Collections in Context: The Organization of Knowledge and Community in Europe. Edited by Karen Fresco and Anne D. Hedeman. Ohio State University, 2011. Pp. xvii + 321. ISBN: 9780814292655.

Collections in Context: The Organization of Knowledge and Community in Europe, edited by Karen Fresco and Anne D. Hedeman, brings together fourteen articles dedicated to analyzing late medieval miscellanies specifically as collections. In most cases these articles deal with codices, though there is also space devoted to a consideration of serialized printed booklets, an ivory casket, and even a modern computer program developed for viewing digitized manuscripts. Though the book includes a total of sixteen different contributors (including the authors of the introduction and afterword) and explores a wide variety of historical documents, this collection achieves an impressive coherence in its general argument. That argument may be summarized as follows: medieval miscellanies not only required their readers to be conversant with a wide variety of non-textual syntaxes, but also often relied on the particular knowledge, identity, and reading practice of their intended audiences for a full appreciation of a given collection of texts. In short, the meanings of these miscellanies were heavily dependent on the broader world of their social context and on varying practices of reading—arguably to an extent modern books are not. Ultimately, *Collections in Context* provides a convincing collection of individual manuscript and collection studies in support of this argument, rather than developing the argument itself or its implications more broadly. Thus it contributes both as a kind of methodological guide to studying miscellanies and medieval manuscripts in general and as a theoretical argument about how these sources functioned in their historical setting.

Most of the inclusions advance one or both of these contentions. Nancy Freeman Regalado, for example, does both in "The Wings of Chivalry and the Order of Bodleian Library, Ms. Douce 308." In this article, Regalado explains the unusual wings on the backs of knights in miniatures adorning the *Tournoi de Chauvency* (a poem relating six days of feasting and jousting in late thirteenth-century Lorraine) through her concept of reciprocal reading. Reciprocal reading denotes a practice whereby the reader of a miscellany constructs his or her own unified meaning across the varied texts through recurrent and parallel references (textual or artistic) to common cultural concepts (e.g. famous people or places, other texts, etc.). Thus the wings invoke the moral allegory of *Le roman des eles* (*The Romance of the Wings*), not included in Ms. Douce 308 but directly referenced in one of the miscellany's included texts, which illustrates the virtues of

knighthood through the mnemonic device of wings and feathers. That text, in turn, could well have called to mind Alan of Lille's treatise on penance, *De sex alis Cherubim*, (*On the six wings of the Seraph*), which also makes use of wings and feathers as corresponding to specific virtues, and the allegorical armor of God appearing in Ephesians 6:13-17. By representing knightly virtue while simultaneously alluding to spiritual virtue through the symbol of wings and armor, the inclusion of wings on the *Tournoi*'s miniatures links the first four works included in the miscellany (all dealing with courtly love and the temporal traits of knighthood) with *Li tornoiemens Antecrist* (*The Tournament of the Antichrist*), another allegory in which Virtues triumph over Vices with the aid of angels in an apocalyptic tournament: in classical medieval fashion, then, the wings may have suggested chivalric virtue as a baser form of, or education in, the virtues that would, with God's help, overcome sin and vice.

Kathryn A. Duys's "Reading Royal Allegories in Gautier de Coinci's *Miracles de Nostre Dame*: The Soissons Manuscript (Paris, BnF Ms. n. a. fr. 24541)" provides another example of the intersection of historicized reading practices, textual content, and social/political setting. The Soissons Manuscript is a statement of the legitimacy of Philip VI's (the first Valois king of France) succession in 1328, and Duys explores how Gautier de Coinci's *Miracles de Nostre Dame*, an early thirteenth-century collection of Marian miracle stories and devotional songs written in vernacular courtly style, played a role in advancing this political message. Her argument centers on the adaptation of monastic, meditative practices of reading (the *lectio divina*) to the immense and complex illumination of the Throne of Solomon on the manuscript's frontispiece. Duys argues that the meditative reading and re-reading, especially in a context laden with biblical typologies, adapted by Coinci from formal monastic worship to vernacular, recreational reading, is uniquely suited to the heavily-layered allegories of this frontispiece, which itself draws on a long medieval tradition of Bible study, theology, and illumination.

These articles thus represent an admirable and illuminating approach to their sources. First, the authors consider various medieval literary and artistic traditions: allegories, typologies, commentaries, adaptations, histories, genres, and so on. Usually, these considerations reveal some unusual deviation from such traditions. These deviations in turn provide the point of departure for understandings of particularized medieval reading practices, the goal being to show how these practices allowed medieval readers to "read" their miscellanies on a number of levels beyond, though intersecting regularly with, the actual words on the page. Not only did texts in a given collection speak to one

another in such a way as to create a meaning reducible to none of them alone, they spoke in just the same, sophisticated way with texts not present—with traditions of illumination, with individuals, and with specific political, social, and historical situations. Thus Carol Symes explores the parallels created between Arrageois authors Jehan Bodel and Adam de la Halle in a collection of works by and concerning them; these parallels weave together the particulars of their compositions and the histories of their very lives to foster a sense of Arras's coherent artistic community. Or Erin K. Donovan discusses the collection and re-writing of crusade histories and romances by the Burgundian nobility that sought to legitimate its court through association with a past line of Burgundian crusaders. Or Anne D. Hedeman, Andrew Taylor, Craig Taylor, and Karen Fresco deal in a series of articles with the Shrewsbury Book and the dense tangle of military command, royal office, marriage, education, and dynastic claims on which it comments through its collection of romances, treatises, and elaborate illuminations.

Ultimately, because these studies focus closely on specific readings of individual manuscripts, their conclusions may be of limited application to the work of other scholars. But as a guide to interrogating such sources, and especially as an argument in favor of a particular conception of what these sources were and how they functioned in their own time, *Collections in Context* has powerful implications for the history of literacy, of the book, of reading and writing practices, and in fact for any historical research that hinges on the production and use of miscellanies.

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