

# Contents

## SPECIAL ISSUE ON THE SEVEN SAGES TRADITION

**Shades of Misogyny: Medieval Versions of the Seven Sages Tradition  
from a Gender Perspective** | ANNE REYNDERS AND REMCO SLEIDERINK 119

***The Seven Wise Masters* as a Resource for Studying Historical Diversity:  
Comparing Latin and Early German Versions with Texts from the Eastern  
Tradition from a Postcolonial Studies Perspective** | BEA LUNDT 124

Variants of *The Seven Sages* cycle of tales have circulated through centuries and across three continents. During its dissemination, the narrative has undergone numerous alterations and reinterpretations, particularly when seen through the lens of religion, gender politics, and “East” vs. “West.” Developments in the areas of postcolonial and gender studies open up new ways of reading and interpreting these variants, allowing for a more fluid and multifaceted view and refusing the dominant understanding as misogynist. This in turn reflects the mores of the societies in which these variants were created and received.

### **Angry Men: On Emotions and Masculinities in Samarqandī's *Sindbād-nāmeḥ***

| ALEXANDRA HOFFMANN

145

Ẓahīrī Samarqandī's *Sindbād-nāmeḥ*, written ca. 1160-1164 CE, is the oldest extant Persian version of the frame tale known as "The Seven Sages." Through a comparison with near-contemporary ethics, this article argues that the *Sindbād-nāmeḥ* provided "working through emotion" tales for its male readership. Some of the tales in the *Sindbād-nāmeḥ* typically presented as warning against the dangers of haste are, on a deeper level, narrating the consequences of anger, or in some cases, fear. Furthermore, stories framed as 'wiles of women tales' also warn against other 'vices of the soul' such as excessive appetite or desire, while other tales address male sexual anxieties.

### **Misogyny and the Trends of a European Success: The French Prose *Roman des sept sages de Rome***

| YASMINA FOEHR-JANSSENS

165

Since the thirteenth Century, the Old French *Roman des sept sages de Rome* has given birth to a wide narrative tradition all over Europe. This paper discusses the misogynistic aspects of the *Seven Sages'* tales collection in the context of its impressive diffusion. Several embedded tales such as *Tentamina* occur for the first time in French version and clearly reinforce this tendency. However, scrutiny of the interactions between frame story and embedded tales enable us to a very powerful literary example of the polyphonic use of tale telling, we can mitigate this statement. In spite of its misogynistic tone, the clash of agonistic points of view make it possible to hear the fictitious voice of a women's protest against the homogeneity of masculine knowledge and power. Facing this question, we will rely on the widespread French Prose Version A of the *Roman des sept sages* that is at the root of the first European expansion of this narrative tradition.

### **Misogyny, Wisdom, and Legal Practice: On Narrative Flexibility across Different Versions of the *Seven Sages of Rome***

| NICO KUNKEL

181

By comparing several French (*K, A, D*), Latin (*Historia septem sapientum, Allegatio septem sapientum*), and German (*Historij von Diocleciano, Bämpler print*) versions of the *Seven Sages of Rome*, this article aims at developing a better understanding of the modular flexibility that is characteristic of this late medieval narrative tradition. It examines small variations across the texts in regard to the *Seven Sages'* proclaimed misogyny, its didactic character, and questions of legal practice. A comparison shows how small variations in the narrative motivation of events can have a significant impact on the linkage of narrative events within a given version without changing the basic plot and structure of the *Seven Sages*.

***Chwedleu Seith Doethon Rufein, the Middle Welsh Les Sept Sages de Rome: An Inadequate Rendering or a New Perspective on This Internationally Popular Tale?* | CARYS GADSDEN**

198

This article sets out to explore some of the differences between *Chwedlau Saith Doethion Rhufain*, the Welsh version of *Seven Sages of Rome*, and its parent, the Old French *Sept Sages de Rome*, and suggest some reasons for these. The most obvious difference is that the Welsh redaction is far shorter than the French, being about a third of its length. Another is that some of the tales appear in a different position within the frame story, with one even changing sides in the argument, a most unusual feature. We also find that one tale which is present in all other versions of the *Sept Sages* is completely omitted from the Welsh, being replaced by a new story of the writer's own invention. Therefore, should we dismiss the Welsh version as a pale imitation of the French *Sept Sages*, an inferior, flawed product of an imperfect memory? Or is it a deliberately crafted work, refashioned to appeal to the native Welsh literary audience and having its own individual agenda? On closer examination it is possible to discern a definite programme on the part of the redactor, named in one manuscript (Oxford, Jesus MS 20) as *Llewelyn Offeiriad*, Llewelyn the Priest. He brings a fresh approach to the traditional rendering of the *Sept Sages* tradition; tempering the out and out misogyny usually associated with the tales by the use of traditional Welsh literature, thereby adding an extra dimension to the narrative.

***How Lonely Are Women in Van den VII Vroeden van binnen Rome?: An Analysis of the Resources and Networks of the Female (and Male) Characters in a Middle Dutch Version of the Seven Sages of Rome* | ANNE REYNDERS**

216

Although the Middle Dutch *Van den VII Vroeden van binnen Rome* is generally believed to be a faithful translation of the Old French prose version *Les Sept Sages de Rome*, the anonymous Middle Dutch translator made some intriguing changes to the end of the tale. At the very moment when the empress is being judged, he added a sequence of nearly 40 verses. This sequence acknowledges explicitly that the presence (or absence) of reliable social networks constitutes a determining factor when it comes to exerting power or even simply enhancing one's chances of survival. The rewritten judgment scene puts the whole tale in a different light and has a strong bearing on its ultimate persuasive force. Rather than a faithful translation, *VII Vroeden* turns out to be an adaptation in which the harsh and essentialist misogyny of the French source is attenuated.