



Clio

Women, Gender, History

38 | 2013

Working Women, Working Men

Gender and written culture in England in the Late Middle Ages

Genre et culture de l'écrit en Angleterre à la fin du Moyen Âge

Aude Mairey



Electronic version

URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/cliowgh/329>

DOI: 10.4000/cliowgh.329

ISSN: 2554-3822

Publisher

Belin

Electronic reference

Aude Mairey, « Gender and written culture in England in the Late Middle Ages », *Clio* [Online], 38 | 2013, Online since 15 September 2014, connection on 10 December 2020. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/cliowgh/329> ; DOI : <https://doi.org/10.4000/cliowgh.329>

Gender and written culture in England in the Late Middle Ages

Aude MAIREY

*Experience, though noon auctoritee
Were in this world, is right ynough for me...*¹

For more than a decade now, the concept of gender² has been slowly making its way in medieval studies in France, whereas in English-speaking countries it has been receiving some criticism for being over-used. Similarly, the history of writing, or more generally, of communication, is attracting increased attention in France, primarily through works aiming to construct a textual archaeology – recently charted by Pierre Chastang.³ It should be noted that the research and ideas of English-speaking scholars (as well as of the Scandinavians and Dutch, who frequently collaborate closely with them) on both these issues – and to an even greater extent, on the interaction between gender and written culture – are extremely rich. These works cannot be reduced to the more extreme aspects of the debates surrounding post-modernism and the linguistic turn,⁴ but deserve to be acknowledged in all their complexity and confronted with the recent questioning from French medieval historians. This is the more relevant since, beyond the often misleading labels, the concerns and issues of both groups frequently coincide.

¹ Chaucer, “Wife of Bath’s Prologue,” *Canterbury Tales*, lines 1-2, cited by Benson 1987: 105.

² See Jeanne 2008; Bühner-Thierry, Lett & Moulinier-Brogi 2005.

³ Chastang 2008.

⁴ See criticism by Noiriel 1996.

My comments on the history and issues of cultural studies have been published elsewhere, and I will not return to them here.⁵ Neither is it my intention to rewrite the historiography of gender studies – an area prominent since the end of the 1980s⁶ within American and British academic landscapes and one which in fact constitutes a multi-faceted entity, embracing numerous, sometimes clearly opposed currents of thought. That particular historiography has been the subject of careful syntheses, most notably in impressive works by Françoise Thébaud and Laura Lee Downs, and also in numerous articles.⁷ It will nonetheless be helpful here to recapitulate the three important areas of debate which have emerged in recent years, given the significant impact they have had on medieval studies. The first deals with the place of feminism in women’s studies, and particularly in gender studies. A number of researchers have indeed been recently troubled by the seeming retreat from a specific vision of feminism at the heart of gender studies. Elizabeth Robertson, for example, has expressed some fear that strictly feminist issues have been displaced by a politically correct vision which sweeps aside the reality of masculine domination and its mechanisms.⁸ Robertson feels, as do some other researchers, that the notion of gender can only ultimately lead to a watering-down of the specificity of women and their history. Such criticism is equally present in France, and is one of the reasons why the idea of gender has for a long time remained on the peripheries of French research. This criticism is in fact closely linked to the multiple definitions of the term itself.

The original sense of gender, which was developed by American psychiatrists and sociologists in the late 1960s-early 1970s,⁹ “is, as it were, the ‘social aspect of sex’, or the difference between the sexes as socially constructed – a dynamic ensemble of practices and representations, with assigned activities and roles, and with

⁵ Mairey 2008.

⁶ Boxer 2001; Downs 2004b.

⁷ Thébaud 2007; Downs 2004b. See Lett 2008 for the Middle Ages.

⁸ Robertson 2007. This is not a new debate: see Thébaud 2007: 140-141.

⁹ Stoller 1968; Oakley 1972.

psychological attributes: a belief system".¹⁰ The use of this concept from the start allowed emphasis to be placed on various historical dynamics and on situating them in a comparatist context. But in 1986, Joan Scott proposed a new definition: "Gender is a constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes; and gender is a primary way of signifying power relationships".¹¹ Thus Scott introduced a more political view, one marked by the questionings of post-modernism, which in turn led her to focus on the construction of gender discourse. At the time, Scott's hypotheses and interpretations provoked objections from numerous women historians, yet it remains the case that in studies from the 1990s and above all, the 2000s, many points of convergence between the different concepts of gender can be identified.

Feminist criticism of gender has however become sharper in recent years, with the emergence in the 1990s of a new field: the history of masculinity, or rather, masculinities, which fell logically into the field of gender studies. Yet study of the history of masculinities does not automatically involve the elimination of the question of masculine domination: both men and women researchers working on these issues are fully aware of this. The spirited introduction to the collection *Medieval Masculinities*, edited by Clare A. Lees, provides an endorsement:

The focus on men in *Medieval Masculinities* [...] is not a return to traditional subjects that implies a neglect of feminist issues, but a calculated contribution to them, which can be formulated as a dialectic. The search for women in the cultural record, the breaking down of disciplinary barriers to that search, and the resultant new inquiries into cultural, social and representational forms afford medievalists a glimpse of a very different history of men. That study, in turn, will modulate the premises, methods and goals of a feminist inquiry.¹²

It is thus indeed a matter of complementing analyses which focus on gender relationships, giving full consideration to their many different dimensions. Again in the 1990s, Judith Butler's writings, most notably her famous *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, in

¹⁰ Thébaud 2007: 121.

¹¹ Scott 1999: 42 [article first published in.

¹² Lees 1994: xv-xvi.

which she conceives gender as a regulating norm emerging out of “a specific formation of power”, and categories of identity as “the *effects* of institutions, practices and discourses with multiple and diffuse points of origin”¹³ – established a firm theoretical base for, and stimulated interest in queer studies. These are based on the analysis of forms of sexuality that differ from the instituted heterosexual norm, together with the mechanisms of construction of that norm. Certain medievalists have welcomed this thinking, but as far as the present article is concerned, the area of queer studies will be taken to fall primarily into the field of the history of sexuality, appearing only incidentally in that of written culture.¹⁴

There is no doubt that Anglophone medievalists – in particular historians and literary specialists – have been affected by the huge growth of gender studies in the past twenty years¹⁵. Works of synthesis and *Companions* concerned with recent trends in historiography invariably devote a section to gender – whichever way the concept is defined.¹⁶ However, in practice, things are a little different; indeed, an analysis of the *Bibliography of British and Irish History (ex-Royal Historical Society)* provides a much more nuanced perspective. A search of book titles concerning the British Isles, published between 2007 and 2011, covering the chronological period 1000-1500, and which had attached to them one or more of the following keywords: *gender*, *women* and *masculinity* – yielded 372 results.

	Articles ¹⁷	Monographs
Women	274	52
Gender	59	24
Masculinity	12	5

¹³ Butler 1990: viii and ix respectively.

¹⁴ See Drake 2008; Burgwinkle 2006.

¹⁵ See website *Feminae: Medieval Women and Gender Index* (<http://www.haverford.edu/library/reference/mschaus/mfi/mfi.html>). Please note this site has not been updated since April 2010.

¹⁶ See in particular Little & Rosenwen 1998; Partner 2005; Mairey 2008: 154.

¹⁷ Includes chapters in edited works.

The proportion of articles and monographs to which these keywords are linked is about equal: a good quarter of monographs. As far as the keyword *masculinity* is concerned, it remains rare (17 cases only). What can we understand about the main subjects associated with these terms?

If we consider only the keywords, which clearly only allow a very simplified glimpse of the historiographical landscape, women's history is in practice far more significant than gender history proper. The most favoured areas are primarily concerned with religious and devotional history, as well as histories of the monarchy and elites, urban history, and histories of the family and private life. Two women from the English Middle Ages hold places of honour: Julian of Norwich and Margery Kempe. "Written culture" does not appear as a keyword category, but one should stress the fact that religious literature represents the most-studied field, and that literature in the narrower sense holds a significant place (including the works of Chaucer). However, study by keyword proves limited; cultural history is more visible when publications are examined in detail.¹⁸

In recent years, a number of works on women and gender in the field of cultural history have been located in the context of conceptual thinking about "literacy/orality/aurality" triptych. For medievalists working in women's/gender studies, this particular trio is at the heart of their concerns, and for some while scholars have been rethinking the relationships between the three terms. Theories developed by some anthropologists and arising out of what English-speakers describe as "The Great Divide" between societies characterized by writing and those based on oral culture, are currently subject to criticism – as much by other anthropologists as by historians.¹⁹ Medievalists cannot help but be concerned with the question of relationships between the written and the oral, which

¹⁸ *The Annual Bibliography of English Language and Literature*, available in hard copy only, makes this type of survey much more difficult. See the 2008 edition, vol. 82.

¹⁹ For the debate between anthropologists see Goody 2000, who sets out his thinking on the impact of writing technology.

were particularly complex in medieval society.²⁰ “Literacy” (the ability to read and write)²¹ is no longer viewed as a monolithic concept, and this is not just due to the recognition of the importance of pragmatic writing. The definition given recently by Margaret Ferguson seems particularly apt in this respect:

Literacy in my usage almost always connotes “literacies” and points to a social relation that has interpersonal, intercultural, international, and interlingual dimensions. Instead of asking “What is literacy?” we might rather ask, “What counts as literacy for whom, and under what particular circumstances?”²²

In other words, “literacy” cannot be viewed as a static state, but one which constitutes a dynamic process, in interaction with numerous other factors, and in particular with the multiple dimensions of orality. Generally speaking, more and more works are stressing the complementarity of the written and the oral in medieval society. The emergence of the triptych’s third term, *aurality*, defined by Joyce Coleman as “the reading of books aloud to one or more people,”²³ is a strong indication of that. Speaking even more generally, much scholarly thought lies within the framework of communication, although this term is equally problematic and requires rigorous definition with respect to the medieval period: an area investigated notably by Marco Mostert.²⁴ Anglophone scholars do not employ the concept of a communication system, as defined with respect to the medieval period by Jean-Philippe Genet, in particular.²⁵ Yet these different approaches do largely converge.

Scholarly works on culture – or rather on women’s cultures – greatly enrich such questions, in that women were for a long time virtually excluded from written culture, firstly by the medieval clerks and subsequently by nineteenth- and twentieth-century scholars. But

²⁰ See the pioneering works by Clanchy 1993; Stock 1983; Briggs 2000 for a recent historiography. For the German historiography, see Keller & Kuchenbuch 2002.

²¹ Some researchers have adopted a French version of “literacy”: “littératie”.

²² Ferguson 2003: 3–4.

²³ Coleman 2007: 69. Her approach is developed in Coleman 1999. See also Cherewatuk 2004.

²⁴ Mostert 1999 (a significant bibliography).

²⁵ Genet 1997: 13. For linguistic matters see Mairey 2011.

in reality, this exclusion only concerns a certain type of written culture: the academic culture, by nature clerical and frequently considered as the very model of written culture. Antje Mulder-Bakker's introduction to *Seeing and Knowing: women and learning in medieval Europe, 1200-1500*, proves eloquent on this point:

The time has come to abandon the idea of a few learned women living as exceptions on the margin. We have to search for general patterns in their narratives. But at the same time we have to realize that the large majority of them lived in a different world from that of the textually learned; that they used different ways of acquiring and transmitting culture and knowledge. In brief, we must shift our attention from the school and universities, from scholars and scholarship... to the world in which most medieval people lived, the world of seeing and hearing.²⁶

Such insistence on the complexity of the content and form of women's learning and its transmission is found at every level, and must lead towards a clarification of the overall complexity of communication systems. Orality, aurality and visual culture can no longer be considered as media or languages inferior to those of written culture. At the same time, their re-evaluation leads to a reshaping of our very conceptions of written culture, whether in the domain of education, pragmatic writing, devotional or literary culture, etc.

In the first place, how women were placed for learning to read, and sometimes to write,²⁷ has been the subject of several analyses. In 1979, Michael Clanchy stressed the essential role of the mother in such learning.²⁸ Several studies then appeared on the same subject, such as those which focus for example on iconography representing Saint Anne teaching the Virgin Mary to read. Representations of this particular theme multiplied during the closing centuries of the Middle Ages; according to Pamela Sheingorn, notably, the spread of this motif is a significant indication of the growth in women's literacy, and a medieval culture in which women's reading – not only among

²⁶ Mulder-Bakker 2004: 11. See also: Mulder-Bakker & McAvoy, 2009.

²⁷ In the Middle Ages, learning how to read and how to write constituted two distinct processes.

²⁸ Clanchy 1993: 251-252.

women in the highest society – is recognized as a significant fact.²⁹ This represents one of the points of convergence with French works on the subject.³⁰ Beyond their basic learning, women's competencies in the area of literacy are constantly being revised upwards, both in the context of households or monasteries, although it should be stressed that these reassessments principally concern the final centuries of the Middle Ages.³¹

The systematic study of libraries in monasteries and women's convents has led above all to a revision of the image of nuns' bookish culture in several areas. David Bell, in particular, has stressed that a knowledge of Latin was not totally improbable, at least among a minority of nuns.³² He points especially to the vitality of vernacular theological culture among fifteenth-century nuns, and concludes his study thus:

The interest of the nuns in fifteenth-century books and literature stands in marked contrast to the unimpressive record of their male counterparts, and if almost all the books were in English and if, from a Latinate theological point of view, most [nuns] were unlearned, what of it? As a consequence [...] of what most men would have seen as their limitations, the spiritual and devotional life of the English nuns could have been richer, fuller, and, one might say, more up to date than that of their more numerous brethren, who, for the most part, were still mired in the consequences of a conservative and traditional education.³³

Other studies, such as those by Mary Erler, have taken a similar direction, again concentrating on the process of individualized reading in women's monasteries.³⁴ In addition, Jocelyn Wogan-Browne notes that nuns' book-reading culture in the thirteenth century should not be underestimated and was far more significant

²⁹ Sheingorn 193; See also Scase 1993.

³⁰ See in particular Alexandre-Bidon 1989.

³¹ However, for the High Middle Ages, we are able to refer to the works by Rosamond McKitterick and her disciples both for the Carolingian Period and for works on Anglo-Saxon literacy: McKitterick 1990.

³² Bell 1995. On the knowledge of Latin in secular circles, see, for example, Hirsch 2007.

³³ Bell 1995: 76-77.

³⁴ Erler 2004.

than has long been thought; again, this primarily concerns a culture in the vernacular language of French.³⁵

On the secular side, English correspondence of the fifteenth-century has been particularly explored with reference to culture within households.³⁶ Numerous studies have been devoted to the famous correspondence of the Paston family, a family from the English gentry for whom letters extending over several decades exist, a number of them penned by women.³⁷ Rebecca Krug's study of Margaret Paston's letters is particularly enlightening, largely because Krug places the social practices of literacy in a context where writing was employed by a person unlettered in the scholarly or academic sense of the term. This situation implies that her literacy was mediated orally:

Margaret Paston's introduction to literate culture through her husband's legal/literate practice demonstrates how the demands of daily life led women...to work with written texts even when they possessed few literate skills themselves.³⁸

Yet this does not mean that Margaret was not responsible for the content of her letters: she was – in the same way as a man who dictates to a secretary is nonetheless able to manipulate the conventions of written culture,³⁹ and in the same way as she was energetically involved in the management of family matters and the protection of family interests. Margaret does not represent an isolated case. According to Malcolm Richardson, for example, Elizabeth Stonor's letters (the fifteenth-century Stonors were another family of the English gentry) even prove that a woman of a certain standing could demonstrate both style and vigour: "Her letters show a woman fully capable of dealing with the five rhetorical challenges [...] as a

³⁵ Wogan-Browne 2003.

³⁶ On English correspondence in general, see Taylor 1980; for women's correspondence, see Cherewatuk and Wiethaus 1993; Daybell 2001.

³⁷ Davis 1976-2004. Some letters by women from the family have been modernized and published separately by Diane Watt (2004). On the Pastons, see Richmond 1990-2000; Barber 1993.

³⁸ Krug 2002: 29. See also Harding 2004.

³⁹ Douglas 2009. See also Speeding 2008.

result of her personal circumstances, using and even bypassing the epistolary conventions of her time".⁴⁰

Even if the letters of Margaret Paston and her contemporaries reveal a conscious use of written culture in a primarily practical context, that does not mean that they were unconcerned with other types of reading. Generally speaking, questions to do with the reading practice and patronage of noblewomen, of women from the gentry and, to a lesser degree, from the urban elite, have now been well explored.⁴¹ Such studies have frequently placed an emphasis on women's roles as intermediaries in two areas of life: devotion and vernacular literature, while some scholars have equally stressed that the use of books was the manifestation of a form of power.⁴² Some work has focussed on queens in the twelfth to thirteenth centuries, whose role in the promotion of at least a vernacular literature in the Angevin and Plantagenet courts has now been well delineated.⁴³ For the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, recent research certainly continues to explore aristocratic patronage: the case of Henry VII's mother, Margaret Beaufort, for example, has been studied several times.⁴⁴ But in the last few years, interest has also been directed towards the possible existence of sub-cultures, inscribed in textual communities which might unite both secular women and those in holy orders. This idea was advanced by Felicity Riddy, in part influenced by Brian Stock's work on the heretical textual communities of the eleventh to twelfth centuries;⁴⁵ since then, it has been the subject of various studies. Mary Erler's work, *Women, Reading and Piety in Late Medieval England*, is exemplary here; an expert in her area, Erler nicely presents the issues at stake in this type of analysis in the prologue to her study:

This study's two subjects [...] are books and communication networks. Examining the circumstances under which reading took place – not merely what was read – brings these two subjects together. Likewise, the

⁴⁰ Richardson 2005: 57.

⁴¹ See Bell 1988; McCash 1996; and more recently, McCash 2008.

⁴² See Michelove 2004.

⁴³ Honeycutt 1996; Parsons 1996; Short 1992.

⁴⁴ Bell 1998.

⁴⁵ Riddy 1993.

movements of books inevitably illuminate the outlines of a particular community of readers, and such a view of reading coteries can provide a rich sense of what perusing a particular text meant culturally.⁴⁶

Erler concentrates particularly on orthodox communities, but also considers those of the Lollards.⁴⁷ The study of the latter reminds us of the extent to which the idea of the male or female reader must be viewed in a broad, even metaphorical, sense: the fact that Lollard women were no better-read than their orthodox sisters did not prevent them from memorizing readings from the Bible and the unorthodox teachings heard during meetings. It is quite possible they also passed on such learning.⁴⁸

Either way, these communities or more informally, networks, were formed initially around devotional practice – a fact which leads us directly to the question of their content. This indeed proves to be of an overwhelmingly devotional nature: while the *Books of Hours* and psalters have certainly prompted numerous studies (as in France)⁴⁹ fresh approaches have focused particularly on literary genres traditionally associated with women, such as hagiography, “mystical” literature, didactic literature, or novels.

Hagiographic literature, above all in the vernacular, has seen a significant renewal of interest in the past few years, linked as much to recent analyses of the cult of saints as to areas of interest developed by literary historians.⁵⁰ As is seen to be the case with other literary genres, some of these historians increasingly emphasise the historicization and reception of texts. In addition, hagiographic literature also provides a rich exploratory terrain for gender relations, both in the context of a work’s production and in its content, especially given the survival of a rich body of work on the lives of women saints – works either composed or translated in England during the later Middle Ages, particularly in the fifteenth century. Among privileged themes, of note is the dialectic at work between an

⁴⁶ Erler 2002: 6.

⁴⁷ See in particular McSheffey 1995; Aston 2003.

⁴⁸ Aston 2003: 173-178.

⁴⁹ See for example Scott-Stokes 2006; Smith 2003.

⁵⁰ Salih 2006. On the wider movement of reflection on the Cult of Saints see Ashley & Sheingorn 1990; and more recently, Jenkins & Lewis 2003; Coletti 2004.

author's imagined public and the actual reception of the text. This dialectic is marked by the tensions inherent in the fact that hagiographic literature is of a prescriptive nature. At the same time, several recent works have shown that a number of the texts managed to construct some possibilities for negotiation.⁵¹ Indeed, the very perception of saintliness can be seen to have evolved. Fifteenth-century authors in particular, adapted their hagiographic stories to reflect their audience and foregrounded the qualities demanded of women from the gentry and nobility of their age, rather than those of virgins from early Christian times. John Capgrave, author of a life of Katherine of Alexandria – the subject of a study by Karen Winstead – provides a highly significant example in this respect: “In his saints' lives and *Solace of Pilgrims*, he offers models of piety emulable by professional virgins and devout laywomen alike.”⁵² But beyond these orthodox models embedded in the dominant hierarchy of gender relations, Capgrave (no doubt influenced by the sophisticated circles of East Anglia in which he moved)⁵³ also develops a highly sophisticated vernacular theology, the more remarkable in a context still marked by clerical concerns over the Lollard heresy, then in its final days.

Women's access to complex theological problems, within this constrained context linked to the Lollard heresy, emerges even more prominently in connection with the visionary literature of the late fourteenth and the fifteenth century, which has been the object of continued and growing interest. The bibliography on two English women writers, Julian of Norwich and Margery Kempe, is extraordinarily extensive,⁵⁴ because in their different ways they crystallize a number of problems encountered by both gender history and written culture. Two key areas are those of women authors' authority when it was mediated by a clerk, and women's relationships to written and institutional authorities. Both Julian of Norwich, on an

⁵¹ See in particular Mooney 1999; Sanok 2007; Winstead 1997.

⁵² Winstead 2007: 90.

⁵³ Rosenthal 2002.

⁵⁴ Bibliographies can be found in McAvoy 2008; Arnold & Lewis 2004. *The Book of Margery Kempe* has been translated into French: Magdinier 1989.

intellectual level, and Margery Kempe, on a more emotional level, developed diverse strategies in order to make themselves heard, as had their continental homologues (Birgitta of Sweden and St Catherine of Sienna, for example), whose texts were translated into English during the same period. Yet in both cases, their strategies worked through their insistence on a mode of communication different from that of the clerks – a method based on vision and their natural position of inferiority, which made possible a more direct contact with the divine. Yet if such strategies for a long time served to bolster the firm opposition between the two ways of learning – intellectual and affective – to the detriment of the latter, recent studies stress that in reality the two paths are not so much opposed, as complementary.⁵⁵ In the first place, neither Julian nor Margery was isolated, but operated within social networks and communities (whether or not textual). Next – and it is here that thinking about gender relations is relevant – putting thought into writing necessitated collaboration with male clerks who did not oppose the communication of the women's visions, but on the contrary supported it, thus subscribing to other forms of learning.⁵⁶ This did not mean that genuine tensions never arose, as testified by the problems encountered by Margery Kempe, who had to appeal to three different people in order to have her visions penned.⁵⁷ Conversely, both women carefully entwined the two methods of learning, and were almost certainly conscious of doing so. Thus rather than a calling into question of clerical domination, this was an example above all of compromise and negotiation.

Nevertheless, in the majority of books on manners, which principally date from the fifteenth century and which may mainly concern urban milieus, an opposition between the two paths of learning clearly emerges, as Anna Dronzek has noted:

⁵⁵ See Mulder-Bakker 2001. I should point out that at one period in the historiography, Margery Kempe was perceived more as resisting the system. See for example Staley 1994.

⁵⁶ The pioneering article is Beckwith 1992. See also Benedict 2004; Coakley 2006; Renevey & Whitehead 2000. On the particular point, see also Erler 2007

⁵⁷ Coakley 2006.

[In these manuals] it was obligatory to present information in two different ways – for boys, visually, and for girls, aurally – and had different capacities for absorbing this information. Boys could handle abstract rational concepts, while girls learned more effectively from information presented in a tangible, physical way, through the use of examples or the experiential model of a parent [...]⁵⁸

Furthermore, these manuals point more clearly to other forms of relationships of domination, connected to women's internalization of values that maintained the patriarchal system. This particular aspect is also found in many other types of text. The English *Brut* chronicles, one of the most popular in the period,⁵⁹ offer a good example. Lister Matheson has meticulously studied every mention of women in the work and has demonstrated that:

The female characters who appear throughout the narrative [...] suggest that the *Brut* could function similarly as a “Mirror for princesses” that would have been pertinent to women from the baronial, gentry, and mercantile families of mediaeval England [...]; in general [its stories] serve to buttress and, perhaps, inculcate, the genealogical principles of primogeniture, male inheritance and orderly succession.⁶⁰

This said, negotiating space still sometimes emerges, and analyses of different behaviour manuals have sought to cast light on the subtleties and nuances of this mechanism.

Moreover, it is possible to widen the field of investigation into didactic education by including those who educated women – in particular, priests. The obvious differentiation between men and women in manuals devoted to priestly learning refers to well-known concepts whereby woman bore the mark of natural inferiority; at the same time, however, many male authors were aware of the need to nuance that inferiority. In her discussion of instruction manuals for the clergy, with particular reference to *Instructions for Parish Priests* by John Mirk (l. 1414), Alison Barr notes:

⁵⁸ Dronzek 2001: 151.

⁵⁹ Their title comes from Brutus, grandson of Aeneas and eponymous founding hero of Britain.

⁶⁰ Matheson 2008: 237. For a slightly different interpretation of the place of women in the *Brut*, see Baswell 2007. The author studies the subversive aspects of “Albyne”, the “pre-founder” of Britain.

Priests reading John Mirk's pastoral literature would have learned that women were important parishioners who needed to be addressed specifically in their sermons and not overlooked when they administered sacraments. They also would have learned that married women had pastoral needs different from single women; that pregnant women had pastoral needs different from widows; and that, at least in some instances, female parishioners needed to be dealt with differently than their counterparts.⁶¹

All the same, the author does not gloss over the tension between these acknowledgements and traditional conceptions of womanhood, but this kind of analysis accompanies the growing tendency to differentiate women according to their social category, and to define different models of femininity – in the same way as different models of masculinity exist.⁶²

In these studies engaging with various aspects of women's relationships to written culture, certain themes frequently recur – sometimes implicitly; they are also found in literature, in the narrow sense of the term. We should first note the theme of the confrontation between the traditional notions of women's inferiority and women's real-life situations – varying greatly according to social standing and geographical origins. This confrontation is frequently connected to the question of relationships to authority. Tensions with respect to authorities (which were essentially masculine) occurred regularly, but often take the form of negotiation on both sides, rather than open resistance. We have observed this in the context of visionary women, who could in addition be made to serve political ends;⁶³ this is similarly seen in fifteenth-century novels and poems, where political thought frequently features. Analyses of such thinking usually turn around the idea of female agency⁶⁴ and a possible cooperation between the sexes (without going so far as to question the hierarchy) in a line of thought critical of the strict separation of private and public spheres.⁶⁵ This approach does not only concern

⁶¹ Barr 2008: 19. See also Barr 2006.

⁶² See Phillips 2008.

⁶³ See Warren 1999.

⁶⁴ Erler & Kowaleski 2008; Collette 2006.

⁶⁵ Coss 1998.

the most eminent women, such as queens or princesses, even if these last are often praised and viewed as models.⁶⁶ Comments also focus on women from the gentry – and Margaret Paston is probably not an exceptional case – or on women from the urban elite who read (or listened to) the same works and might belong to the same textual communities (such as Margery Kempe, daughter of a rich member of the middle-classes from Lynn).

Turning to the currents of thought seen in literature, the question of counsel-giving appears to be particularly significant.⁶⁷ Writing in the late fourteenth century, Geoffrey Chaucer, for example, broached the subject in one of his *Canterbury Tales* – *The Tale of Melibee*, an adaptation in prose of Renaud de Louens' *Livre de Melibee et de Dame Prudence* (1336).⁶⁸ The character Prudence sets out – citing plentiful authorities as she goes – to convince her husband that forgiveness is better than vengeance. Amanda Welling has demonstrated the extent to which both Prudence's interpretations and her husband's reactions were shaped by gender relations.⁶⁹ Yet it is there, in a sense, that one remains – inside the sphere of husband-wife relations, where soothing and feminine counsel is often viewed as a requirement of the wifely role. Chaucer's contemporary, John Gower, goes further in his *Confessio amantis* – a mirror for the ideal prince, which draws greatly on *exempla*. Several of them focus on the question of counsel, and certain scholars have observed that Gower pays particular attention to gender matters in his writing, to the extent of proposing a feminized mode of counsel within the public sphere. As Misty Schieberle notes with reference to *The Tale of Three Questions* (I, 3067-3402):

Not only does the Tale engage problems of advice and pride prevalent in Book I, but it also argues for a feminine persona as the solution to the difficulties of challenging a rash, wilful monarch [...]. A feminized mode

⁶⁶ Note the number of entries in the bibliography of *The Royal Historical Society*. With reference to France, see Lett & Mattéroni 2005.

⁶⁷ Ferster 1996.

⁶⁸ Which itself is an adaptation of *Liber consolationis et consilii*, by Albertanus of Brescia (1246).

⁶⁹ Walling 2005.

of counsel relies upon “feminine” subordinate performance, as distinct from masculine aggressive techniques.⁷⁰

Of course, Gower carefully avoids questioning the axiom of feminine obedience and women advisers are always situated in a submissive position. Yet it is that subordinate position itself (comparable to the position of advisers in general or of visionary women with respect to the clerical institution) that enables them to reveal disturbing truths to the prince without suffering an angry riposte.

Over and above the question of counsel and linked to matters of intercession – the prerogative of queens – some texts raise the still thornier issue of female power. Anne Bartlett, for example, has studied the significance of the commission given by Margaret of Beaufort (mother of Henry VII and powerful woman par excellence) to William Caxton, to translate the novel *Blanchardyn and Eglantine*. The work recounts the education of a young chevalier prince, who is taken aback at his rejection by Queen Eglantine, with whom he is in love. According to Bartlett:

Blanchardyn and Eglantine constitutes a thinly veiled, highly idealized, and deeply didactic account of its patron's own exercise of governance, and highly personal propaganda for the rapidly expanding audience of English readers.⁷¹

In formulating this theory, Anne Bartlett means to question more universally the traditional interpretations of gender relations in novels, according to which women are largely excluded from the public sphere. Reflections on women's power, a more problematic area, also appear in the *Life of Katherine of Alexandria*, by John Capgrave. The Queen, still at this stage a heathen, is effectively ordered to marry, since in the view of her kingdom's lords, she cannot reign on her own. However, in the lengthy ensuing debate, Katherine manages to refute the arguments of her masculine opponents. The debate, of great complexity and including some ambivalence, carried strong contemporary resonance – it was written while the English monarchy was facing a grave crisis linked to the incompetence of the reigning king, Henry VI of Lancaster. Yet the

⁷⁰ Schieberle 2007: 104.

⁷¹ Bartlett 2005: 57-58

ripples travelled even wider with respect to the question of female power. As Karen Winstead has stressed:

Capgrave portrays his heroine as an almost tragic figure, whose desire for sovereignty though understandable is impractical, and whose fate conveys a stern warning to those who would challenge the conventional wisdom about women's proper place in society [...]. Yet, in spite of this conservative message the *Life of Saint Katherine* lends itself to – indeed, practically invites – more radical interpretations.⁷²

If Capgrave finishes by condemning Katherine's ambitions, the complex nature of his work suggests that the debate was, in his eyes, worthy of being aired; this is the more significant since the text was composed in English, thus aimed at a wide and mixed audience.

Katherine of Alexandria nonetheless represents the embodiment of a saint endowed with strong intellectual powers and fulfils the academic model of written culture. Her popularity suggests that certain contemporaries did not reject the possibility of women's access to that type of learning; and a number of works, written by men in the late fourteenth and fifteenth century, and known to have been read by women, can certainly be seen as sophisticated intellectual models – written in the vernacular tongue. At the same time, the majority of recent publications in various fields discuss the relationships between gender and written culture, and stress the complexity of the issues involved. A certain number of analyses in the past twenty years – of which we have mentioned only a few examples – insist ever more strongly on the diversity of situations and models, depending on the social, political and religious context. These works widen and problematize the notion of women's literacy, but also of literacy itself, in addition to relationships of power between men and women and their consequent tensions and negotiations. Thus research is shaping a densely woven cultural landscape, in which women's voices – difficult though they may be to capture – acquire their full place.

⁷² Winstead 1994: 375. See also Winstead 1990.

Bibliography

- ALEXANDRE-BIDON, Danielle. 1989. La lettre volée. Apprendre à lire à l'enfant au Moyen Âge. *Annales ESC* 44(4): 953-992.
- ARNOLD, John H., and Katherine J. LEWIS (eds). 2004. *A Companion to the Book of Margery Kempe*. Cambridge: Brewer.
- ASHLEY, Kathleen, and Pamela SHEINGORN (eds). 1990. *Interpreting Cultural Symbols: Saint Anne in Late Medieval Society*. Athens: University of Georgia Press.
- ASTON, Margaret. 2003. Lollard Women. In *Women and Religion in Medieval England*, ed. Diana WOOD, 166-185. Oxford: Oxbow.
- BARBER, Richard (ed.). 1993. *The Pastons: a family in the Wars of the Roses*. Woodbridge: Boydell.
- BARR, Allison B. 2006. Gendering Pastoral Care: John Mirk and his "Instructions for Parish Priests". In *Fourteenth-Century England*, IV: 93-108.
- 2008. *The pastoral care of women in late medieval England*. Woodbridge: Boydell Press.
- BARTLETT, Anne C. 2005. Translation, self-representation, and statecraft: Lady Margaret Beaufort and Caxton's *Blanchardyn and Eglantine* (1489). *Essays in Medieval Studies* 22: 53-66.
- BASWELL, Christopher. 2007. Albyne sails for Albion: gender, motion and foundation in the English imperial imagination. In *Freedom of movement in the Middle Ages*, ed. Peregrine HORDEN, 157-168. Donington: Shaun Tyas.
- BECKWITH, Sarah. 1992. Problems of Authority in Late Medieval English Mysticism: language, agency, and authority. In *The Book of Margery Kempe. Exemplaria* 4: 172-199.
- BELL, David. 1995. *What Nuns Read: books and libraries in medieval English nunneries*. Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications.
- 2007. What nuns read: the state of the question. In *The culture of medieval monasticism*, ed. James G. CLARK, 113-133. Woodbridge: Boydell.
- BELL, Susan G. 1988. Medieval Women Book Owners: arbiters of lay piety and ambassadors of culture. In *Women and Power in the Middle Ages*, ed. Mary C. ERLER and Maryanne KOWALESKI, 149-187. Athens (Ga.): University of Georgia Press.
- 1998. Lady Margaret Beaufort and Her Books *The Library*, 6th series, vol. XX/3: 197-240.
- BENEDICT, Kimberly M. 2004. *Empowering collaborations: writing partnerships between religious women and scribes in the Middle Ages*. New York and London: Routledge.

- BOXER, Marilyn. 2001. "Women's Studies" aux États-Unis : trente ans de succès et de contestation. *Clio. Histoire, Femmes et Sociétés* 13: 211-238. [Online: <http://clio.revues.org/index142.html>]
- BRIGGS, Charles. 2000. Historiographical Essay: literacy, reading and writing in the medieval west. *Journal of Medieval History* 26(4): 397-420.
- BÜHRER-THIERRY, Geneviève, Didier LETT, and Laurence MOULINIER-BROGI. 2005. Histoire des femmes et histoire du genre dans l'Occident médiéval. *Historiens et Géographes* 392: 135-146.
- BURGWINKLE, Bill. 2006. Queer theory and the Middle Ages. *French Studies* 60(1): 79-88.
- BUTLER, Judith. 1990. *Gender Trouble: feminism and the subversion of identity*. London and New York: Routledge.
- CHASTANG, Pierre. 2008. L'archéologie du texte médiéval. Autour de travaux récents sur l'écrit au Moyen Âge. *Annales HSS* 2: 245-269.
- BENSON, Larry D. (ed.). 1987. *The Riverside Chaucer*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- CHEREWATUK, Karen. 2004. Aural and Written Reception in Sir John Paston, Malory, and Caxton. *Essays in Medieval Studies* 21: 123-131.
- CHEREWATUK, Karen, and Ulrike WIETHAUS (eds). 1993. *Dear Sister: medieval women and the epistolary genre*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- CLANCHY, Michael. 1993 [1st edn 1979]. *From Memory to Written Record: England 1066-1307*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- COAKLEY John W. 2006. *Women, Men and Spiritual Power: female saints and their male collaborators*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- COLEMAN Joyce. 1999. *Public Reading and the Reading Public in Late Medieval England and France*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- 2007. Auality. In *Middle English*, ed. Paul Strohm, 68-85. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Coletti, Theresa. 2004. *Mary Magdalene and the Drama of Saints: theatre, gender and religion in late medieval England*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- COLLETTE, Carolyn P. 2006. *Performing polity: women and agency in the Anglo-French tradition, 1385-1620*. Turnhout: Brepols.
- COSS, Peter. 1998. *The Lady in Medieval England 1000-1500*. Stroud: Stackpole Books.
- CRÉPIN, A. (ed.). 2010. *Les Contes de Canterbury et autres œuvres*. Paris: Robert Laffont.
- DAVIS, Norman (ed.). 1976-2004. *The Paston Letters*, 2 vols. Oxford: Oxford University Press (Early English Text Society, Supplementary Series: 20-21).
- DAYBELL, James (ed.). 2001. *Early Modern Women's Letter Writing: 1450-1700*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.

- DOWNES, Laura Lee. 2004a. Histoires du genre en Grande-Bretagne, 1968-2000. *Revue d'Histoire moderne et contemporaine* 51(4bis): 59-70 [Online: www.cairn.info/revue-d-histoire-moderne-et-contemporaine-2004-5-page-59.htm]
- 2004. *Writing Gender History*. London: Hodder Arnold.
- DOUGLAS, Jennifer. 2009. “Kepe wysly youre wrytyngys”: Margaret Paston’s fifteenth-century letters. *Libraries and the Cultural Record* 44(1): 29-49.
- DRAKE, Graham N. 2008. Queer Medieval. Uncovering the Past. *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 14(4): 639-658.
- DRONZEK, Anna. 2001. Gendered Theories of Education in Fifteenth-Century Conduct Books. In *Medieval Conduct*, ed. Kathleen ASHLEY and Robert L. CLARK, 135-159. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- ERLER, Mary C. 2002. *Women, Reading and Piety in late medieval England*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- 2004. Private reading in the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century English nunnery. *Medium Aevum* 73: 134-146.
- 2007. “A Revelation of Purgatory” (1422): reform and the politics of female visions. *Viator* 38: 321-347.
- ERLER, Mary C., and Maryanne KOWALESKI. 2003. A New Economy of Power Relations: female agency in the Middle Ages. In *Gendering the Master Narrative, Women and Power in the Middle Ages*, ed. Mary C. ERLER and Maryanne KOWALESKI, 1-16. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- FERGUSON, Margaret. 2003. *Dido’s daughters: literacy, gender and empire in early modern England and France*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- FERSTER, Judith. 1996. *Fictions of Advice: the literature and politics of counsel in late medieval England*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- GENET, Jean-Philippe. 1997. Histoire et système de communication. In *L’Histoire et les nouveaux publics dans l’Europe médiévale (XIII^e-XV^e siècle)*, ed. Jean-Philippe GENET, 11-29. Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne.
- GOODY, Jack. 2000. *The Power of the Written Tradition*. Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press.
- HARDING, Wendy. 2004. Mapping masculine and feminine domains in the Paston letters. In *Maistresse of my wit: medieval women, modern scholars*, ed. Louise D’ARCENS and Juanita F. RUYS, 47-74. Turnhout: Brepols.
- HIRSCH, John C. 2007. Latin prayers as a lesson in writing and devotion for a lady of standing. *The Chaucer Review* 41(4): 445-454.

- HUNEYCUTT, Lois L. 1996. "Proclaiming her dignity abroad": the literary and artistic network of Matilda of Scotland, queen of England. In *The Cultural Patronage of Medieval Women*, ed. June McCASH, 155-174. Athens (Ga.): University of Georgia Press.
- JEANNE, Caroline. 2008. La France: une délicate appropriation du genre. *Genre & Histoire* 3 [Online: <http://genrehistoire.revues.org/index349.html>]
- JENKINS, Jacqueline, and Katherine J. LEWIS (eds). 2003. *St Katherine of Alexandria: texts and context in western medieval Europe*. Turnhout: Brepols.
- KELLER, Hans, and Ludolf KUCHENBUCH. 2002. L'oral et l'écrit. In *Les tendances actuelles de l'histoire au Moyen Âge*, ed. Jean-Claude SCHMITT and Otto G. OEXLE, 127-169. Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne.
- KRUG, Rebecca. 2002. *Reading Families: women's literate practice in late medieval England*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press.
- LEES, Clara A. 1994. Introduction. In *Medieval Masculinities: regarding men in the Middle Ages*, ed. Clara A. LEES, xv-xxv. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- LETT, Didier (ed.). 2008. Les médiévistes et l'histoire du genre. *Genre & Histoire* 3. [Online: <http://genrehistoire.revues.org/index348.html>]
- LETT, Didier, and Olivier MATTÉONI (eds). 2005. Princes et princesses à la fin du Moyen Âge. *Médiévales* 48. [Online: <http://medievales.revues.org/1403>]
- LITTLE, Lester K., and Barbara H. ROSENWEN. 1998. *Debating the Middle Ages*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- MAGDINIER, Louis (trans.). 1989. *Le Livre de Margery Kempe*. Paris: Cerf.
- MAIREY, Aude. 2008. L'histoire culturelle du Moyen Âge dans l'historiographie anglo-américaine. *Médiévales* 55: 147-162.
- 2011. Multilinguisme et code-switching en Angleterre à la fin du Moyen Âge. Approche historiographique. *Cahiers électroniques d'histoire textuelle du LAMOP* 2. [Online: <http://lamop.univ-paris1.fr/spip.php?rubrique218>]
- MATHESON, Lister M. 2008. Genealogy and Women in the Prose *Brut*, especially the Middle English Common Version and its continuations. In *Broken Lines. Genealogical Literature in Late Medieval Britain and France*, ed. Raluca RADULESCU and Edward D. KENNEDY, 221-258. Turnhout: Brepols.
- MCAVOY, Liz (ed.). 2008. *A Companion to Julian of Norwich*. Cambridge: Brewe.
- MCCASH, June (ed.). 1996. *The Cultural Patronage of Medieval Women*. Athens (Ga.): University of Georgia Press.
- 2008. The role of women in the rise of the vernacular. *Comparative Literature* 60(1): 45-57.

- MCKITTERICK, Rosamund (ed.). 1990. *The Uses of Literacy in Early Medieval Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- MC SHEFFREY, Shannon. 1995. *Gender and Heresy: women and men in Lollard communities, 1420-1530*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- MICHALOVE, Shannon D. 2004. Women as book collectors and disseminators of culture in late medieval England and Burgundy. In *Reputation and Representation in Fifteenth-Century Europe*, ed. Douglas L. BIGGS, Sharon D. MICHALOVE, and Albert COMPTON REEVES, 57-79. Leiden: Brill.
- MOONEY, Catherine M. (ed.). 1999. *Gendered Voices: medieval saints and their interpreters*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- MOSTERT Marco (ed.). 1999. *New Approaches to Medieval Communication*. Turnhout: Brepols.
- MULDER-BAKKER, Antje B. 2001. The Metamorphosis of Woman: transmission of knowledge and the problems of gender. In *Gendering the Middle Ages: a gender and history special issue*, 112-134.
- MULDER-BAKKER, Antje B. (ed.). 2004. *Seeing and knowing: women and learning in Medieval Europe, 1250-1550*. Turnhout: Brepols.
- MULDER-BAKKER, Antje B., and Liz MCAVOY (eds). 2009. *Women and Experience in Later Medieval Writing: reading the book of life*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- NOIRIEL, Gérard. 1996. *Sur la "crise de l'histoire"*. Paris: Belin.
- OAKLEY, Ann. 1972. *Sex, Gender, and Society*. London: Gower.
- PARSONS, John C. 1996. Of Queens, Courts and Books: reflections on the literary patronage of thirteenth-century Plantagenet queens. In *The Cultural Patronage of Medieval Women*, ed. June MCCASH, 175-201. Athens (Ga.): University of Georgia Press.
- PARTNER, Nancy (ed.). 2005. *Writing Medieval History*. London: Hodder Arnold.
- PHILLIPS, Kim M. 2008. Feminities and the gentry in late medieval East Anglia: ways of being. In *A Companion to Julian of Norwich*, ed. L. MCAVOY, 19-31. Cambridge: Brewer.
- RENEVEY, Denis, and Christiania WHITEHEAD (eds). 2000. *Writing Religious Women: female spiritual and textual practices in late medieval England*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- RICHARDSON, Malcolm. 2005. "A Masterful Woman": Elizabeth Stonor and English women's letters, 1399-c.1530. In *Women's letters across Europe, 1400-1700*, ed. Jane COUCHMAN and A. CRABB, 51-62. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- RICHMOND, Colin. 1990-2000. *The Paston Family in the Fifteenth Century*, 3 vols. Cambridge and Manchester: Cambridge University Press and Manchester University Press.

- RIDDY, Felicity. 1993. "Women talking of the things of God": a late medieval sub-culture. In *Women and Literature in Britain, 1100-1500*, ed. Carol MEALE, 104-127. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- ROBERTSON, Elizabeth. 2007. Medieval feminism in middle English studies: a retrospective. *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* 26(1): 67-79.
- ROSENTHAL, Joel T. 2002. Local girls do it better: women and religion in late medieval East Anglia. In *Traditions and transformations in late medieval England*, ed. Douglas BIGGS, S.D. MICHALOVE, and Albert Compton REEVES, 1-20. Leiden. Brill.
- SALIH, Sarah (ed.). 2006. *A Companion to Middle English Hagiography*. Woodbridge: D.S. Brewer.
- SANOK, Catherine. 2007. *Her Life Historical: exemplarity and female saints' lives in late medieval England*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- SCASE, Wendy. 1993. St Anne and the education of the virgin: literary and artistic traditions and their implications. In *England in the Fourteenth-Century*, ed. Nicholas ROGERS, 81-96. Stamford.
- SCHIEBERLE, Misty. 2007. "Thing which a man mai noght areche": women and counsel in Gower's *Confessio amantis*. *The Chaucer Review* 42(1): 91-109.
- SCOTT, Joan W. 1986. Gender, a useful category of historical analysis. *American Historical Review* 91(5): 1053-1075.
- 1999 [1st ed. 1988]. *Gender and the Politics of History*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- SCOTT-STOKES, Charity. 2006. *Women's Books of Hours in Medieval England*. Rochester.
- SHEINGORN, Pamela. 1993. "The Wise Mother": the image of St Anne teaching the Virgin Mary. *Gesta* 32(1): 69-80.
- SHORT, Ian. 1992. Patrons and polyglots: French literature in twelfth-century England. In *Anglo-Norman Studies*, 14, ed. M. CHIBNALL, 229-249. Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer.
- SMITH, Kathryn A. 2003. *Art, Identity and Devotion in Fourteenth-Century England: three women and their books of hours*. London: British Library.
- SPEEDING, Alison. 2008. "I shall send word in writing": lexical choices and legal acumen in the letters of Margaret Paston. *Medium Aevum* 77(2): 241-259.
- STALEY, Lynn. 1994. *Margery Kempe's dissenting fictions*. University Park (Pa.): Pennsylvania State University Press.
- STOCK, Brian. 1983. *The Implications of Literacy: written language and models of interpretation in the 11th and 12th centuries*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

- STOLLER, Robert. 1968. *Sex and Gender: on the development of masculinity and femininity*. New York: Science House.
- TAYLOR, John. 1980. Letters and letter collections in England, 1300-1420. *Nottingham Medieval Studies* 24: 157-170.
- THÉBAUD, Françoise. 2007. *Écrire l'histoire des femmes et du genre*. Paris: ENS Éditions.
- WALLING, Amanda. 2005. "In hir tellyng difference": gender, authority, and interpretation in the *Tale of Melibee*. *The Chaucer Review* 40(2): 163-181.
- WARREN, Nancy B. 1999. Kings, Saints and Nuns: gender, religion and authority in the reign of Henry V. *Viator* 30: 307-322.
- WATT, Diane (ed.). 2004. *The Paston Women: selected letters*. Rochester: D.S. Brewer.
- WINSTEAD, Karen. 1990. Piety, politics, and social commitment in Capgrave's *Life of St. Katherine*. *Medievalia et Humanistica* 17: 59-80.
- 1994. Capgrave's Saint Katherine and the perils of gynecocracy. *Viator* 25: 361-376.
- 1997. *Virgin Martyrs: legends of sainthood in late medieval England*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- 2007, *John Capgrave's Fifteenth-Century*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- WOGAN-BROWNE, Jocelyn. 2003. Powers of record, powers of example: hagiography and women's history. In *Gendering the Master Narrative: women and power in the Middle Ages*, ed. Mary C. ERLER and Maryanne KOWALESKI, 71-93. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- ZIEMAN, Katherine. 2003. Reading, singing and understanding: constructions of the literacy of religious women in late medieval England. In *Learning and Literacy in medieval England and abroad*, ed. Sarah REES JONES, 97-120. Turnhout: Brepols.
- 2008. *Singing the New Song: literacy and liturgy in late medieval England*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.