THE NEW MIDDLE AGES

VOICE *and* VOICELESSNESS *in* MEDIEVAL EUROPE

Edited by Irit Ruth Kleiman

THE NEW MIDDLE AGES

BONNIE WHEELER, *Series Editor*

The New Middle Ages is a series dedicated to pluridisciplinary studies of medieval cultures, with particular emphasis on recuperating women's history and on feminist and gender analyses. This peer-reviewed series includes both scholarly monographs and essay collections.

PUBLISHED BY PALGRAVE:

Women in the Medieval Islamic World: Power, Patronage, and Piety
edited by Gavin R. G. Hambly

The Ethics of Nature in the Middle Ages: On Boccaccio's Poetaphysics
by Gregory B. Stone

Presence and Presentation: Women in the Chinese Literati Tradition
edited by Sherry J. Mou

The Lost Love Letters of Heloise and Abelard: Perceptions of Dialogue in Twelfth-Century France
by Constant J. Mews

Understanding Scholastic Thought with Foucault
by Philipp W. Rosemann

For Her Good Estate: The Life of Elizabeth de Burgh
by Frances A. Underhill

Constructions of Widowhood and Virginity in the Middle Ages
edited by Cindy L. Carlson and Angela Jane Weisl

Motherhood and Mothering in Anglo-Saxon England
by Mary Dockray-Miller

Listening to Heloise: The Voice of a Twelfth-Century Woman
edited by Bonnie Wheeler

The Postcolonial Middle Ages
edited by Jeffrey Jerome Cohen

Chaucer's Pardoner *and Gender Theory: Bodies of Discourse*
by Robert S. Sturges

Crossing the Bridge: Comparative Essays on Medieval European and Heian Japanese Women Writers
edited by Barbara Stevenson and Cynthia Ho

Engaging Words: The Culture of Reading in the Later Middle Ages
by Laurel Amtower

Robes and Honor: The Medieval World of Investiture
edited by Stewart Gordon

Representing Rape in Medieval and Early Modern Literature
edited by Elizabeth Robertson and Christine M. Rose

Same Sex Love and Desire Among Women in the Middle Ages
edited by Francesca Canadé Sautman and Pamela Sheingorn

Sight and Embodiment in the Middle Ages: Ocular Desires
by Suzannah Biernoff

Listen, Daughter: The Speculum Virginum *and the Formation of Religious Women in the Middle Ages*
edited by Constant J. Mews

Science, the Singular, and the Question of Theology
by Richard A. Lee, Jr.

Gender in Debate from the Early Middle Ages to the Renaissance
edited by Thelma S. Fenster and Clare A. Lees

Malory's Morte D'Arthur: *Remaking Arthurian Tradition*
by Catherine Batt

The Vernacular Spirit: Essays on Medieval Religious Literature
edited by Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski, Duncan Robertson, and Nancy Warren

Popular Piety and Art in the Late Middle Ages: Image Worship and Idolatry in England 1350–1500
by Kathleen Kamerick

Absent Narratives, Manuscript Textuality, and Literary Structure in Late Medieval England
by Elizabeth Scala

Creating Community with Food and Drink in Merovingian Gaul
by Bonnie Effros

Representations of Early Byzantine Empresses: Image and Empire
by Anne McClanan

Encountering Medieval Textiles and Dress: Objects, Texts, Images
edited by Désirée G. Koslin and Janet Snyder

Eleanor of Aquitaine: Lord and Lady
edited by Bonnie Wheeler and John Carmi Parsons

Isabel La Católica, Queen of Castile: Critical Essays
edited by David A. Boruchoff

Homoeroticism and Chivalry: Discourses of Male Same-Sex Desire in the Fourteenth Century
by Richard E. Zeikowitz

Portraits of Medieval Women: Family, Marriage, and Politics in England 1225–1350
by Linda E. Mitchell

Eloquent Virgins: From Thecla to Joan of Arc
by Maud Burnett McInerney

The Persistence of Medievalism: Narrative Adventures in Contemporary Culture
by Angela Jane Weisl

Capetian Women
edited by Kathleen D. Nolan

Joan of Arc and Spirituality
edited by Ann W. Astell and Bonnie Wheeler

The Texture of Society: Medieval Women in the Southern Low Countries
edited by Ellen E. Kittell and Mary A. Suydam

Charlemagne's Mustache: And Other Cultural Clusters of a Dark Age
by Paul Edward Dutton

Troubled Vision: Gender, Sexuality, and Sight in Medieval Text and Image
edited by Emma Campbell and Robert Mills

Queering Medieval Genres
by Tison Pugh

Sacred Place in Early Medieval Neoplatonism
by L. Michael Harrington

The Middle Ages at Work
edited by Kellie Robertson and Michael Uebel

Chaucer's Jobs
by David R. Carlson

Medievalism and Orientalism: Three Essays on Literature, Architecture and Cultural Identity
by John M. Ganim

Queer Love in the Middle Ages
by Anna Klosowska

Performing Women in the Middle Ages: Sex, Gender, and the Iberian Lyric
by Denise K. Filios

Necessary Conjunctions: The Social Self in Medieval England
by David Gary Shaw

Visual Culture and the German Middle Ages
edited by Kathryn Starkey and Horst Wenzel

Medieval Paradigms: Essays in Honor of Jeremy duQuesnay Adams, Volumes 1 and 2
edited by Stephanie Hayes-Healy

False Fables and Exemplary Truth in Later Middle English Literature
by Elizabeth Allen

Ecstatic Transformation: On the Uses of Alterity in the Middle Ages
by Michael Uebel

Sacred and Secular in Medieval and Early Modern Cultures: New Essays
edited by Lawrence Besserman

Tolkien's Modern Middle Ages
edited by Jane Chance and Alfred K. Siewers

Representing Righteous Heathens in Late Medieval England
by Frank Grady

Byzantine Dress: Representations of Secular Dress in Eighth- to Twelfth-Century Painting
by Jennifer L. Ball

The Laborer's Two Bodies: Labor and the "Work" of the Text in Medieval Britain, 1350–1500
by Kellie Robertson

The Dogaressa of Venice, 1250–1500: Wife and Icon
by Holly S. Hurlburt

Logic, Theology, and Poetry in Boethius, Abelard, and Alan of Lille: Words in the Absence of Things
by Eileen C. Sweeney

The Theology of Work: Peter Damian and the Medieval Religious Renewal Movement
by Patricia Ranft

On the Purification of Women: Churching in Northern France, 1100–1500
by Paula M. Rieder

Voices from the Bench: The Narratives of Lesser Folk in Medieval Trials
edited by Michael Goodich

Writers of the Reign of Henry II: Twelve Essays
edited by Ruth Kennedy and Simon Meecham-Jones

Lonesome Words: The Vocal Poetics of the Old English Lament and the African-American Blues Song
by M.G. McGeachy

Performing Piety: Musical Culture in Medieval English Nunneries
by Anne Bagnall Yardley

The Flight from Desire: Augustine and Ovid to Chaucer
by Robert R. Edwards

Mindful Spirit in Late Medieval Literature: Essays in Honor of Elizabeth D. Kirk
edited by Bonnie Wheeler

Medieval Fabrications: Dress, Textiles, Clothwork, and Other Cultural Imaginings
edited by E. Jane Burns

Was the Bayeux Tapestry Made in France? The Case for St. Florent of Saumur
by George Beech

Women, Power, and Religious Patronage in the Middle Ages
by Erin L. Jordan

Hybridity, Identity, and Monstrosity in Medieval Britain: On Difficult Middles
by Jeffrey Jerome Cohen

Medieval Go-betweens and Chaucer's Pandarus
by Gretchen Mieszkowski

The Surgeon in Medieval English Literature
by Jeremy J. Citrome

Temporal Circumstances: Form and History in the Canterbury Tales
by Lee Patterson

Erotic Discourse and Early English Religious Writing
by Lara Farina

Odd Bodies and Visible Ends in Medieval Literature
by Sachi Shimomura

On Farting: Language and Laughter in the Middle Ages
by Valerie Allen

Women and Medieval Epic: Gender, Genre, and the Limits of Epic Masculinity
edited by Sara S. Poor and Jana K. Schulman

Race, Class, and Gender in "Medieval" Cinema
edited by Lynn T. Ramey and Tison Pugh

Allegory and Sexual Ethics in the High Middle Ages
by Noah D. Guynn

England and Iberia in the Middle Ages, 12th-15th Century: Cultural, Literary, and Political Exchanges
edited by María Bullón-Fernández

The Medieval Chastity Belt: A Myth-Making Process
by Albrecht Classen

Claustrophilia: The Erotics of Enclosure in Medieval Literature
by Cary Howie

Cannibalism in High Medieval English Literature
by Heather Blurton

The Drama of Masculinity and Medieval English Guild Culture
by Christina M. Fitzgerald

Chaucer's Visions of Manhood
by Holly A. Crocker

The Literary Subversions of Medieval Women
by Jane Chance

Manmade Marvels in Medieval Culture and Literature
by Scott Lightsey

American Chaucers
by Candace Barrington

Representing Others in Medieval Iberian Literature
by Michelle M. Hamilton

Paradigms and Methods in Early Medieval Studies
edited by Celia Chazelle and Felice Lifshitz

The King and the Whore: King Roderick and La Cava
by Elizabeth Drayson

Langland's Early Modern Identities
by Sarah A. Kelen

Cultural Studies of the Modern Middle Ages
edited by Eileen A. Joy, Myra J. Seaman, Kimberly K. Bell, and Mary K. Ramsey

Hildegard of Bingen's Unknown Language: An Edition, Translation, and Discussion
by Sarah L. Higley

Medieval Romance and the Construction of Heterosexuality
by Louise M. Sylvester

Communal Discord, Child Abduction, and Rape in the Later Middle Ages
by Jeremy Goldberg

Lydgate Matters: Poetry and Material Culture in the Fifteenth Century
edited by Lisa H. Cooper and Andrea Denny-Brown

Sexuality and Its Queer Discontents in Middle English Literature
by Tison Pugh

Sex, Scandal, and Sermon in Fourteenth-Century Spain: Juan Ruiz's Libro de Buen Amor
by Louise M. Haywood

The Erotics of Consolation: Desire and Distance in the Late Middle Ages
edited by Catherine E. Léglu and Stephen J. Milner

Battlefronts Real and Imagined: War, Border, and Identity in the Chinese Middle Period
edited by Don J. Wyatt

Wisdom and Her Lovers in Medieval and Early Modern Hispanic Literature
by Emily C. Francomano

Power, Piety, and Patronage in Late Medieval Queenship: Maria de Luna
by Nuria Silleras-Fernandez

In the Light of Medieval Spain: Islam, the West, and the Relevance of the Past
edited by Simon R. Doubleday and David Coleman, foreword by Giles Tremlett

Chaucerian Aesthetics
by Peggy A. Knapp

Memory, Images, and the English Corpus Christi Drama
by Theodore K. Lerud

Cultural Diversity in the British Middle Ages: Archipelago, Island, England
edited by Jeffrey Jerome Cohen

Excrement in the Late Middle Ages: Sacred Filth and Chaucer's Fecopoetics
by Susan Signe Morrison

Authority and Subjugation in Writing of Medieval Wales
edited by Ruth Kennedy and Simon Meecham-Jones

The Medieval Poetics of the Reliquary: Enshrinement, Inscription, Performance
by Seeta Chaganti

The Legend of Charlemagne in the Middle Ages: Power, Faith, and Crusade
edited by Matthew Gabriele and Jace Stuckey

The Poems of Oswald von Wolkenstein: An English Translation of the Complete Works (1376/77–1445)
by Albrecht Classen

Women and Experience in Later Medieval Writing: Reading the Book of Life
edited by Anneke B. Mulder-Bakker and Liz Herbert McAvoy

Ethics and Eventfulness in Middle English Literature: Singular Fortunes
by J. Allan Mitchell

Maintenance, Meed, and Marriage in Medieval English Literature
by Kathleen E. Kennedy

The Post-Historical Middle Ages
edited by Elizabeth Scala and Sylvia Federico

Constructing Chaucer: Author and Autofiction in the Critical Tradition
by Geoffrey W. Gust

Queens in Stone and Silver: The Creation of a Visual Imagery of Queenship in Capetian France
by Kathleen Nolan

Finding Saint Francis in Literature and Art
edited by Cynthia Ho, Beth A. Mulvaney, and John K. Downey

Strange Beauty: Ecocritical Approaches to Early Medieval Landscape
by Alfred K. Siewers

Berenguela of Castile (1180–1246) and Political Women in the High Middle Ages
by Miriam Shadis

Julian of Norwich's Legacy: Medieval Mysticism and Post-Medieval Reception
edited by Sarah Salih and Denise N. Baker

Medievalism, Multilingualism, and Chaucer
by Mary Catherine Davidson

The Letters of Heloise and Abelard: A Translation of Their Collected Correspondence and Related Writings
translated and edited by Mary Martin McLaughlin with Bonnie Wheeler

Women and Wealth in Late Medieval Europe
edited by Theresa Earenfight

Visual Power and Fame in René d'Anjou, Geoffrey Chaucer, and the Black Prince
by SunHee Kim Gertz

Geoffrey Chaucer Hath a Blog: Medieval Studies and New Media
by Brantley L. Bryant

Margaret Paston's Piety
by Joel T. Rosenthal

Gender and Power in Medieval Exegesis
by Theresa Tinkle

Antimercantilism in Late Medieval English Literature
by Roger A. Ladd

Magnificence and the Sublime in Medieval Aesthetics: Art, Architecture, Literature, Music
edited by C. Stephen Jaeger

Medieval and Early Modern Devotional Objects in Global Perspective: Translations of the Sacred
edited by Elizabeth Robertson and Jennifer Jahner

Late Medieval Jewish Identities: Iberia and Beyond
edited by Carmen Caballero-Navas and Esperanza Alfonso

Outlawry in Medieval Literature
by Timothy S. Jones

Women and Disability in Medieval Literature
by Tory Vandeventer Pearman

The Lesbian Premodern
edited by Noreen Giffney, Michelle M. Sauer, and Diane Watt

Crafting Jewishness in Medieval England: Legally Absent, Virtually Present
by Miriamne Ara Krummel

Street Scenes: Late Medieval Acting and Performance
by Sharon Aronson-Lehavi

Women and Economic Activities in Late Medieval Ghent
by Shennan Hutton

Palimpsests and the Literary Imagination of Medieval England: Collected Essays
edited by Leo Carruthers, Raeleen Chai-Elsholz, and Tatjana Silec

Divine Ventriloquism in Medieval English Literature: Power, Anxiety, Subversion
by Mary Hayes

Vernacular and Latin Literary Discourses of the Muslim Other in Medieval Germany
by Jerold C. Frakes

Fairies in Medieval Romance
by James Wade

Reason and Imagination in Chaucer, the Perle*-poet, and the* Cloud*-author: Seeing from the Center*
by Linda Tarte Holley

The Inner Life of Women in Medieval Romance Literature: Grief, Guilt, and Hypocrisy
edited by Jeff Rider and Jamie Friedman

Language as the Site of Revolt in Medieval and Early Modern England: Speaking as a Woman
by M. C. Bodden

Ecofeminist Subjectivities: Chaucer's Talking Birds
by Lesley Kordecki

Contextualizing the Muslim Other in Medieval Christian Discourse
edited by Jerold C. Frakes

Ekphrastic Medieval Visions: A New Discussion in Interarts Theory
by Claire Barbetti

The [European] Other in Medieval Arabic Literature and Culture: Ninth-Twelfth Century AD
by Nizar F. Hermes

Reading Memory and Identity in the Texts of Medieval European Holy Women
edited by Margaret Cotter-Lynch and Brad Herzog

Market Power: Lordship, Society, and Economy in Medieval Catalonia (1276–1313)
by Gregory B. Milton

Marriage, Property, and Women's Narratives
by Sally A. Livingston

The Medieval Python: The Purposive and Provocative Work of Terry Jones
edited by R. F. Yeager and Toshiyuki Takamiya

Boccaccio's Decameron *and the Ciceronian Renaissance*
by Michaela Paasche Grudin and Robert Grudin

Studies in the Medieval Atlantic
edited by Benjamin Hudson

Chaucer's Feminine Subjects: Figures of Desire in The Canterbury Tales
by John A. Pitcher

Writing Medieval Women's Lives
edited by Charlotte Newman Goldy and Amy Livingstone

The Mediterranean World of Alfonso II and Peter II of Aragon (1162–1213)
by Ernest E. Jenkins

Women in the Military Orders of the Crusades
by Myra Miranda Bom

Icons of Irishness from the Middle Ages to the Modern World
by Maggie M. Williams

The Anglo-Scottish Border and the Shaping of Identity, 1300–1600
edited by Mark P. Bruce and Katherine H. Terrell

Shame and Guilt in Chaucer
by Anne McTaggart

Word and Image in Medieval Kabbalah: The Texts, Commentaries, and Diagrams of the Sefer Yetsirah
by Marla Segol

Rethinking Chaucerian Beasts
edited by Carolynn Van Dyke

The Genre of Medieval Patience Literature: Development, Duplication, and Gender
by Robin Waugh

The Carolingian Debate over Sacred Space
by Samuel W. Collins

The Disney Middle Ages: A Fairy-Tale and Fantasy Past
edited by Tison Pugh and Susan Aronstein

Medieval Afterlives in Popular Culture
edited by Gail Ashton and Dan Kline

Poet Heroines in Medieval French Narrative: Gender and Fictions of Literary Creation
by Brooke Heidenreich Findley

Sexuality, Sociality, and Cosmology in Medieval Literary Texts
edited by Jennifer N. Brown and Marla Segol

Music and Performance in the Later Middle Ages
by Elizabeth Randell Upton

Witnesses, Neighbors, and Community in Late Medieval Marseille
by Susan Alice McDonough

Women in Old Norse Literature: Bodies, Words, and Power
by Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir

Cosmopolitanism and the Middle Ages
edited by John M. Ganim and Shayne Aaron Legassie

Reading Skin in Medieval Literature and Culture
edited by Katie L. Walter

The Medieval Fold: Power, Repression, and the Emergence of the Individual in the Middle Ages
by Suzanne Verderber

Received Medievalisms: A Cognitive Geography of Viennese Women's Convents
by Cynthia J. Cyrus

The King's Bishops: The Politics of Patronage in England and Normandy, 1066–1216
by Everett U. Crosby

Perilous Passages: The Book of Margery Kempe, *1534–1934*
by Julie A. Chappell

Francis of Assisi and His "Canticle of Brother Sun" Reassessed
by Brian Moloney

The Footprints of Michael the Archangel: The Formation and Diffusion of a Saintly Cult, c. 300-c. 800
by John Charles Arnold

Saint Margaret, Queen of the Scots: A Life in Perspective
by Catherine Keene

Constructing Gender in Medieval Ireland
edited by Sarah Sheehan and Ann Dooley

Marking Maternity in Middle English Romance: Mothers, Identity, and Contamination
by Angela Florschuetz

The Medieval Motion Picture: The Politics of Adaptation
edited by Andrew James Johnston, Margitta Rouse, and Philipp Hinz

Wales and the Medieval Colonial Imagination: The Matters of Britain in the Twelfth Century
by Michael A. Faletra

Power and Sainthood: The Case of Birgitta of Sweden
by Päivi Salmesvuori

The Repentant Abelard: Family, Gender, and Ethics in Peter Abelard's Carmen ad Astralabium *and* Planctus
by Juanita Feros Ruys

Teaching Medieval and Early Modern Cross-Cultural Encounters
edited by Karina F. Attar and Lynn Shutters

Religion, Power, and Resistance from the Eleventh to the Sixteenth Centuries: Playing the Heresy Card
edited by Karen Bollermann, Thomas M. Izbicki, and Cary J. Nederman

Borges the Unacknowledged Medievalist: Old English and Old Norse in His Life and Work
by M.J. Toswell

Race, Caste, and Indigeneity in Medieval Spanish Travel Literature
by Michael Harney

The Gnostic Paradigm: Forms of Knowing in English Literature of the Late Middle Ages
by Natanela Elias

Jews and Christians in Thirteenth-Century France
edited by Elisheva Baumgarten and Judah D. Galinsky

Consolation in Medieval Narrative: Augustinian Authority and Open Form
by Chad D. Schrock

Women, Enjoyment, and the Defense of Virtue in Boccaccio's Decameron
by Valerio Ferme

Medieval Ovid: Frame Narrative and Political Allegory
by Amanda J. Gerber

Games and Gaming in Medieval Literature
edited by Serina Patterson

Reading Women in Late Medieval Europe: Anne of Bohemia and Chaucer's Female Audience
by Alfred Thomas

Narratives of the Islamic Conquest from Medieval Spain
by Geraldine Hazbun

Chaucer the Alchemist: Physics, Mutability, and the Medieval Imagination
by Alexander N. Gabrovsky

Voice and Voicelessness in Medieval Europe
edited by Irit Ruth Kleiman

Heloise and the Paraclete: A Twelfth-Century Quest (forthcoming)
by Mary Martin McLaughlin

VOICE AND VOICELESSNESS IN MEDIEVAL EUROPE

Edited by

Irit Ruth Kleiman

palgrave
macmillan

VOICE AND VOICELESSNESS IN MEDIEVAL EUROPE

Softcover reprint of the hardcover 1st edition 2015 978-1-137-39705-8

First published 2015 by
PALGRAVE MACMILLAN

Palgrave Macmillan in the UK is an imprint of Macmillan Publishers Limited, registered in England, company number 785998, of Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, RG21 6XS.

Palgrave Macmillan in the US is a division of Nature America, Inc., One New York Plaza, Suite 4500, New York, NY 10004-1562.

Palgrave Macmillan is the global academic imprint of the above companies and has companies and representatives throughout the world.

ISBN 978-1-349-58031-6
E-PDF ISBN: 978–1–137–39706–5
DOI: 10.1007/978-1-137-39706-5

Distribution in the UK, Europe and the rest of the world is by Palgrave Macmillan®, a division of Macmillan Publishers Limited, registered in England, company number 785998, of Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 6XS.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data.

Voice and Voicelessness in Medieval Europe / edited by Irit Ruth Kleiman.
pages cm.—(The New Middle Ages)
Includes bibliographical references and index.

1. Voice culture—Europe—History. I. Kleiman, Irit Ruth, 1973– editor.

PN4162.V55 2015
808.5—dc23 2015010785

A catalogue record of the book is available from the British Library.

CONTENTS

FIGURES

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It is a pleasure to thank the many people who contributed to this book and to the Spring 2013 gathering where its authors first came together.

Adeline Soldin and Shannon Gilson helped to get the ball rolling with early logistical support. Arthur Bahr, Matilda Bruckner, Sean Gallagher, Sean Gilsdorf, and Francesca Southerden chaired sessions and rallied the troops. Christine Axen kept an eye on the details and was a patient and funny right hand. Patricia Johnson gave a much-appreciated opening benediction. My tried-and-true colleagues in Boston University's Interdisciplinary Program in Medieval Studies, Amy Appleford, Dennis Costa, Phillip Haberkern, and Deeana Klepper, contributed generously of their research, time, expertise, and enthusiasm. Scott Metcalfe and Blue Heron brought a sparkle to the weekend with their dedicated concert performance. None of this would have been possible without financial and personnel support from Boston University's Center for the Humanities, Center for the Study of Europe, Departments of History, English, and Romance Studies, and Italian Interdisciplinary Fund. Special thanks to Elizabeth Amrien, Nancy Geourntas, Chris Loken-Kim, and Katie McNamara. I wish also to thank the Institut universitaire de France for the financial sponsorship that made the conference's international scope possible. Additional thanks are due to the Boston University Center for the Humanities for the welcome support offered by a Print Production Award.

I am thankful to Bonnie Wheeler for believing in this project enough to welcome the manuscript into the New Middle Ages series and for her keen editorial and scholarly vision. Valuable suggestions for improving the volume were made by an anonymous peer reviewer. It has been a delight to work with Ryan Jenkins and the Palgrave editorial and production teams.

Last but not least: for technical, intellectual, moral, and logistical support at key moments in collating and editing the manuscript, my own personal appreciation goes out to Wade Bartlett, Karen Bassi, Abigail and Tara Donner, Jennifer Eyl, Virginie Greene, Stephanie Nelson, and Judith Osias. Cédric Giraud has been a valuable conversation partner, sounding board, and friend from the project's first inception through to its realization before you. The indefatigable Roberto Rey Agudo provided research assistance, crazy glue, and ironic restraint—even when the car caught fire.

ABBREVIATIONS

LCL	Loeb Classical Library
PG	Migne, Jacques Paul, ed. *Patrologia cursus completus, . . . Series graeca*. 161 vols. Paris: 1857–1866.
PL	Migne, Jacques Paul, ed. *Patrologia cursus completus, . . . Series latina*. 217 vols. Paris: 1844–1864.
SC	Sources chrétiennes

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

Irit Ruth Kleiman

This is a book of essays about the values, functions, and paradoxes medieval thinkers attached to the sonorous, human voice, in theory and in practice. The categories of *voice* and *voicelessness* were deeply embedded in medieval definitions of the human, as they remain for contemporary thinkers such as Jacques Lacan or Stanley Cavell. For medieval thinkers, as for these and other recent authors, the compelling omnipresence of Voice as a topos in Western traditions frequently rendered elusive the quest to define its precise boundaries and functions. The chapters in this volume confront a series of interlocking questions about how the philosophy, theology, and aesthetics of the voice inhabit and animate the Middle Ages. They ask what it means to "possess a voice"—or be without one—and seek to articulate how the concepts of voice and voicelessness operate within distinct domains of medieval Christian culture as social and legal categories, as aesthetic terms, within theological and political doctrines, or as a site of tension in the negotiation between subjectivity and authority. Together, they demonstrate how our understanding of the Middle Ages can be deepened and enriched through engagement with theological and philosophical debates over voice and voicelessness, whether ancient, medieval, or contemporary.

First Voices: Aristotle

In the *Politics*, Aristotle declares, "He who thus considers things in their first growth and origin, whether a state or anything else, will obtain the clearest view of them."[1] This approach to voice and voicelessness leads us straight back to Aristotle himself, for it was Aristotle's words in *De Anima* II.8 that provided a first touchstone for medieval authors. Indeed, his words continue to provide a nearly universal point of departure for meditations on the meaning of *voice* and its contraries.

> Voice [ψόφος] is a particular sound [φωνή] made by something with a soul; for nothing which does not have a soul has a voice … But many animals do not have a voice, e.g. those which are bloodless as well as fish among those which do have blood. And this is reasonable enough, since sound is a particular movement of air.

> So, the striking of the inbreathed air upon what is called the windpipe due to the soul in these parts constitutes voice. For, as we have said, not every sound made by an animal is voice (for it is possible to make a sound also with the tongue or as in coughing); but that which does the striking must have a soul and there must be a certain imagination (for voice is a particular sound which has meaning).[2]

This definition appears in a portion of Aristotle's text dedicated to the physiology of the senses, and in many ways its claims are straightforward, or at least direct. Voice has sound and meaning. Its medium is the air we breathe. To give voice, there must be a movement that strikes the air, there must be lungs, and there must be a soul. It is only a metaphor to speak of flutes or lyres as possessing voice.[3]

There are two important aspects of Aristotle's writings on the voice that are useful to emphasize here, and to which the first two chapters of this collection will bring deeper understanding. First, Aristotle is above all concerned with the faculties—physical and intellectual—that furnish the conditions under which voice can exist. This is clearly shown in the passage just cited, and in numerous others, such as the lengthy and well-known discussion of cicadas, fish, dolphins, snakes, and especially frogs found in the *History of Animals* (IV.9). The conclusion of that portion of Aristotle's writing brings into focus a second essential point about Aristotle's philosophy of voice for readers of this book. Four-legged mammals, says Aristotle,

> utter voiced sounds of different kinds, but they have no language. In fact, this is peculiar to man. For while whatever has language has voice, not everything that has voice has language. Men that are born deaf are in all cases also dumb; that is, they can make vocal sounds, but they cannot speak. Children, just as they have no control over other parts, so have no control, at first, over the tongue;... [A]rticulate sound, that one might reasonably designate language, differs both in various animals, and also in the same species according to diversity of locality; as for instance, some partridges cackle, and some make a shrill twittering noise. Of little birds, some sing a different note from the parent birds, if they have been removed from the nest... thus suggesting that language is not natural in the same way as voice... Men have the same voice, but they differ from one another in language.[4]

Thus we must bear in mind as well Aristotle's distinction between voice and language. The importance and purpose of these features of Aristotle's arguments are to define the human, both singly and in collectivity, in opposition with the animal, the dumb, or the uncivilized. For Aristotle, the deaf who make vocal sounds but cannot speak, children who cannot control their tongues, and barbarian Others whose speech is different in sound are all divided from the soul-possessing (political) community of speaking men by the barrier of verbal language.

First Voices: Augustine

From Aristotle's dispassionate theories about frog tongues I turn to the often-passionate *Confessions of Saint Augustine*. Augustine's voluminous corpus includes extensive and repeated considerations of voice, language, rhetoric, and semiotics

whose foundational status within the Western tradition cannot be overstated.[5] Looking ahead to the chapters in this book, I am drawn to Augustine's writing about his experience of distinct voices in the *Confessions*, where Voice must be considered a structuring leitmotif.[6] In Book I, Augustine portrays the emergence of subjectivity as a difficult entry into language. Unable to form words, his infant self flails limbs and utters inchoate sounds, wailing in response to physical discomforts.[7] As with Aristotle earlier, there is a point of origin that cannot be denied. It comes from Augustine's account of the voice that brings about his conversion in Book VIII.

> As I was . . . weeping in the bitter agony of my heart, suddenly I heard a voice from the nearby house chanting as if it might be a boy or a girl (I do not know which), saying and repeating over and over again "Pick up and read, pick up and read." At once my countenance changed, and I began to think intently whether there might be some sort of children's game in which such a chant is used. But I could not remember having heard of one; I checked the flood of tears and stood up. I interpreted it solely as a divine command to me to open the book and read the first chapter I could find.[8]

A passage from the Book of Romans falls under his finger. "I neither wished nor needed to read further . . . it was as if a light of relief from all anxiety flooded into my heart."[9]

Augustine's dialogue with God begins with a seemingly external, disembodied voice that speaks to the ears of his body. The detail is noteworthy especially because much of Augustine's thought privileges the divine voice that makes no noise, as, for instance, when Augustine describes how God speaks to him "with a loud voice to my inner ear," a phrase he repeats three times during Book XII's meditations on truth and creation.[10] Indeed, the sonorous voice of human song (whose sound is shaped, begins, and ends) serves repeatedly as the trope through which Augustine represents temporal succession, in contrast to God's eternity in Books XI and XII.[11]

Perhaps it is Augustine's sensitivity to earthly music that leads him to give such diverse and important roles to the voice in his theological philosophy. The author of the *Confessions* portrays his struggle against the pleasure of human singing as being more arduous and ongoing than those required to renounce other forms of sensuality. Listen to how Augustine describes himself as literally *subject* to music:

> The pleasures of the ear had a more tenacious hold on me, and had subjugated me; but you set me free and liberated me. As things now stand, I confess that I have some sense of restful contentments whose soul is your words, when they are sung by a pleasant and well-trained voice. *Not that I am riveted by them, for I can rise up and go when I wish* . . . [W]hen the sacred words are chanted well, our souls are moved and are more religiously and with a warmer devotion kindled to piety than if they are not so sung. All the diverse emotions of our spirit have their various modes in voice and chant appropriate in each case, and are stirred by a mysterious inner kinship.[12]

"I can rise up and go when I wish": these are truly the confessional words of someone who has felt himself powerless and unable to draw back. At times, Augustine writes the pleasure he feels in singing prayers or hearing them sung has overwhelmed his mindfulness of their scriptural contents. His struggle against this sensual indulgence has led him to wonder whether prayers should not be spoken only;[13] the tension is one that remains within the Church for centuries to come and which surfaces in several chapters in this collection. Although he himself "fluctuate[s] between the danger of pleasure and the experience of beneficent effect,"[14] Augustine's memory of how profoundly and spiritually he wept during sung prayers at the time of his conversion leads him to the position that through human singing "the weaker mind may rise up towards the devotion of worship."[15] Indeed, he portrays his coming to Christianity as a liberation from his tongue-bound profession as a *rhetor* into an immensely physical release of devotional singing.[16]

Finally, the narrative Augustine offers surrounding the death of his mother Monica brings to bear a number of distinct voices, both divinely silent and humanly sounded. Early Christianity placed tremendous emphasis on shifting the cultural discourses surrounding death, such that mourning itself became tainted with paganism. The *Confessions* reveal the willed force required to accommodate the pain of loss into Christian doctrine, a theme that returns in Hélène Bernier-Farella's study of the Marian voice and ritual lamentation in chapter 3 of this volume.

Augustine's highly self-conscious narrative of his mother's death begins with the recollection of a lengthy, intense conversation the two shared while standing beside a window overlooking a garden shortly before her final illness. Their conversation rises to a shared fervor of mystical transcendence of the temporally bound, bodily senses, touching upon an image of heaven's eternity in which "the very soul itself is making no sound…[where] all language and every sign and everything transitory is silent,"[17] before "return[ing] to the noise of our human speech where a sentence has both a beginning and an end."[18] Only a few days later, Monica's "devout soul was released from the body."[19] Augustine describes the effort of self-control as an agony, but only the child Adeodatus, Augustine's son, lets a cry of sorrow escape. The others silence him, and Augustine writes, "In this way too something of the child in me, which had slipped towards weeping, was checked and silenced by the youthful voice, the voice of my heart."[20] The measured chanting of Psalms checks Augustine's tears, and only God hears the torrential suffering that finally unleashes itself when he is alone.[21]

Bridge: *Veni Creator Spiritus*

In chapter 6, Marisa Galvez evokes the thoughts and feelings of crusaders setting off for the Holy Land. Few who have read Jean de Joinville's narrative of Louis IX's disastrous Seventh Crusade can forget his own poignant recollection of departure, afraid to look behind himself, "so that my heart did not soften at the handsome chateau I was leaving and for my two children" ("pour ce que le cuer ne me attendrisist du biau chastel que je lessoie et de mes II enfans").[22] Joinville's narrative offers an *a propos* glimpse of how several distinct discourses about the voice, or indeed, several conceptual elements attached to those discourses, might saturate the lived experience of history and its narrative recollection.

We join Joinville at the port of Marseille, in August of 1248, as he prepares to set sail.

> Quant les chevaus furent ens, nostre mestre notonnier escria a ses notonniers qui estoient ou bec de la nef et leur dit: « Est aree vostre besoigne? » El ilz respondirent: « Oÿ, sire, vieingnent avant les clers et les proveres. » Maintenant que il furent venus, il leur escria: « Chantez de par Dieu. » Et ils s'escrierent touz a une voiz: VENI CREATOR SPIRITUS. Et il s'escria a ses notonniers: « Faites voille de par Dieu! », et il si firent. [§] Et en brief tens le vent se feri ou voille et nous ot tolu la veue de la terre, que nous veismes que ciel et yaue, et chascun jour nous esloigna le vent des païs ou nous avions esté nez.[23]
>
> [When the horses were inside, our ship's captain shouted to his sailors who were in the prow of the ship, "Is all ready?" And they answered, "Yes, sir, let the clergy and priests come forward." And when they had gathered he cried to them, "Sing, in God's name." And they rang out all together in a single voice, "COME CREATOR SPIRIT." And he shouted to his sailors: "Set sail, in God's name!" and so they did. And in no time, the wind had struck the sails, and carried us away from the sight of land, so that we saw only sky and water; and each day, the wind carried us further away from the lands where we were born.]

The structure of this scene depends on the layering between the human voice, the invocation of God's spirit, and the wind. Indeed, it depends on this layering and on the archetypal proximity between wind, spiritual breath, and the divine voice that grounds Judeo-Christian tradition and is perhaps universal.[24] We read in Genesis 1:2, "And the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters"; and then in Genesis 2:7, "Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being."[25]

The narrative sequence that carries Joinville's ship out to sea has three steps. In each one, another kind of breath joins into a swelling chorus. When the horses are sealed in and all the ropes are ready, the priests and clerks raise the breath of their human voices and summon the spirit of God the creator. Joinville's boat pulls away from the harbor propelled by the elemental winds, by God's own breath, and by the clear, ringing tones of men's prayer rising joyously.[26] It is a moment of perfect harmony between human, earthly, and divine presence; this is the subtle but key value in the description, "ils s'escrierent touz a une voiz," "they rang out all together in a single voice." I cannot help but notice that the wind *strikes* the sail, just as inbreathed air *strikes* the windpipe to produce voice. Rhetorically, at least, chanted prayers, music, the voice of all creation fills these sails with the Holy Spirit and moves the narrator Joinville over the face of the water, away from the country where he was born and toward the place where Christ was born, where History awaits him.

Refrain: Arrangement for Many Voices

The essays in *Voice and Voicelessness in Medieval Europe* return to the material primacy of manuscripts. They theorize the corporality of religious experience and question the processes through which a lived present is codified and canonized as

History. They scrutinize the practice, as well as the theory, of medieval Law; and they bring classical, Christian, and contemporary philosophers into dialogue. In this way, the chapters in this volume engage with current debates surrounding historicist models of subjectivity, the poetics and esthetics of marginality, political theology, embodiment, performance studies, and the "affective turn." The progression from one chapter to the next is driven by ideas more than by chronology, geography, discipline, or language. The image of a mosaic is often used to describe approaches that combine smaller morsels to produce a larger, synthetic whole. Borrowing from this book's subject matter, I prefer the metaphor of a choir singing. The individual parts may make charming songs, but it is their union and sequence that creates an indivisible musical whole.

Definitions of voice, language, and speech mediate a long tradition in Western philosophy. The two studies in part I, "The Nature and Limits of the Human: Voice and Language," explore how a particular corpus of texts has navigated the threshold between sound and voice, language and the human. In chapter 1, Ghislain Casas examines medieval debates surrounding the nature of *locutio angelica* (the speech of angels) in light of the idea that there is something political inherent to human speech, an idea indebted to Aristotle himself. In chapter 2, Robert Stanton confronts the philosophical problems teased at by medieval riddles that put language into the mouths of normally speechless creatures. By simultaneously crafting a performative imitation of animal speech and then by making animals "speak," such riddles enact a critique of late-Antique grammatical traditions rooted in Aristotle's distinction between sound as *symbola* or *semeion*. Together, these chapters establish a vertical axis uniting angels, men, and beasts, thus testing the philosophical limits of language and questioning what it means to have a voice.

The volume's second part, "The Social Body: Voice, Authority, and Community," both analyzes the place of the voice in institutionalized discourses of power and asks what social values might be attached to the "voice" within distinct Christian communities. The first two chapters in this section focus on the attempt by Church authorities to appropriate and control vocal production at pivotal moments in its history. Chapter 3 reveals the importance of the female voice within the early Church's efforts to separate itself and its members from their surrounding pagan context. Hélène Bernier-Farella guides us from the early Church Fathers' censure of the long-condemned voices of women's funerary lamentations to the emphasized association between silence and saintliness, an association whose discontents are frequently exposed in depictions of Mary's mourning for Jesus. Bruno Lemesle's analysis of twelfth-century reforms in chapter 4 examines the legal and theological stakes attached to the voices of priests and monks by the authors of twelfth-century legal texts. The charisma of the voice and its power to summon divine forces remain a leitmotif here, but Lesmesle also confronts the voice as a privileged vehicle in the construction and definition of human communities, a theme reprised in the following chapter. In "Abelard and Heloise between Voice and Silence," Babette Hellemans explores the encounter between twelfth-century modes of rhetorical and logical expression and twentieth-century philosophy. This chapter considers the destiny of

what Peter von Moos called "le silence d'Héloïse," scrutinizes the tendency to read the written dialogue between Abelard and Heloise as taking place in a semi-confessional model, and argues for the need to conceptualize new approaches to the subjectivity of historical subjects.

The book's third part, "Rhetoric and Subjectivity: Polyphonic Voices," challenges readers to think differently about the unity between subject and voice and to question the relations between a literal, bodily voice, and the tropes and metaphors that surround the topic. Chapter 6 reads *trouvère* lyrics about crusading against the background of thirteenth-century pastoral works such as sermons rife with exempla or penitential manuals that preached how sincere tears give the penitent a new tongue and voice. Through a careful analysis of poetic dissociation, Galvez explores the articulation between subject and voice as a construction to be manipulated, suggesting perhaps that sincerity is itself an act of deception. Chapter 7, "Margery's 'Noyse' and Distributed Expressivity," examines the place of voice and vocalization in the tension between interior self and public performance and portrays this tension as a perilous balancing between rhetorical mastery and loss of bodily control. Julie Orlemanski situates responses to Margery Kempe's fits of crying and screaming within a larger set of concerns, both medieval and contemporary, about how we interpret the body and what kinds of causation we imagine to explain unusual appearances or behaviors. In chapter 8, Andreea Marculescu writes about agency, knowledge, and the gendered voice, ventriloquizing the bawdy devils that riot on the stage of late-medieval French Passion plays. Drawing on early modern writings about possession, but also Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, Foucault's notion of subjugated knowledge, and recent scholarly writings about affect, Marculescu shows how diabolically possessed speech—"the demonic idiom"—produces tactile, sensorial, and visceral effects on the human body. Marculescu's study thus provides a test case for the limits of voice as a form of embodiment, at once responding to the chapters in part III and harkening back to Robert Stanton's study of animal voice and vocality in chapter 2.

The book's final section is devoted to the voice in its dual status as both agent and object of representation. If the choir metaphor I used at the beginning of this overview can be stretched, the chapters in part IV, "Aesthetic Experiences: Representations of Human and Divine Voices," resolve the distinct themes that run through *Voice and Voicelessness* into a series of harmonious chords. Anna Zayaruznaya sets Guillaume de Machaut's musical "poetics of joy" against the idea that there is such a thing as being too depressed to speak, and considers the case of a subject who gives voice to her own loss of voice. This chapter deepens our understanding of the possibilities available to represent voicelessness and demonstrates how the categories of voice and voicelessness can operate in different media—that is, song, poetic text, or manuscript image. The subject of chapter 10, Richard Rolle's mystical treatise, the *Melos amoris*, challenges readers to encounter the material book, that seemingly voiceless witness, as resounding with many imminent voices, human and angelic. Moving beyond facile equations between the verbal music of Rolle's alliterative prose and the angelic music his treatise describes, Andrew Albin engages with Rolle's quest to portray the

incommensurability of angelic and human voices. The dialogue between chapter 10 and several others in this collection exemplifies how the apparent diversity between chapters gives rise to a single whole, proposing an ambitious and nuanced answer to the question posed at the threshold of this volume. The materiality of the medieval manuscript as witness is at the heart of Albin's study, as it is for Zayaruznaya in the preceding study. The mystical experience of hearing angels sing answers Albin's examination of the philosophical dilemmas embedded in angelic speech scrutinized by Casas in chapter 1. Readers will also recognize the concern with vocality and expression in the context of late medieval English mysticism that Albin's study of Rolle shares with Orlemanski's reading of Kempe (chapter 7). Looking onward, Cédric Giraud's "Mary between Voice and Voicelessness: The Latin *Meditationes* of Bernard de Rosier," continues where Albin leaves off—that is, in the grips of a rhetoric that commands its reader to utterance. By signaling the intense longing for the voice that inhabits Marian devotion, and by revealing the fundamental importance of the voice to the *maternal*, Giraud reminds readers of the insights Bernier-Farella brings to the foundations of medieval Christianity in chapter 3. Finally, in chapter 12, "Voice and Wisdom in Early Italian Art," Matthew Shoaf enacts a disciplinary turn that simultaneously facilitates the revised understanding of what has come before and offers a means to synthesis. Taking up the critical topos of *visibile parlare*, Shoaf demonstrates how Italian painters represented acts of speech and vocalization in order to amplify the spiritual value or social censure attached to them. This final study brings a new perspective on the distinction between *voice* and *the production of verbal meaning* first explored by Stanton in chapter 2. Like the studies in part II, Shoaf confronts the essence and functions of voice within a tissue of power relations and ideals of community. Contrasting the orality of human and divinely blessed bodies, Shoaf thus sounds a final note that echoes the angelic voices of the heavenly city heard in the opening chapter by Ghislain Casas.

Notes

1. Aristotle, *Politics*, I.2, trans. Benjamin Jowett (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1921). Cited from http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/politics.1.one.html.
2. Aristotle, *De Anima*, II.8.420b5 and II.8.420b27 in Aristotle, *De Anima Books II and III*, trans. D. W. Hamlyn (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993, 2002), 32–33.
3. Aristotle, *De Anima*, II.8.420b5, trans. Hamlyn.
4. Aristotle, *The History of Animals*, Book IV, Part 9; cited from *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation*, ed. Jonathan Barnes, vol. 1 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984). One pertinent study that unites these strands is J.-L. Labarrière, *Langage, vie politique et mouvement des animaux*: *Etudes aristotéliciennes* (Paris: Vrin, 2004).
5. It is an understatement to describe the literature on Augustine as vast. See especially, Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography*, 2nd edition, with an epilogue (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); Pierre Courcelle, *Recherches sur les Confessions de Saint Augustin* (Paris: E. de Boccard, 1950, 2nd. expanded ed. 1968); M. B. Pranger, *Eternity's Ennui: Temporality, Perseverance and Voice in Augustine and Western Literature* (Leiden: Brill, 2010); and Brian Stock,

Augustine the Reader: Meditation, Self-Knowledge, and the Ethics of Interpretation (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996). On language, and especially voice, see in particular Peter King, "Augustine on Language," in *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine*, 2nd edition, ed. David Vincent Meconi and Eleonore Stump (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 292–310; Anne-Isabelle Bouton-Touboulic, "La voix de la vérité, un élément de démonstration chez saint Augustin," *Pallas* 69 (2005): 179–93; and Anne-Isabelle Bouton-Touboulic, "Augustin et le corps de la voix," *Cahiers philosophiques* 122 (2010): 43–56.

6. On this topic, see also Pierre Courcelle, "Les 'Voix' dans les *Confessions* de Saint Augustin," *Hermes* 80.1 (1952): 31–46; and William North, "Hearing Voices in Late Antiquity: An Aural Approach to Augustine's *Confessions*," in *The Middle Ages in Texts and Texture: Reflections on Medieval Sources*, ed. Jason Glenn (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011), 7–20.
7. *Confessions*, Book I.6.8; and Book I.9.13.
8. *Confessions*, Book VIII, 12.29. All citations of the *Confessions* are from Augustine of Hippo, *The Confessions*, trans. Henry Chadwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).
9. *Confessions*, Book VIII.12.29.
10. Notably at *Confessions*, Book XII. 11.11, Book XII. 11.12, and Book XII.15.18. Indeed, Augustine's philosophy of language is marked by what might be called a "hyper-interiority."
11. See, for example, *Confessions*, Book XI, 31.41, and Book XII, 29.40.
12. *Confessions*, Book X.33.49; my emphasis.
13. *Confessions*, Book X.33.50.
14. *Confessions*, Book X.33.50.
15. *Confessions*, Book X.33.50.
16. *Confessions*, Book IX.4.7–8. See also Rowan Williams, "Augustine and the Psalms," *Interpretation* 58 (2004): 17–27.
17. *Confessions*, Book IX.10.25.
18. *Confessions*, Book IX.10.24.
19. *Confessions*, Book IX.11.28.
20. *Confessions*, Book IX.12.29.
21. *Confessions*, Book IX.12.30–33.
22. Jean de Joinville, *Vie de Saint Louis* §122, ed. J. Monfrin (Paris: Librairie Générale Française, 2002), 220. Translations of Joinville are my own.
23. Joinville, *Vie de Saint Louis* §125–27, 220.
24. On this topos, see Adriana Cavarero, *For More than One Voice: Toward a Philosophy of Vocal Expression*, trans. Paul A. Kottan (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), 20–23.
25. Cited from the Revised Standard Version, available online at quod.lib.umich.edu/r/rsv/.
26. As of January 2015, it was possible to hear "Veni Creator Spiritus" chanted at the Vatican on youtube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IKtXhfxEgpg.

PART I

THE NATURE AND LIMITS OF THE HUMAN: VOICE AND LANGUAGE

CHAPTER 1

LANGUAGE WITHOUT VOICE: *LOCUTIO ANGELICA* AS A POLITICAL ISSUE

Ghislain Casas

Taking Voicelessness Literally

Angels are messengers. Their specific task is to bring messages from the heavens down to earth. From the Book of Genesis to the Gospel of Luke, biblical narratives abound with angels appearing to humans under the guise of human form, behaving like human beings and addressing them directly in a human language like alien visitors, or undercover agents. One might wonder, however, if angels, when they are not on missions, have lives of their own and a language of their own, and what they look and sound like when they talk to one another. One might in that case reasonably suppose that, granting that they do share a language, it does not quite resemble our own.

This is precisely the sort of seemingly absurd question to which thirteenth-century theologians dedicated themselves. *Locutio angelica*, the language of angels, was in a sense a scholastic invention, developed in great detail in numerous treatises devoted to the various forms and possibilities of angelic communication. Medieval theologians held angels to be entirely spiritual creatures whose language could only consist of an original form of immaterial communication, one not requiring the use of vocal signs.[1] They deployed a whole set of arguments to explain how immaterial beings could perform speech without properly speaking. It is as if they were trying to answer the question: What is [spoken] language without voice?

From a modern point of view, angelology often seems like a borderline case of anthropology. This is probably why medieval discussions of locutio angelica, as puzzling as they might seem, have so held the attention of scholars during recent decades.[2] Instead of setting this discussion in a strictly linguistic and epistemological perspective, as is most often done, I would like to focus on its political aspects.[3] As has long been seen by historians, angelology, throughout the whole Middle Ages, fostered