and English translation in parallel columns on the same page is especially excellent and facilitates a mode of engaged comparative reading not afforded by the use of multiple editions or a facing-page translation.

The scholarly contributions of this volume are numerous--the collection condenses and synthesizes a vast collection of past and current scholarship, uncovers a rich corpus of medieval vernacular literary theory, and opens new frontiers of inquiry. The volume expands the fields of medieval multilingualism and Francophone culture and contributes to the recent global turn in Medieval Studies by including texts which theorize contact with Mediterranean cultures and invoke non-European languages such as Hebrew and Arabic. A truly collaborative production combining the expertise and energy of established and emerging scholars, this volume will doubtless foster still more contributions to the study of vernacular literary theory and the French of England.

NOTE

[1] Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, Nicholas Watson, Andrew Taylor, and Ruth Evans, eds. *The Idea of the Vernacular: An Anthology of Middle English Literary Theory, 1280-1520* (University Park, Penn.: Penn State University Press, 1999).

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