

## Early Middle English

This year saw the publication of an important new edition of the Katherine Group based on the texts in Oxford, MS Bodley 34, by Emily Rebekah Huber and Elizabeth Robertson. This volume, which is part of the TEAMS Middle English Texts Series, is available in print and also online, at <http://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/publication/huber-and-robertson-the-katherine-group>. Huber and Robertson present the Middle English text on the top half of each page, updating medieval letter forms and regularising u/v, i/j according to the principles of the TEAMS series, with a corresponding modern English translation on the bottom half. In their introduction, the editors discuss each text in the Katherine Group in turn, consider these texts' relationships to *Ancrene Wisse* and the Wooing Group, and summarize what can be inferred about their intended audiences. They note the 'rhythmical, alliterative style' of the Katherine Group texts, but defend their decision to print them as prose, based on the irregularity of the alliteration and the punctuation of the manuscripts (pp. 11-12). The introduction also includes a discussion of the base manuscript, and of its relation to other manuscripts containing texts in Tolkien's 'AB dialect'.

In 'The Middle English *Life of St Teilo*' (*The Mediaeval Journal*, 6.i[2016] 29-72), Erik Kooper and David Callander present the text of this little-known Middle English hagiography, which has never before been edited. The Middle English life of Teilo, a Welsh saint associated with Llandaf, was translated from the twelfth century Latin *vita*, and survives in a single manuscript of the *South English Legendary*: British Library, MS Egerton 2810. Although the text in this manuscript was copied in the second half of the fourteenth century, Kooper and Callander argue from linguistic

evidence that the Middle English *Life of St Teilo* was first composed in the late thirteenth century, by a poet from the south east of England. They hypothesise that this poet was a monk, and that he produced his translation while he was resident at St Peter's Abbey in Gloucester, the only English foundation where Teilo is known to have been venerated; the two main scribes of Egerton 2810, both of whom have Gloucestershire dialects, encountered the text as it circulated in this part of England, and added it to their copy of the *Legendary*. Kooper and Callander present the Middle English text with marginal glosses and explanatory footnotes.

Critical work on early Middle English this year was rich and wide ranging. Lazamon's *Brut* was particularly well served, with a chapter in an important new study of Middle English metre and a dedicated special issue of *Arthuriana*, as well as independent articles elsewhere. A special issue of *JMRC* on anchoritism also addressed many early Middle English texts.

In *English Alliterative Verse: Poetic Tradition and Literary History*, Eric Weiskott argues for a 'historically durable' tradition of Middle English alliterative verse, extending from the eighth to the sixteenth centuries, and challenges the division of medieval English literary history into Old English and Middle English subperiods. Two chapters in this study, which is discussed in full elsewhere in this bibliography, are directly concerned with early Middle English poetry. In chapter 3, 'Lawman, the Last Old English Poet and the First Middle English Poet' (pp. 71-92), Weiskott contends that Lazamon's metre was as strict and highly-organised as that of the *Beowulf*-poet before him and the *Gawain*-poet after him. He rejects the claim that Lazamon's metre was 'loose' or imprecise, as argued by Blake, Turville-Petre, and others, and also the possibility that Ælfric of Eynsham's 'rhythmical alliteration' influenced Lazamon. This chapter reconsiders Lazamon's place in literary history.

Weiskott notes that, although *Lazamon* wrote in a conservative style within a long-established alliterative tradition, he also achieved a 'new fusion of form and genre' as he rendered *Wace* into alliterative verse, producing the first known alliterative romance (p. 82). *Lazamon* himself did not have to confront the possibility that alliterative verse might be marginalized in relation to other forms, but his scribes did, and in their responses they reveal different visions of the future: the *Caligula* scribe imagines that alliterative verse might become a specialised pursuit, and is careful to preserve its original forms, whereas the *Otho* scribe is happy to modernise, confident that alliterative verse will remain central to the literary tradition. In chapter 4, 'Prologues to Middle English Alliterative Poetry' (pp. 93-126), Weiskott presents metrical, lexical and textual evidence to show that a continuous tradition of alliterative poetry extends across the gap in the written record between c.1250 and 1340. In an excursus, he argues that unrhymed alliterative verse remained formally distinct from the stanzaic alliterative metre that emerged in the fourteenth century. Finally in this chapter, Weiskott presents a typology of poetic prologues, distinguishing the types that can be found outside the alliterative corpus from others which are exclusive to it. The appendices to Weiskott's book include the texts of six early Middle English alliterative poems, and a diplomatic edition of *Henry of Huntingdon's* Latin translation of the *Battle of Brunanburh*, which Weiskott describes as 'an early Middle English alliterative poem in Latin' (p. 183).

In 'Lazamon's Dialogue and English Poetic Tradition' (*ES* 9.vii[2016] 709-24), Callander, like Weiskott, locates *Lazamon's Brut* in a continuous literary tradition. Callander focuses on the passages of direct speech that *Lazamon* adds to his text, in a departure from *Wace*, and argues that, in their frequency and their style, these resemble the passages of speech and dialogue found in classical Old English

poetry, as distinct from the rhythmical prose tradition and the poems of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, which have also been proposed as models for *Lazamon*.

*Lazamon's Brut* was the subject of a special issue of *Arthuriana* this year. In his 'Introduction' (*Arth* 26.i[2016] 3-4), Kenneth Tiller comments on the health and vitality of scholarship on *Lazamon*, and offers a brief overview of the articles to follow. In 'Arthur and the Giant of Mont St Michel in *Lazamon's Brut*: Exposing the Fragility of Kingship' (*Arth* 26.i[2016], 5-21), Hwanhee Park develops Marie-François Alamichel's account of the giant as Arthur's doppelganger to argue that the giant mirrors and subverts the various strategies by which Arthur asserts his kingly authority, dominating and displacing the local aristocracy, exerting control over the bodies of women, and building a structure (Helene's tomb) that endures as a landmark after his death. The giant reveals that these strategies have the potential to create chaos, rather than establish order. Park also considers the verbal exchange between Arthur and the giant, which *Lazamon* adds to the story, and argues that this, too, reveals Arthur's fragile authority, since Arthur kills the giant because he will not submit to his verbal commands. In 'Prophecy and the Body of the King in *Lazamon's* Account of Arthur's Dream (*Brut* 13984-14004)' (*Arth* 26.i[2016], 22-40), Tiller, like Park, reflects on Arthur's vulnerabilities. Tiller reads the dream at lines 13984-14004, which predicts the rebellion of Mordred, as a 'counterstatement' to the prophecies of Merlin earlier in the text; where the prophecies treat the king's body as an extended metaphor for his kingdom, and imagine his great deeds as a subject for poetry, in the dream his body has no significance beyond itself, while the 'banal, almost brutal, diction' isolates him from the poetic tradition that might otherwise preserve his reputation (p. 30). In 'Myth, Marriage, and Dynastic Crisis in *Lazamon's Brut*' (*Arth* 26.i[2016], 41-59), John P. Brennan replies to Christopher Cannon's account of the

poem as a stable series of ‘formally identical’ narrative units (elegiac stories of the reigns of kings), which point in turn to the underlying stability of the law and the land. Brennan considers four dynastic crises, where a real or apparent failure of legitimacy threatens the stable transition of power, and argues that these reveal the vital importance of ‘conflict and movement’ in the poem (p. 55). The *Brut* certainly returns to the law and the land as abiding concerns, but these are never treated as abstractions, Brennan argues; rather, they are always involved in the dynamics, and the specifics, of narrative. Joseph Parry considers *Lazamon* as a philosopher of history in ‘Arthur and Possibility: the Philosophy of *Lazamon*’s *Arthuriad*’ (*Arth* 26.i[2016], 60-75). In his account of Arthur’s reign, *Lazamon* reflects on the possibilities for the future, imagining the prospect of an exceptional ruler who is able to enforce his will in the world around him, and also the social and political structures wherein such a ruler could become an agent of change. In “‘An arður sculde ȝete cum’’: The Prophetic Hope in Twelfth-century Britain’ (*Arth* 26.i[2016], 77-107), Daniel Helbert considers the prophecies of Arthur’s return in *Lazamon*’s *Brut* in relation to Anglo-Norman Latin historiography and Welsh political prophecies. Anglo-Norman historians asserted the authority of written, Latin prophecy, while denigrating oral, vernacular prophecy, Helbert argues, but *Lazamon*, who imagines the prophecies of Merlin in oral circulation in the vernacular, insists on their veracity. *Lazamon* inherited from Anglo-Norman historiography a sense that oral, vernacular prophecies about the ‘Breton Hope’ were politically subversive and potentially dangerous, and he deployed them for precisely these subversive purposes, writing from an anti-colonial position. At the same time, he borrowed tropes and motifs from Welsh political prophecy, with its promises of a messianic deliverer, and used them in his own account of the prophecies of Merlin. Jacqueline M. Burek contrasts British and

English attitudes to cultural interaction in the *Brut* in “‘Ure Bruttisce speche”:  
Language, Culture, and Conquest in Lazamon’s *Brut*’ (*Arth* 26.i[2016], 108-123).  
Lazamon repeatedly describes British hostility to other cultures and languages, and suggests that, for the British, all cultural and linguistic interactions are a form of power struggle. Gawain, who exemplifies this attitude, turns his language into a weapon as he strikes down a Roman negotiator, shouting ‘þus we eou scullen techen ure Bruttisce speche’ (l. 13249). The English, by contrast, are prepared to engage with other cultures and languages in a way that often brings benefits in the long term. Lazamon expresses something of this English attitude in his own approach to his sources, Burek argues, so that ‘Lazamon’s depiction of English engagement with other *leoden* becomes both theme and praxis in the *Brut*’ (p. 109). In ‘Diplomatic Antiquarianism and the Manuscripts of Lazamon’s *Brut*’ (*Arth* 26.i[2016], 124-40), Stephen M. Yeager argues that the ‘antique’ features of the Caligula text of the *Brut* do not necessarily indicate that this text is closer to Lazamon’s original than the Otho text. Rather, the two texts establish their claims to authenticity in different ways: Otho as a literary text, where clarity is strongly valued, and Caligula through its resemblance to contemporary legal documents. In ‘Astronomy Translated: *Caput Draconis* and the Pendragon Star in Geoffrey of Monmouth, Wace, and Lazamon’ (*Arth* 26.i[2016], 141-63), Elizabeth J. Bryan discusses Geoffrey of Monmouth’s claim that the name Pendragon is an ancient Celtic British word for the ‘head of the dragon,’ a term that described one of the lunar nodes in Arabic astronomy, and which was first used in England by Walcher, the prior of Great Malvern Priory. The term appears in Geoffrey’s *Historia* when Uther sees a star in the sky, which Merlin then interprets as a portent of the dynasty he will found; Wace and Lazamon will refer to this as a comet, but Geoffrey uses the more precise language of solar rays (*radii*),

which were understood to be the medium of astrological forces. Reading Lazamon's revisions to Wace, and considering his proximity to Malvern, Bryan considers the possibility that Lazamon, like Geoffrey, brought a degree of astronomical knowledge to his presentation of this episode.

The first volume of *JMRC* for this year was a special issue on anchoritism, which included three articles on early Middle English texts. In her introduction, 'Anchoritism, Liminality, and the Boundaries of Vocational Withdrawal' (*JMRC* 42.i[2016] v-xii), Michelle M. Sauer sets out the primary concerns of this issue, which considers anchoritism in terms of the anthropological concept of 'liminality', 'a state of being in transition' (p. v). Sauer explains how Victor Turner's account of liminality in ritual illuminates the experiences of medieval anchorites. For Turner, ritual participants exist in a state 'betwixt and between,' and as part of an *anti-structure*, a community outside the time and space of social organization. Anchorites, too, can be described in these terms: after their enclosure, they occupied a state between life and death; in their mystical experience, they traversed a threshold between the human and divine; and in their reading, they explored the space between languages. In 'Liminal Performance in *Hali Meiðhad*' (*JMRC* 42.i[2016] 28-43), A. S. Lazikani argues that *Hali Meiðhad* creates an 'embodied simulation' of the fruitless sufferings of married women for its enclosed, celibate readers (p. 28). The reader of this text occupies a liminal position, not only watching the married woman, but also feeling her suffering; she is both a spectator and a performer. Lazikani draws particular attention to the various metaphors of melting and pouring with which *Hali Meiðhad* describes its readers' responses; the text imagines that the reader will be 'affectively-somatically transformed by her reading,' she argues (p. 35). In 'Rewriting Liminal Geographies: Crusader Sermons, the Katherine Group, and the Scribe of MS Bodley 34' (*JMRC*

42.i[2016] 56-78), Dorothy Kim takes a group of texts that are strongly identified with the borderlands of the Welsh marches, and locates them on another border: the frontier of the Latin kingdoms and crusader territories in the eastern Mediterranean. Gerald of Wales records that Archbishop Baldwin traveled through the borders preaching the third crusade in 1188, and Kim argues that the texts of the Katherine Group respond to the rhetoric of crusading sermons, and to the instructions given to preachers in Lateran IV; she draws particular attention to a scribal insertion at the end of *Seinte Juliene* in Bodley 34, which alludes to the parable of the tares, a text that was often preached against heretics and non-Christians, and which became a mainstay of crusade propaganda. Kim argues that the texts of the Katherine Group allow their enclosed readers ‘an imaginative devotional proximity to both the spiritual warfare of the Crusades and their geographic holiness’ (p. 73). Susannah Mary Chewning considers the liminal space between literary genres in ‘Intersections of Courtly Romance and the Anchoritic Tradition: *Chevelere Assigne* and *Ancrene Wisse*’ (*JMRC* 42.i[2016] 79-101). Chewning notes that some anchoresses may well have read romances as secular women before their enclosure, and asks how this reading might have shaped their approach to anchoritic texts in turn. These texts, she argues, shared thematic preoccupations: the romance *Chevelere Assigne* and *Ancrene Wisse*, for example, address love, motherhood, and devotion in similar ways; both texts, moreover, impart a ‘heroic subjectivity’ to their readers, ‘empowering them to live beyond their worldly identities’ (p. 96). The other articles in this volume, by Lisa M. C. Weston, Clare M. Dowding, William Rogers, and Julia Bourke, are discussed in the relevant sections here.

In “‘Ovre londe’ / ‘Irlonde’: Appropriating Irish Saints in the Aftermath of Conquest’ (*SIP* 113.i[2016] 1-18), Andrea Lankin considers the significance of two



textual errors in the late thirteenth century manuscript Bodleian MS Laud Misc. 108 copy of the *South English Legendary*, where Saint Brendan is said to come from ‘ovre londe’ rather than from ‘Irlonde,’ and St Brigid of Kildare to descend from Scottish, rather than Irish, noblemen. Lankin argues that these errors are meaningful examples of *mouvance*, which transform the meaning of the surrounding text, appropriating these Irish saints for England and Scotland. At the same time, this version of the *Legendary* presents Ireland as wild and exotic, reinforcing the rationale that was used to justify the conquest of Ireland, for example in the works of Gerald de Barri. Allison Adair Alberts’ essay on the *South English Legendary*, ‘Spiritual Suffering and Physical Protection in Childbirth in the *South English Legendary* Lives of Saint Margaret’ (*JMEMS* 46.ii[2016] 289-314), offers a reading of later versions of the text, which fall outside the scope of this section, and is discussed elsewhere in this bibliography.

In ‘Translating the Context in the *Orrmulum*’ (*The Medieval Translator / Traduire au Moyen Âge*, 16[2016] 129-41), Sharon Rhodes interrogates Orm’s attitude to translating the bible. She argues that Orm shared some of the anxieties expressed by Ælfric of Eynsham about lay readers misunderstanding the text, but was also convinced, like later Wycliffite translators, of the need for a widely-available gospel in English. Rhodes considers the rationale behind Orm’s additions and alterations to his scriptural source, and argues that some provide ‘safeguards against scriptural misinterpretation’ (p. 134), glossing and explicating the text, while others render the biblical narrative in the idiom of contemporary literature. These idiomatic additions reveal some of the ways in which older literary traditions were evolving in the twelfth century.

Hannah Byland identifies three previously untraced Latin quotations in *Ancrene Wisse*, in ‘Three New Sources for the *Ancrene Wisse*’ (*N&Q* 62.iv[2016] 519-21), one from a note on Tobias 3:11 on the *Glossa Ordinaria*, another from Peter Lombard’s *Collectanea in Epistolas Pauli*, and a third which may come from the preface to Augustine’s *Tractatus in Joannis Evangelium*, a source that seems more likely if, as Robert Hazenfrantz has suggested, the author of *Ancrene Wisse* was himself an Augustinian friar.

#### Books cited

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