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Claire M. Waters, *Translating Clergie: Status, Education, and Salvation in Thirteenth-Century Vernacular Texts*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015. xv + 289 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, and index. \$69.95 U.S. (cl) ISBN 978-0-8122-4772-5

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According to the *Anglo-Norman Dictionary*, the meanings of *clergie* range from “clergy,” to “the ability to read,” “learning,” Latin, and science. In this admirable book, Claire Waters uses the vernacular term to denote “learnedness,” particularly among the laity. Given the importance of *translatio studii* in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and the vast number of French texts related to lay learning on both sides of the channel, the potential range of the topic is broad indeed, and Waters initially narrows her scope to focus on the relationship between teacher and learner. In later chapters, she turns her attention to narratives illustrating how (sometimes minimal) learning might be effectively manipulated by laypeople at the margins of society.

In considering the teaching situation, the teacher is usually the writer or translator, while the “learner” may be construed as both the immediate audience of a text (its patron or imagined reader), and the broader audience implicit in the manuscript tradition, as well as a modern reader. These considerations lead Waters to choose texts that circulated widely over a long period of time. Commendably, she refuses to confine her interest to works produced only in England or in France; she insists that the texts she studies are “part of a transnational French tradition that includes both Continental and insular strands” (p. x). She also sets vernacular texts into a wider context by discussing relevant Latin texts by Honorius Augustodunensis (*Sermo generalis*, *Speculum ecclesiae*, *Elucidarium*), Thomas of Chobham’s *Summa de arte praedicandi*, Bernard of Clairvaux (*In festo annuum sanctorum sermo I*), and Arnold of Bonneval’s *Tractatus de septem verbis Domini in cruce*. The analyses in each chapter are enriched by relatively brief discussions of the manuscript transmission and the codicological context of individual texts.

The first two chapters examine texts of religious instruction in Anglo-Norman, including the *Dialogue du père et du fils*, Robert of Gretham’s *Miroir* or *Évangile des domées*, Pierre d’Abernon’s *Lumere as lais*, William of Waddington’s *Manuel des Pechiez*, Edmund of Abindon’s *Merure de seinte eglise*. It is in these chapters that the “education” of the subtitle is most explicitly addressed. Brief discussions of twelfth-century writers like Bernard of Clairvaux and the recluse of Molliens allow thirteenth-century innovations and shifts in emphasis to stand out more clearly. In contrast to writers from the earlier period who maintain a careful clerical distance from their flock, Waters notes among the thirteenth-century authors a blurring of the divide between clerical and lay status, manifested most clearly in an increasing tendency to treat audiences as collaborators. Her analysis focuses on the dialogue (literal or implicit) between the writer/narrator and his audience, who might be either inscribed into the text or the writer’s patron. Waters insists that these texts are not dry; on the contrary, the evocation of the audience often reveals the “affection that is implicit in such teaching” (p. 23). There is often a partnership between teacher and learner, for both must make the same journey through life. In creating a relationship between master and disciple or teacher and learner, these manuals convey not simply

content but also method: the learner learns how to learn, and is thus enabled to teach others. Waters finds attention to method particularly evident in the *Lumere as lais*, which is the first work to impart the methods of scholastic inquiry to a lay audience.

Although the second chapter is also based on vernacular manuals of doctrinal instruction, it focuses on death as a moment of particular instructional importance, for it is only then—when the individual soul is judged by the Creator—that the effectiveness of both teaching and learning is evaluated. Both William of Waddington and Pierre d'Abernon, though their approaches to judgment are very different, emphasize the connection between present and future, as actions performed in the present have consequences for the future, while care for that future also shapes those actions. It is the universality of death that contributes to the sense of common purpose between teacher and learner as they work together to confront the same fate.

The remaining three chapters differ from the opening ones in their concentration on narrative texts rather than instructional manuals, although attention to the issues of learning, status, and judgment create a sense of continuity. The theme of status, and particularly status reversals, comes to the fore here, in the unexpected salvation of members of despised social groups like thieves, jongleurs, whores, and peasants, and in criticism of clerical hypocrisy. Doctrinal education in these chapters is replaced by the demonstration of the efficacy of very basic religious learning, sometimes reduced to knowledge of a single prayer.

Chapter three deals at length with the story of the Good Thief as presented in the Anglo-Norman *Holkham Bible Picture Book* and in the various versions of the *Évangile de Nicodème* or *Gospel of Nicodemus*. According to Waters' analysis, the Good Thief is saved, not by learning or knowledge, but by his ability to see beyond appearances to perceive Christ's divinity. His appearance among the saved in the *Évangile de Nicodème* underlines the status reversals inherent in Christian teaching. In chapter four, the theme of status (and its reversal) is explored in careful readings of versions of the life of a single saint (the harlot-saint Mary of Egypt), and three *fabliaux* that have peasants or jongleurs as protagonists. Here again, there is not much learning or instruction in evidence. Waters signals instead how these low-status characters manipulate the little knowledge they have in order to save themselves, observing: "The popular eschatology of the peasants, whores, and jongleurs discussed here not only embodies, in comic form, the dissemination of religious teaching in the vernacular that marked the late twelfth and, especially, the thirteenth centuries, but also shows the astuteness, the *engin* with which that teaching could be shaped by and for non-clerical audiences" (p. 163).

The fifth and final chapter is an exhilarating discussion of two large collections of Marian miracles, one by the French poet Gautier de Coinci, the other the so-called "second collection" preserved in London, British Library, Royal 20 B.XIV, by an anonymous Anglo-Norman compiler. The theme of status reappears in different guise in this chapter because the miracles include members of all social groups—lay and clerical, noble, bourgeois and peasant. All appear as sinners in need of Mary's help or intercession to be saved. Once again, the learning involved in these stories is leagues away from the doctrines imparted in the manuals. Often what the protagonists have mastered is very limited—the basic prayer to Mary, which gains importance with repetition. In analyzing the two collections, Waters senses in Gautier de Coinci a monk's sense of superiority to most of his characters and, presumably, to his audience as well, even as he celebrates the virtue of humility and the value of simple faith. She finds him uneasy with the message he preaches. The Anglo-Norman writer, in contrast, tends to emphasize what he shares with his audience. The difference in tone is well illustrated in Waters' analysis of the contrasting treatment of the same miracles by the two authors. Where Gautier stresses the ignorance of the priest who knows but a single mass and the hopeless rusticity of the peasant able to master only part of the *Hail Mary*, the Anglo-Norman writer is instead more critical of the harshness of the clerics who readily condemn them.

I have found little to criticize in this book, but omissions raised a few questions. Given the emphasis on straddling the channel, the absence of any French didactic texts in the first two chapters seems problematic. The Continental *Somme le roi*, for example, would have made a good point of comparison for the insular texts Waters discusses in chapter one, since it has neither the *Miroir*'s attention to audience nor the *Lumere*'s fictional dialogue. In addition, the *Somme* maintains firmly the clerical distance that the other two works tend to blur. Similarly, the sensitive reading of miniatures in the opening chapters and of two illustrations from the *Holkham Bible* made the absence of any commentary on the illustrations that often accompany Gautier's *Miracles* striking. Could it be that the very wealth of material here proved discouraging?

On the other hand, Waters shows herself sensitive to the language of her texts, and particularly to the power of vernacular rhymes to enhance and intensify the meaning of Latin texts. For example, a propos of a passage where Pierre d'Abernon translates a passage from Augustine, I was struck by her comment that "the beauty of the Latin parallel is intensified by the internal and end rhyme of the French verse, with *nus* chiasmatically linked to, and thus enclosed by, *vus*" (p. 202). Such an observation offers a welcome corrective to more routine notices of a translator's simplification of a source or lapses in comprehension of Latin.

Waters is to be commended for taking these texts (and especially the understudied manuals of doctrinal instruction) seriously, and finding them more radical than most scholars have perceived. She notes that "the inherent complexity of Christian doctrine and the importance of status reversal in Christian religion meant that even the most introductory teaching inevitably touched on crucially important and often volatile theological issues" (p. 2). There is a notable absence of gloom in this book. Death and judgment may be major topics, but the message the Waters conveys about her texts is hopeful and counters the more usual negative perceptions of modern scholars. She observes, for example that "[t]he figures in miracles learn through their love for Mary and her love for them: love is instructive, love is corrective, love is what makes it possible to learn" (p. 171). If the interpretation of learning (or education) and status evolve in the course of the book, the salvation that is the goal of all of these authors remains constant. One of Waters' aims was "to bring modern readers more fully face-to-face with the variety and liveliness of texts that respond to the teaching imperative of the thirteenth century" (p. 8). In this, she has succeeded admirably. Her book will open a considerable corpus to literary scholars of both medieval England and France, and it should interest theologians and religious historians to know how doctrine was transmitted and learned by the laity.

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