

**Nadine Henrard, Marjolaine Raguin (dir.),
Représentations et voix de femmes face à la
guerre sainte au Moyen Âge. Lyrique de croisade
et littérature narrative (XII^e–XV^e siècle), Paris
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Although the exact definition is open to debate, crusade songs are vernacular lyric poems that have to do with the crusades or the Reconquista in Spain. Linda Paterson distinguishes three types of crusade songs: »propaganda texts«, political *servientès* and love songs or *chansons de départie*, celebrating or, often, lamenting a man's departure on crusade.¹ Despite a number of excellent studies and an online project initiated by Paterson at the University of Warwick, crusade songs have not received sufficient attention. In particular, as the editors Nadine Henrard and Marjolaine Raguin state in their introduction, the vast majority of studies of crusade songs have largely ignored the issue of gender, while the studies of gender in medieval literature have largely ignored crusade songs. This is surprising, if only because of the wide popularity of *chansons de départie* in the Middle Ages. In addition, some songs have been attributed to female authors (although the existence of these female authors is debatable), others adopt a woman's voice and yet others address women. A woman is also at the center of the tensions that dominate many of the poems, including tensions »between the poet and society« between *fin'amour* and God's commands; and between conflicting emotions within the poet himself« (Julien Maudoux, »Représentations et rôles des femmes dans les chansons lyriques de croisade«, 241). In short, this collection is long overdue.

In the introduction to the collection, Henrard and Raguin make two claims. While their first claim, that crusade poems allow us to »analyze and to understand what holy wars meant for women who lived through them« (11), might seem too ambitious, we have to remember that most other sources on crusades tell us even less on the subject. In other words, when it comes to the topic of crusades and women, we cannot be choosy. The editors' second claim, that crusade poems are invaluable for illuminating societal expectations of women in the context of crusades, is beyond any doubt. To quote Marie Guérin in »Regards croisés sur la participation des femmes à la quatrième croisade«, the songs »present men's image



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¹ Linda Paterson, *Singing the Crusades. French and Occitan Lyric Responses to the Crusading Movements, 1137–1336*, Cambridge 2018, 9.

of women or, rather, the image of women that men wanted to transmit« (348). Angelica Rieger's »Canon de Béthune entre oc et oil. Une lecture subversive« demonstrates that this image of women could be steeped in misogyny. Even when it was not or at least not directly, it imposed limitations on women's choices. Crusade songs clearly reflect the societal (and the ecclesiastical) expectations for women to stay behind when their beloved went on crusade. Regardless, many women still went on crusades, but no one wrote songs about them.

The volume – which reunited papers presented at a conference organized by the University of Liège in 2018 – contains eighteen articles, not counting the introduction, one in English and the rest in French (the volume, however, is very much international and includes contributions from scholars based not only in France, but in Germany, Italy, the UK and the US). Several contributions focus not on crusade songs, but on related narrative sources, such as *Ditié de Jehanne d'Arc* by Christine de Pizan (which, for once, presents us with an unmediated woman's voice). The articles are divided into three sections: (1) »Female voices and gender of the authors«; (2) »Representations of women«; and (3) »History and reception«. Some readers of the volume would have appreciated a longer introduction, with more background information on crusade songs and a more thorough explanation of some of the editorial decisions (for which, no doubt, there are sound reasons), such as, for example, the inclusion of crusade songs in Middle High German, which are often absent from similar studies, or of sources other than crusade songs, which extended the chronological scope into the fifteenth century. The back matter includes a list of crusade songs – about one hundred fifty in total – under discussion. How this list relates to corpora of crusade songs found elsewhere would have merited an explanation. The back matter also includes an index of manuscripts (arranged by location), another index of authors, and a third index of titles of songs. I am sure many future researchers will be grateful for these three indexes.

The volume contributes to filling an important gap in the field of medieval literature studies and, at the same time, participates in two sub-fields of crusader studies: crusades and gender and reception of crusades. A scholar working on medieval music will also find much of interest here, particularly with Anne Ibos-Augé's article »La lyrique de la croisade possède-t-elle une ›voix musicale féminine‹ propre?«. By focusing almost exclusively on women – which, given the volume's pioneering nature, is an entirely justified decision – the volume sets aside other aspects of gender, which, one hopes, other (or the same?) editors and authors will pick up. In short, this is an important collection that deserves to be noticed and read beyond narrow disciplinary confines.



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