



Poems and Carols (Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Douce 302)

by John the Blind Audelay, edited by Susanna Fein

DESCRIPTION:

Audelay's idiosyncratic devotional tastes, interesting personal life history, and declared political affiliations—loyalty to king, upholder of estates, anxiety over heresy—make him worthy of careful study beside his better-known contemporaries. Of particular note: MS Douce 302 preserves Audelay's own alliterative *Marcolf and Solomon*, a poem thought to be descended from Langland's *Piers Plowman*. The Audelay Manuscript also contains unique copies of other alliterative poems of the ornate style seen in *Gawain and the Green Knight* and *The Pistel of Swete Susan*. These pieces are *Patemoster* and *Three Dead Kings*, both set at the end of the book. Whether or not they are Audelay's own compositions, they seem certain to be his own selections. Audelay also displays a persistent habit of sequencing materials in generic and devotionally affective ways. His is a pious sensibility delicately honed by reverence for the liturgy and by an awe of God. That Audelay's poetry can awaken us to new poetic sensitivities in medieval devotional verse is reason enough to bring him into the ambit of canonical fifteenth-century English poets.

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Blind Audelay's English Passion

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