Speculum

Review of 'The Maritime World'

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STACY S. KLEIN, WILLIAM SCHIPPER AND SHANNON LEWIS-SIMPSON, eds. *The Maritime Worlds of the Anglo-Saxons*. (Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies 448. Essays in Anglo-Saxon Studies 5.) Tempe, AZ: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2014. Paper. Pp. xiv, 361. 48 illustrations. ISBN: 978-0-86698-496-6.

This collection emerges from the 14th biennial meeting of the International Society of Anglo-Saxonists, held at Memorial University, Newfoundland in 2009. Its fourteen new essays, many of them illustrated, reflect the society's commitment to interdisciplinary work, with contributions from the fields of archaeology, geography, art history, literature, history and theology.

Stacy Klein's introduction (1-20) provides a useful survey of the recent 'oceanic turn' ~~as well as~~ sketching the various ways in which Anglo-Saxons themselves engaged with the sea as a liminal space to be crossed in times of migration or defended against during invasion, as well as a place for funerals and a physical and spiritual boundary. The first five chapters are connected through a focus on maritime travel. Martin Carver's "Travels on the Sea and in the Mind" (21-36) draws on his own (near-fatal) experience of sailing in a replica of the Oseberg ship to argue that it was the development of the ability to tack, rather than the use of the sail, that gave rise to the great navigational feats of the Viking Age. Carver also emphasises the ways in which small boats operating on inland waterways, as well as larger sea-going vessels, could serve as conduits for ideas as well as trade, proposing that we rethink the *adventus saxonum* as "not so much an age of migration as an age of maritime communication" (30). John Baker and Stuart Brookes's chapter, "Overseeing the Sea: Some West-Saxon Responses to Waterborne Threats in the South-East" (37-58), demonstrates how defences against the Vikings in the late ninth century were usually built with a view to limiting riverine access to roads rather than to preventing the establishment of a beach-head. Juliet Mullins's "*Herimum in Mari*: Anglo-Saxon Attitudes Towards *Peregrinatio* and the Ideal of the Desert in the Sea" (59-73), finds that, while Irish ecclesiasts could think of the sea as a place of ascetic refuge equivalent to the desert of the Eastern fathers, in Anglo-Saxon religious literature maritime imagery is generally used to denote spiritual turmoil antithetical to monastic *stabilitas*. In the fourth chapter, "Eleventh-Century Anglo-Saxon Long-Haul Travelers: Jerusalem, Constantinople, and Beyond" (75-129), David A. E. Pelteret first retraces the journeys of pilgrims and political refugees before assessing evidence for the activities of Anglo-Saxon members of the Varangian Guard and even identifying the seeds of British Imperialism in the eleventh-century, when the ambitions of English travellers began to shift from pilgrimage to colonisation. Gale Owen-Crocker's "… *Velis Vento Plenis* … : Sea Crossings in the Bayeux Tapestry" (131-56) examines the voyages of both Harold Godwinson and William the Conqueror, highlighting how, through the use of anticipation and parallelism, the Tapestry justifies William's claim to the English throne while also presenting Harold as a "worthy opponent" and "tragic hero" (153-55).

Five sub~~q~~equent chapters focus to varying degrees on the literature of the sea. In "*Be mihtigum mannum*: Power, Penance, and Food in Late Anglo-Saxon England" (157-85), Allen J. Frantzen draws on his expertise on the Penitentials to explore how "situational identity" (185) could be constructed by conspicuous penance, demonstrating that the consumption of fish was not—as is often supposed—accepted as a substitute for meat during periods of fasting. Peter Dendle's "Demons of the Water: Anglo-Saxon Responses to the Gerasene Demoniac" (187-207) explains how this biblical episode was used both in exorcism rituals and to demonise foreigners (Scots) across the water. The theme of the purification of water is picked up again in Heide Estes's chapter, "*Beowulf* and the Sea: an Ecofeminist Reading" (209-26), which reads Grendel's mother and her mere as liminal spaces between male and female, human and non-human, and land and water. Karl Persson's contribution, "*Scip*: A Proposed Solution to Exeter Book Riddle 95" (227-45), weighs the mertis of earlier solutions, notably Kiernan ("prostitute") and Korhammer ("holy book"), before making its own case for "ship", bolstered by the prevalence of seafaring motifs elsewhere in the manuscript. Phyllis Portnoy's "Verbal Seascapes in Anglo-Saxon Verse" (247-73) suggests that the literary accounts of the Flood in *Beowulf* and *Genesis A* and the Red Sea crossing in *Exodus* would have evoked for contemporaries a "traditional image pool" (273) of biblical iconography—readers should also now consult Daniel Anlezark's 2006 monograph.

The final four chapters focus on whales in literature and material culture: Carolin Esser-Miles, in "*King of the Children of Pride*: Symbolism, Physicality, and the Old English *Whale*" (275-301), traces modern misconceptions about the whale back to medieval problems with classification of terms such as *balena* and *cetus*; Haruko Momma, in "Ælfric's Fisherman and the *Hronrad*: A Colloquy on the Occupation" (303-21), argues that the mercantile aspirations of the Fisherman distance him from the "Benedictine ideal of order represented by the monastery" (316); Carol Neuman de Vegvar's "*Hronæs Ban*: Exoticism and Prestige in Anglo-Saxon Material Culture" (323-35) discusses the use of whale-bone—mostly harvested from beached rather than hunted whales—in both household objects and luxury items such as the Franks and Gandersheim Caskets; and in the final chapter, "Archaeology of the Anglo-Saxon Whale" (337-54), Ian Riddler analyses the working of whale-bone items found in four urban centers, distinguishing between Anglo-Saxon and Viking usage.

The essays collected here serve as a timely reminder that English identity has always been marked by a complex and often ambivalent relationship with the waters that surround the island of Britain, dividing its people from and connecting them with friends and foes *ofer hronrāde* ("across the whale-road").

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