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## **Friars' Tales: Thirteenth-century exempla from the British Isles by David Jones (review)**

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The more one reads, the more the fascinating ideas are engulfing. This book will remain a stimulus to further thinking and study for a long time. The opulent footnotes, crammed with citation of literature, will alone serve as an important resource—although this reviewer wishes some major publications, constantly cited throughout, could have been assembled as a selected bibliography, just as twelve images constantly referred to by all the authors have been assembled as a preliminary album of plates.

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JOHN W. BARKER

*Friars' Tales: Thirteenth-century exempla from the British Isles.* Selected sources translated and annotated with an introduction by David Jones. [Manchester Medieval Sources Series] (New York: Manchester University Press. 2011. Pp. xvi, 201. \$95.00 clothbound, ISBN 978-0-7190-8424-9; \$34.95 paperback, ISBN 978-0-7190-8425-6.)

With his translation of the earliest mendicant exempla collections from the British Isles dating from around the year 1275, David Jones offers an extremely useful tool for university teaching. His work will enrich seminars on the history of the medieval Church and of medieval thought as well as classes in historical anthropology in a broader sense.

At first sight, the translations allow easy access to the practice of medieval preaching: 213 stories from two sermon books, the Franciscan *Liber Exemplorum* (preserved in Durham Cathedral Library MS B.IV.19, ed. A. G. Little, *Liber Exemplorum ad usum praedicatorum* [Aberdeen 1908], here translated on pp. 27–153) and fifty-two stories from the so-called Cambridge Dominican Collection (preserved in London BL Royal MS 7 D.i., not published so far, here translated on pp. 155–88).

At second glance, the translations facilitate reading and thus help us to understand both the “otherness” and the “likeness” of the Middle Ages. Three aspects are illustrative, although many more could be added.

First, the stories testify to a tremendous circulation of knowledge (both in time and space) at the time. The compiler often speaks as a first-person narrator explaining from where he draws his knowledge. Apart from ancient stories from the Saints' Lives, the *vitae patrum*, and so forth, he frequently refers to firsthand sources such as “what I heard from Brother Jordan, a good and truthful friar”; “a clerk named John [. . .] told me this himself”; “a story related to me and Brother Roger Bacon in Paris”; and “I found this in a sermon by Brother Richard Fishacre”—thus witnessing to the lively streams of communication within the mendicant communities.

Second, the tales feature an “international” perspective as a matter of course to the minds of late-thirteenth-century storytellers. The topographical horizon of the

stories reaches from local knowledge in England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland to German and Italian sources of information. Brethren from Paris and Oxford, testimonials from Spain, Castile, Seville, Cilicia, the Holy Land are regularly cited, thus documenting a surprising “international” mobility of knowledge, people, and stories at the time.

Third, a radical concern for the fundamentals of the *conditio humana* is clear: the uncertainty of human life, the agonies of death, the fears and hopes of those left behind, dreams and visions, the promises of magic, the dangers of sexuality and incest, fears of impurity, depression, guilt, possession, neighborhood conflicts, generational conflicts, and many other issues. No doubt this perspective owes a good deal to the friars’ activities as confessors. From this, we might also understand another peculiarity: an almost naive trust in the power of the spoken word. This is most charmingly expressed in the famous story of the clerk named John who, on the way to his concubine one night, managed to defeat the devil in disguise by merely speaking out loudly, “You lie, by the death of Christ.”

In short, this is a wonderful book and is a must-have for those teaching history with a focus on the history of humanity.

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*Kurienuniversität und stadtrömische Universität von ca. 1300 bis 1471.* By Brigide Schwarz. [Education and Society in the Middle Ages and Renaissance, Vol. 46.] (Boston: Brill. 2013. Pp. xxii, 923. €226,00. ISBN 978-90-04-23589-2.).

This weighty volume stands in the grand tradition of German scholarship regarding late-medieval papal institutions. Brigide Schwarz explains in her preface that she started research in the Vatican Archives in the 1960s, not only for her thesis but also on behalf of the *Repertorium Germanicum*, for which she was allocated two years of the pontificate of Eugenius IV. Her Roman researches, drawing in particular upon the underused registers of supplications, have continued ever since; and she has many other publications, notably about minor functionaries of the papal curia (abbreviators and correctors of papal letters, couriers, and so forth). Over the years, she has collected an enormous amount of data about the development and personnel (professors, students, and others) of the two confusingly parallel bodies named in the title of the present book. The *Studium Urbis* has received much attention in recent years, and Schwarz has contributed and clarified a great deal more about it, but above all she has advanced knowledge about the so-called *Studium* of the Roman Curia. She nevertheless claims only to have opened up pathways and that much more can be discovered. She warmly acknowledges the help of many scholars—above all, of her mentor, Hermann Diener (whose vast collection of notes she has used), and of a colleague who contributed a prosopographical appendix. This reviewer is grateful for generous citations of his long-superseded article about the *Studium Urbis* and its funding, written more than forty years ago, and also for a humorous correction (p. 197).