

The third chapter, 'The first sodomite', addresses medieval literary and visual interpretations of the myth of Orpheus. The hero's forbidden look back, which precipitates his loss of Eurydice and his turn to pederasty, is discussed alongside the fatal glance of Lot's wife. While Orpheus retains the potential for rehabilitation, his acquired misogyny reconfigured as pious chastity, Lot's wife represents loss and retrograde urges, resonating with queer theory's antisocial turn. Mills's fourth chapter, 'The sex lives of monks', considers the countererotic strategies of the enclosed, examining the narratives of Ganymede and St Eugenia as they appear on church capitals for the lessons that a beautiful, abducted boy and a woman who lived as a monk might teach about sexual continence and the redirection of desire.

'Orientations', the final chapter, compares the 'straight' and 'upright' living expected of anchorites with the horizontal and rotational trajectories of the sodomites roasted on spits in images of hell, demonstrating that directional orientations were manifest in medieval theories of sexual conduct. These positionings with regard to sinful behaviour, Mills argues, even constitute identity categories.

This ambitious and insightful volume breaks ground for much future thought and study; the extensive and meticulous endnotes attest to the exemplary thoroughness of Mills's scholarship. This is a substantial contribution both to queer studies and to the study of medieval art and literature.

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Claire M. Waters, *Translating Clergie: Status, Education, and Salvation in Thirteenth-Century Vernacular Texts*, The Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia, Pa: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016). xiv + 289 pp. ISBN 978-0-8122-4772-5. £60.00.

Claire Waters's second book analyses a broad range of pastoral texts written in French, both Anglo-Norman and Continental, that teach the essentials of Christian learning to a lay audience. Her focus is on the form the instruction takes in the texts and on the way clerical authors interact with their lay audiences. Thus, the book does not only introduce a variety of texts to the discussion that are rarely acknowledged by scholars of medieval literature, but offers an innovative approach which accounts for the interactive character of religious instruction. Waters argues that French literature 'mediates between laity and clergy', providing a 'middle ground between the more learned among laity and the less learned among clergy' (p. 24). The relationship between these two groups and the question of their

relative status is essential for the book. Most importantly, Waters emphasizes throughout the book that religious instruction was a joint venture of clergy and laity. Waters points to various ways the relationship between clerically educated author and 'moderately learned' (p. 9) disciple could be shaped. Throughout the argumentation, the author raises awareness of the bilateral character of the instruction, one of the great merits of this book.

A central motif Waters finds in the texts of her corpus is the moment of death. This is, she emphasizes, the ultimate 'teachable moment' (p. 64). While all teaching prepares the reader for this moment, it is only after physical death that true wisdom can be reached. It is also in death, Waters demonstrates, that the status division between teacher and student, which is unstable in any case, can become entirely blurred and the roles reversed.

The lower estates, the outsiders of Christian society, play a surprisingly central and ambiguous role in some of the instructional texts Waters analyses. Given the audience of quite possibly noble readers and the clerical background of the authors, there appears to be much more consideration of the role of *jongleurs*, whores, and peasants in God's world than one might expect. The biblical motif of the sinner saint allows the authors to use these types to connect to their audiences in new ways and encourage their own efforts to educate themselves in order to ensure their eternal lives.

Waters is looking at the status relations between clergy and laity predominantly through the eyes of the clergy, the very same people who compose the texts and who like to present themselves as superior in knowledge as they pass on their acquired wisdom to the uneducated. While she concedes that this role of the clergy is a literary topos she hardly ever draws conclusions from this observation. Waters describes scenarios of 'status reversals' of teacher and disciples in scenes from French pastoral texts, and draws parallels to the relation between author and audience. However, it needs mentioning that antagonism between clergy and laity is often topical, too. Discussions of their relative statuses are important, but in reality both groups more often than not recruit their highest-ranking members from the same families. Thus, French, even in England, was not so much a 'mediating language', but the language shared by members of the political and cultural elites of the time. Waters is right to point out that composing religious instruction in French, basic as it may be, opens the door for further engagement with the topic and enables lay participation in a number of discourses. She avoids some of the pitfalls of this discussion in speaking predominantly of 'teachers' and 'students' rather than 'clergy' and 'laity', as these terms do not cover necessarily identical groups of people. A thoughtful reflection of the social situatedness of both groups, even if it had to be largely hypothetical, would be interesting. With the book's interest in status reversals, it would have been fruitful to think about the implications that religious instruction in the vernacular could have for

social elites in High Medieval France and England, as the translation of *clergie* ('learnedness', p. 10) into French allows new groups to participate in discourses hitherto limited to the clergy.

'*Translating Clergie*' opens the ground for a more nuanced discussion of the role of pastoral writing in the vernacular and offers detailed insights into the textual strategies employed for religious instruction. The book encourages scholars from different disciplines to reassess categories of status and learning and thus contributes to recent trends in medieval studies to think across boundaries, both geographical and intellectual.

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CLAUDIA WITTIG

Charity Urbanski, *Writing History for the King: Henry II and the Politics of Vernacular Historiography* (Ithaca, NY, and London: Cornell University Press, 2013). xi + 252 pp. ISBN 978-0-8014-5131-7. \$69.95.

The first book in English substantially devoted to two French verse chronicles, Wace's unfinished over 16,000-line *Roman de Rou* (1160–c.1174) and Benoît de Sainte-Maure's nearly 45,000-line *Chronique des ducs de Normandie* (c.1174–c.1180), *Writing History for the King* is unique and welcome for its unwavering acceptance of the legitimacy (not necessarily accuracy) of vernacular historical writing within the context of twelfth-century Latin historiographical production in Anglo-Norman England. While Urbanski is not the first to question Henry II's removal of commission from Wace, transferring it to 'Maistre Beneeit', she takes a novel approach, aiming to connect Henry II's transfer of commission to a 'much larger political program intended to shape public opinion' (p. 7). However, demonstrating that Henry sought vernacular histories about his ancestors to reinforce his own power is a tall order, particularly when this goal is predicated on 'a critical reassessment of the nature of Henry's power' (p. 40), arguing that his 'authority in England and Normandy was remarkably tenuous in some ways' (p. 7). Linking conclusions about these histories to a demonstration of Henry's weaknesses both as a ruler and head of a dynasty may also distort readings of the texts.

Chapter 1, 'Situating the *Roman de Rou* and the *Chronique des ducs de Normandie*', contains a useful introduction to those two poems, though undercut by suggestions such as 'not only was *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* the most likely precursor of Old French historiography, it was also the first history known to have appeared in Old French' (p. 24). Chapter 2, 'Henry II', takes up 'the four most important threats to Henry's power' including Norman 'disdain' for Geoffrey Plantagenet and the 'lack of clear rules governing the Anglo-Norman succession' (p. 40). However, Urbanski's perspectives on Henry's hegemony (not necessarily shared by scholars of twelfth-century Norman/English/Angevin government)