

ANNE E. B. COLDIRON. *English Printing, Verse Translation, and the Battle of the Sexes, 1476–1557*. Pp. xvi + 264 (Women and Gender in the Early Modern World). Farnham: Ashgate, 2009. Cloth, £55.

Anne Coldiron's new book, as the title indicates, addresses a complex and carefully delineated subject. This subject—largely neglected in literary scholarship to date—is a surprisingly extensive body of verse texts, translated from French sources, which engages with the long-standing 'woman question' or *querelle des femmes* during the late fifteenth century and early sixteenth century. These texts range from translations of Christine de Pizan by Caxton and others, to the variously misogynous satires *The Fyftene Joyes of Maryage* (1509) and the paired complaints of *Them That Be To Soone* and *To Late Maryed* (1505), all translated by Robert Copland, and from the anonymous *Letter of Dydo to Aeneas* (1526) to John Heywood's court drama *Johan Johan* (1533), a rendering of the late fifteenth-century French play *La Farce du Pasté*. Once popular, many of these texts are now largely unknown, and some are still extant only in single, rare or incomplete copies. One of the many virtues of Coldiron's book is its recovery of these little-known and intriguing texts, many of which have never previously been edited. Coldiron concludes the book with full transcriptions of several of these texts, which are thus made fully available to future research.

Coldiron's work in identifying and recovering these obscure texts is important for several reasons. One is that, as she herself emphasizes, it fills a gap between the production and early reception of Christine de Pizan and the gender-based pamphlet wars of the mid-sixteenth century. Thanks to Coldiron, we now know that the *querelle des femmes* did not simply fade away in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, but instead was a surprisingly persistent presence, albeit handled with varying degrees of skill, misogyny and generic inventiveness. Another significant factor is that the texts addressed by Coldiron form an instructive contrast with the courtly literature more commonly associated with the period 1476–1557. With the possible exception of Heywood's *Johan Johan* (itself an anomalous text in a genre which Heywood himself did not subsequently pursue), Coldiron's material is non-courtly, focussed on the lower social classes and profoundly interested in issues of economics and the body. By bringing this non-courtly material to scholarly attention, Coldiron's discussion continues the process, already evident in much recent research, of extending our understanding of the diversity of published English-language literature in the early years of print-publication. It also participates in recent debates on literary periodization—following the work of scholars such as David Aers and James Simpson in questioning traditional period divisions—and challenges narratives which identify Italian as the chief foreign-language influence on English texts of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. Coldiron's argument that early English printing was culturally francophone, and that the prevalence of translation from English to French during this period has been greatly underestimated, is powerfully and persuasively made.

Coldiron's project in *English Printing, Verse Translation, and the Battle of the Sexes* combines methodologies from three areas of contemporary literary scholarship: book history, the history of translation and gender studies. The confluence of all these factors can be seen, for instance, in her discussion of the use of paratexts and illustrations. Through several case studies, Coldiron shows how skilfully paratexts and illustrations could be used—either by the printer or the translator—to shape and manipulate the effects of a text: sometimes altering the ideological emphases of its French original(s); sometimes obscuring, sometimes enhancing its status as a work of translation. This sensitivity to the interplay between word and image is also complemented by a detailed and knowledgeable analysis of individual texts 'as translations'. Coldiron pays careful attention to the formal

and linguistic choices involved in these translations, and their significance within the ideologically charged context of the *querelle*. She also considers how English translators variously compressed, expanded and suppressed elements of their French originals; a case in point is *The Beaute of Women* (1525), an anonymous and anxiously misogynistic work, which, as Coldiron argues, conflates, reorders and repackages materials from two quite distinct French sources. Her discussion of translation alongside print history also uncovers instances in which the priorities of translators and of their printers and publishers seem to have been at variance—often with implications for the gender politics of the resulting texts.

One of the most persuasive aspects of *English Printing, Verse Translation, and the Battle of the Sexes* is that its numerous case studies do not tell a simple story. Some English translators were more misogynistic than their French counterparts; others took a more complex—and sometimes contradictory—approach to their materials. English translations of Christine de Pizan were influential; Heywood's *Johan Johan* was a generic dead end. Coldiron's discussion of marriage texts also admirably resists the lazy historicism which reads every reference to marital problems in the Henrician period as a critique of Henry VIII.

On a point of pedantry, I would have liked the transcription conventions for Coldiron's rendering of early modern print texts to be more explicitly articulated. Overall, moreover, the book is oddly and surprisingly inconclusive. Some of the key claims in Coldiron's introduction—such as her challenge to the role of Petrarchism in the English Renaissance (p. 6)—are left largely implicit in much of the rest of the narrative. The lack of a formal conclusion is especially regrettable. As it stands, the book ends somewhat abruptly with the somewhat bare example of Heywood, whose *Johan Johan*, although skilful and witty, was largely irrelevant to the later history of the *querelle*. Even a short conclusion, summing up the book's key findings and perhaps looking forward to later developments in the *querelle*, would have been welcome. In its absence, some of the collective impact of Coldiron's arguments is lost.

These few reservations aside, *English Printing, Verse Translation, and the Battle of the Sexes* is an able, well-informed and illuminating discussion of a fascinating and unjustly neglected topic. An important contribution to scholarship in its own right, it should also act as a stimulus to further research.

GILLIAN WRIGHT *University of Birmingham*  
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JOHN N. KING (ed.). **Tudor Books and Readers: Materiality and the Construction of Meaning**. Pp. xviii+270. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010. Cloth, £55.

This collection of 11 essays by established early-modern scholars explores 'the ways in which the materiality of books contributes to the construction of meaning' (p. 10). King's introduction is a nuanced account of the complexities affecting continuity and change between coexistent manuscript and early-modern print culture, offering a historical overview of the period addressed in terms of the conditions and kinds of print culture that intersect with broader social and domestic concerns. Lotte Hellinga's 'Prologue' demonstrates a similar reciprocity. In an examination of Caxton's output for Henry VII, she observes that Henry's commissioning of a translation of Christine de Pizan *Faits d'armes* as a conduct book for his armies both anticipates a statutory document that will define the