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*Affections of the Mind: The Politics of Sacramental Marriage
in Late Medieval English Literature* (review)

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Fulton's analyses of the *Chastising of God's Children* and the Middle English translation of Porete's *Mirror*. Indeed, the author asks a lot of good questions, but my sense is that her considerable talents in codicology should have been brought more fully to bear in an evaluation of Hildegaardian and Joachite books in England without the repeated turn to Middle English texts by Langland, Chaucer, Julian, and Margery to prove the value or ubiquity of this or that radicalism, as if ubiquity is the sole criterion for importance. It is fair to say that the author understands perfectly well the difficulty of this project and the controversy and doubt it not only describes but is likely to produce: "How or whether these things impacted on Ricardian and early Lancastrian writers is very difficult to assess, and much of what I hope to do here is to simply open up new possibilities to allow others to explore and judge for themselves" (p. 37).

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EMMA LIPTON. *Affections of the Mind: The Politics of Sacramental Marriage in Late Medieval English Literature*. Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007. Pp. 246. \$32.00 paper.

Emma Lipton looks at four very different texts from the late Middle Ages in England—Chaucer's *Franklin's Tale*, Gower's relatively ignored *Traitié pour Essampler les Amantz Marietz*, the plays dealing with Mary in the N-Town cycle, and *The Book of Margery Kempe*—for evidence that new views of marriage were developing with the increasing influence of the class she refers to as the "emergent lay middle strata of society." The nub of the argument has to do with the different concepts of marriage held by emerging new orders of society, as love became what she calls "a discourse of power" in the fourteenth century. This is obviously linked to other developments: the movement toward clerical celibacy from the twelfth century, and the growing emphasis in the late Middle Ages on the role of the marriage partners rather than the officiating cleric in the dispensation of the Sacrament. It is the emphasis that is new here, rather than the doctrine, and Lipton summarizes the argument succinctly: "The lay middle strata were specifically drawn to the sacra-

mental model of marriage in contrast to the sexual model and the hierarchical model, embraced respectively by clergy and aristocracy" (p. 4).

Beginning from, and ending with, an interesting thought about how modern controversies about gay marriage show that marriage does not have as invariable a social operation as we might think, Lipton outlines the debates of the Sacrament in her period. The marked variety of genre and provenance in the texts considered leads to differences that are not quite articulated here, though they are obvious enough. Both the N-Town Mary plays and *Margery Kempe* are interestingly examined in relation to tensions between orthodoxy and heterodoxy in East Anglia, connected with controversies about Lollardy there; the centrally canonical *Franklin's Tale* clearly comes from a very different world. Gower's *Traitié*, written after the *Confessio Amantis* and appended to it in seven out of ten manuscripts, is a sententious series of short verse tales of classical heroes, written in Anglo-Norman French and Latin. Lipton shows revealingly that the *Traitié* is concerned with male behavior within marriage, rather than with kingship; it is interesting, for instance, that in the *Confessio Amantis*, Aristotle's advice to Alexander about the control of lust is expressly said to apply to him as king, whereas in the *Traitié* David's desire for Bathsheba is "the story of everyman." In the *Traitié*, Gower sets marriage above chastity, in language that Lipton shows to be secular-legal rather than ecclesiastical. The concern is with male behavior in marriage—a striking move away from what Coffman long ago called Gower's "most significant role": articulating the ideas and responsibilities of kingship.

The *Traitié* is the focus of the second chapter here, subtitled "Marriage and Masculinity in John Gower's *Traitié*." The familiar *locus classicus* for the debate of husbandly responsibility in late Middle English literature is of course Chaucer's *Franklin's Tale*—and perhaps the preceding "Marriage Group," whatever terms we use to describe that nowadays. It is not surprising to hear in the opening chapter, "Married Friendship," that the *Franklin's Tale* "describes marriage as an equal and mutual relationship based in friendship"; but the discussion of how this works in the *Tale* is very enlightening, particularly on the old dilemma of the conclusion that removes Dorigen from the closing *demande*, "which was the mooste fre?"—the merchant-husband, the clerk or the philosopher, but not, it seems, the virtuous wife. Lipton's general argument provides a satisfactory answer, at least in the terms in which she scrutinizes the marriage texts of the period: the lay, bourgeois concern

was with the responsibility of husbands, even if in this semihomiletic setting Dorigen has a degree of agency and choice far beyond that of the romance-heroine Emelye in *The Knight's Tale*. Lipton puts this—twice—in striking terms: “Whereas the opening of the tale is recounted in a compressed style that parodies the parataxis of romance, after the exchange of vows between Dorigen and Arveragus discourse-time extends well beyond story-time, and the narrative dilation seems to resemble the expansive form of sermons as the Franklin temporarily takes on the discursive style of a preacher,” invoking what “thise clerkes seyn.”

Interesting as these opening two chapters are, Lipton's theme becomes both clearer and more revealing in the last two, East Anglian chapters, which are the book's most valuable contribution, particularly because the political significance of the debates comes into clearer focus there. The N-Town plays examined (in the chapter “Performing Reform,” which serves as an excellent introduction to the context of this fascinating compilation-cycle), are “Joachim and Anna,” “The Marriage of Mary and Joseph,” and “The Trial of Mary and Joseph.” The general theme of the developing bourgeois view of marriage, relating to procreation, celibacy, and sexuality, is placed in the context of the line between orthodoxy and heterodoxy, recently shown by Anne Hudson, Sarah Beckwith, and Dyan Elliott (among others) to be a good deal more blurred than was previously assumed. Reading these plays in the context of contemporary East Anglian religious politics brings them to vivid life. In the first play Joachim, significantly, is a merchant: a figure of the lay bourgeoisie. Most effectively of all, the forensic exchanges with the Detractors in the Trial play are linked to the heresy trials in Norwich from 1428 to 1431, which show the accused attacking clerical authority by arguing that marriage was superior to celibacy.

This contextualizing is even more marked in the last chapter, “The Marriage of Love and Sex,” about Margery Kempe's *Book*. To put it briefly, Lipton argues that Kempe's highly physical representation of her loving relations with Christ, while she resisted sexual commerce with her husband, was making a very strong statement of the necessity of sex in the most exalted marriage. Christ's mystical marriage with Margery is expressed in the terms of the marriage formula (where Lipton even draws on Austin's idea of the performative). The case against celibacy could not be put more forcefully. Like the N-Town chapter, this is an excellent introduction to the *Book*, setting it in the context of the newly popular bourgeois manuals of manners.

By the end, the term “Sacramental” in Lipton’s title, accurate and justified as it is in Augustinian, doctrinal terms, seems slightly misleading. The emphasis has shifted decisively toward the secular bourgeois. The term “class” might have been adopted more generally than “strata” (especially as there is some uncertainty from the very start about whether to treat that noun as singular or plural). Lipton occasionally gives vent herself to a bourgeois, “middle strata” indignation: she says twice in so many words that in the *Traitié*, “Tristan and Ulysses are revealed to be domestic horrors” (they are certainly not a model of marital manners, it is true); *The Book of Margery Kempe* depicts “marital sex as horribly oppressive and unclean.” But, even if the book does not exactly establish a genre of marriage-related literature from around 1400, it is a model of how texts can be read closely in their context to the benefit of both literary and historical understanding.

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ROBERT J. MEYER-LEE. *Poets and Power from Chaucer to Wyatt*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007. Pp. xii, 297. £50.00; \$90.00.

Robert Meyer-Lee’s *Poets and Power from Chaucer to Wyatt* explores familiar territory from an unfamiliar perspective. In one sense this is yet another study of the evolution of premodern subjectivity, the development of a personal voice in reaction to, or in concert with, the exercise of institutionalized power. But rather than relying, like most new historicists, on an anachronistic Foucauldian paradigm, Meyer-Lee looks to sober literary history to provide him with a structure for his narrative. The results, while not likely to be uncontentious, are consistently perceptive and stimulating.

Down to the late fourteenth century, says Meyer-Lee, neither named authors (paradigmatically, writers of chronicles and histories) nor anonymous first-person lyricists were expected to project a sense of personal presence in their work. Self-expression was generic, not only in the literary sense (which it can hardly avoid being), but also in the sense that nonpatented drugs are generic—that is, nondiscrete, common to all. All