

KAZUTOMO KARASAWA, ed. *The Old English Metrical Calendar* (“*Menologium*”). (Anglo-Saxon Texts 12.) Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2015. Paper. Pp. xvi, 228. £60.00. ISBN: 978-1-84384-409-9.

The Old English Metrical Calendar, a poem of 231 lines produced in late Anglo-Saxon England, is a mnemonic device for teaching the relationship between the four seasons of the calendar year and the key liturgical feasts observed by the late Anglo-Saxon church, beginning and ending with Christmas. The poem has been misleadingly entitled *Menologium*—a term used to refer to a particular type of service-book used in the Eastern church—ever since Hickes’s 1703 edition, a convention which Kazutomo Karasawa acknowledges in the subtitle of this welcome new addition to D. S. Brewer’s excellent Anglo-Saxon Texts series. Despite the existence of seventeen earlier editions, there is little agreement as to the poem’s origins, provenance, purpose or structure. In his detailed, thorough introduction Karasawa tackles each of these issues with great clarity and authority, arguing persuasively that the verse *Menologium*, together with the wisdom poem *Maxims II*, was copied into its sole extant manuscript, Cotton Tiberius B. i, to form a bridge between two long prose texts, the Old English *Orosius*, which deals mostly with foreign, pre-Christian history, and the C-text of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, with its focus on domestic affairs: the *Menologium* carefully explains to the manuscript’s audience the differences between Roman and Anglo-Saxon ways of measuring time, and, as such, may have served as a teaching aid.

The poem is perhaps best-known to Anglo-Saxonists for the fact that it contains a quotation of Old English Metrical Psalm 117.22 (closely resembling the version preserved in the Paris Psalter) in lines 60-62. This provides a *terminus a quo* for the composition of the *Menologium* in the early-to-mid tenth century, when the Old English versification of the psalter is thought to have been made. Aside from this psalm-verse and a more general debt to scripture, no other sources have been identified, though the poet may have made use of Ambrose, Bede and other patristic works. Moreover, Karasawa argues that scholars have over-emphasised connections with Anglo-Latin and Old Irish analogues: while the *Menologium* has an explicitly nationalistic perspective, the Anglo-Latin Calendars of York, Hampton and Ramsey are all regional in their outlook and none share the *Menologium*’s concern with harmonising Roman and Anglo-Saxon methods of reckoning feast days and months; similarly, while the Old Irish Calendar poems resemble the *Menologium* in their integration of saints’ feast days and the natural cycle of the year, none of them do so within a cyclical structure comparable with the Old English poem. Nevertheless, Karasawa presents these texts in full (with facing-page translation) in the appendices to this volume, in several cases providing fresh editions from manuscript sources, pointing the way for further research into this under-studied area of early insular learning. Karasawa identifies a much closer analogue, however, in the Old English prose *Menologium*, which shares many of the verse version’s structural features but calculates the vernal equinox differently.

Both the prose and verse versions appear to be derived from a common vernacular source, though the verse *Menologium* is considerably more ambitious in its approach. The poet employs the typical Old English poetic techniques of alliteration, variation and amplification to breathe life into its at times rather plodding temporal scheme. For example, the months are personified in imaginative and, at times, strikingly memorable ways, echoing the nature-imagery of the Old English *Maxims* and *Riddles*. Perhaps the most noteworthy of these passages is the beautiful

description of the coming of May: *Swylce in burh raþe/ [embe six niht þæs], smicere on gearwum,/ wudum and wyrhtum cymeð wlitig scriðan/ Prymlice on tun*, “Likewise, after six nights, beautiful *Prymlice* comes gliding into the citadel, into town, elegantly clad in adornments, woods and plants” (ll. 75b-78a).

One significant feature of the manuscript layout of the poem, overlooked by previous editors, is its clear division into four sections marked by punctuation, spacing and large capitals. Noting correspondences with fourfold temporal diagrams in Byrhtferth’s *Enchiridion*, Karasawa argues persuasively that this division is authorial—the poem’s structure reflects the cycle of solstices and equinoxes, beginning and ending with the feast of Christmas—and he therefore follows the scribe in his presentation of the text: “the Christian year itself ... is the main theme of the poem; the poet defines it by locating the major feasts constituting it” (53).

Karasawa also provides a full discussion of language (predominantly late West Saxon), metre (unlike *Maxims II* the *Menologium* features no hypermetric verses, conforming mostly the 5-types), date (c. 950-c. 1008) and provenance (southern England); detailed commentary on the text of the *Menologium*; five very helpful appendices containing text, translation and commentary of Anglo-Latin, Old English and Old Irish analogues, tables and lists of Anglo-Saxon calendars and their immovable feasts, vigils, solar turning points, and Latin and Old English month-names; a Glossary, full Bibliography and Index.

This very welcome new edition, with full scholarly apparatus, facing-page translation and a wealth of supporting material, will do much to stimulate research into one of the most neglected pieces of Old English literature. It also significantly enhances our appreciation of the richness of late Anglo-Saxon ecclesiastical learning and early medieval science.

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