

variety of local milieux and intellectual contexts. Even the wide-ranging, masterful study of *Saracens* produced recently by John Tolan (2002) is at its very best in its detailed engagement with the Franciscan missions to Asia (which are also the focus of Tolan's current research). Only through highly focused histories such as Scarfe Beckett's *Anglo-Saxon Perceptions of the Islamic World* can we begin to glimpse the contours of an age as fraught with conflict and cultural exchange as our own.

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ROSEMARY TZANAKI, *Mandeville's Medieval Audiences: A Study on the Reception of the Book of Sir John Mandeville (1371–1550)*. Pp. xv + 301. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003 £47.50 (ISBN 0 7546 0846 8).

IN the decades since the decline and fall of the New Criticism, authorial intention has largely fallen out of view. It has been replaced by interest in reception, adaptation, and redaction – in short, the *mouvance* of the literary text as it passes from one scribe to another, and as it moves within (and between) communities of readers. Perhaps no literary text lends itself to this kind of interpretive practice as readily as *The Book of John Mandeville*, which circulated in nine medieval vernaculars as well as Latin and survives today in over 250 manuscripts. Rosemary Tzanaki's study of the audiences of *The Book of John Mandeville* attempts to flesh out what we know of how this text was received during the two centuries following its first appearance in 1356. She offers a wide-ranging account of the kinds of illustration and marginalia found in manuscripts of Mandeville, as well as of the editorial strategies and compilation choices brought to bear on the text. While the book does not quite succeed in its ambitious aims – to provide a 'coherent picture of Mandeville's reception' (269) – it none the less offers a number of useful insights into late medieval reading practices and the heterogeneity of

response inspired by *The Book of John Mandeville*.

The book begins with an introduction surveying the various versions of *The Book of John Mandeville*, outlining Tzanaki's methodology, and listing the manuscripts used, followed by five chapters, each of which highlights a different aspect of the medieval text. In spite of the title's promise to focus on audience response, these chapters are fundamentally interpretive essays, in keeping with Tzanaki's argument that study of the work's reception 'must start from an analysis of the author's intention' (2). These five chapters are keyed to five distinct aspects of the text: pilgrimage, geography, romance, history, and theology. Tzanaki avers that these categories are not of her own choosing, but rather 'emerged very strongly from the evidence itself' (269); it is hard to deny, however, that these categories also echo modern generic and theoretical approaches. Each chapter concludes with examples of illustration and marginalia drawn from manuscripts of Mandeville's Book, highlighting what Tzanaki calls the 'dynamic tension between intentionality and response' (4).

The dual focus of the study – on the author's (singular) intention and the audience's (plural) response – leads Tzanaki to rely upon a single witness to the Mandeville tradition in the early parts of each chapter, and a range of versions and manuscripts in the later parts. Her choice of that single witness, however, is peculiar. Tzanaki indicates that she has chosen to use the Continental version of the French text because 'this is the version closest to the lost archetype' (19), citing Christiane Deluz's edition of *Le Livre des merveilles du monde* in corroboration. Deluz's magisterial study, however, states precisely the contrary: 'La comparaison entre les manuscrits de la version insulaire écrits en parler anglo-normand et ceux écrits en parler continental montre que c'est bien le texte anglo-normande qui est premier' (Deluz, 33). Another peculiar choice is Tzanaki's almost complete neglect of the Defective version, which was by far the most widely read version of Mandeville in English. Although M. C. Seymour's edition of the Defective text (EETS, o.s. 319, 2002) probably appeared too recently to be used by Tzanaki,

facsimiles of the Defective version (which was the basis for all early printed editions) have long been available, and Tamarah Kohanski's edition of the Pynson printing of the Defective text appeared in 2001.

The usefulness of *Mandeville's Medieval Audiences* is somewhat limited by the author's habit of relying upon secondary sources, which hinders the reader's effort to retrace Tzanaki's steps back to the primary materials. The discussion of Mandeville's sources consistently follows the notes to Deluz's edition, though the usage is not always explicitly acknowledged; instead, one finds Deluz's infrequent errors of source attribution (e.g., of Brunetto Latini on pp. 86–7) echoed in Tzanaki's own text. Finally, the book often relies upon older scholarship even when newer work on the same topic has appeared over the last few decades. Perhaps the most painful example of this tendency appears in the closing pages, where Tzanaki writes, 'More recently, Paul Hamelius has drawn attention to the arguably heretical aspects of the Book' (279). Since Hamelius died in 1922 of wounds sustained during the Great War, 'recent' may not be the right term to use.

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EMILY STEINER, *Documentary Culture and the Making of Medieval English Literature*. Pp. xvi + 266 (Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature). Cambridge, New York, Oakleigh: Cambridge University Press, 2003. £45.00 (ISBN 0 521 82484 2).

EMILY STEINER'S *Documentary Culture and the Making of Medieval English Literature* exists on two planes. At ground level, Steiner traces the operations of a certain conceit – the idea of Christ issuing a charter of salvation, written with his own blood – as it modulates through a small set of devotionally or socially oriented texts. After the introductory discussion in chapter 1 (see below), chapter 2 ('Lyric, Genre, and the Material Text') focuses on the mid-fourteenth-century

Franciscan *Charters of Christ*. The following chapter, 'Piers Plowman and the Archive of Salvation', turns to Langland's documents, particularly Lady Meed's charter, Piers's pardon, Moses's maundement, and Peace's patent. Steiner equates the tearing of the pardon with the creation of an indentured charter, whereby Piers is apportioning duties and rewards to his followers (140–2). (She cannot, however, completely explain away the statement that he acted out of 'pure tene' [version B, VII.116] – that is, to use J. A. W. Bennett's gloss, out of 'vexation, anger'.)

In chapter 4 ('Writing Public: Documents in the *Piers Plowman* Tradition'), Steiner traces the influence of Langland's troping of documentation into two later historicized contexts: the letters of the 1381 rising and the admonitory poem *Mum and the Sothsegger*. These texts, she argues, reflect not the actual usage of documents but 'the vernacularized legal fictions of documentary culture' (175; Steiner's italics). The two closing chapters examine this 'documentary poetics' as it migrates into a Lollard context. 'Lollard Community and the *Charters of Christ*' focuses on heretical reinterpretations of the *Charters*, and on orthodox counter-revisions of the *Charters* and in the C version of *Piers Plowman*. 'Lollard Rhetoric and the Written Record: Margery Baxter and William Thorpe' aims to demonstrate how 'Lollard rhetoric might disrupt the conventions of the written record by invoking an alternate documentary culture' (233). Finally, the Epilogue looks at Margery Kempe's obsession with the authenticating power of documents.

On this first plane Steiner exhibits a good grasp of the relevant primary and secondary literature, and her comments are clever if sometimes opaque. Introducing this analysis, however, and periodically punctuating it, is the second plane of discourse. Here Steiner strains for wider significance by crediting, as her title implies, the 'making' of medieval English literature to the growing importance of legal instruments over the later fourteenth century. Her line of reasoning (reconstructed from a jumbled presentation as well as I could manage, with help from an earlier article) is that the idea of Christ's charter was developed by the Fathers of the Church but dropped out of sight until it resurfaced in