Guillemette Bolens and Lukas Erne, eds. *Medieval and Early Modern Authorship.*

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One of the striking features of this rich, engaging collection is that its essays, including the focused, eloquent introduction, spend very little time rehearsing the critical history of the death of author famously heralded by figures such as Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault in the 1970s. Instead, having absorbed this methodological challenge to the interpretive primacy of the author as the basis for reassessing — but not abandoning — the topic of medieval and early modern authorship, each of the papers identifies specific philosophical, theological, or institutional contexts that illuminate the shifting status of the writer in the premodern periods. The result is a valuable collection of essays that covers a broad temporal sweep, from roughly the twelfth century to the late seventeenth, while offering fine-grained attention to a range of texts, theories, and historical circumstances.

The editors' introduction usefully organizes the essays into four categories: authorial self-fashioning, the fictionalization of authorship, the posthumous construction of authorship, and the nexus of authorship and authority. The essays that follow, by established figures in authorship studies as well as emerging scholars, are consistently provocative, complicating earlier criticism and devising new methodological approaches. The first set includes Helen Cooper's dismissal of assumptions about the anxiety of influence, as she suggests that early writers deliberately associated themselves with literary forbears, as well as Robert Edwards's study of medieval writers' appropriation of commentary traditions. Lynn Meskill argues that Shakespeare and Ben Jonson, in *Julius Caesar* and *Sejanus*, respectively, share a "meticulous" approach to the use of classical sources; Johann Gregory challenges Lukas Erne's important reading of Shakespeare as a dramatist for the page by demonstrating the ways in *Troilus and Cressida* makes the "theatre literary" (93); Neil Forsyth puts fresh pressure on the relation between *Paradise Lost*'s narrator and Satan; and Stephen Hequembourg offers a sparkling treatment of Marvell's approach to pronouns in the *Rehearsal Transpros'd* and the *Remarks Upon a Late Disingenuous Discourse* as a register of his "conflictual relation with his [print] medium" (127).

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The essays on fictions of authorship concern the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In a compelling move, Patrick Cheney emphasizes the model of the sublime — the Longinian "commitment to literary greatness" — in early modern notions of authorship (141). John Blakeley turns to the Cambridge Parnassus plays to suggest the pedagogical endorsement of literary creativity (167). And Colin Burrow's erudite "Fictions of Collaboration" is one of the collection's most rewarding: it surveys a wide swath of nondramatic texts and writers from across the sixteenth century to trace the development of the editor, or "intermediary" — including the invented or imagined intermediary — in the production of various models of authorship.

Although not as bold in their claims as those in other sections, the essays about posthumous authorial construction are smart and thorough. They include Emma Depledge's painstaking analysis of Shakespeare adaptations during the Exclusion Crisis (1679–82), and Julianna Bark's useful reading of Shakespearean portraiture. The final section, on authorship and authority — implicitly defined as the political or institutional power to confer legitimacy — looks solely at medieval works and authors. Rita Copeland provides a learned account of the role of the curriculum in conferring authorial prestige based on a text's ability to prompt readers to "cultivate themselves through the texts" (246). Stefania D'Agata D'Ottavi's essay on *Troilus and Criseyde* offers a fresh approach to the poem's fictitious author, while Nicole Nyffenegger considers the authorial strategies of English historiographers, particularly Robert Mannyng of Brunne; and Alice Spencer reads a recently discovered manuscript to explain Osbern Bokenham's unique melding of topographical and hagiographical techniques "in vindication of his own vernacular voice" (279). The final essay of the collection, by Alastair Minnis, is a deep, penetrating discussion of the "interconnections of the secular and the sacred within late medieval *auctor*-theory" (294), and it studies theologians' reservations about, as well as poets' exploitation of, the relation between poetics and exegesis in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

The collection derives from a 2010 conference of the Swiss Association of Medieval and Early Modern Studies and is thus not meant to do the work of a survey. Nevertheless, the lack of a single essay on female authors or authorship is striking. The collection also, for better and for worse, has a slightly old-fashioned sensibility; for instance, several of the essaysists take the late Richard Helgerson as their central interlocutor, thus orienting their terms to the 1970s and 1980s (*Elizabethan Prodigals* was published in 1976, *Self-Crowned Laureates* in 1983). Finally, although as a collection the essays sweep across the long stretch of the medieval and early modern, none of them take as a topic the historical development of authorship across traditional period boundaries. Despite these oversights, however, Guillemette Bolens and Lukas Erne have assembled a valuable set of essays that attests to the vibrancy of authorship as a focus of contemporary scholarship.

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