

Carrie Griffin, Emer Purcell (ed.), Text, Transmission, and Transformation in the European Middle Ages, 1000–1500, Turnhout (Brepols) 2018, XXII–242 p. (Cursor Mundi, 34), ISBN 978-2-503-56740-2, EUR 80,00.

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The editors open this volume with the claim that it collects essays that would not under other circumstances have appeared together. Given the wide geographic, linguistic, and chronological range of the ten essays, this is most likely true, and it shows the value of publishing miscellanies that all could be accommodated here and bring their varied perspectives to the broader question of textual transmission and translation in the European Middle Ages. As the editors state, the interest in the volume lies in »what happens to material when it moves into contexts other than that in which it was produced« (p. XIII).

All the essays here are the product of close textual work on manuscript traditions and early printed texts. Given the expansiveness of the remit, however, it was important that each author render his or her essay as amenable to the general medievalist reader as possible, and some have achieved this more fully than others. The best essays in this volume, I would suggest, are those that point to wider political and cultural implications beyond the history or mechanics of the translation or transmission of a single text. As a result, around half the essays make technically proficient literary and philological contributions to their own field, but are possibly too specific to speak to the broader audience that might take up this miscellany.

Amongst these essays, Kevin Murray studies narrative traditions related to the question of regicide and voyaging, and his essay immerses itself in close reading of the Irish texts. Tom Birkett analyses the philological links between three congruent traditions of rune poems from England, Norway, and Iceland. Beth Ann Zamzow turns her attention to the musical and literary intertexts at play in Medieval English carols.

Anthony Lappin studies key moments in a critical interfaith dialogue, considering how the Latin translations of the Qurʾān were shaped through the processes of initial Christian contact with the text, its subsequent employment in Christian anti-heretical discourse, and its appearance in early modern Italian Hermeticism. Tamara Pérez-Fernández takes account of the problematics of marginalia and Latin paratexts in Iberian translations of John Gower's »Confessio amantis«, with a focus on what she describes as the »breaking of the Latin frame« (p. 126). Given the material, Pérez-Fernández might have spoken to wider issues, perhaps considering what was *gained* by altering the structure of the text rather than only what was lost. I also think she misunderstands the maxim of Seneca that she discusses at the conclusion of her



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essay, so that the translations she cites as incomprehensible in fact represent Seneca's words more appropriately than her own translation of them. Nóirín Ní Bheaglaoi undertakes a comprehensive analysis of the manuscript tradition of the »Topographia Hibernica« of Giraldus Cambrensis.

Four essays engage more widely with the contexts of the transmission and translation processes that they study. Caoimhe Whelan's analysis of the translations of Giraldus's »Expugnatio Hibernica« that were made in Ireland raises the question of the politics of translation in a colonized country where there are competing options for a language of translation. Conceived more broadly, this essay could have implications for the current decolonization strategies at work within universities and other centres of learning. Krista Rascoe's essay uses Dante's »Paradiso« to analyse how a medieval literary text could intersect with contemporary scientific knowledge. Rascoe shows how Dante utilized the optics of reflection and refraction, employing science to shape his aesthetics in a way that would not be seen again until the didactic poems of the Neolatinists some centuries later. Classical Greek texts translated by medieval Arabic thinkers allowed Dante to consider how colour and light could be used to express the unknowable concept of the Trinity, in the process creating what Rascoe has termed early »science fiction« (p. 116).

Anna Dlabačová undertakes a comprehensive study of the mechanics by which vernacular texts were transmitted through the Rhineland and Low Countries prior to the impact of printing. Tracing the dissemination of a single devotional »Mirror« for the contemplative life, originally written in Middle Dutch, through its appearance in various languages and orders, both male and female, she reveals the link between methods of distribution and technologies of reading. This »Mirror« travelled through, but also helped to form, textual communities that were devoted to reformation and a stricter observance of the monastic rule. Dlabačová's essay deftly outlines the political, pastoral, ideological, and personal lines of influence that could affect a text's transmission.

Finally, Matthew Wranovix takes exception to the historical depiction of parish priests as essentially unlearned by undertaking close readings of the documents associated with the textual life of parish priests in Germany in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. Wranovix's study offers an insight into the textual formation of priests and how this shaped their interaction with their parishioners, before considering the new role of print in standardizing texts such as diocesan missals and synodal statutes in an effort to combat heresy and superstition.

The volume concludes with an Afterword by the late Emeritus Professor Donnchadh Ó Corráin to whom the volume was also dedicated. This constitutes only a very brief summary of the essays in the volume. There is also an Index of six pages that primarily lists proper names.

As it stands, this is an interesting volume for those interested in the complex philology associated with medieval textuality, translation, and transmission. The editors can be commended for bringing together this eclectic collection and maintaining a



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strong through line amongst the essays. With greater editorial encouragement, more of the essays might have been able to speak more broadly to the cultural and political considerations at play in these processes as well.



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