
H-France Review Vol. 21 (June 2021), No. 100

Sandra Hindman and Elliot Adam, eds., *Au prisme du manuscrit: Regards sur la littérature française du Moyen Âge (1300–1550)*. 301 pp. Turnhout: Brepols, 2019. €125.00 (pb). ISBN 978-2-503-56635-1.

Review by Rosalind Brown-Grant, University of Leeds.

This useful collection of articles approaches the medieval book as a prism through which various branches of knowledge were refracted. More specifically, it explores the interaction between the different agents involved in the production and reception of the book and challenges the traditional view of illuminated medieval manuscripts which often sees the image as being subordinate to the text. Eight of the twelve studies gathered here were originally given as papers at a conference organised in Paris by Sandra Hindman's gallery, Les Enluminures, in 2014. The occasion was the publication of a sale exhibition catalogue entitled *Flowering of Medieval French Literature: "Au parler que m'aprist ma mere"* which featured sixteen late medieval manuscripts of French works, several of which are discussed in *Au prisme du manuscrit*. Some of these codices have subsequently been sold either to private collectors or to public collections held in countries far from France. For instance, a copy of the early fourteenth-century *Livre de la fontaine de toutes sciences* (also known as the *Livre de Sydrac le philosophe*) illuminated by Jeanne de Montbaston is now in private hands whilst a copy of a Middle French translation of Berossus's *Histoires Chaldéennes* by Pierre de Balsac which the author gave to his wife, Anne de Graille, shortly after their marriage in 1507, is now in the Louvre Abu Dhabi. The studies of these manuscripts contained in this volume by some renowned experts on medieval books, as well as by some fine early-career scholars, are thus particularly welcome.

The collection benefits from a succinct but helpful introduction by Deborah McGrady (pp. 9–12) that sets out the four different sections into which the twelve contributions are organised. The first section comprises two articles which focus on the important role played by manuscript images as a medium through which to communicate complex ideas and even as a way to enhance the artist's own standing in those instances where this person can be clearly identified. The opening study by Thomas Le Gouge (pp. 14–33) of Gossuin de Metz's *Image du monde*, from the end of the 1240s, discusses this synthesis of scholastic thought and geographical knowledge through the prism of the author's images of the world and the detailed descriptions that accompany them in the manuscript tradition of a work that was popular for at least two centuries after it was first composed. As Le Gouge argues, being destined for a lay rather than a learned audience, these images of the regions of the globe which are described in everyday language as being like an apple cut into quarters serve not so much as abstract, scientific representations but rather as tools by which medieval people could visualise the world around them. Next, Nicholas

Herman's study (pp. 34-56) analyses the complex interplay between writers, publishers, artists, and intended recipients in presentation copies produced for royal patrons at the end of the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth century. As Herman persuasively argues, illuminators such as Godefroy Le Batave, Jean Bourdichon and Jean Perréal, in association with highly successful writers such as François Desmoulins and printers such as Antoine Vérard, were able to catch the eye of patrons like François I^{er} and Anne of Brittany and came to attain the status of *peintres-rhétoriciens* through showcasing their artistic inventiveness, demonstrating their diplomatic skills as portraitists, and proving their ability to depict the sheer splendour of royal power.

The second section, which consists of four studies, looks at the various uses made of books by their later readers. Patricia Stirnemann's contribution (pp. 59-71) on how medieval French authors may have accessed the sources which they used in writing their own texts is avowedly speculative, being the result of painstakingly tracking down annotations and inscriptions and identifying handwriting. Yet Stirnemann convincingly shows how authors such as Jean de Meun, Hélinand de Froimont, and Denis Foulechat may have acquired a familiarity with John of Salisbury's *Policraticus*, how a copy of Rutebeuf's poems made its way into the library of Charles d'Orléans, and how Pierre Sala put together for himself a copy of the *Roman de la Rose* and Jean de Meun's *Codicille*. The second article in this section, by Marie-Hélène Tesnière (pp. 72-106), discusses the purpose behind Louis d'Anjou's successive borrowings of various books from the library of his dead brother, Charles V, during a crucial period when Louis was jockeying with his brothers for control of the young heir to the throne, Charles VI, and when he himself came into possession of new territories in Naples. For Tesnière, the list of books which Louis borrowed, comprising thirty of some of the most luxurious illustrated volumes from the royal library, many of them translations of works of political theory by authors such as Aristotle and Augustine, and of legal texts such as those of Gratian and Justinian, reveals how he sought to construct an image of himself as a learned prince, one who was conversant with these authoritative statements of good rule.

The third study in this section, that by Mathieu Deldicque (pp. 109-36), discusses the life of Anne de Graville from the point of view of how she resolved her legal dispute with her father who had tried to disinherit her following her clandestine union with Pierre de Balsac whom he deemed to be of insufficiently high status for her. Deldicque shows how, paradoxically, the collection of books which Anne built up and which included a number of volumes that she managed to wrest from her father's library after his death was a more than worthy testament to her learned parent's own intellectual, artistic and religious interests and preoccupations. The article by Maxence Hermant (pp. 138-57) that closes this section examines another library collection: that of the French king, François I^{er}. Hermant charts this patron's evolving tastes from his early introduction to Vergil and Seneca by his mother, Louise of Savoy, who saw their works as vital to his future role as ruler, to the period after her death when he not only ordered new translations of texts such as those of Plutarch and Homer but also developed a fascination with printed books from Italy, ones that were of a more readily portable kind, being in-octavo, rather than the lavishly illustrated manuscripts which he had previously first collected and which were more typical of a royal library.

The third section, comprising three articles, concentrates on the role of medieval women in the processes of production and reception of the book. In a useful overview, Anne-Marie Legaré (pp. 161-78) reminds us of the contribution to the textual and visual culture of the period made by

women including artists such as Jeanne de Montbaston who worked in the secular book market of Paris, writers such as Catherine d'Amboise, in her early sixteenth-century *Complainte de la dame pasmée contre fortune*, and those such as Anne de Graville, who inspired her husband to translate the *Histoires Chaldéennes* and present it to her as an act of love, or Louise of Savoy and Margaret of Austria who, in collaboration with the tutors of the children with whose early education they were entrusted, commissioned works for their edification. In the second study in this section, Olga Karaskova-Hesry (pp. 180-201), shows how Jean Molinet, the official chronicler to the Burgundian dukes, crafted an evolving image of his patroness, Mary of Burgundy, heiress of the dynasty, from just before her marriage to Maximilian of Austria in 1477; through the early years of her rule when she successfully produced an heir, the future Philip the Fair; to her untimely death in 1482. Across three different works, Molinet presented Mary as being transformed from a young, orphaned "damsel in distress," metaphorically adrift at sea, to a redemptive figure based on models provided by the Virgin Mary and Moses, and, finally, on her death, to an ideal mother of her people. The third contribution to this section, that of Elizabeth L'Estrange (pp. 202-16), sees Anne de Graville's own copy of the *Histoires Chaldéennes* not simply as a "livre d'amour" from her husband, Pierre de Balsac, but rather as a work that attests to Anne's own interests in ancient history and in the translation and reformulation of earlier texts. For L'Estrange, this work would not only occupy an important place in the substantial collection of books that Anne de Graville put together but would also, in turn, inspire her to write her own texts contributing to the long-running debate on the position of women in culture and society.

The fourth and final section of the collection consists of three articles which examine how the actual choice of a book's form, that is in manuscript or as an early printed text, affected the way in which it was received by its various audiences over time. The first of these, by Maria Colombo Timelli (pp. 219-39), outlines the different fortunes of the *mises en prose*, that is, fifteenth-century prose reworkings of epics and romances originally written in verse, which began to appear in printed form towards the end of the century. From analysis of the dates at which the *mises en prose* were printed and the number of editions that were made of them, and from consideration of whether they circulated in both manuscript and printed form at the same time, Colombo Timelli shows how this corpus of works, which has long been underestimated by scholars of early modern French literature, gained new audiences beyond the courtly milieu in which they had originated and enjoyed a success that, for some of them, lasted even up to the nineteenth century. In the second contribution to this section (pp. 241-68), Delphine Mercuzot discusses the Middle French translation by Colard Mansion, the famous scribe and printer of Bruges, of the *Vita Adae*, an apocryphal text recounting the travails of Adam and Eve after the Fall, that was probably produced between 1472 and 1477 at the request of the great bibliophile, Louis of Gruuthuse. In Mercuzot's view, the very limited diffusion of this translation which is extant in only three copies can be explained by the rather clunky and at times almost unintelligible rendering that Mansion gives of his Latin source, despite the fact that all three copies of his work were beautifully illustrated. The final article in the collection, by Sylvie Lefèvre (pp. 270-87), revisits the life and *œuvre* of the relatively little-studied late fifteenth-century poet, Guillaume Alecis. Through a careful examination of the interplay between the manuscript and print versions of his various works, Lefèvre argues that Alecis's textual afterlife illustrates the need for modern scholars to remain alert not only to the parallel diffusion of works in these two media in the early decades of the sixteenth century but even to the possibility of a manuscript's being created on the basis of a prior printed edition.

This handsomely produced volume, which features many gorgeous full-page, full-colour reproductions of images from the manuscripts and printed books under discussion, will be of interest to students and scholars of the history of the book, of French literature, of art history, and of gender studies. For literary specialists in particular, it serves as an indispensable reminder of how studying works of literature purely through modern critical editions may lead us to miss out on the rich life of these works every time that they took on a new form in either manuscript or print or that a new owner left their mark on them for their own readerly or authorial purposes.

LIST OF ESSAYS

Sandra Hindman, “Avant-propos”

Deborah McGrady, “Introduction: Entre forme, fonction et sens symbolique”

Part One, L'écrivain et l'artiste

Thomas Le Gouge, “Voir la Terre. *L'Image du monde* de Gossuin de Metz”

Nicholas Herman, “Le peintre et le rhétoricien: symétrie ou dissemblance?”

Part Two, Bibliothèques, traduction et circulation des textes

Patricia Stirnemann, “De bouche à oreille. La bibliothèque de l'écrivain”

Marie-Hélène Tesnière, “Les emprunts de Louis d'Anjou à la Librairie royale (octobre 1380-mai 1381)”

Mathieu Deldicque, “La passion des livres en héritage. Anne de Graville et sa bibliothèque”

Maxence Hermant, “Les traductions manuscrites en français pour François I^{er}”

Part Three, Les femmes et le manuscrit

Anne-Marie Legaré, “Au prisme du féminin. Voir autrement la culture du Moyen Âge”

Olga Karaskova-Hesry, “L'image de la duchesse Marie de Bourgogne (1477-1482) dans les œuvres de Jean Molinet”

Elizabeth L'Estrange, “Les *Histoires Chaldéennes* d'Anne de Graville”

Part Four, Entre manuscrits et imprimés

Maria Colombo Timelli, “Du manuscrit à l'imprimé. Le cas des ‘mises en prose’”

Delphine Mercuzot, “La *Pénitence d'Adam* de Colard Mansion. Un texte rare à l'heure de la diffusion en série”

Sylvie Lefèvre, “Guillaume Alecis. Une œuvre entre manuscrits et imprimés”

Rosalind Brown-Grant
University of Leeds
R.Brown-Grant@leeds.ac.uk

Copyright © 2021 by the Society for French Historical Studies, all rights reserved. The Society for French Historical Studies permits the electronic distribution of individual reviews for nonprofit educational purposes, provided that full and accurate credit is given to the author, the date of publication, and the location of the review on the H-France website. The Society for French Historical Studies reserves the right to withdraw the license for edistribution/republication of individual reviews at any time and for any specific case. Neither bulk redistribution/republication in electronic form of more than five percent of the contents of *H-France Review* nor republication of any amount in print form will be permitted without permission. For any other proposed uses, contact the Editor-in-Chief of H-France. The views posted on *H-France Review* are not necessarily the views of the Society for French Historical Studies.

ISSN 1553-9172