

IDELLE SULLENS, ed., *Robert Mannyng of Brunne: The Chronicle*. MRTS vol. 153. Binghamton, New York: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1996. Pp. x, 911. ISBN: 0-86698-137-3. \$60.

Robert Mannyng's *Chronicle* has mainly attracted the attention of modern scholars interested in the Havelok story, the development of the English language, particularly the Lincolnshire dialect, and early English historiography. Research, however, has been hampered by the editorial state of Mannyng's text. The first part of the work was edited by Frederick J. Furnivall for the Rolls Series in 1887. The second part was edited by Thomas Hearne in 1725. These editions, which were based on different manuscripts with only sporadic citation of variants, were woefully inadequate for the study of Mannyng's text. Idelle Sullens is therefore fully justified when she lists the three main justifications for a new edition: '(1) errors and peculiarities in all the older editions, (2) their inaccessibility except in major university libraries, and (3) the necessity for an accurate text to support studies of Mannyng's language' (1). As scholarly interest in medieval chronicles grows, this edition could not be more welcome.

The *Chronicle* is uniform with Sullens' edition of Mannyng's other work, *Handlyng Synne* (Binghamton: MRTS, 1983) and the extensive glossary refers to both texts. The lengthy and comprehensive introduction discusses Mannyng's biography and language, as well as his poetic style, use of sources, influence and the relationship of the surviving manuscripts. There is not much new in this introduction, but Sullens draws together the available scholarship on Mannyng in a careful and thorough manner. She also introduces a conservative note of caution with regard to some of the more speculative attempts to identify Mannyng, or to trace his influence on later texts.

The notes are primarily concerned with textual matters and Mannyng's use of source material. Sullens carefully identifies places where Mannyng deviates from his principal sources (Wace and Peter Langtoft), but she rarely indicates analogues to his innovations. When, for example, Mannyng rejects the story of Inge (lines 1.7427-7433 and again at lines 1.14215-18), Sullens does not mention the *Short Metrical Chronicle's* version of the tale but merely remarks that Mannyng 'seems to be referring to a legendary character for whom England was named in some other source' (70).

The edition is based on the Petyt manuscript, which is earlier than the Lambeth manuscript and preserves Mannyng's Lincolnshire dialect. Punctuation and capitalization have been modernized, but otherwise Sullens presents a diplomatic text with no editorial corrections. She has also 'adopted an unorthodox editorial method' (3) with regard to variants from Lambeth, which are printed beside the corresponding line in Petyt. This method cuts down on repetition, allows errors in Petyt to be spotted easily, and gives an impression of the Lambeth reviser's editorial method. It does prove difficult, however, to cite additions in Lambeth, and the printed page also becomes very cluttered at lines 1.12550-12699 where the variants from the fragment in the Rawlinson Miscellany are also cited.

Despite Sullens' attempt to provide a text which does not 'second-guess the scribes' (3), she has chosen not to include Latin captions, paragraph marks or any notice of decorated initials 'because these are clearly not authorial' (36). The reader interested in these pieces of marginalia and decoration is directed to the earlier editions. This choice is puzzling since Sullens uses these notations to establish a common source for the two manuscripts. These notices might also have helped to break up the text which is presented continuously for 24,304 lines with only the artificial division into Parts I and II. Given the size of Mannyng's text it is also surprising that proper names are not included in the glossary, nor are they indexed. It is very difficult for a reader to find a single episode quickly, such as the Lear story or the death of Thomas à Becket.

The book is attractively presented, but could have used more careful proof reading. On two occasions, for example, the introduction states that textual notes are 'at the end of each part' (71 and 76) but they are, in fact, all contained at the end of the volume. These complaints, however, are minor in comparison with the enormity of the task that Sullens took in hand. By presenting a complete and accurate edition of Mannyng's *Chronicle*, Sullens has done a great service to those interested in early English historiography. Perhaps she will inspire others to tackle the many medieval chronicles which remain unedited and understudied.

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