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Gender and Voice in Medieval French Literature and Song (book review)

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GOLDEN, RACHEL MAY, and KATERINE KONG, eds. *Gender and Voice in Medieval French Literature and Song*. UP of Florida, 2021. ISBN 978-0-8130-6903-6. Pp. 310.

This collection, comprised of an introduction by the editors and ten essays, traces the gendered manifestations and meanings of voice in France and Occitania, from the twelfth century until the early sixteenth century. The volume views medieval France as a locus of new trends in travel, trade, and cross-cultural encounters and as a hotspot of artistic ingenuity, including experimentation with French and Occitan (newly valued vernaculars), the productions of learned, Latinate scholars and scribes, the blossoming of troubadour and trouvère lyric, liturgical innovations that responded to changing needs, and the formation of the polyphonic song. Through such utterances—in song, liturgy, romances, letters, treatises, and sermons—medieval people cultivated their performative and political selves, shaping contemporaneous belief systems about gender. Most chapters engage in the important work of recuperating female-voiced genres, restoring female voice and subjectivity to their rightful place in medieval French literature and lyric. In chapter 1, however, Katherine Kong examines the exercise of Lancelot's masculine voice in Chrétien de Troyes's *Le chevalier de la charrette*, not as constitutive of a universal gendered subjectivity but rather to consider how its privileged status overrides abject, liminal, and subjugated performances of voice. In chapter 2, Tamara Bentley Caudill examines how gendered voices operate within conventions of particular troubadour lyric genres like the *tenso* and *canso*, while reinforcing and challenging gendered expectations. In chapter 3, Anne Adele Levitsky explores how the troubadour Aimeric de Peguilhan challenges gender binaries in his classification of song genres, by distinguishing grammatical gender from socially constructed notions of song types. In chapter 4, Meghan Quinlan examines two linked trouvère songs and traces their poetic-musical interrelationships. Chapter 5, by Rachel May Golden, focuses on two anonymous trouvère lament songs that develop the voice's capacity to engage with and reinterpret losses stemming from crusading contexts. In chapter 6, Lydia M. Walker examines how bishop Jacques de Vitry (d. 1240) strategically constructs a preaching voice, developing vivid imagery and vocabulary to persuasively perform sermons in support of the Fifth Crusade. In chapter 7, Lisa Colton demonstrates the distinctive polyphonic construction of the motet as a community of voices in dialogue, one that allowed composers to interact with and comment upon past conventions, create multiple registers of gendered expressivity, and newly negotiate the vocalization of striking and highly personal emotions against ecclesiastic regulations for controlling such utterances. Anna Kathryn Grau, in chapter 8, employs close musico-poetic readings of female voices within motets to uncover nuanced gendered readings. Emily J. Hutchinson, in chapter 9, locates in the textual voice

of Christine de Pizan acts of gendered and political resistance. Finally, chapter 10, by Daisy Delogu, examines the early sixteenth-century court of Queen Claude of France where Anne de Graville, in an act of “voiceover,” boldly adapts the work of Boccaccio, appropriating a male-authored Italian text into her own romance intended for a female patron and public. This expertly researched and crafted collection is highly recommended to all interested in the complex relationships between gender and voice in medieval French culture.