

of this pastoral as a means of promoting peace. In the matching chapter, Scott presents her case that the piece was performed. Except for the young king, the royal children served as the principal actors, and of this Scott theorizes: '[r]oyal children needed to learn not only presentation but also representation, the art of manifesting and symbolizing their royal rôles' (p. 99). Also, observing the children of the principal members of the warring factions as they vowed their allegiance on stage to the accompaniment of the music of the spheres must have profoundly affected the audience, or at least this was the hope.

In Chapters 5 and 6, 'Ronsard, Ariosto, and a Scottish Princess: *La Belle Genièvre*' and 'Une Autre Polynesse', the authors analyse the first known dramatic adaptation of Ariosto's *Orlando furioso* in either Italian or French. No text of the piece remains. Nonetheless, sufficient evidence attests to its performance on that day. The chapters are particularly interested in situating the piece within the overlapping networks of the Este court in Ferrara (patrons of Ariosto) and the French royal court with its numerous Italianophiles.

A conclusion and a postscript follow the analyses of the two performances, inserting these more generally into recent studies of performance and queenship. Catherine's sad heritage is also traced in some detail.

Focusing attention on a single day, Scott and Sturm-Maddox capture the moment, bringing to life the phenomenon of ritual at the Valois court and revealing some of the layers of meaning that may have been activated through the performances of *Bergerie* and *La Belle Genièvre*.

Tracy Adams  
University of Auckland

**Sobecki**, Sebastian I., *The Sea and Medieval English Literature* (Studies in Medieval Romance), Cambridge, D. S. Brewer, 2007; hardback; pp. xii, 205; R.R.P. £45.00; ISBN 9781843841371.

In this book, Sebastian Sobecki makes an ambitious attempt to place medieval English literature's presentation of the sea into broader contexts, chronological, geographical and disciplinary. In this, he is only partially successful. Chronologically, he gives a deeply interesting context from classical poets to Winston Churchill. Geographically and politically, he betrays a limited understanding of the makeup of the British Isles in both medieval and modern times, which damages the credibility of his overall argument. I would also argue that his understanding of the role of the sea in early medieval insular

communities is flawed, leading to significant problems in his attempt to situate his core material in a continuum with early medieval Gaelic attitudes to the sea.

As early as the introduction, Sobecki asserts that '[u]ntil the unequivocal formulation of the notion of territorial waters ... the sea is in constant movement [and] can only be traversed by man or, for purposes of fishing, visited' (p. 5). The evidence he evinces for this in the very early period seems sound enough, incorporating Pliny the Elder, Plutarch and Gregory of Nazianzus. However, he leaps unconcernedly thence to Bernard of Clairvaux, seemingly ignoring the 700-odd years in between.

As an early medievalist, I take exception to this dismissal, but it is soon contradicted by a discussion of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle's* report of the three Irishmen who landed in Cornwall in 891. This discussion on the one hand, admits that the Irish had a more trusting relationship with the sea than did the English, and on the other hand denies any difference between the conditions in the English Channel that had hindered Julius Caesar and those in the Irish Sea with which the Irish were apparently quite at home.

This leads Sobecki to a discussion of Paolo Squatriti's 'paradigm-shifting' suggestion that the Irish Sea formed a Mediterranean-style connectivity rather than a barrier. This suggestion clearly does not shift any paradigms, being a restatement of paradigms widely accepted by those who study this region, and stated many times over by numerous authors over many years.

Sobecki moves on to a discussion of the so-called '*peregrinatio pro amore Dei*', and supports his contention that pilgrimage was an essential part of a scholar's life by citing Thomas Charles-Edwards' claim that Bede did not consider a man a *peregrinus* until he had travelled to Ireland or the Continent. Few, however, would be reckless enough to suggest that Bede was not a scholar, but it is generally accepted that he never left Northumbria. The point might have had more weight (or indeed not been attempted) had Sobecki actually read Charles-Edwards' article, which he cites out of context through a secondary reference. The citing of reasonably accessible primary and secondary literature through secondary references is common throughout Sobecki's book, and leads one to wonder just how thorough his research can have been.

A chapter titled 'Deserts and Forests in the Ocean' deals with Benedeit's *Voyage de Saint Brandan* and Thomas of Britain's *Tristan*. The former is inevitably compared to the Irish *Navigatio Brendani*, not always successfully.

Having acknowledged David Dumville's translation of *immram* (the generic Old Irish name for this kind of tale) as 'rowing about', Sobecki then gives an altogether inaccurate description of the journey. He begins by claiming that the journey is undertaken in an 'unseaworthy' coracle (p. 49), a suggestion for which there is no evidence in the sources. He describes the 'refusal to use one's oars and/or rudder' (p. 50), apparently ignorant of the fact that a coracle does not have a rudder and that there is again no evidence in the sources that oars were not used. Citing *Immram Snédgus ocus Maic Riagla*, Sobecki relies on Whitley Stokes' century-old translation, and even so, asserts that the monks 'discard their oars' (p. 50), which is stated in neither the original text nor Stokes' translation. Similarly, in the Old Norse version of *Tristan*, Sobecki is keen to identify Tristan's departure as a setting adrift, apparently on the evidence of the words 'I wish to go away, wherever God in his infinite grace may let me land to obtain help', despite the clear statement in the text that Tristan 'sailed out onto the sea' (p. 57).

A valiant attempt to move beyond his home discipline of literature sees Sobecki discussing the Ebstorf Mappa Mundi, a discussion that is not without interest. It is, however, severely marred by his description of what is clearly the right foot of Christ as the left, and more alarmingly, his assertion that Britain 'is synonymous with England on this map as Scotland is assigned a separate island', when the separate island, labelled 'Scotia' clearly represents Ireland (p. 87). A far more successful venture into the world of graphic representation occurs in his discussion of Leviathan, where Sobecki describes his discovery of the depiction of a circular whale in an illustration of *Patience*, echoing and possibly inspired by the depictions of Leviathan in Jewish manuscripts.

This book had the potential to give an in-depth treatment to a fascinating and under-studied topic. Unfortunately, its flaws are of a magnitude that leaves that potential unrealized, although there are moments of considerable interest.

Pamela O'Neill  
School of Letters, Art and Media  
University of Sydney