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England and Iberia in the Middle Ages, 12th-15th Century: Cultural, Literary, and Political Exchanges (review)



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María Bullón-Fernández, ed. *England and Iberia in the Middle Ages, 12th–15th Century: Cultural, Literary, and Political Exchanges*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007. Pp. x, 250. $69.95.

When considering England's international relations during the late Middle Ages, both on a political and on a cultural level, scholars have traditionally focused most of their interest on two countries, France and Italy. The recent volume edited by Peter Brown, *A Companion to Medieval English Literature and Culture* (2007), clearly exemplifies this tendency, since its section "Encounters with Other Cultures" takes only these two countries into account in the context of contemporary Europe. The unsurprising absence of Iberia simply emphasizes, as stated by María Bullón-Fernández, that "[r]ecognition of . . . cultural and political traffic patterns, particularly regarding England and Iberia, has been slow to emerge among medievalists" (p. 2). The purpose of the collection of essays under review is to present arguments that should encourage full-scale scholarly attention to medieval Anglo-Iberian relations.

England and Iberia is concerned primarily with the contacts between England and the Christian kingdoms of Iberia, namely, Castile, the Catalano-Aragonese Crown, and Portugal. As Bullón-Fernández highlights in her introductory essay, the book explores cultural and political interactions not between geographical areas, but between national realities, and thus the Muslim presence in the Iberian Peninsula is excluded from consideration. Apropos the chronological boundaries, the choice of the twelfth century as a point of departure is a valid response to converging historical circumstances: while in England the Norman ruling class consolidated its power after the Conquest, the Iberian kingdoms began to take advantage of the debilitated Almoravide power around the 1130s. These conditions disposed the English and Iberian kingdoms to begin "more insistently to look outward to other countries in Europe" (p. 4). The fifteenth century, besides being the conventional closing point for discussions circumscribed to the medieval period, is also the natural temporal limit to this collection, since the Anglo-Iberian relations during the early modern period have been the object of numerous studies that have, however, paid little attention to their medieval background.

The three opening essays in the collection present general overviews of various aspects of the traffic between England and Iberia, while the rest discuss more specific cases. Jennifer Goodman Wollock examines the Anglo-Iberian chivalric interactions in their military, political, and

literary dimensions, and suggests that "the crusade remains the central paradigm" (p. 17). That is, from an English perspective, the Iberian Peninsula represented the land where the Christian faith had to be defended against the Muslim infidel; in fact, the English involvement in Peninsular crusading activities is documented as early as 1112 and continued throughout the period covered by the book. But this crusading paradigm was reversed after the embracement of Protestantism in England, constructed then by the Spaniards as a modern bastion of infidelity.

The purpose of Lluís Cabré's essay is "to detect the existence of a British influence in Catalan writing" (p. 30) with special emphasis on texts that might have affected Joanot Martorell, author of *Tirant lo Blanc*. After tracing the presence of British texts and themes either in Latin, French, or in Catalan translation in the territories of the Crown of Aragon, Cabré revisits the issue of Martorell's knowledge of *Guy of Warwick*. He endorses the theory in favor of Martorell's acquaintance not with the English but with the French version of *Guy*, and he presents two new pieces of evidence, both of which seem, however, uncompelling. First, Cabré argues that the Catalan passage in chapter 115 of *Tirant*, "ciutats, viles i castells," is close to the French *Guy* "villes et forteresses" and removed from the English "Castell, *towre* nor cyte" (p. 39, my emphasis); but the fact that the meaning of *towre* may be "extended to include the whole fortress or stronghold of which a 'tower' was the original nucleus" (*OED* s.v. *tower*, n. 2) disproves this point. Second, the "soldà de Babilònia" (*Tirant*, chapter 135) matches with "le grand soudam de Babilonie" of the French *Guy*, while the English text reads "The ryche sowdan of Sysane"; but here Cabré fails to indicate that *Sysane* is most probably a corrupt reading, as Julius Zupitza, editor of the English *Guy*, suggests (EETS, e.s. 25 (1875): 78 n. 1), and thus cannot be used to exclude the possibility of the sultan of Babylon featuring in an English text encountered by Martorell.

The remaining essays expose the transversality and complexity of the Anglo-Iberian cultural contacts. Echevarría Arsuaga studies Jacobean pilgrimage from England and construes the shrine at Compostela as a mediator of the flux between England and Castile during a period of political uncertainty. Rose Walker associates the presence of "Iberian 'symptoms' " (p. 71) in English manuscripts and of English damp-fold illustration in Castilian codices with the royal marriages of Eleanor of Castile and Leonor of England, respectively. In her essay on Giles Des-

pagne, Cynthia Chamberlain ably reconstructs the career of this bodyguard at the service of Edward II, giving an account that illustrates the king's preference for, and confidence in, his Castilian retainers. The article by Jennifer Geouge sheds new light on the unbalanced and turbulent Anglo-Portuguese trade relations during the long reign of João I (1385–1433). Joyce Coleman focuses on the figure of João's wife, Philippa of Lancaster, and analyzes her role as promoter and purveyor of English culture, noticeable in her advocacy of the Use of Sarum, the sculptures made of Nottingham alabaster that adorn Portuguese churches, the Batalha Monastery, and most saliently the translations of Gower's *Confessio Amantis*. Coleman presents a strong case for identifying the Portuguese translator with the son of Philippa's treasurer, engaged by her to translate the work "as a present for her husband . . . she further had the work translated from Portuguese into Castilian as a gift for her half-sister, Catherine, and her brother-in-law, Enrique III of Castile" (p. 154). Amélia Hutchinson discusses the historicity of the episode known as "Os Doze de Inglaterra," determines the earliest extant version, and speculatively connects the narrative events with the Arthurian tradition. Finally, R. F. Yeager discusses Chaucer's exposure to what he calls the Matter of Spain, both during his travels in the Peninsula in 1366 and back in England through his likely contacts with the peninsular merchant community. Picking out the references to the Peninsula (to which *Almería* should be added; see Jeanne Krochalis, "'And riden in Belmarye': Chaucer's General Prologue, Line 57," *ANQ* 18.4 [2005], 3–8) in Chaucer's works, Yeager tentatively suggests the itinerary Chaucer followed in his visit to Spain, during which time it seems he acquired a rudimentary knowledge of Spanish and became partially acquainted with Castilian literary culture. Yeager cautiously concludes that while "Chaucer's involvement with Spanish literature . . . must remain speculative" (p. 201), if this did exist it certainly "prepared the ground for his Italian discoveries in the 1370s" (p. 202).

The issues covered by the nine essays included in *England and Iberia* are solid testimony to the intense and multifaceted exchanges between people from the two regions throughout the late Middle Ages. Significantly, this book reveals that the traffic between these nations was two-way, showing medieval England not only in her usual role as consumer of foreign fashions but also as exporter of cultural modes. This collection succeeds in properly illustrating the political and cultural implications

of Anglo-Iberian relations and in highlighting the need for further scholarly consideration of this topic.

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Catherine A. M. Clarke. *Literary Landscapes and the Idea of England, 700–1400*. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2006. Pp. xii, 160. £45.00; $80.00.

Near the end of this book, Catherine Clarke remarks that only her chronological focus has imposed limits on a "potentially enormous subject." In fact the corpus of materials revealed seems rather small for a seven-hundred-year span. Chapter 1, "The Edenic Island," relies heavily on Bede's well-known descriptions of Britain and Ireland. Clarke notes his debt to Gildas, brings in the very brief descriptions of the island of Farne in Bede's *Life of Cuthbert*, and adds Alcuin on York and the transformation of St Guthlac's island in the fen in Felix's *Life*. Chapter 2, on the *locus amoenus* tradition in Old English, covers sections of the poems *Phoenix*, *Genesis A*, *Guthlac A*, and a few lines of *The Seafarer*, with discussion of some Latin and one Irish sources and analogues. Chapter 3 considers landscape in the later monastic accounts of Glastonbury, Ely, and Ramsey, three island monasteries. The material here is less familiar, but once again Guthlac receives a certain prominence. Clarke notes that though he is strongly associated with Crowland, there was a cult of him at Glastonbury, which had a ninth-century abbot called Guthlac, and suggests that this could be part of a West Saxon strategy of appropriating Mercian and East Anglian saints. This allows Clarke to make a further argument for these island descriptions acting as "metonym or emblem for the island nation" of Britain. Her fourth chapter moves from islands to cities, and considers two twelfth-century texts on London and Chester, and three later ones including sections of Gower's *Vox Clamantis*, and a satirical poem that gives three lines to each of seven English cities, and pokes fun at their products—*verba vana* or "empty words" for London, "halfpenny pies (?)" for Norwich, *burges negones* or "niggardly citizens" for Bristol, and so on. A final chapter roves rather more widely in search of material, but at the expense of focus. Is Arthur's taunting