
Ben Parsons, *Punishment and Medieval Education* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer; Woodbridge and Rochester, NY: Boydell and Brewer, 2018). ix + 252 pp. ISBN 978-1-84384-515-7. £60.00.

Schooling and beating were close companions in medieval ideas of education. Artists portrayed them together, writers linked them together, and beating forms a regular topic of school exercises. Most famously, when a schoolmaster gained the degree of 'Master of Grammar' in early Tudor Cambridge, he ceremoniously beat a 'shrewd' or naughty boy who was brought in for the purpose and paid 4*d.* 'for his labour'. Some medieval commentators argued that discipline of this kind in the Christian era marked progress from less principled pagan times. In fact, as the author shows, the education of boys in the classical world had been similar. Both classical and medieval writers regarded childhood as the age of mankind that is naturally given to play. Children must be disciplined, by force if necessary, to instil the morals, knowledge, and skills that they would not otherwise acquire, and to be shaped at a malleable age of life into the ideal forms of adulthood.

Dr Parsons's book is concerned with educationists and grammar schools in western Europe up to the sixteenth century, and therefore with the training of boys of the middle and upper ranks of society from about seven to fourteen. Much of the evidence comes from England but there is also substantial attention to France, Germany, and Italy. The author, writing clearly and fluently, traces the nuances of the subject from some who valued discipline in itself to others who wished to fit it to the psychology of children and to moderate it rather than impose it stringently. While historians over a century ago saw a more tolerant approach to discipline emerging only at the Renaissance, there is plenty of evidence for this long beforehand, notably in the writings of Vincent of Beauvais in the thirteenth century. One could add to the author's evidence that of the statutes of Winchester and Eton in which the schoolmaster was told to punish in moderation, and those of Bishop Beckington for the choristers of Wells Cathedral in 1460 where unsatisfactory pupils are first to be warned kindly, then rebuked sharply, and beaten only on the third occasion.

Having chronicled the theories and practice of corporal punishment, the author gives a chapter to the responses of pupils. This is a brave initiative, given the paucity of evidence. Although there are examples of schoolmasters being sued in court for brutality, the defence was always necessity or the wish of the plaintiff to avoid paying overdue school fees, and the truth fails to emerge. One knows little of pupils' or parents' reactions in actuality, although a draft letter survives from an early Tudor pupil at Oxford to his tutor, not mentioned here. 'Now you punish me overmuch, master, and please you I cannot bide this punishment.' We do not know how much beating was done in any school. The author quotes the

complaints of Langland and the grammarian Robert Whittington that children were spoilt by adults, and other indignant writers said the same. Contemporaries seem to have thought that discipline was inadequate rather than inordinate. When beating is mentioned in school exercises, in which it is a frequent topic, there is usually an element of humour.

This book is a valuable study of discipline in educational writings. Its limitation is that it takes one element of education and considers it with little regard to the others. There is plenty of evidence to show that empathy between masters and boys was important in the work of a typical classroom. Masters took great care to make easy the learning of Latin with understandable textbooks and to lubricate the curriculum with ploys that would interest and amuse, like riddles and rhymes, if only to make their own task easier.

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EDITIONS OF TEXTS

Philippe de Thaon, *Bestiaire* (MS BL Cotton Nero A.V), ed. Ian Short, Anglo-Norman Text Society: Plain Texts Series 20 (Oxford: Anglo-Norman Text Society, 2018). 100 pp. ISBN 0-905474-65-1. Free of charge to Society members. Ian Short here offers a new edition of Philippe de Thaon's *Bestiaire*, composed between 1121 and 1135 with a dedication to Queen Adeliza, and rededicated to Queen Eleanor c.1154. Short's edition, a preliminary step towards a new critical edition of this poem that will draw on all three surviving manuscript copies, reproduces the oldest extant version, found in a manuscript dating from the final third of the twelfth century, MS BL, Cotton Nero A.V. As Short reminds us, this is the earliest known French vernacular manuscript to present two works by the same author; it is also the only complete surviving copy of the *Bestiaire*. Though the work has been previously edited, all previous editions feature extensive corrections and emendations, obscuring access to this earliest known, and only complete, version of the poem. In contrast, the current edition is highly conservative. Short expands scribal abbreviations, supplies punctuation and word division, and introduces corrections only when absolutely necessary for intelligibility. Rejected readings are of course noted; variant readings are provided selectively, from the 1900 edition by Emmanuel Walberg. As a result, readers finally have access to an actual, unaltered version of the text that dates from only a few decades after its original composition. Short's introduction offers a concise description of the manuscript, a brief review of Philippe's literary output, and plausible, though speculative, comments on his possible identity.

Françoise E. Denis and William W. Kibler, *Gui de Bourgogne: chanson de geste du XIII^e siècle*, Classiques français du Moyen Âge 187 (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2019). 497 pp.