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*An Anglo-Norman Reader*. By JANE BLISS. Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2017. x + 404 pp.

Jane Bliss's reader presents extracts from a variety of Anglo-Norman texts, arranged according to Ruth Dean's generic criteria and provided with facing-page translations. The work bears the mark of Bliss's longstanding engagement with the Oxford Anglo-Norman Reading Group, but Bliss is keen to stress the utility of her collection to a broader audience. Her engagement with the question of utility is welcome given the recent appearance of two other anthologies of Anglo-Norman texts, one of which — *Vernacular Literary Theory from the French of Medieval England: Texts and Translations, c.1120–c.1450*, ed. and trans. by Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, Thelma Fenster, and Delbert W. Russell (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2016) — offers new single-manuscript readings of its selected texts, along with facing-page translations and glossaries. Bliss, by contrast, largely relies on existing editions for primary material, which necessarily leads to inconsistent editorial practice throughout, particularly with respect to diacritics. Nevertheless, Bliss is clear that her collection serves a fundamentally different purpose: unlike Wogan-Browne's 'study book', Bliss's reader offers a more 'general introduction to a range of interesting texts' written in the French of medieval Britain (p. 10). In choosing her texts through subjective criteria — namely, 'according to what I thought twenty-first century readers would find interesting and amusing' (p. 8) — she assumes no prior knowledge of medieval French; in this context, her liberal editorial excursions, which bring together Dickens and Montesquieu and remind the reader that 'medieval literature is full of bad derivations' (p. 139) or that 'this tone is unlikely to be heard in a modern English court' (p. 237), maintain a guiding and engaging presence throughout. Her translations are equally lively, attempting to 'catch the flavour of the texts' rather than

offering literal renderings (p. 21). This approach invites turns of phrase in English that, while perhaps not conveying the precise sense of the original, are idiomatic and entertaining: '[they] would have had a job to lift it' for 'de [...] lever se grevassent' (p. 111) is one notable example. Her introductions to each text are compelling, although it is perhaps to be regretted that the editions from which she draws her primary texts are not referenced more systematically and clearly: instead, the reader is directed, through somewhat elliptical footnotes, to a rather lengthy bibliography that freely intersperses her Anglo-Norman source texts with Middle English material and works such as Sellar and Yeatman's *1066 and All That* (London: Methuen, 1930). Bliss concludes the volume with a transcription of a piece of twentieth-century Alderney patois, a perhaps unexpected addition that nevertheless offers a useful reminder that 'Insular French does still exist outside the medieval field' (p. 373). The volume as a whole provides a useful taste of Anglo-Norman from a wide variety of domains and genres; while it cannot (and indeed does not) claim to be comprehensive in its coverage, its engaging arrangement and prominent editorial presence, coupled with its availability as a free download as a PDF from the Open Book website, render it an inviting point of entry for those exploring Anglo-Norman for the first time as well as a starting point for further enquiry.

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