**Anthony Bale and Sebastian Sobecki (eds.).** 2019. *Medieval English Travel: A Critical Anthology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, xviii + 498 pp., 4 figures, 3 maps, £ 95.00 (hb)/£ 20.00 (pb).

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This volume responds to a renewal of interest in medieval travel that comes as medievalists attempt to re-imagine their field outside the paradigm of the nation-state. It will be plundered by instructors, who will come here looking for material for their courses. It will also be welcomed by researchers for its generous thematic bibliographies and for the new editions that it provides of understudied texts, many of which are difficult to track down elsewhere and some of which are edited here for the first time.

In their "Introduction", the editors explain the broad definition of travel writing that they have adopted as writing that "narrates movement to and through places" (2). This leads them to include in their anthology not only travel itineraries but also extracts from romances, chronicles, and devotional texts. The editors also provide useful commentary on what they call the "tension between imagination and experience" (2) that animates their extracts: The places named in the texts that they collect may be located in geographical reality but often their significance will also be symbolic or imaginary, as is the case for the places visited by pilgrims on tours of the Holy Land, for example. By emphasizing the imaginary alongside the documentary properties of travel writing, the editors make clear the interest of this sort of writing (they avoid the term 'genre') for a broad constitu-

ency of readers, including literary scholars and those working on devotional culture alongside historians and geographers.

The remainder of the volume falls into three parts giving contextualizing essays (pp. 15–64), the anthology (pp. 65–464), and the thematic bibliographies (pp. 465–476, confusingly entitled "Contexts" here). Bale returns to the tension between imagination and experience in medieval travel writing in the first of the essays; other essayists treat the history of map-making and map-reading in Britain (Hiatt); the attitudes towards foreigners that travel writing might foster (Goldie); the linguistic experiences and effects of travel (Hsy); and the prosecution of travel for the purposes of trade (Sobecki) and war (Bellis). These contributions combine broad, up-to-date scholarship with more focused commentary, for example, on the role of trade networks in the transmission of books and ideas (Sobecki) and the finely balanced imperatives of cosmopolitanism and isolationism fostered by military engagement (Bellis). Together with the thematic bibliographies in the book's final section, they will constitute much-visited ports of call for beginning and more experienced researchers alike.

The anthology itself presents texts that are better known, although perhaps not often viewed in the context of travel writing (e.g., Chaucer's "Squire's Tale", *Floris and Blancheflour*, and extracts from the *Richard Coer de Lyon* and *The Book of Margery Kempe*) alongside a collection of less readily accessible works (e.g., *The Libelle of Englyshe Polycye*, Bokenham's *Mappula Angliae*, and *The Pilgrims' Sea Voyage*). The volume contains three guest-edited texts falling into this latter category: an extract from Trevisa's *Polychronicon* (Boffey); *The Division of the World* (Edwards); and *The Siege of Rouen* (Bellis). Readers may regret the decision to combine glosses, textual notes, and explanatory notes on the primary texts in a single run of footnotes, which run into the hundreds where extracts are longer. Given that one of the more obvious applications of the volume is teaching, it is a shame that the resources of the press have not translated into a page design that serves beginner readers of Middle English better; more expert readers will also resent having to sift through the glosses to catch other useful bits of information. What value does the press add? A mid-price paperback edition is available as of 1 September 2021 but today's students expect to encounter their primary texts online, and no online content is provided besides an ebook that www.ebooks.com lists at $ 107.99 (reduced from $ 119.99). OUP should really be upping its game if it hopes to stay relevant in the primary text market alongside the likes of TEAMS and Broadview.

My one other quibble relates to the editors' decision to limit their anthology to works written in English. Some of their extracts translate French and Latin material into Middle English, admittedly, and there is one extract translated from Latin into Modern English: Sæwulf's *Voyage to Jerusalem*, with its gripping description

of a storm at the port of Jaffa. But the decision to exclude other materials written in French skews the presentation of the topic towards the later end of the period and risks giving the impression that the rise of English and the first flourishing of English travel writing are coterminous. The risk is compounded by the rather bold claim made in the "Introduction" that the rise of English corresponded with the development of well-organized pilgrimage routes (8). Medieval English multilingualism not only facilitated travel; it also enabled the reception of travel writing originating in a wide variety of contexts within England. Dean lists several texts that might have been called upon to plug the gap in the editors' selection.[1]

Notwithstanding these objections, *Medieval English Travel* marks a significant moment in the study of medieval travel. Its advent is evidence of the current centrality of travel in medieval studies and the broad variety of less familiar texts that the anthology does contain will help to carry the field forward in new and exciting directions.

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**1** See Ruth J. Dean with Maureen B. M. Boulton. 1999. *Anglo-Norman Literature: A Guide to Texts and Manuscripts*. London: Anglo-Norman Text Society, e.g., items 325, 326, and 330–341.