

Besprechungen

BAKERE, JANE A.: *The Cornish Ordinalia: A Critical Study*. Second (revised) edition. S. l.: Kesva an Taves Kernewek/The Cornish Language Board, 2009. vii + 249 p. ISBN 978-1-902917-85-6. £ 16.99.

The Cornish *Ordinalia* is the name given to a set of three Middle Cornish dramas on Biblical themes preserved in a manuscript (Oxford MS. Bodl. 791) dating from the first half of the fifteenth century, although the dramas themselves are probably slightly earlier in date. These three plays (known individually as *Origo Mundi*, *Passio Christi*, and *Resurrexio Domini*) dramatise events from the Old Testament, Christ's Passion, and the Resurrection and Ascension of Christ, respectively. A substantial portion of the third play is also devoted to an apocryphal sequence presenting the death of Pontius Pilate (*Mors Pilati*). Indications in the manuscript make it seem likely that the three plays of the *Ordinalia* could be performed in sequence on consecutive days, forming a dramatic cycle comparable to the better-known and more widely studied Middle English cycles. The final lines of *Origo Mundi* in MS. Bodl. 791 strongly imply that a fourth play about the Nativity or childhood of Christ also existed, but if so, it has not been preserved.

Since its original publication by the University of Wales Press in 1980, Jane Bakere's *The Cornish Ordinalia: A Critical Study* has been an indispensable work for anyone interested in Middle Cornish literature in general and the *Ordinalia* plays in particular. In 2009, a new edition of Bakere's study was published by the Cornish Language Board. The new edition retains the overall structure of the original work, being divided into six chapters:

- Chapter I: The Ordinalia and Ordinalia Studies
- Chapter II: The Historical and Topographical Setting
- Chapter III: Biblical and Liturgical Sources
- Chapter IV: Apocryphal and Legendary Sources
- Chapter V: Theme and Structure
- Chapter VI: Staging

Within this framework, Bakere provides a thorough analysis of the *Ordinalia* as a historical document, as a work of medieval literature, and as a play to be performed. Her discussion of these aspects of the text is quite comprehensive; the only areas of *Ordinalia* studies which are not represented or whose treatment could meaningfully be expanded in her book are palaeography, metrics, and Cornish historical phono-

logy, especially insofar as these may shed light on the origins of the plays and their relationship to one another.

Those familiar with the first edition of Bakere's work may be somewhat disappointed by the 2009 edition, as it does not add a great deal to the original. The most significant changes to the text appear in Chapters II and VI, although minor corrections, revisions, additions, and deletions can be found in all six sections. A short 'Postscript'—in which Bakere discusses the relationship between her original doctoral dissertation (completed in the 1960s) and the 1980 edition, along with her impressions of various productions of the dramas and her speculations about the "playwright" responsible for bringing the *Ordinalia* cycle into its current form—has been removed entirely. In the second edition, Bakere has also adopted a slightly more moderate tone in her critique of Robert Longworth's *The Cornish Ordinalia: Religion and Dramaturgy* (1967), the only other book-length study of the cycle. In addition, Bakere has expanded her bibliography to include a number of sources published in the past three decades, including Brian Murdoch's landmark survey *Cornish Literature* (1993), Sally Joyce and Evelyn Newlyn's study of medieval Cornish drama for the *Dorset/Cornwall* volume of the *Records of Early English Drama* series (1999), and Sidney Higgins' *Medieval Theatre in the Round* (1995). The recent (1999) discovery of *Beunans Ke*, a manuscript containing the incomplete text of a hitherto unknown Middle Cornish mystery play, and its relevance to *Ordinalia* studies is also briefly discussed.

Despite these additions, however, several other important articles on the *Ordinalia* published in the past thirty years (marked with an asterisk in the bibliography to this review) do not appear in the second edition, and Bakere herself admits that 'more work has been done on the *Ordinalia*, particularly in North America, which circumstances have not allowed me to keep abreast of' (p. vi). Similarly, while the past decade has seen a number of new productions of the *Ordinalia* plays, Bakere's chapter on the staging of the cycle does not take these into account, although references to recent scholarship by Higgins, Joyce, and Newlyn among others have been added to her discussion of a 1969 production of the *Ordinalia* in Perran Round. One surprising omission in this context is H. Paul Manning's 'Staging the State and the Hypostasization of Violence in the Medieval Cornish Drama' (published in the journal *Cornish Studies* in 2005), as this article contains extensive discussion of the stage plans from the *Ordinalia* manuscript which would be directly relevant to Bakere's treatment of the staging in Chapter VI.

Bakere's chapter on the 'historical and topographical setting' (Chapter II) has also been updated to take account of new research on the Cornish open-air amphitheatre (known in Cornish as *plen-an-gwary*) by Rod Lyon, and her analysis of the Cornish place-names used in the three plays has also been slightly revised in light of recent work by Oliver Padel and Brian Murdoch. Like most scholars before her, Bakere concludes that the most likely origin for the dramas as we have them is Glasney College in Penryn, a religious foundation in western Cornwall which may be responsible for several other works of Middle Cornish literature as well. A short section has been added to the second edition in which Bakere argues against Gloria Betcher's contention that the *Ordinalia* cycle was written for a Bodmin audience, and in view of her response to Betcher, it is somewhat surprising that Bakere does not also take the opportunity to address T. D. Crawford's speculations on the origins of the *Ordinalia* plays ('The

Composition of the Cornish *Ordinalia*, published in the journal *Old Cornwall* in the early 1980s) as well.

Some of the most noticeable differences between the first and second editions relate to the presentation of the work on the printed page. Like many other academic works published in recent years, the new edition of Bakere's study does not appear to have had the benefit of professional typesetting and proofreading, and the book suffers from a number of formatting problems and questionable font choices that detract from the appearance of the text. This is particularly true of the block quotes, parallel translations, and footnotes—although in the latter case, it should be noted that the editorial decision to use footnotes rather than endnotes for Bakere's numerous citations is a good one and makes the book considerably more user-friendly overall. Rather confusingly, however, new references added for the second edition appear as internal citations instead of footnotes. Cross-references have been added in several places directing readers to further discussion elsewhere in the book, but in at least two instances in Chapter VI relating to the possible use of the 'Devil's Spoon' (a shallow trench found in one surviving medieval Cornish amphitheatre) in the staging of the *Ordinalia*, the reader is directed to Chapter II for clarification of this term, although no discussion of the Devil's Spoon is found in the portion of Chapter II in which Bakere describes the Cornish *plen-an-gwary*.¹

Other changes in the new edition make the work more accessible to a non-specialist audience. Latin book titles, phrases, and quotations left untranslated in the first edition have now been glossed in English, as is one citation from the Middle English poem *Piers Plowman*. Terms relating to the medieval church, Biblical studies, or religious holidays and services (e.g. advowson, tithe, Synoptic Gospels, Gospel Harmony, Sexagesima Sunday, Nocturn, Pyx) have likewise been glossed. As in the first edition, the Cornish quotations are provided with a parallel English translation, but where Bakere's book originally used Norris' 1859 edition of *The Ancient Cornish Drama* as a source for both text and translation, the new edition supplies corrected readings of the manuscripts and a modern English translation by R. Morton Nance and A. S. D. Smith which reflect a further century and a half of scholarship on the *Ordinalia*. In keeping with current practice, the second play of the *Ordinalia* is here given the title *Passio Christi*, as in most modern editions, rather than *Passio Domini*, as in Norris' *Ancient Cornish Drama* and Bakere's 1980 edition.

While the second edition of Bakere's *The Cornish Ordinalia: A Critical Study* does not represent as thorough and complete a revision of the original text as might be hoped, and suffers from editing problems and some gaps in its bibliography, it also includes a number of valuable updates and revisions which help to keep the work current and accessible. The Cornish Language Board has done a great service to Celtic academia by ensuring that this groundbreaking study of the *Ordinalia* cycle remains in print. It continues to be an essential work of twentieth- (and twenty-first-) century Cornish scholarship, and in its new form it will hopefully reach a wider audience as well as a new generation of Celticists.

¹ BAKERE 2009: 214, 225; the relevant section appears in Chapter VI of the first edition (BAKERE 1980: 152) but has been cut entirely from the second edition.

References²

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BEEKES, ROBERT S. P. (with the assistance of Lucien VAN BEEK): *Etymological Dictionary of Greek*. Leiden: Brill, 2010 (*Leiden Indo-European Etymological Dictionary Series*, ISSN 1574-3586, 10/1 + 10/2). 2 Bände, zusammen xlviii + 1808 S., ISBN (Set) 978-90-04-17418-4. € 399,00.

Das vorliegende Werk setzt die Reihe indogermanischer Etymologika aus Leiden fort, in der auch das ausführlich in ebendieser Zeitschrift besprochene Werk zum Proto-Keltischen von Ranko MATASOVIĆ (*ZcP* 58 / diese Zeitschrift S. 265 – 289) erschienen ist. Anders als bei jenem ist der Nutzen eines etymologischen Lexikons des Griechischen für Keltologen nicht offensichtlich, zumal es, wie hier vorweggenommen sei, kaum Neues für die Etymologie des Keltischen enthält. Wenn das Werk dennoch

² * indicates works since 1979 not included in the bibliography for BAKERE 2009