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MEDIUM ÆVUM

Edited by

David Rundle

Corinne Saunders Sylvia Huot

Stephen Mossman

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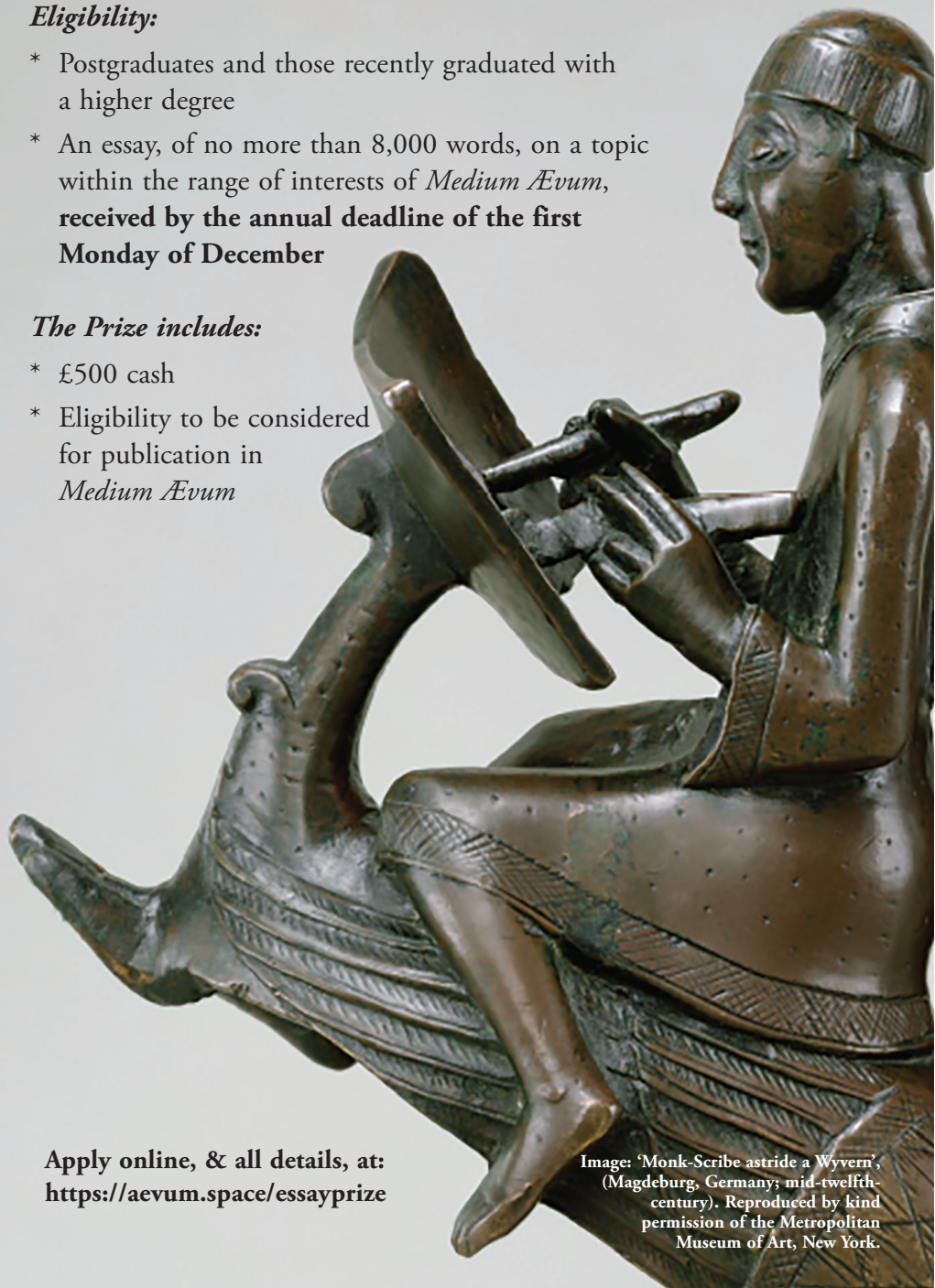
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The journal welcomes submissions in all areas relating to medieval literature and languages. Articles can vary in length but are normally in the range of 7,000 to 12,000 words, while notes of under 2,000 words are also fully acceptable. The Editors will acknowledge articles submitted on receipt, and will endeavour to reach an in-principle decision on publication within twelve weeks.

Both articles and books for review should be sent to the relevant editor:

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THE SOCIETY FOR THE STUDY OF MIEVEAL LANGUAGES AND LITERATURE

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Suffice it to note that the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres has awarded its first Médaille des Antiquités de la France to her for this book. The honour is well deserved.

Yale University
University of York

ALASTAIR MINNIS

Patrizia Grimaldi Pizzorno, *Dopo la peste: Desiderio e Ragione nella Decima Giornata del Decameron*, Biblioteca di «Lettere italiane», Studi e testi 80 (Florence: Olschki, 2021). 125 pp. ISBN 978-88-222-6813-6. €20.00.

Despite Boccaccio's resolution of basing the *novelle* of the 10th *giornata* of the *Decameron* on the theme of liberality (*magnificenza*), Patrizio Grimaldi Pizzorno has dedicated this monograph to the thesis that the true moral centre of the last *giornata* is, instead, prudence. Intended as a dianoetic virtue, *prudenza* is that practical and situational wisdom connected to rationality (*ragione*) and thought that considers the consequences of acting in the *communitas*, evaluates the means, and determines how the virtues must be implemented in practice to flourish in the life of relationship given the achievement of everyone's purpose and well-being.

The book is divided into six chapters. The first chapter, which occupies one-third of the whole book, has a programmatic goal: it serves as an introduction for the following sections, and it also provides the readers with the philosophical background and knowledge useful to follow the author through the rest of the study. Moving from Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, it is pointed out that Boccaccio often alludes to a virtuous relationship between desire (*desiderio*) and reason (*ragione*) or, better, to a positive view of desire as long as it is tempered with reason: desire is a powerful driving force for human beings and, when mitigated with prudence, has very positive effects.

The second chapter tackles the first *novella* (Ruggieri de' Figioanni). Grimaldi Pizzorno intends to demonstrate that the analysis of the reasons for the knight's rage against the king shows that the true meaning of the story is not just the simple realization of liberality (such is the proposition of Neifile, who tells it), but the nature itself of desire and the passions that break the connection between prudence and moral virtues. Through several references to Arthurian literature, the author reflects on the theme of courtesy and loyalty, values that were quite outdated in the merchants' *ethos* in which Boccaccio was immersed.

The third chapter is dedicated to the second *novella* (Ghino di Tacco), in which the protagonist does not reach virtue thanks to the intervention of reason (as in the former *novella*), but thanks to a miracle. This marvel is performed

directly by Ghino, who by doing it does the will of God, and becomes therefore a mediator of the supernatural. Moving from this assumption, and referring back to Michelangelo Picone's studies, Grimaldi Pizzorno then suggests that the matter is not as linear as it might seem and that Ghino is at the same time means of the will of God and minion of the devil.

The fourth chapter focuses on the third *novella* (Natan and Mitridanes): here, the realization of virtuous fulfillment is described as the result of a painful interior process that, starting from passion, reaches auto-conscience through reason's intervention. According to a dynamics already pointed out for the other two *novelle*, the author observes that the lordship–servitude relationship presides over the dialectics of desire and develops into the strife for recognition.

The fifth chapter deals with the fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh *novelle*. The *fil rouge* between them is the theme of love as destructive *eros* (*incontinentia*), as a search for pleasure that starts from the lowest level of the soul and is potentially uncontrollable for reason (such as in the *novelle* of the fourth *giornata*). The plot is the same for each story: the protagonists reach the conscience of virtue through a specific learning process aimed at transforming the nature itself of desire, from low longing for erotic satisfaction to honest and detached love.

The last chapter, dedicated to the last *novelle*, carries on with the same demonstration as the former one. Of particular interest is the reasoning around the last *novella*, the one about Griselda, in which Dioneo takes the reader back to the world of sensuality and carnal transgression. After nine exemplars and edifying tales, it is the true meaning of the *Decameron*, and of its purgatorial space and time, to turn back to the world of men and (also) of sin.

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STEFANO PEZZÈ

Louise Champion, *Cushions, Kitchens and Christ: Mapping the Domestic in Late Medieval Religious Writing*, Religion and Culture in the Middle Ages (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2022). xvii + 180 pp. ISBN 978-1-78683-830-8. £70.00.

Later medieval England experienced what has been described as an explosion of writing in the vernacular: Middle English translations of Latin religious texts were among those newly made available to non-Latinate and lay – and so also often female – readers. Louise Champion's *Cushions, Kitchens and Christ: Mapping the Domestic in Late Medieval Religious Writing* makes a valuable contribution to our understanding of these vernacular writings and their readers by demonstrating the significance of changes also under way in domestic culture to them. Focusing on