Reviews

Andersson, Roger, ed., *Constructing the Medieval Sermon* (Sermo, 6), Turnhout, Brepols, 2008; hardback; pp. xiv, 338; 5 b/w illustrations, 4 b/w tables; R.R.P. €60.00; ISBN 9782503525891.

I have always had an unbounded admiration for those with the scholarly ability and perseverance to tease out the long but changing practices of sermon-making in the Middle Ages. I often regret, however, that many of those who work on later Reformation sermon-making are not able to sufficiently acknowledge the thousand years of varying traditions that lay behind it. How different are the Calvinist sermons from those of Anthony of Padua (considered here by Riccardo Quinto) when he speaks of the elect, and their duty to prepare themselves for his reception in accordance with the word of Scripture?

This is a work of highly focused professional scholarship, though it is not perhaps easily accessible to general or Latin-less readers, who will be the poorer for it. But it must be hoped that some of the more significant points that emerge from these detailed studies will be taken up in works for a wider audience. Christoph Burger's analysis of Jean Gerson's two sermons for the feast of All Saints, one for the University in Latin and the other for parishioners in French, for instance, provides a powerful demonstration of the skill of the preacher in adapting his text to his audience.

The field is not without its controversies. The scholars included in this collection largely reject the attitude to the *artes praedicandi* that dismisses the role of such texts in structuring actual preaching. All the contributions are meticulous in their examination of the role of the numerous *artes praedicandi* and model sermon collections that provide us with an insight into the mind of the preacher and his audience. Indeed, Mary Swan goes further, suggesting that sermons performed a cultural work, and could alter the identities of their 'target audience' and perhaps that of the preacher himself. Was this indeed one of the ways in which cultural identity was formed and reinforced?

Jonathan Adams examines the problems of language difficulties in medieval vernacular sermons using in particular the comments of Birgitta of Sweden who was herself a preacher. This reveals the complex problems of missionary preaching not only in Sweden but in many places where the lack of linguistic competence and ignorance of local cultural practices

made individuals, however dedicated and knowledgeable, a liability. The modification of texts to make them locally intelligible is an important, if neglected, part of the history of preaching and the wider history of missionary effectiveness.

Even more interesting is Kirsten Berg's consideration of the use of memorizing devices. Memory is, after all, vital to the effectiveness of the sermon in two respects. The audience needs to remember the core of the sermon so requires a framework that recalls the line of argument. The preacher needs a scheme that can structure his presentation when a new composition is developed. All this is critical to the method of expounding the fundamental subject of gospel and epistle so that the audience, literate or illiterate, absorbs the basic elements of the faith and its spiritual and moral significance.

Unfortunately, we have few clues as to the reasons why certain individuals were powerful preachers, attracting a large attendance and influencing the behaviour of their audience. Thom Mertens has studied the surviving records of the fifteenth-century Dutch Franciscan, Johannes Brugman, whose name became synonymous with persuasive oratory, but the written forms of his sermons are not sufficiently different from other collections to provide an insight into what converts a standard sermon into a world-shattering experience.

Certain themes were common on certain liturgical days. Jussi Hanska, by looking at the popular theme of 'Jesus wept', not only the two examples accepted today (John 11: 35 and Luke 19: 41) but also the idea that he wept on the cross, in his infancy and at the treachery of Judas is able to draw out the way in which different interpretations could spring from a single text and from the additions scholars made to the canonical list.

Sermons got written down in various ways and for different reasons, and Patricia Stoop shows how the tradition of the Brussels Augustinian convent of our Lady of the Rose planted in Jericho may have contributed to the texts they inscribed to the extent that they may have been the true authors.

These are exceptional papers and the volume should be found on the shelves of every university library that considers its holdings to be the basis of literary and historical studies of the Middle Ages.

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Arn, Mary-Jo, *The Poet's Notebook: The Personal Manuscript of Charles d'Orléans* (Paris BnF MS fr. 25458) (Texts & Transitions, 3), Turnhout, Brepols, 2008; hardback; pp. xx, 202; 30 b/w illustrations, 8 b/w tables, CD; R.R.P. €80.00; ISBN 9782503520704.

This codicological study of Paris BnF MS fr. 25458 was conceived by Mary-Jo Arn as the foundation for a planned edition of the poetry of Charles d'Orléans. The edition will replace the extant version, edited by Pierre Champion between 1923 and 1927, but much of the scholarship in the current study already displaces Champion's work. The book examines, in minute detail, the physical composition of what Arn calls the poet's 'notebook': a manuscript, originally unbound, whose production Charles oversaw for a period of some 30 years, from the time when he was a prisoner in England, to his death in France in 1465. Arn describes an intensely personal object, which is both a record of the life of the Duke of Orléans, and a rare insight into the activities of poets, limners and scribes in late medieval manuscript production.

Arn's monograph is underpinned by an understanding of Charles as a thoroughly bicultural author and consumer of literary works. Her preface situates her study of the duke against the currents through which other studies have passed, many of which are still in need of revision: she responds to and decisively dispels nineteenth- and early twentieth-century romantic visions of the exiled poet. More importantly, Arn raises several problematic issues for modern scholars of Charles' writings, namely, the dating of his lyrics and their numbering in the BnF manuscript, which the study convincingly redresses.

The first chapter describes the manuscript's physical composition, with Arn taking into account its ruling, decorations, numbering, marginalia, as well as what these indicate about its scribes. To consider the evidence in more detail, she breaks up the production of the volume into strata, examining individual copying stints. Her own book is divided along the same lines, and each chapter focuses on one of four copying stints before an analysis and conclusions are offered in a sixth and final chapter.

Chapter 2, which focuses on the first copying stint, paints a picture of the distinctly bicultural world in which Charles lived while a prisoner in England. It begins with a consideration of the duke's writing practices, and outlines his various trips to London, where he might have done 'business' with books (p. 56). Arn here contests studies that date the first stint to after 1440, the date of Charles' return to England (pp. 59–60). She also considers the original layout

of the manuscript, divided between *ballades* and *complaintes*, and *chansons* and *caroles* (p. 68).

In Chapters 3, 4 and 5 Arn examines features of the manuscript's French production. She is able to glean a surprising amount of detail from various aspects of the second stint: that Charles himself copied a number of the poems; that he travelled frequently and took the book with him; and, from the lack of order in certain quires, that the manuscript was at this stage unbound (p. 99).

Arn's descriptions of the third and fourth stints evoke Charles' court at Blois as a hub of poetic composition. She emphasizes the dukedom as an administrative and creative centre of 'writing and written word' (p. 129). Chapter 4 supplies a list of the lyrics in the second and third stints identified in Charles' hand, and Chapter 5 reviews the dating of the English lyrics.

Chapter 6 ('Implications of this Study') offers some suggestions as to what scholars might take from detailed codicological analysis of this sort. In her introduction, Arn queried modern editorial interpretations of medieval 'time', and how best to relay the text or texts of a medieval manuscript to a modern audience: either as a 'snapshot' of the copied page, or in chronological order of composition or of copying (p. 12). Here, she concludes that 'arranging' and chronicling the production of Charles' poems changes considerably the critical interpretation of his corpus (p. 149). One of her most intriguing finds is Charles' interest in categorizing his lyrics according to 'associative structure[s]' rather than verse form (p. 150).

Arn's monograph is supplemented with a number of tables, all of which attempt to convey the manuscript as book rather than as text alone. The information here is dense and detailed. It is repeated in the CD-ROM that accompanies the book, with which it can be ordered and viewed as the user dictates. Arn's reassessment of numbering and chronology is complicated. The disc offers readers a way of coming to terms with that material, and visualizing the ways in which it might be interpreted. Slightly dizzying in the complexity of its contents, the CD nonetheless offers a practical sense of the various chronologies possible, and the utility of meticulous studies of this kind in understanding a range of relationships in late medieval literary and book production.

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Arnold, John H., *What is Medieval History?* Cambridge, Polity Press, 2008; paperback; pp. ix, 155; 4 b/w illustrations; R.R.P. US$19.95; ISBN 9780745639338.

In an unassuming form, John Arnold has produced an engaging and insightful manifesto for medieval studies, and it makes unexpectedly gripping reading. Like an airport thriller, the action begins in line one with the interrogation of Bartolomeo, a priest, his torture and the revelation of a magical plot to assassinate the pope. But this is not Dan Brown, and even as he tells the tale, Arnold is already picking it apart, showing how the fabric of the historical record can seem to uphold the popular image of 'the medieval' while simultaneously challenging both it, and its implicit separation from 'the modern'. Indeed, the problem of what exactly 'medieval' means – how it developed as a concept, how this continues to affect the way we think about it, and the problems this presents – is one of his consistent themes.

Although there is medieval history in this book, it is principally about *doing* medieval history. Inherited frameworks for understanding and undertaking medieval history are the focus of the first chapter. Arnold's historiographical observations are brief, but have a fierce clarity. He examines the development of the discipline, chiefly in Britain, Europe and America, observing both the common threads and the subtleties that distinguish 'national' approaches. Conscious awareness of this texture of the discipline is important both in reading the work of others, and in framing our own, and this concise summary will be especially appreciated by senior students.

In the next section, Arnold turns his attention to practical matters. What exactly are the archives or sources to be used? How and where did they survive or come to be collected? What skills are required to engage with them? He addresses himself to students who may be unfamiliar with the answers to these questions, but in fact it remains important to reflect on these issues irrespective of your experience in the field. The practicalities of archive survival, for example, directly affect the uses to which the materials can be put and the assumptions that can be made about them.

In the third chapter, the interdisciplinary nature of medieval studies is explored and celebrated. The fruitful contributions of anthropology, archaeology, art history, economic history and cultural theory to the foundational academic model of enquiry based on archives of primary sources are discussed in enough detail to reveal the important broadening influence they have exerted.

There are also some insightful – and gently humorous – observations about the tendencies of the disciplines to be suspicious of each other and even (wilfully?) to misunderstand. Arnold's amusement, and ours, is directed at showing how silly and counterproductive such academic 'towers' can be. He cautions, however, against uncritical adoption of methods that may have been designed for purposes very different from one's own. For example, while applauding the usefulness of economic approaches in distilling rich social information from account books, he notes the tendency for graphs and other 'scientific' presentations of information to appear factual and static, when in fact the history they reflect is just as fluid and partial (in both senses) as any that can be gleaned from a chronicle or literary text. He never argues that this means other methods should be shunned, but only that every academic action should be taken consciously.

In the final part, Arnold faces the issue of why we do medieval history at all. He responds to a tradesman's query – 'Much call for that, is there?' (p. 119) – by arguing for the possibility of medieval history as a 'craft', performed to order with an artisan's care and skill. But 'to what ends?' (p. 120) he asks himself. His answer is constructed as a set of challenges to practitioners, but it is really a call to arms. Doing medieval history, as he notes earlier in Chapter 1, 'has been and will always be a political act' (p. 22). This book is about being conscious of that fact, and coming to informed decisions about how to work in the field. There could not be a more timely moment in which to read it. One of the great joys of *What is Medieval History?* is its consistently optimistic treatment of the challenges of practising, and indeed, justifying, medieval history. Arnold is forthright in confronting them, but never succumbs to despair. This deceptively simple book ought to be a prescribed treatment for the malaise that hangs over so many medieval programmes around Australasia, or indeed, the English-speaking world. If you need to be reminded why you do what you do, why you love it and why it matters, look no further.

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Barthélemy, Dominique, *The Serf, the Knight and the Historian*, trans. Graham Robert Edwards, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2009; paperback; pp. 368; R.R.P. US$29.95; ISBN 9780801475603.

Dominique Barthélemy's central concern is to examine the historiography that he claims created the notion of a 'feudal society' in France from the ninth century to the twelfth century. He rejects the interpretation by historians such as Georges Duby that society underwent a fundamental change around the first millennium producing a system of serfdom that was recognisably different from the system of slavery in antique times, and a new type of warrior class, knighthood. He argues that this view of French history is nothing more than a construct because the society was far too complex to fit into such reductionist theories.

This is not the first time Barthélemy has expressed this point of view. This edition has been translated into English by Graham Robert Edwards from the French *La mutation de l'an mil a-t-elle eu lieu? Servage et chevalrie dans la France des X^e^ et XI^e^ siècles* published in 1997. However, Barthélemy acknowledges his translator's skills in the preface saying that Edwards' knowledge of the Middle Ages and his constant referral to the Latin sources has improved the original text (p. xi).

In his opening chapter, Barthélemy describes his method as being a comparison between modern historians who uphold the idea that society in France was transformed around the millennium and older historians who were not familiar with this transformation (p. 7). His major area of investigation involves examining how historians have read their primary sources. He then proceeds to reinterpret the historical models with his own close reading of the primary sources.

The text is divided into two sections: the first is concerned with exploring the modern constructions of serfdom, and the second with modern constructions of knighthood. One example of his method occurs early in his first chapter on serfdom, 'From Charters to Notices: The example of Saint-Aubin, Angers'. Barthélemy argues that the idea that society was transformed during the millennium was based on a too systematic distinction between the 'charter' and the 'notice'. It was around the year 1000 that the formal and objective charter was superseded by the less formal and subjective notice (p. 14). In categorizing documents in this manner, historians claim that serfdom was no longer a public institution but had become a private agreement around the year 1000. As Barthélemy explains, this 'documentary transformation becomes

the model and reflection of a critical transition from a society still marked by Antiquity to a feudal society' (p. 15). Barthélemy's revisionist reading of the period is therefore based on the argument that the distinction between the two types of documents is a modern misreading of the sources.

Once the critique of the historiography has been completed, Barthélemy begins his own reading of the primary sources and draws a rich picture of the serf's life. He shows that serfdom was often a voluntary state from which it was possible to lead a comfortable and profitable life. His final conclusion in regard to serfdom is that there was a single institution in France that placed people in servitude, but how this servitude was expressed was based on individual circumstances and practical considerations. Therefore, it is impossible to simplify serfdom into a single model and only by reading documents carefully and without any preconceived notions based on the work of earlier historians, can the truth about this institution in society emerge.

The second section, Barthélemy's examination of knighthood, uses the same method to argue that knighthood did not suddenly appear at the time of the millennium. Again, Barthélemy turns to a linguistic analysis, based on the word *miles*, to argue that knighthood did not emerge suddenly as a separate class in the eleventh century. He then embarks on an investigation of how mounted warriors and their activities have been described since Carolingian times. Barthélemy demonstrates very effectively that forms of knighthood existed from early times but were not recognized as such until they were described more fully in later chronicles and romances.

As this is a text concerned principally with refuting modern interpretations of the primary sources, it would be of interest to specialist readers with a broad understanding of the period. Also, because Barthélemy takes time and care to explain the various points of view taken by individual modern historians, the text becomes a valuable resource for postgraduates navigating their way through the various interpretations available. To the experienced researcher, it offers another paradigm from which the primary sources can be interpreted. However, no matter how Barthélemy reached his conclusions, it is difficult not to agree that a reductionist view that neatly ties up answers about questions in medieval society is doing an injustice to the period. Medieval society was far more interesting and complex, and in acknowledging this, Barthélemy's work makes a substantial contribution to our understanding of the period.

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Breuer, Heidi, *Crafting the Witch: Gendering Magic in Medieval and Early Modern England* (Studies in Medieval History and Culture), New York, Routledge, 2009; hardback; pp. 202; R.R.P. US$95.00; ISBN 9780415977616.

The theme of this book is less the gendering of magic in medieval and Early Modern England than the ancestry of the witch of contemporary American imagination. In her preface, Heidi Breuer asserts her feminist intentions and defends her decision to address a wide audience in an accessible style and to venture beyond her own field of medieval and Early Modern literature in order to give her textual analysis a social context. She is largely successful in these admittedly risky endeavours, though a certain amount of patchiness is the inevitable price.

The introductory chapter on good and bad witches sets the scene with some personal anecdotes, a brief theoretical context courtesy of Lacan and Judith Butler and a general explanation of what is meant by magic. Next comes a gender analysis of Chrétien de Troyes, Marie de France, Geoffrey of Monmouth and Layamon. Unsurprisingly, these literary works are revealed as complex plays on gender relations within the context of the problem of excessive male aggression. The binary analysis Breuer employs, however, is somewhat circular. The axiomatic equivalence of masculine/active and feminine/passive renders actual gender irrelevant and the creative work of the author in destabilizing these oppositions is effectively undone.

The portrayal of women's magical powers in these works is positive – no wicked witches, only helpful, healing maidens. Breuer explains the contrast with later negative depictions by a short comparison of the status of women in Anglo-Saxon and Norman societies. The relevance of this is unclear, since the works in question are of Celtic inspiration and produced in either France or Norman England. None are even remotely Anglo-Saxon. As the author anticipates in her preface, the attempt to contextualize individual literary works by inserting them into a general but eclectic account of European socio-economic history is a bold venture open to many objections.

'From Rags to Riches, or The Step-Mother's Revenge' takes the modern concept of the makeover and applies it to the magical transformation of 'churlish knights' and 'loathly ladies' in Chaucer and various Middle English Arthurian romances, notably the Gawain cycle. The wicked stepmother now makes her entrance, replacing the evil giants of the twelfth century. Breuer relates this to the shift from a feudal to a capitalist economy which provided women with more opportunities for economic independence.

How effectively this explains the contrast between twelfth-century French romances and fourteenth-century English poems is debatable. I also have a problem with applying the modern American concept of the makeover to these fourteenth-century tales, or indeed to the twentieth-century tales Breuer uses. The protagonist of the Gawain cycle is Gawain – not the 'churlish knight' or the 'loathly lady'. It is Gawain who overcomes the trials and temptations and obtains the reward, Gawain who is transformed through his own actions. Eliza in *My Fair Lady* is not the passive object of a makeover but the active initiator of her own transformation and *Pretty Woman* is not a makeover of the prostitute but rather a fantasy that the utilitarian nexus of sex and money can be transcended. Presumably Breuer feels that the wider point of these tales is irrelevant to her subject but this is indicative of a general tendency to sacrifice nuance to ideology. In this chapter, she states, 'Chrétien's romances create a masculine ethos of aggression that endorses extreme violence for men' (p. 54), yet in the previous chapter she follows the general scholarly consensus in arguing that the major theme of the romances is their critique of unrestrained male aggression.

Moving from the fourteenth to the sixteenth century, Breuer uses Shakespeare, Malory and Spenser to show that women and magic are now indissolubly linked, to the detriment of both. The witch hunt is raging and both faces of Disney's witch – the beautiful, evil temptress and her true self, the hideous hag – are in full flight. Leaping the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Breuer arrives at the point of it all, namely the witch in contemporary America – Disney's numerous contributions, the *Wizard of Oz*, endless TV shows and Halloween. This raises interesting questions about the relationship of the United States to wider European culture and emphasizes once again the book's exclusively American perspective. Curiously, the obvious connection between evil stepmothers and inheritance problems arising from the remarriage of wealthy males to young females is virtually ignored in the book.

Breuer concludes by briefly considering modern feminist neo-paganism and Wicca. She affirms the power of narrative to transform individuals and society, though I cannot see that her own analysis justifies this optimism. The breadth of material covered in this relatively short book is commendable. There are brief endnotes, a lengthy bibliography, a good index and mercifully few proof-reading errors. It is clearly aimed at students and should make a valuable contribution to gender studies courses.

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Brown, Jennifer N., *Three Women of Liège: A Critical Edition of and Commentary on the Middle English Lives of Elizabeth of Spalbeek, Christina Mirabilis, and Marie d'Oignies* (Medieval Women: Texts and Contexts, 23), Turnhout, Brepols, 2009; hardback; pp. viii, 348; R.R.P. €70.00; ISBN 9782503524719.

This is a useful book for those wishing to know more about the circulation and transmission of saints' lives in the later medieval milieu. Specifically, the book provides editions of the Middle English lives of three famous thirteenth-century beguines from around Liège: Elizabeth of Spalbeek, Christina *Mirabilis* and Marie of Oignies. The Latin *vitae* of these women are very well known and have been studied individually and together for a number of years, providing scholars such as Caroline Walker Bynum with evidence for the importance of somatic piety in the medieval religious landscape. The later circulation of these lives has been less studied, and this is where Jennifer Brown's book makes an important contribution.

The book is divided into two main parts, and seven chapters overall. The first part of the book provides the editions of the texts and the second part provides more narrative commentaries and interpretations of the three texts. The Middle English lives appear in one fifteenth-century manuscript, Oxford Bodleian Library, MS Douce 114 which, Brown notes, is one of the only pieces of evidence for interest in female continental mysticism in late-medieval England (p. 10). The contextual introduction to the book furnishes the reader with useful information about reception, audience and the likelihood that these Middle English lives were directed at women. Although more might have been said about the Carthusian connection (mentioned briefly on p. 11), the background of the manuscript is effectively narrated.

The editions of the texts themselves as they appear in MS Douce 114 are careful and quite meticulously glossed. Helpful reference is made to the Latin original, and Brown notes throughout where the Douce author has omitted material. The notes include some reference to relevant events and people, while biblical references are annotated. The glossary at the end of the book will assist readers with the more unfamiliar words and phrases.

Somewhat less original is the second part of the book. Brown has devoted a chapter to each of the holy women of Liège, in order to discuss the main themes in their *vitae* and to provide a discussion of the original Latin texts on which the Middle English versions are based. Elizabeth of

Spalbeek is described in the context of *performatio Christi*; the chapter on Christina *Mirabilis* is subtitled 'astonishing piety'; and the chapter on Marie of Oignies discusses the text of Jacques de Vitry. The placing of these chapters is a little awkward, and it might have been more useful to situate each as a preface to the Middle English texts, rather than as long postscripts to them.

The material presented in each of these chapters mostly summarizes the traditional scholarship, rather than offering a new interpretation. Elizabeth of Spalbeek's *vita* (composed by Philip of Clairvaux around 1268) is presented as an example of *imitatio Christi*, and Brown writes that 'because women were so tied to their fleshly bodies, at least according to medieval thought about gender, the devotional meditation [on Christ] had to be predominantly on Christ's humanity' (pp. 194–5). Here, Brown is quite reliant on the established scholarship of Walter Simons, for example, and reiterates the views of various others on rapture, pain and the importance of seeing. More interesting is the Middle English omission of a significant passage in the Latin in which Elizabeth is linked to St Francis. While this is point could have been explored further, to tell us more about the English context, Brown is content merely to note that 'the omission is the most glaring one, denying the audience a key piece of Philip's exegesis' (p. 217). The sections on Christina *Mirabilis* and Marie of Oignies similarly mostly summarize what is already known about the Latin scholarship. I do not wish to appear too demanding of this section of Brown's book, which could be useful for those unwilling to read further around the extant scholarship, but it is here that the book betrays its origins as a dissertation and misses the opportunity to make more of a contribution to the field.

Nonetheless, this is a careful and interesting book that certainly fulfils its aim of making the reader aware of a singular set of hagiographies. Brown has done an excellent job of editing the texts and in so doing has set the scene for further detailed work on the textual relationships between England and the Low Countries, and the discursive longevity of these most singular women.

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Bruun, Mette B. and Stephanie **Glaser**, eds, *Negotiating Heritage: Memories of the Middle Ages* (Ritus et Artes, 4), Turnhout, Brepols, 2009; hardback; pp. xii, 396; 42 b/w & 5 colour illustrations, 4 b/w tables; R.R.P. €90.00; ISBN 9782503527949.

Covering an incredibly extensive range of media and eras, *Negotiating Heritage* explores the ways in which notions or elements of the past have been used, rewritten, adopted and (deliberately) expunged from the historical and cultural record. Specifically, it considers the constructs of the medieval period – both during the medieval period itself and subsequent reinterpretations and re-uses of the medieval across the Renaissance, Early Modern and beyond.

The overall focus is memory, which gives the collection of articles a good hook: memory is approached in a collective, cultural sense, from the echoes of the Seven Deadly Sins in the musicality of Kurt Weill to the incorporation of medieval architecture in modern buildings. Explorations of memorials (tombs, rituals, folklore, and foundations) also abound.

The editors clearly understand the pitfalls of such a broad, interdisciplinary approach. They have provided not only an overarching focus in memory, but have categorized the essays into four sections: Authority and Heritage', 'Ritual Commemoration', 'Memory and Oblivion' and 'Artistic Negotiations with the Medieval Heritage'. Each has an introductory overview to help explicate the connections and synergies between them.

However, at times the connections are somewhat forced, and only about half the articles really touch on memory in any explicit way. This is more apparent in the last section, 'Artistic Negotiations with the Medieval Heritage' which more firmly explores cultural appropriations of the medieval than any consideration of memory. Moreover, although the introductions to each of the four 'sections' are well written and highly useful for getting a sense of the theoretical framing of the section, they also come with the all-too-typical quotes from revered sources on the matter: The Bible, Nietzsche, Aristotle, Burke, et al. The framing quotes add another layer of academic obfuscation to the ideas behind the articles – the reader feels the need to be a exegetical scholar, a Nietzsche expert, and so on, in order to make sense of the overall direction of the collection. Indeed, this general tendency is seen across the collection, rendering the individual articles and the four topical introductions minefields of references and casual allusions.

That being said, the collection as a whole is delightful, and the sheer breadth involved stimulates the reader's mind: there are so many different approaches to lose yourself in! Many of the articles provide enough academic and historical context to make the arguments clear, despite the fact it seems unlikely any given reader would be an expert in fields from music to architecture to mausoleums to pageantry. Some are harder going than others, and tend to be written for a decidedly expert audience. Again, there is always this general tendency 'to sound academic' lurking behind the scenes of the majority of the collection which brings the reader up short.

The first four essays, by Bruun, Munster-Swendsen, Andree and Bruhn, all deal primarily with the use of memory and heritage within power dynamics, from the self-identity of Citeaux to the fiction of Chrétien de Troyes. These are some of the most well-argued and interesting essays in the collection – certainly providing the most coherent meta-narrative of the book. Verbaal, Pranger and Bossuyt all sadly suffer from the above lack of context: as a non-expert it is hard to make complete sense of what they present, and there is not enough authorial 'handholding'. At the same time, their essays on ritual and oblivion (the need to forget) are fascinating, even if this reader got the feeling there was some argument forever out of reach. The last section is a reverse-image of the first, with the six essays lacking a real connection with one another: a shame as individually they are coherent, well argued and interesting. The last essay is, again, well-argued and interesting, but it does not have much to say. Essentially Kabir contends that scholars and folk historians recently have begun to contest normative ideas of the medieval with the history of the 'medieval Other' – the Jew, the Muslim, etc – to consider the broad range of technological and cultural diasporas to contrast with the notion of the 'Christian Dark Ages', to reconstruct the medieval as a wealth of cultural contact and heterogeneity, and mourn for its loss, both metaphorically and in terms of time.

At the end, that hardly seems like a revelation worth stating, and that perhaps is emblematic of the collection. Recommended, but do not expect any real interdisciplinary connections: everyone is too busy being an expert in their own field.

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Burguière, André, *The Annales School: An Intellectual History*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2009; pp. xiv, 309; hardback; R.R.P. US$45.00; ISBN 9780801446658 (review copy supplied by Footprint Books).

By any measure, the Annales school has had an enormous influence on the historical profession. The journal *Annales d'histoire économique et sociale*, founded in the late 1920s, developed into a major historical movement in the 1930s under the direction of Marc Bloch and Lucien Febvre. After the War, historians associated with the journal (now renamed *Annales: Économies, sociétés, civilisations*) came to dominate the writing of history in France, as well as dominating teaching in French universities and institutes. In English translation, their work also proved remarkably influential, even reaching the best-seller lists in the case of Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie. From the beginning, their main focus has been on medieval and Early Modern history, primarily – but not exclusively – that of France.

Over the last eighty years, the Annales school has encompassed a wide range of perspectives, methods and approaches. Numerous books and articles have already been written about it, including a considerable number in English (notably by Peter Burke). But this new book by André Burguière is something different. Burguière is very much an Annales insider. He was the journal's *secretaire de redaction* for twelve years from 1969 and has been a member of its editorial board since 1981. A distinguished historian in his own right, specializing in the demography of the *ancien régime*, he is an Emeritus Professor at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales.

Burguière is at pains to point out that this book differs from other studies of the Annales school. It is not a history of events, nor a historical sociology. Nor is it a reflection on the nature of historical knowledge, based on the ideas of the Annales historians. Instead, he describes it as 'an attempt to analyse and understand an intellectual trajectory' (p. 9). He sees that trajectory as extending from the 'history of mentalities in the 1930s to the anthropological turn of the 1970s and 1980s' (p. 5). He rejects as 'somewhat ridiculous' the idea of 'generations' of Annales historians (widely used in other histories of the school), preferring to focus on a series of 'moments' during which different aspects of the Annales programme were emphasized. As a result, his approach is selective in its choice of historians and topics, rather than comprehensive.

The first half of the book is devoted to Marc Bloch and Lucien Febvre: their influences and antecedents, their agreements and disagreements, and

their legacy. Burguière sees their work as being drawn together by the central theme of the 'notion of mentalities', to which they had differing approaches and which they understood rather differently. He emphasizes their disputes and the 'combative climate' in which they worked, in contrast to the 'irenic image of their relationship' promulgated by Febvre after Bloch's death. He sees in this an important feature of the Annales school: an openness and lack of dogmatism that helped it to survive and change over subsequent decades.

For Burguière, the 1950s and 1960s were dominated by the quantitative approach of Ernest Labrousse and his disciples, applying the techniques of serial analysis to economic and social history. He regards Fernand Braudel as a more marginal figure; despite his prestigious position and powerful originality, Braudel failed to found a school and attract disciples as Labrousse did. On the other hand, Braudel did help to inspire those who wanted to move away from Labrousse – notably Le Roy Ladurie, who was so influential in the 'anthropological turn' of the Annales school in the 1970s and 1980s. Burguière's analysis of Braudel's work and influence, though relatively short, is subtle and interesting, and credits him with originating the 'paradoxical proximity' of microhistory and global history.

The final part of the book ('Questions') examines a series of developments in the 1970s and 1980s, beginning with the historical anthropology of Philippe Ariès, Michel Vovelle, François Lebrun and Alain Croix. Their studies of attitudes towards death focused on the problem of understanding 'the articulation between the biological and social worlds in the construction of culture' (p. 163). There follows a 'digression' on the immense challenge and influence of Michel Foucault ('the passing of the comet'). Burguière is ultimately very critical of Foucault's approach, labeling it an illusion and 'a reductive view' which underestimates the complexities of the relationship between conceptual representations and the social system. Burguière goes on to discuss the enduring value of the notion of mentalities and to take a somewhat sceptical look at the re-emergence of political history during the 1980s.

He concludes with a brief manifesto for the continuing relevance of the Annales school. He deplores the current tendency to reduce 'our relationship to the past to its most affective and subjective form', to a 'patrimonial fantasy' (pp. 257–8). Instead, he argues, the notion of mentalities – and the historical anthropology derived from it – can enable us to understand the past as completely as possible, in order to decipher 'the riddles of the present' and assume our responsibilities within it.

This is a fascinating, thoughtful and at times provocative account of the Annales school by a real insider. You may disagree with some of his interpretations and emphases, and with some of his omissions and inclusions. You will have to draw your own conclusions about the relevance of his work for the English-speaking world, since he limits his horizon to France. But Burguière's account is essential reading, not just for anyone interested in the Annales school or in twentieth-century historiography, but also for anyone with an interest in the historical profession, its achievements, its role and its value.

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Busuttil, Joseph, Stanley Fiorini, and Horatio Vella (eds), *Tristia ex Melitogaudo: Lament in Greek Verse of a XIIth-century Exile on Gozo*, transcribed, translated and edited by Joseph Busuttil, Stanley Fiorini, and Horatio Vella, Malta, Farsons Foundation, 2010; pp. cxxvi, 471; 4 plates; paperback; R.R.P. €40.00; ISBN 9789993208334. (Available from stanley.fiorini@um.edu.mt)

Three Maltese academics – two classicists and a medieval historian – have meticulously transcribed, translated and edited this long (4043 iambic trimeters and originally longer) Greek poem probably composed by Eugenius of Palermo, a highly educated official in Norman Sicily and recently identified as the historian Hugo Falcandus. The poet had evidently displeased Roger II of Sicily who banished him to Gozo (Melitogaudo), a tiny island off Malta. Both islands were used as places of exile by the Byzantine emperors and continued to be so until the fifteenth century. During his enforced sojourn there (some years between 1135 and 1151) the poet wrote this *Tristia* (the original title is lost) for the same purpose as Ovid produced his *Tristia ex Ponto*: to beg leave to return home. Ovid appealed (unsuccessfully) to Augustus, while the Sicilian exile addressed his appeal to George of Antioch, to whom he was perhaps related. As Roger's amir or vizier, George was the most powerful man in Sicily after the king. Even so the poet was only permitted to return a few years before Roger died in 1155. At this time Norman Sicily was the wealthy cross-cultural centre of the western world as well as a major (and ambitious) military, naval and trading power. George of Antioch was a patron of the arts; a mosaic depicting him prostrate in front of the Virgin survives in

the church of Santa Maria del Ammiraglio, now called la Martorana, that he built in Palermo. Eugenius had a distinguished career as a public servant in Sicily and (after a further period of exile in Trifels castle in Germany) in Italy.

Other sources and studies testify that the poet was a fluent linguist. He translated Ptolemy's *Optica* (Arabic into Latin) and contributed to a translation (Greek into Latin) of the *Almagest*. His poetry is valued by scholars for its insights into contemporary moral and political philosophy and natural history. He had a wide knowledge of Greek letters, the Septuagint, the new testament and classical authors such as Homer, Plato, Aristotle, Lucian, the historians of Sicily, and Byzantine writers notably St John Chrysostom. His texts are littered with reminiscences of the Greek dramatists and proverbial wisdom.

Readers of this edition of this *Tristia* will appreciate the lengths the editors have gone to in their efforts to identify the literary and other sources the poet drew on to embellish his text. There are references to the bible, ancient history, Greek and Roman literature and Greek mythology. His mastery of Greek verse forms and figures of style is fully investigated.

The *Tristia* contains references to the poet's life in Gozo and to then still recent Norman conquest of the Maltese archipelago from the Arabs. The editors have reopened the most hotly debated issue among students of Maltese history in recent years. Did Christianity survive three centuries (800-1090) of Muslim rule? The consensus among scholars was that it did not. No significant archaeological finds supported its survival and the sources until now available suggested that there were no Christians in Malta when it was captured by the Normans. One important source records that the only Christians encountered by the Normans when they captured Malta were captives from other lands and these returned to their homes. There is evidence too that the island remained largely Muslim long after Arab rule finally ended in 1123. After visiting Malta in 1175 a German bishop wrote that Malta was 'a Saracenis habitata, et est sub dominio regis Sicilie'. All this sat uncomfortably with many Maltese, proud in what they call the 'Pauline Tradition' – that the Apostle Paul christianized Malta after he was shipwrecked there and that the Maltese have remained Christians ever since. A few academics remained supporters of this popular tradition and they now claim that their faith has been vindicated by this passage in the *Tristia*:

> [The] most resplendent leader of all leaders (Roger II) … sailed to Melitogaudos (Gozo) … [and] having encircled [the godless (i.e. Muslims)]

> he banished [them and their numerous black slaves. Then he] … brought out into the open the pious inhabitants of the place, together with their bishop, who having departed from the Pact of Old got rid of the things by which they used to invoke Mohammed … He then established into most sacred temples, places [i.e. mosques formerly] belonging to the [Muslims] sacred and useful priests who were worshipping the Holy Trinity from ancestral times … (p. lvii)

In the light of this text the editors argue that Gozo's experience was quite different to Malta's where Christianity may well have been eradicated. Space precludes further discussion of the thorny question here but the thesis is thought provoking. The conclusions of the editors are being hotly debated by scholars and others in the Maltese press. The Maltese take a very healthy interest in their long history.

The editors make a point which is perhaps more telling than a few lines of laudatory verse: 95% of 419 Maltese and Gozitan churches and chapels recorded in a 1575 visitation were dedicated to cults venerated in Sicily before the Arab conquest. If the Normans 're-evangelized' Malta and Gozo would they have encouraged the dedication of chapels and churches to cults following the Greek (rather than the Latin) rite? One suspects not. The editors draw extensively on recent scholarly research into Maltese religious and social history to support their argument that, at any rate in Gozo, the Greek rite survived the Muslim period. On the other hand many will stoutly continue to maintain that a silent gap of nearly 300 years in the history of Christianity in Malta and Gozo is hard to explain except as evidence of its annihilation.

The debate continues.

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Coldiron, Anne E. B., *English Printing, Verse Translation, and the Battle of the Sexes, 1476–1557* (Women and Gender in the Early Modern World), Aldershot, Ashgate, 2009; hardback; pp. xv, 280; 15 b/w illustrations; R.R.P. £55.00; ISBN 9780754656081.

This monograph presents its readers with an examination of the relationships between men and women as portrayed in a series of French poems that were translated and published in Early Modern England. The book comprises six chapters and three appendices where the author presents her transcriptions

of several of the major works examined. Indeed the transcriptions, at least according to the preface, represent one of the major purposes of the work: that of increasing the accessibility of Early Modern printed works. Although one might question the utility of replicating sources already accessible to many scholars through online databases the author's argument that these challenging works achieve greater readability through the book's presentation is on solid ground when the combined challenges of Early Modern type settings, language, style and the cost of online access are considered.

In addition to its role in transmitting Early Modern texts the book seeks to offer a new interpretation of early English print culture. By examining some of the earliest works printed in English and by identifying them as translations from late medieval French manuscript poetry this study builds on the work of scholars such as Anne Lake Prescott, Margaret Ferguson, Deanne Williams, Karen Newman and Ruth Morse, who have illuminated the connections between French and English literatures and cultures.

Rather than presenting another study of French-English literary connections the author skilfully steps outside older discourses of influence to examine textual transmission beyond the site of translation by studying the importance of the technologies that facilitated the poems' transmission. In exposing the technical and aesthetic experiments conducted by the translators and printers the work explores not only the mediating art of translation but it also exposes the influence of the printers' experiments in typefaces, border designs, illustration and even binding. The book's sources are thus characterized as works in transition not only between cultures but also between modes of production and audience.

In pursuing this argument, each of the work's six chapters, apart from the initial chapter which outlines the book's argument, offers a case study of different texts. The texts examined have been self-consciously selected to provide an alternative 'noncourtly, antiromance, un-Petrarchan, and nonclerical discourse on women, gender, and marriage' (p. 11). Although many of the works are obscure to modern readers, the book asserts that they were well known in their own era. Nevertheless, the texts studied become more obscure and perhaps less influential as the book progresses. The opening case study, of Christine de Pizan's textual authority, is convincing. However, the final chapter, which examines John Heywood's commercially unsuccessful translation of a French sexual farce, is on less solid ground. Despite the ranging influence of the works discussed, the book gives a voice to an alternative, although possibly

less influential, view of women in Early Modern England. More importantly the work elucidates how the processes of printing and translation facilitated the creation and exchange of this view.

As the book progresses, its case studies, while examining a diverse range of texts, slowly build up some general conclusions. Chapters 2, 3 and 6 demonstrate how the processes of textual transmission could serve to decontextualize works. Although, in the case of Christine de Pizan, whose work is discussed in the second chapter, the extent to which her context is obscured is perhaps open to more questions than the present study allows, given her personal connections in England and her international reputation; nevertheless, her repeated publication in collections of works by Chaucer was an attempt to locate her in an alien literary tradition. The influence of paratextual insertions in the publication of the other works examined may have likewise placed them within English traditions. Despite this, the fluidity of both the cultural and political boundaries between France and England in the early years of printing would have impacted any strict classification of a work as typical of either cultural tradition.

In many ways the book is a study of cross-cultural and cross-technological textual transmission. Not only does the work explore this process of exchange in the Early Modern world but also through the author's transcriptions in the appendices, the book itself participates in the processes of textual transmission. It is this exposure of the previously unstudied manipulations inherent in transmission that form the central contribution of the work.

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D'Abrera, Anna Ysabel, *The Tribunal of Zaragoza and Crypto-Judaism, 1484–1515* (Europa Sacra, 3), Turnhout, Brepols, 2008; hardback; pp. x, 242; 1 b/w line art; R.R.P. €60.00; ISBN 9782503524726.

In the ongoing argument about whether the records of the tribunals of the Inquisition are reliable evidence of the beliefs and practices of the accused, Dr D'Abrera comes firmly down in favour of their acceptability, rejecting arguments that they are unusable. Her discussion of the historiographical background to the debate, from the early argument of Llorente (1811), to the recent wholesale dismissal of their utility by Benzion Netanyahu (1995), is designed to emphasize the factual nature of the surviving documentation.

This is the territory of anti-Semitism where the historical examination of the delicate issue of whether the new Christians, *conversos*, were sincere converts or deceitful practisers of Crypto-Judaism becomes peculiarly difficult.

D'Abrera argues that the treatment of the New Christians must be seen in the context of a long period of plague and famine where minorities throughout Europe were blamed for the misery and natural disasters that were disrupting society. The New Christians, many of whom were prosperous and held prominent positions in Spanish society, were both envied and blamed.

Although some of her claims – such as that the Dominican Inquisitors were theologians rather than canon lawyers – are unsupported, she gives a useful summary of the background and major texts, such as those of Bernard Gui and Nicholas Eymerich, that Inquisitors would draw on to conduct their trials. Although she may not have studied the Inquisitors' Manuals (p. 192), she concludes they had a reasonable working knowledge of Judaism, presumably knowledge of their daily life rather than of the more religious understanding that Jews with access to rabbinical teaching might have.

Jews in Aragon before 1492 were compelled to answer the Inquisitors on an oath that they would regard as binding in return for complete anonymity. This is a critical issue in the debate over the utility of evidence that 'flouted inviolable judicial principles' (p. 65) but D'Abrera concludes that the Inquisitorial process was reasonable – the accused was permitted a defence lawyer and the Inquisitors appreciated the unreliability of confession under torture and required its ratification the following day. The notaries who recorded the proceedings were, she asserts, professionally impartial in their transcriptions. She presents a number of specific cases to demonstrate that the process gave the defendants some chance of acquittal and that the Inquisitors followed the judicial procedures laid down and did not impede 'the natural course of justice'.

She then uses the questions put by the Inquisitors, both before and after 1492, regarding observance of some known Jewish rituals, to investigate the extent to which Jewish ritual practices survived in some New Christian households, and the frequency of contact between New Christians and their Jewish relatives, friends and acquaintances. Since the Sabbath ritual was in the woman's domain many of those accused were women. She emphasizes the reluctance of women to work on Saturday and the willingness of the accused of both sexes to work on Sunday. She is also concerned with the examination of how far they were able to, and did, consume only kosher meat.

It is understandable that the Inquisitors focused on household events since attendance at public religious places such as synagogues was not an essential part of a life of Jewish prayer and it is surprising that some New Christian men did visit synagogues rather than holding a *minyan* at home. Observing religious feasts, however, required knowledge of the Jewish lunar calendars and where this involved asking practising Jews it was clearly of value to the Inquisitors. Evidently longstanding prohibitions from both Christian and Jewish authorities on Christians and Jews eating together were frequently ignored, both groups regularly entertaining one another and even sleeping in one another's houses, apparently without scruple about the finer implications of such interaction.

What this tells us about the religious understanding of Jews in their interaction with non-kosher Christians deserves further scrutiny, as does the question of what actual Jewish religious beliefs the New Christians may have retained. D'Abrera explains the Inquisitors' focus on visible actions 'because the New Christians rarely, if ever, verbally expressed a positive profession of the Jewish faith' (p. 171). She notes, but does not pursue, the comparative lack of Inquisitorial interest in the normally elaborate Passover rituals and what light this might cast on New Christians' understanding. The few expressions of heretical belief she has gathered in Chapter 8 are contradictory. While some, such as disbelief in a next world, may result from Jewish traditions, others are nearer to Christian Protestantism – and ignorance of Christian prayers was not confined to those suspected of Judaism.

How many *conversos* there were in Aragon at this time, and how many were brought before the Inquisition, however, she does not explore. It is, therefore, hard to accept unequivocally her conclusion that 'a sizeable number of Aragonese *conversos* were secretly attempting to observe and preserve the laws of Judaism'. This accepts the Inquisitors' position that a lamp on Friday night implied that the defendant understood and believed the theological symbolism it represented and that a few incomplete and mangled words of prayers as common as the 'Our Father' demonstrated religious comprehension. What is needed is an assessment of the degree of understanding involved in this behaviour. It is useful to see that only 24 per cent of those tried were handed over to the secular authorities for burning and to have 53 biographies of those accused, but illuminating the religious life of the New Christians requires more than this.

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Daston, Lorraine and Michael **Stolleis**, eds, *Natural Law and Laws of Nature in Early Modern Europe: Jurisprudence, Theology, Moral and Natural Philosophy*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2008; pp. 350; 3 b/w illustrations; R.R.P. £60.00; ISBN 9780754657613.

Drawing together experts from a range of backgrounds to examine a complex topic from a variety of perspectives is a difficult undertaking. Daston and Stolleis organized several workshops on the subject of natural law and laws of nature. The first outcome of the exchange of information and ideas that these produced has been this collection of stimulating essays on different elements of the subject. Individual scholars will seek out the essays that are particularly relevant to their own field and will not be disappointed, but the strength of the volume lies in the interaction between the writers that the workshops achieved, so that, for instance, the theological arguments that interact with the development of new scientific ideas suddenly clarify the matrix in which both were operating. Read with care, the volume casts light on most aspects of cultural, religious and intellectual life and their importance for the origins of the modern state.

The shifting meaning of the terms natural law and laws of nature has often been overlooked when historians write about the ideas of the Reformation or the economic and scientific revolution. Debate over 'how humans know' natural law was an issue for those now dubbed scientists, like Boyle and Newton, as well as for philosophers such as Descartes and lawyers like Leibniz and Grotius. Biblical exegesis is not routinely included in modern accounts of science but this is clearly an error. The essays tease out the true innovations in the changes of definition, particularly the move to connect natural laws with causal explanations. The editors summarize what resulted by saying that 'natural laws had become the glue that joined cause and effect in both the natural and moral realm' (p. 12).

In a volume where all sixteen contributions are impressive one can only pick out for special comment the ones that particularly resonate with one's personal interests. To me, Jean-Robert Armogathe's analysis of the theological matrix is crucial as is Michael Stolleis' investigation of the different ways in which law was itself legitimated. All the contributors are concerned to explain how a relative uniformity in medieval times broke down in the seventeenth century into competing explanations. Writers in the scientific strand, however, as Catherine Wilson makes clear, were not from the start in themselves philosophically coherent or in agreement.

The range of areas in which the shift in definitions had an impact on the state as well as religion is well seen in Andreas Roth's essay on 'Crimen contra naturam'. Here Grotius' influence led to a shift in which punishment for sodomy, homosexuality, masturbation, bigamy, incest, parricide and suicide was to be limited to cases in which the crime disturbed social peace. Increasingly legality and morality were separated.

Anne-Charlotte Trepp shows how nature became critical as 'a central medium of early modern attribution of meaning and concepts of salvation' (p. 123). By examining three pastors and medical doctors who were not key philosophers, she demonstrates how ideas were incorporated into the perceptions of the more ordinary middle class of educated men.

Another essay that uses lesser-known people to considerable effect is Hubert Treiber's comparison of Matthias Bernegger and Richard Cumberland and their development of a physical concept of law. This is a concrete example of the discovery of laws deductively by a 'meticulous chronicling of natural particulars and variability' (p. 29) that is set out in Ian Maclean's essay on expressing nature's regularities in the late Renaissance. Certainty and security were goals in a number of the areas studied and here the role of mathematics is touched on although its underlying importance may merit greater attention.

One gap that might be filled in any later collection is the absence of an essay on medical thought, where there were changes that could be said to amount to a revolution as practitioners addressed themselves to careful recording of cases.

There is, inevitably, a certain use of jargon in most of these essays that makes them less accessible to the general reader but the understanding that can be achieved by perseverance is well worth it.

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Duffy, Eamon, *Fires of Faith: Catholic England under Mary Tudor*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 2009; hardback; pp. xiv, 249; 30 colour plates, 6 maps, R.R.P. US$28.50; ISBN 9780300152166.

Despite recent reassessments of Mary Tudor's reign as England's first crowned queen regnant, she is still best known as the monarch in whose reign almost 300 Protestants died by burning. The verbal and pictorial images in John Foxe's *Book of Martyrs,* published in four successively enlarged editions

from 1563 to 1583, ensured those deaths have remained unusually potent in English historical traditions. Now they have been revisited in Professor Duffy's most recent book, a reworking of his 2007 Birkbeck Lectures. The work retains much of his easy lecturing style, but nothing can disguise the challenging nature of some material. His wider argument attacks and subverts the enduring view that Marian Catholicism was reactionary, strong on repression and weak on persuasion.

William Wizeman's *The Theology and Spirituality of Mary Tudor's Church* (Aldershot, 2006) had previously argued for a strong theological renewal which anticipated many Counter-Reformation decisions, but said little about the treatment of religious dissent. Duffy's is a wider-ranging work, covering the whole spectrum of Marian strategies to restore England to its Catholic loyalties. In that, Duffy's Reginald Pole, traditionally the 'invisible man of the Marian restoration', played a crucial part. A cardinal since 1536, and Mary's Archbishop of Canterbury, Pole preached frequently, encouraged others to do the same, and was the primary driver for the entire religious renewal. The tradition that the restored church failed to counter Protestant printed works with effective Catholic printed alternatives is also persuasively refuted. And much attention was paid to the refurbishing of churches to meet Catholic expectations.

In brief, Eamon Duffy's new book is a comprehensive assault on the older view of Catholic failure during Queen Mary's reign. If, however, Hilary Mantel's review (*London Review of Books*, vol. 31, no. 18, 24 Sept 2009) is any guide, nothing could mitigate the horror of those Protestant burnings. Mantel writes: '[d]espite his careful and no doubt deeply felt disclaimers, it sometime sounds as if Eamon Duffy is cheering on the executioners.' His offence, it would seem, is that, instead of simply deploring the burnings, Duffy discusses their place in the much wider process of reclaiming England for the Catholic faith.

Although he never disguises his distaste for those deaths, he also offers an entirely fresh perspective. He is insistent (if not always completely persuasive) that although the clerics were the ultimate judges, the pressure for the heresy trials came much more from the Privy Council and from Mary herself. However that may be, the bishops certainly played their part in the examinations. Making creative use of Foxe, as well as many other sources, in a chapter titled 'The Theatre of Justice', Duffy demonstrates that the examinations of many heretics, well beyond the familiar cases of Latimer, Ridley and,

above all, Cranmer, attracted crowds of spectators to whom all participants appealed. There, he argues, despite Foxe's interpretations, Protestant obduracy could alienate, rather than win over, the crowd. The same was true of some burnings, although London was one place where burnings were particularly problematic. Where Foxe saw crocodile tears as examiners failed to persuade their prisoners to recant and perforce proceeded to their condemnation, Duffy – at least as plausibly – sees real distress at the imminent anguish and the eternal torture of yet another soul. Where Foxe sees large crowds at burnings as Protestant demonstrations, Duffy uncovers a range of reasons – including their coinciding with market day and the uncomfortable fact that our forbears were often attracted to public executions. He also uncovers a range of responses to the dying from the entirely sympathetic to the indisputably callous. At the heart of the spectacle was 'an ideological struggle inscribed in the quivering flesh of suffering human beings' (p. 123), but the opportunity for an edifying sermon was seldom missed. One response to what Catholics understood as Protestant 'presumptuous self-immolation', Duffy suggests, was the Catholic creation of a 'noble and almost quiescent' mode of martyrdom, most clearly exemplified in the biographies of Thomas More.

Above all, the heresy hunts were a part of a much wider programme to restore England to a renewed Catholicism by teaching, writing, preaching, restoring and refitting the parish churches. That the Catholic hierarchy did so to considerable effect in the short time available to them is illustrated both by the almost universal refusal of Mary's bishops to conform to the Elizabethan order and by the enduring strength of the renewed Catholicism which remained an important feature of English social and cultural life until it finally became a lawful religion again. Duffy's latest wide-ranging and elegant book is a definitive contribution to understanding just how Catholicism was renewed and restored in the reign of Mary Tudor.

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Flanagan, Sabina, *Doubt in an Age of Faith: Uncertainty in the Long Twelfth Century* (Disputatio, 17), Turnhout, Brepols, 2009; hardback; pp. xiv, 216; R.R.P. €60.00; ISBN 9782503527482.

Why do we need a history of doubt and uncertainty of the twelfth century? In the first chapter and introduction, 'Sites and Soundings', of her subtle,

elegant and erudite book, Dr Flanagan explains why. Although doubt may be considered an innate characteristic of humankind, whatever the historical period, the Middle Ages is widely considered an 'Age of Faith', one in which the superstitious or credulous medieval mind lacked the rationality to brook doubt, particularly in religious matters. The notion of doubt, further, is one relatively ignored by medievalists: such studies as Robert I. Moore's 'persecuting society' polarize reactions to matters of faith in terms of the stark opposites of tolerance or persecution, ignoring the 'middle ground' of doubt (p. 4). Further, historians of medieval 'mentalities' have inexplicably studied humour, wonder, fear and pain, but not doubt (p. 1).

What is doubt? For Flanagan, it is not simply religious scepticism, but 'uncertainty in all its forms'. It covers a broad continuum: at one end is certainty and at the other is denial, with every stage in between occupied by varying levels of uncertainty or doubt (p. 2). Consistently with the study of medieval 'mentalities', Flanagan seeks to examine 'how such uncertainty was experienced, expressed, examined, and in some cases resolved' in selected written sources from the period 1060–1230 ('the long twelfth century') (p. 4).

Secular doubt, the subject of Chapter 2, includes reference to the several ways in which doubt is resolved in non-religious contexts, that is concerning 'life choices'. Spiritual doubt, the subject of Chapter 3, concerns uncertainties on 'objective' matters (e.g., the meaning of the Scriptures) or matters of doctrine (e.g., the sacraments) and 'subjective' matters (someone's own worthiness for salvation or uncertainty on doctrine, e.g., Otloh of St. Emmeram). Flanagan concludes, from a close reading of a number of important texts from the twelfth century, that to doubt the existence of medieval 'atheism' is simply untenable (p. 89).

Chapter 4, 'Discussions of the Nature of Doubt', then deals with accounts of the nature of doubt in and of itself, which she divides between those taking a 'psychological' point of view and those taking an epistemological approach (p. 91). Chapter 5, 'The Benefits of Doubt', examines the relationship between this 'nature' of doubt just discussed in Chapter 4 with what R. W. Southern called 'the intellectual programme' of the twelfth century (p. 125). Flanagan concludes that the twelfth-century 'formalization of doubt as a method of enquiry presents an "historical irony"' (p. 154) in that, while previous early scholasticism did not permit 'the most profound' questions, since they 'diverged too much from what was commonly held by right-thinking people', later, such questions could be posed, 'in the academic exercises of

the schools, but only because they were not really doubted. One side was known to be true already and they became simply pedagogical exercises' (p. 154). In both chapters, the author relies on her close reading of case studies from Abelard, Anselm and others.

Chapter 6, 'Disadvantages of Doubt', considers examples of Christian-Jewish debate or polemic of the twelfth century. In this period, Flanagan notes that 'things took a turn for the worse' regarding the position of Jews in Western Europe, a root cause for which has been identified as anxiety or doubt, in recent studies of Michael Signer, John Van Engen, Anna Sapir Abulafia, Gavin Langmuir and R. I. Moore (pp. 159-60). Flanagan concludes that doubt is not a reliable or workable explanation for such hostility towards the Jews, and other explanations should be sought. A short concluding chapter (Chapter 7: 'A Commendation of Doubt?') – a reversal of the title of Baldwin of Forde's treatise, *De commendatione fidei (On the Commendation of Faith)* – observes that '[u]ncertainty, and its sharp end, doubt, can be found both implicitly and explicitly in twelfth-century sources. This is hardly surprising, since, despite the suggestion of an oxymoron in the phrase "doubt in an Age of Faith", human existence is full of uncertainties' (p. 185). 'Indeed', the author concludes, 'on some levels medieval doubt does not seem very different in its scope and manifestations from what is experienced today' (p. 188).

In my view, it is the questions that Flanagan sets herself and her methodology in answering them that is the real achievement of this book: the establishment of a novel and intellectually rigorous hermeneutic and typology for interrogating doubt, the cornerstone of the intellectual vibrancy of the 'twelfth-century renaissance'. Further, the author's close reading in each chapter of a wide range of seminal twelfth-century sources ensures that this work will prove useful, not just for the overall image it paints for the cultural historian, but also for the acute observations of detail it provides on individual works.

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Gertsman, Elina, ed., *Visualizing Medieval Performance: Perspectives, Histories, Contexts*, Aldershot & Burlington, Ashgate, 2008; hardcover; pp. xiv, 348; 39 b/w illustrations; R.R.P. US$99.95, £65.00; ISBN 9780754664369.

The culmination of a conference held in 2005, Elina Gertsman's *Visualizing Medieval Performance: Perspectives, Histories, Contexts* presents a collection of essays from a broad spectrum of disciplines within medieval studies, all of which address issues of performance and performativity. In her introduction, Gertsman claims as justification for this book, that previous scholarship in the area of performativity tends to be isolated and 'closely circumscribed' in topic, just as the definition of medieval performance 'remains elusive and fragmented,' and she emphasizes the need to 'reconsider interconnections between medieval theatre, images, texts and practices of viewing, reading, listening, and enacting' (p. 2). Gertsman's collection succeeds in bringing together diverse perspectives of medieval performance from history, literature, architecture, art, theology, music, dance and theatre, achieving a certain intertextuality and inclusivity that may be lacking in more focused studies. However, the extent to which this book informs our definition of medieval performance and heightens our understanding of or engagement with issues of performativity remains individuated.

The collection is organized into four loosely unified sections (the last appears to comprise a 'miscellaneous' category) that contain multiple reference points between their various topics and approaches. The quality of writing and editing is consistently high throughout and Gertsman has, for the most part, chosen articles that are clear and engaging, with awkward, hard-to-follow or jargon-ridden passages appearing only rarely among the sixteen contributions.

While some essays are too drily descriptive (Decter, Delogu) or too broadly superficial (Maurey, Nevile) to venture outside their prescribed area, others offer a stimulating dialogue (Emmerson, Swift, Gertsman), touching on issues which suggest multiple cross-disciplinary parallels such as the reader/viewer as performer, the performance of self or gender, or behavioural transformation through performative acts. The inclusion of a broad range of topics nevertheless reveals the (sometimes unavoidable) biases of medieval scholarship: twelve of the sixteen essays deal with liturgical or religious practices, and six focus on literary (narrative or dramatic) texts, while all necessarily rely heavily on written records of verbal, ceremonial, dramatic,

ritualistic or other performative acts, whose apperceptive gap is barely acknowledged by some authors, but bridged by others through an intuitive and thoughtful application of performance theory.

Despite editorial intention, the definition and use of performance and performative theory vary greatly. In several essays, performance is viewed traditionally, as music, dance or theatre (Maurey, Nevile, Eherstine), or equated at a basic level with ceremonial movement and vocalization (Maranci, Decter). Others explore the performance of subject and identity, or of social and political tension (Delogu, Swift, Zorach). Several authors apply or take issue with the traditional demarcation between theatre and ritual (Fischer-Licthe, Suydam, Muessig, Kienzle) and a few attempt a more radical definition of performance as the combined sensory-phenomenological experience of reader/audience in connection with transformative visual or aural stimuli (Emmerson, Sheingorn, Gertsman). Performative theory pervades the volume, at worst with authors who pay lip service to performance studies gurus Richard Schechner and J. L. Austin, dropping names, jargon and labels with liberal abandon but little meaningful import throughout their articles, but at best with authors whose direct engagement of existing theory raises questions both contentious and illuminating. Interestingly, the two authors whose disciplines of music and dance fall most traditionally into the realm of performance (Maurey, Nevile) both fail to consider performative theories or cross-disciplinary dimensions, and instead present a descriptive overview of their subject which, though quite coherent, does little to further inter- or intra-disciplinary dialogue. Instead, authors whose texts, whether events or objects, are not traditionally considered performances, succeed in bringing performance, gender and reception theory into meaningful dialogue with medieval experience (Emmerson, Sheingorn, Frohlich).

The test of a theory is in how it can inform and engage with various disciplines without being contextually or subjectively limited, while the test of a discipline is not how it can manipulate its subject to fit into yet another theoretical mould, but how it confronts and contests a theory, re-shaping and growing in response to a new perspective. If recognizing scholarship's differences, inconsistencies and gaps can inform a particular subject, then the essays and ideas brought together in *Visualizing Medieval Performance: Perspectives, Histories, Contexts* indeed move us closer to defining what is, is not, or may be medieval performance, even as they reveal much about these various disciplines and their theoretical engagement. As a scholar, I found

that the essays furthest removed from my discipline stimulated and surprised the most, offering new methods and perspectives for my own research, and perhaps, it is in this transformative response that Gertsman's collection achieves its true aim and itself becomes a performative act.

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Groves, Peter and Geoffrey **Hiller**, eds, *English Character-Books of the Renaissance: An Anthology*, Asheville, NC, Pegasus Press, 2008; paperback; pp. iv, 240; R.R.P. unknown; ISBN 1889818399.

This book presents examples of cameos or miniatures written by Elizabethan, Jacobean and Caroline wits, epigraphers and churchmen. It contains 'characteries' or character sketches and comprises selections from the large surviving body of this type of literature. Editors Peter Groves and Geoffrey Hiller have selected them from collections published in the first half of the seventeenth century. The original authors include bishops Joseph Hall and John Earle, Richard Flecknoe, Nicholas Breton and Sir Thomas Overbury. In most cases, the authorial identity of the passages is secure, although some passages attributed to Webster are of doubtful authorship.

Although an abundance of these characteries survive, edited collections have appeared only rarely since the early twentieth century. The selections from these seventeenth-century writers present a wide-ranging account of personality types, including men and women, different ages (in fact the transition from childhood to youth to old age was a major theme in the character books), different professions, different social layers and persons from the country and city. Foreign nationalities are also represented, such as a French Dancing Master, with curiously, the Welsh also considered to be foreign from the point of view of the characteries' writers. Within these character sketches are attitudes, customs, religious practices, institutions (the parish constable was a noteworthy stock character) and manners, including the observation of urban, dandy and foreign manners.

Overall the editors have provided useful contextualizing introductions to each of the sections. They have preserved the original spellings and more significantly the original vocabulary, but also have provided a glossary of meanings for words that have changed their sense beyond recognition.

The editors themselves acknowledge that their decision to divide the character sketches into sections (such as men's lives, women's lives, virtues, vices and follies, religion, city and country and so on) imposes coherence on what were meant to be picaresque pieces of writing without thematic focus. However, the categories do assist in consolidating meaning and in presenting the major preoccupations of character writers.

Less successful are the editors' attempts to integrate the characteries into a wider literary context. References to Donne, Marvell and Jonson appear occasionally and passages from their writings are used to elucidate themes from the characteries. More significantly, the editors seek to draw comparisons between the personality types presented in the characteries and the characters in the works of major dramatists, notably Shakespeare.

One of the major claims that Groves and Hiller therefore make on behalf of their material is that the personality types presented in the characteries convey glimpses of individuality which inform the characters of major dramatists. Allusions to Shakespearean characters such as Jacques, Richard III and Iago are made throughout the text, but little attempt is made to account systematically for interaction between dramatists and characteries, beyond pointing to comparisons between characters in the plays and personality types (the melancholic, the unworthy king) in the characteries.

The influence on Shakespeare is a major claim to make about this material, as their earlier scholarly reception has consolidated an impression of their conveying typological characters. This collection therefore raises the question of the extent to which the character books' authors were concerned to convey some impression of actual human personalities. The evidence of the character sketches themselves can often in fact suggest that the characteries were more likely to present a stock character rather than representing an attempt to delineate actual human reality.

Groves and Hiller point out that the writing of the character books was shaped by a distinctive literary and religious context. The numbers known to have kept private diaries during this time in what the editors refer to as 'Protestant communion with God' (p. 8) are cited as evidence of a greater emphasis on individuality which in turn informed the writing of character books. At the same time, Groves and Hiller also reconstruct a context in which social mobility (represented by character types such as the social-climbing alderman or the ambitious sailor) was frowned upon. The characters presented

are therefore rigidly bound by stereotypes of social status and conform to expected types of behaviour.

The genre of the charactery itself is also rigidly artificial, inspired by classical prototypes (notably Seneca) and intended to allow authors to show their skills at pithy, succinct descriptions of appearance and actions. It therefore seems more likely to approach the characteries as lively but often typological catalogues of human behaviour and folly (many are critical of their subjects) than as offering glimmerings of actual human identity.

Groves and Hiller suggest that most characteries conveyed limited moral import, although even those by secular authors have an undeniable moral or ethical edge, conveyed mostly by the choice of character types. Thus, the witch is the doorway to sin, the tinker a social menace but the good magistrate is the 'Deputie of his Maker'.

There are appendices on classical character types and the principal authors from which this collection was drawn.

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Heaney, Seamus, trans., *Beowulf*, ed., John D. Niles, New York, Norton Press, 2007; paperback; pp. 224; R.R.P. US$24.95; ISBN 9780393330106.

Beowulf remains one of the archetypal texts of the medieval heroic age. We push to one side, perhaps, the constant problem of dating the world it depicts and instead embrace its depiction of the storied warrior world. All the hallmarks are there: warriors coming in from the sea and being met by a mounted guard; the wisdom (and impotence) of an aging king; a vicious monster (or three); the glamour cast upon the eponymous hero, and on all his singularly special armaments. The landscape is archetypal as well: from craggy coastlines to the splendour of the mead-hall, the abandoned, ancient tombs where dragons dwell and hoards are kept, and those darker, deeper, demonic meres.

It is no surprise that Seamus Heaney's introduction to his translation focuses on Tolkien's pivotal 1936 article on the way that *Beowulf* was approached as a work of literature, arguing for the treatment of the poem as an imaginative construction of a unified world, giving life to a fantastical age in poetic detail. Certainly Heorot, 'a sheer keep of fortified gold', may have inspired Tolkien's Edoras, and there are parallels between the heroic standards present in *Beowulf* indicated above and the typology of a thousand fantasy epics since *Lord of the Rings*.

The poem's appeal therefore straddles the medieval and the medievalist – it is a good place to start to trace Germanic cultural narratives, the beliefs and systems that developed into Anglo-Saxon identity, and the tropes that medievalism and medieval fantasy especially have inherited since then. Heaney's introduction to the epic displays a fine understanding of the place of *Beowulf* in the academic context, and also demonstrates his own concerns as poet and critic in wrangling with the language.

His translation – which the commentary by John Niles calls 'extravagant' – is on the face of it, anything but. Heaney's words are solid, recalling lost glories with an archaic air that is far more wistful than pretentious. It reads less like extravagant and more like down to earth. Niles also takes exception, when preparing the accompanying illustrations, to some of Heaney's liberties with the text and informs the reader of a direct translation. As fine as the concept of an illustrated edition is, and as superb as its execution is, it might have worked better if the illustrations and accompanying commentary were provided by an academic who did not feel the need to pick at the translation here and there.

The narrative of *Beowulf* itself is not known in the same way as such classics as *The Iliad* or *The Odyssey*, but the stew of medieval and heroic trappings that modern viewers have taken in for the past few decades has probably rendered it predictable. What reading Heaney's translation reminds the reader is that beyond the obvious basics – hero kills monster, becomes king, dies in combat – the world of *Beowulf* is blessed with a narrative and thematic complexity that belies any labelling of the 'Dark Ages'.

As the accompanying notes to this translation state, the world of *Beowulf* would have been a pagan one, but poetic interpolations have muddied the waters: the Danes make sacrifices to heathen gods one minute, then thank God for sending them Beowulf and salvation the next. And for all the many references to God's divine plan, there is no mention of Christ – a puzzling omission. Sadly the text is largely devoid of academic or deep critical commentary. Apart from the Tolkien reference, there is only a very basic overview of academic responses to *Beowulf*. A deeper introduction or a review of the literature would have proved enormously helpful for any reader hoping to take their understanding to a higher level.

The illustrations and accompanying essay and commentary, however, justly provide the reader with a luminous sense of the artefacts, landscapes and scenes that made up the world of those living in Beowulf's time, and those

making sense of it several hundred years later when the poem was set down in the form we have today. The photographs and reproductions are well chosen and many are simply beautiful. Niles states in his commentary that the aim of the illustration was to open up possible visualization of *Beowulf*, rather than limit it. In this sense it succeeds admirably for the lay reader.

Overall, this edition of *Beowulf* provides a remarkable and beautiful introduction to the text. Heaney's word-smithing is full of solid, subtle craft without annoying flourishes, and the illustrations help the reader escape into the heroic world. It is the perfect edition for the curious newcomer – and works well as a coffee table book, too. Academic readers may love the translation and the illustrations, but be mindful of the lack of critical commentary.

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Hewlett, Cecilia, *Rural Communities in Renaissance Tuscany: Religious Identities and Local Loyalties* (Europa Sacra, 1), Turnhout, Brepols, 2009; hardback; pp. xiv, 234; 13 b/w illustrations, 6 b/w tables; R.R.P. €60.00; ISBN 9782503523378.

Italian Renaissance scholarship can appear to privilege Florence, and while there are various reasons for this (e.g. the wealth of extant documentation), other cities and regions can seem peripheral. Cecilia Hewlett's study of rural Tuscany considers how the so-called fringe could force the *urbs* to adapt. Using rural parish records, communal letters of petition and local statutes, particularly from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Hewlett sets out three case studies: the mountain settlements above Pistoia; Gangalandi, in the fertile hills south-west of Florence; and Scarperia, a fourteenth-century Mugello 'New Town' constructed by Florence as a strategic bulwark. While they are clearly different, they are still, Hewlett argues, representative of the 'overlapping "geographies of power"' (p. 11, borrowing a phrase from Elena Guarini) that comprise Florence's extra-mural territory (*contado*).

The *contado* was neither uniform nor invariably peopled by the illiterate or unskilled. Rural inhabitants (*contadini*) in fact shared much with Florentine citizens (*cittadini*): professions, economies, networks and even notions of governance. Part I investigates Florentine attempts at control through communal politics, and their rural negotiation. Chapter 1 offers a useful articulation of the communities' administrative structures. Chapter 2 introduces the Pistoiese

mountains, traditionally considered the home of poor and violent people. Here geographical isolation enforced mobility and wide-ranging networks, as men moved livestock to pasture or market. Mountain knowledge, on which fortunes relied, was used to dodge Florentine tax officials and keen factional loyalties were nurtured. The posting was not popular with Florentine officials nor conflict entirely subdued, yet Hewlett shows that mountain-folk could evince stronger ties to Florence than other *contadini*.

Chapter 3 considers Gangalandi, arguing against the view that Florentine landowners there were necessarily 'agents of oppression in the countryside' (p. 77). Sharecropping (*mezzadria*) here could mean smaller tracts of land worked, to some extent, by urban landowners *and* local inhabitants. The latter did not necessarily live on the land they were employed to work, but often possessed and worked their own. They were respected enough in their communities to hold communal offices and it is not at all clear that the *cittadini* were their habitual exploiters.

Scarperia, the focus of Chapter 4, represents yet another case. Neighbouring villages were forcibly moved inside when the construction of this northern bastion was complete and Florence had to construct loyalty from scratch, but artificial creation did not account for the transference of prior political and social tensions. Inhabitants within Scarperia's walls enjoyed the status and wealth of a market town, and could demonstrate a perceived superiority to villagers just outside. Structures of government and taxation consciously reflected Florence's, and relative affluence saw the development of a political elite who tended to dominate communal offices.

Part II examines the spiritual communities of these contexts. Territorial borders could differ from those of diocese, potentially bringing Florence into conflict with local clergy. Chapter 5 examines approaches to this: church jurisdiction over lay moral crimes was restricted; a Florentine presence was established in local festivals; the *contadini* could be obliged to participate in urban celebrations. Rural clergy were important, as scribes, teachers, advocates and landlords, but locals also needed a delicate balance of urban patronage for building projects and charity. Hewlett makes the point by investigating the composition and role of rural confraternities, complementing numerous urban studies. In some settlements, *cittadino* membership was prohibited to ensure a space for *contadini* to sponsor charities, liturgy and religious instruction.

The case studies come together in Chapters 6–7 with respect to possible Florentine ramifications. Religious institutions in Scarperia tended to resemble

but exclude Florence, and ecclesiastical structures reflected political or social hierarchies. In Gangalandi, rural religious institutions could squabble amongst themselves but they continually engaged with prominent *cittadini* in significant ways, and posed no real threat to Florentine rule. Churches, the primary meeting places for Pistoia's mountainfolk, were vulnerable to factional attacks, and those loyalties ultimately seem more important than those of parish or confraternity. Chapter 7 argues for the complexity of these responses, of each community's 'topography, agriculture, social structures, liturgical practices, strategic location, and political alliances' (p. 204), as an indication of the dynamism of Florence's relations with the *contado*.

Hewlett's work is based on sustained engagement with unpublished archival material, a great strength, although further use of non-statutory material could have fleshed out the *contadini* portraits. Similarly, the extensive use of both Anglophone and Italian scholarship will make students particularly lament the lack of a bibliography. Standardisation of Italian toponyms and proper nouns is sometimes inconsistent, with ramifications for the index, but scholars will be interested to trace, in the four appendices, the influence of lineage on rural political offices. Hewlett acknowledges that her case studies could seem arbitrary or appear to make false distinctions, yet their primary contribution is precisely their specificity, which destroys the idea of a monolithic Florentine *contado*.

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Hingst, Amanda Jane, *The Written World: Past and Place in the Work of Orderic Vitalis*, Notre Dame, University of Notre Dame, 2009, paperback; pp. 296; 2 b/w illustrations; R.R.P. US$40.00; ISBN 9780268030865.

Using the twelfth-century chronicle of the Anglo-Norman monk, Orderic Vitalis, as her base, Amanda Hingst has constructed an elegantly written, engaging text that explores medieval understandings of place and time. This ambitious work takes the unusual approach of grounding the historian's understanding of his wider world by locating him within his physical environment. As those who study Britain and France during the eleventh and twelfth centuries would be well aware, Orderic Vitalis was an important observer of his society whose world chronicle is now available in excellent modern editions. This makes him an ideal subject for such a study.

The book is divided into six chapters that each act as a case study that explores different aspects of the physical world addressed in the chronicle. The first locates the site of authorship within the region of the Pay d'Ouche in Normandy where the monastery that Orderic Vitalis entered at the age of 10 was situated. Here, Hingst recounts the history of the monastery, a community established on the site of a previous foundation founded by St Evroul some four centuries before. This allows Hingst to discuss the relic-cult of St Evroul, including the theft and recovery of the saint's relics, and the significance of locality for such cults. It also provides her with an opportunity to briefly explore the legacy of the desert and the eremetical life in monastic intellectual culture.

In her next three chapters Hingst discusses the broader geopolitical landscape, beginning with her second chapter, 'Classical geography and the *Gens Normannorum*', where she examines not only Orderic's sources and his knowledge of models such as Bede's *Historia Anglorum*, which he had personally copied, but also their impact on the shaping of his history. Ironically, given the focus of this book, Orderic had rejected the geographical introduction, so much a feature of these histories. Instead his world is one 'driven by change', with less focus on a static physical world such descriptions provided. Orderic's world is one reflecting the complicated concept of the *gens Normannorum*, a group defined less by ethnicity than by ethos, by their conquest of a new homeland, an identity that was not diminished as their territorial control extended into Apulia and Britain.

In the third chapter Hingst argues that the Norman concept of the world differed from earlier western imaginings because of the importance of the sea. For example, Britain, which for the Mediterranean Isidore of Seville was an island cut off from the world by the ocean, becomes for the Normans united with the mainland in a community where the sea is at the centre, ringed by land. While this is an engaging insight, one of my frustrations with this chapter is the lack of evidence drawn from Orderic Vitalis's own writings. More detail is needed to explore this idea further and to examine whether this was an attitude associated specifically with him or one generally held by Norman writers.

At the heart of this understanding of the world was the conquest of Britain. In her chapter on Britain, Hingst takes up Orderic's use of the noun 'Albion' to present a unification of both pre and post-Conquest British history as well as a conceptualization of the British Isles as a single geographical and,

potentially, political unit, that includes Scots, Irish, English, Welsh, Danes and Normans. This chapter rounds out and completes the ideas embodied in *gens Normannorum*.

The final three chapters concern, to a certain extent, a more spiritual landscape, although they lack the coherence of the preceding three. In the first, Hingst examines the idea of Jerusalem, not just geographically, but also metaphorically, finding a new Jerusalem in the altar of Orderic's own monastic church, as well as temporally. She also discusses the diagrammatic construction of the world as found in the T-O maps of the *mappae mundi*. This includes Thornley's *computus* manuscript, containing a copy of Byrthferth's diagram, as well as a small entry in Orderic's own hand. 'Haunted landscapes' begins with the vision of a ghostly army of travellers experienced by the priest, Walchelin. The dead are very present in Orderic's worldview, in the tombs of monastic founders and in the community's prayers and their concerns about a good death. This sense colours the very act of writing a history and is the focus of this chapter. In the final chapter, Hingst argues that just as the *Historia Ecclesiastica* begins with Christ, it is fitting that her study of Orderic's geography should also end with Christ. While the argument that Orderic's world was insistently Christocentric seems unassailable, the idea that his conception of geography was as anchored in Christology as his history is less convincingly presented. This is an ambitious chapter, but the spatial elements of this thesis are elusive, at least with reference to Orderic's writings.

This is a bold, thought-provoking, ambitious work that I enjoyed reading. While I would not challenge most of her conclusions, I am not always convinced by Hingst's process. The thematic structure does provide the author with the ability to cover wide-ranging material, but missing for this reviewer was a firm anchoring of this study in an account of the actual construction of Orderic Vitalis's chronicle, and where it fits within the rich historiography of Anglo-Norman history-writing. At the same time, however, this is an imaginative and original contribution to the study of twelfth-century historiography.

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Hobbins, Daniel, *Authorship and Publicity Before Print: Jean Gerson and the Transformation of Late Medieval Learning* (Middle Ages), Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009; cloth; pp. xii, 335; 14 b/w illustrations, 3 b/w maps; R.R.P. US$49.95, £32.50; ISBN 9780812241556.

In the last decade, we have witnessed a series of new major publications on Jean Gerson. Patrick Brian McGuire's editorial efforts, such as *Jean Gerson: Early Works* (1998) and *A Companion to Jean Gerson* (2006), were accompanied by his own biographical account, *Jean Gerson and the Last Medieval Reformation* (2005). Marc Vial produced a theological study, *Jean Gerson: Théoricien de la théologie mystique* (2006). Daniel Hobbins' book, however, is not merely 'another' monograph on Gerson. In fact, it marks a significant departure from the existing scholarship: Hobbins attempts not only to offer a fresh reinterpretation of Gerson as a late medieval intellectual – which alone would have been significant enough – but also to reconstruct the rapidly transforming intellectual landscape in which Gerson lived and worked.

In this context, Gerson is viewed as a 'mirror' of the intellectual and cultural shifts of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Hobbins' aim is to understand Gerson as an author who was 'self-conscious about the task of writing and skilled in putting it to good use' (p. 1). The book is neither a conventional biography nor a study of 'straight' intellectual history. It steers a middle course between conventional intellectual history that highlights intellectual 'giants' and their 'canons', and the social history of ideas and the history of the book that look at the circulation and impact of books and pamphlets written by anonymous or unknown authors as well as famous ones. Hobbins rises to this methodological challenge.

The question underlining this erudite work is: how and why was Gerson enormously successful in reaching a wide international audience? Hobbins begins his enquiry by exploring Gerson's literary motives. In the later Middle Ages, ancient authorities were still embraced, while new works continued to be produced by schoolmen. Living in the growing world of books, Gerson discerned the urgent need to establish the sources of a safe and secure theology, what he called the 'common school of theological truth'. Gerson privileged 'great books' which offered 'a blend of learning and piety'.

Through this endeavour, Hobbins argues, Gerson transformed late medieval learning in many ways. First, he redefined the role of a theologian

as a physician who diagnosed moral diseases, in opposition to the impersonal legalism of the canonists. His desire to safeguard Christian piety and the language by which to verbalize orthodox faith was also accompanied by his extraordinary drive to produce literary works one after another across literary genres ranging from sophisticated theological treatises to poetry. Further, Gerson refashioned contemporary prose: while he remained respectful of the scholastic logical style, he recognized the importance of rhetoric, thus seeking to achieve the readers' understandings as well as their devotional affections.

Unlike those of most schoolmen, Gerson's literary output was appealing to a lay audience because he was conscious of the reading public's needs. Thus he never wrote anything like a *summa*; instead, he wrote numerous short pieces on specific topics. Gerson's editorial attention to readers' needs allowed him to add colophons, diagrams, headings and subdivisions to the text. As a result, Gerson was no longer a conventional schoolman in the ivory tower; he increasingly emerged as a 'public intellectual'.

Gerson's ambitious undertakings, however, could not materialize unless as many copies as possible of his writings circulated far and wide in Western Europe. 'Publishing' in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries posed problems unique to the time, such as how to ensure the accuracy and authenticity of copies produced by scribes. Hobbins concludes the book with two extensive chapters dealing with the highly complex questions of book production and distribution. While no 'open market' for books existed, Gerson's massive output was disseminated widely, if not evenly, in Western Europe through what Hobbins calls 'distribution circles' such as the Councils of Constance and Basel and the network of Carthusian houses.

I suspect this study of Gerson as an author entails significant implications for Gerson in the context of intellectual history: how successful was Gerson in shaping something like 'public opinion' about issues such as orthodoxy and heresy? Hobbins' book began with an enquiry into authorial intentions: an essential question in intellectual history. One of the arresting issues in intellectual history is the discrepancy between authorial motives and the impact of the author's ideas on readers. The question of 'influence', however, is outside the scope Hobbins prescribed.

Altogether, the book constitutes a highly original work of cultural and publishing history. Hobbins is to be congratulated on producing a novel account of a late medieval theological giant and the cultural world with

which he endeavoured to communicate. The book has set a new benchmark in the study of late medieval thought.

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Hobby, Elaine, ed., *The Birth of Mankind: Otherwise Named, The Woman's Book* (Literary and Scientific Cultures of Early Modernity), Aldershot, Ashgate, 2009; hardback; pp. xxxix, 310; 7 b/w illustrations; R.R.P. £60.00; ISBN 9780754638186.

First published in 1545 with the last edition appearing in 1654, a modern version of *The Birth of Mankind* by the physician Thomas Raynalde is long overdue. Elaine Hobby has spent nine years correcting this glaring omission to present a new version of the authoritative 1560 edition.

In an informative introduction, she identifies the general sources which *The Birth of Mankind* closely follows. These include Avicenna, Rhazes, Hippocrates and Albert the Great's (Albertus Magnus') encyclopaedic mid-thirteenth century *On Animals*. She also examines Richard Jonas' 1540 version of *The Birth of Mankind*, a translation of Eucharius Rösslin's *Rose garden* (1513) that Raynalde revised by correcting terminology and updating medical knowledge to present a more sophisticated text.

By way of preparing the modern reader for Raynalde's medical concepts, Hobby also uses her introduction to outline the basic Early Modern understanding of the human body. She begins with the humoral theory in which a subject's health is determined by the equal balance of yellow bile, phlegm, blood and black bile, which are associated with heat, wetness, dryness and coldness respectively. Hobby then emphasizes how 'a man would usually be hotter than a woman' (p. xxi), a superior state to the woman's cold dampness that also negatively describes her as a leaky vessel. What is especially interesting is that Hobby argues that a basic grasp of Early Modern medical and philosophical thought is necessary to understand how Raynalde challenges these concepts. In particular, as Hobby observes, Raynalde refutes women's inferiority to explain that menstruation, usually thought of as a damaging excess of blood, is necessary to provide nourishment for the anticipated foetus.

Hobby further whets the reader's appetite for the 1545 Renaissance

text by revealing that Raynalde added a new Book One to *The Birth of Mankind*. The new Book includes exciting ideas about the human anatomy first published in Latin, only two years previously by Andreas Vesalius, which attacked 'long-standing Galenic assertions' (p. xxv). Vesalius' radical ideas are derived from his own anatomical dissections of the human body that oppose the 'Galenic practice of refusing to dissect human beings' (p. xxv). Interestingly, Hobby observes that the 'Vesalian drawings of the female sexual anatomy' helped sell Raynalde's text (p. xxvii). Hobby also acknowledges that Book One's translated descriptions of the female sexual parts are a radical departure from 'the masculinist assumptions' of the Latin original (p. xxx). Less controversially, the second book moves on to a description of natural and unnatural births, good diets that help labour and also includes gruesome advice on how to remove a fully developed dead baby from the womb (p. 107). Book Three advises how to care for the newborn child, gives information on breastfeeding and provides remedies for childhood illnesses. Finally, Book Four examines the problems affecting conception, and what medicines may help it.

The Birth of Mankind is aided by fascinating diagrams of the birthing stool and 'The Birth figures' in addition to Book One's illustrations of the female sexual anatomy. It is also made more accessible by Hobby's myriad footnotes. The footnotes, though, can sometimes be annoyingly repetitive with the same word like the 'matrix' being persistently defined. However, this repetition may reveal the relentless energy Hobby has poured into the book. These efforts are evident in the appendices that include a wealth of extra material. This material includes extracts from Jonas' 1540 version of *The Birth of Mankind*, Raynalde's 1545 analysis of the male anatomy and the fascinating changes between the 1540 and 1560 editions of the text. Finally, a medical glossary and bibliography provide essential information for the student and researcher wishing to explore Early Modern medicine, gynaecology and midwifery in greater detail.

The exhaustive volume of material Hobby has added to the book makes her edition of Raynalde's *The Birth of Mankind* the definitive text for the modern reader. Furthermore, Hobby encourages her readers not just to enjoy Raynalde's book passively, but to engage with its medical and philosophical notions by comparing it to the classical medical ideas formulated by the Greek Hippocratic corpus and the Galenic anatomy. She even recommends subject matter for future research. Overall, Hobby has transformed a

neglected Early Modern curiosity into a notable work, which deserves its place alongside established Renaissance medical classics such as Robert Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621) and Jacques Ferrand's *A Treatise on Lovesickness* (1623).

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Kaeuper, Richard W., *Holy Warriors: The Religious Ideology of Chivalry* (Middle Ages), Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009; cloth; pp. 344; 1 illustration; R.R.P. US$59.95, £39.00; ISBN 9870812241679.

Richard W. Kaeuper describes the subject of his book as an investigation into how chivalry could fit into a Christian framework (p. 5). He comes to his subject not by examining the clerical notions of knightly piety but by examining how the knights themselves came to justify their violent profession within Christianity. Although clerical responses to knightly violence are discussed in Chapter 1, Kaeuper acknowledges this is an area that has attracted much scholarly interest (p. 6). He also notes the church's pervasive influence in all aspects of medieval life, often stemming from beliefs about the afterlife. However, what interests Kaeuper is how knights interpreted these clerical responses and developed their own notions of knightly piety.

The investigation into knightly piety begins in Chapter 2 when Kaeuper explores the religious ideas of two knights, Henry of Lancaster and Geoffroi de Charny. Both knights lived in the first half of the fourteenth century and fought on opposing sides during the Hundred Years War. And they had something else in common: both wrote chivalric treatises that examined the religious aspects of chivalry.

Kaeuper demonstrates that Henry's treatise, *Livre de seyntz medicines* (The Book of Holy Remedies) presents a model knight whose piety is based in his desire to suffer in imitation of Christ. His suffering is not just about his love for Christ but is an attempt to cancel out many of his sins and place him in favour on the Day of Judgement. His knightly activities are offered as atonement for sin, a meritorious suffering (p. 41) that is pleasing to God.

Charny's *Livre de chevalerie* contains the same themes as Henry's treatise but his emphasis is firmly on the chivalric life with religious overtones. To

Charny, the bodily sufferings endured by knights are an essential component of the prowess required to be a great knight. It is this suffering that links knightly activities to honour and makes these activities the highest form of human endeavour (p. 43). Although this perhaps seems to be a conventional view of how the knights saw their contribution to chivalry, the religious nature of chivalry is present because knightly prowess is a gift from God. Therefore the knight has a responsibility to use this gift in a righteous and appropriate manner.

Kaeuper emphasizes that both treatises are the independent thoughts of two practising knights. They arrived at their own conclusions about the piety of knightly life despite the great clerical interest in the subject. Notions of heroic prowess, meritorious suffering and lay independence formed their response to clerical ideas of chivalry. Although it is possible to see clerical ideas about knighthood in their writings, Kaeuper argues that the two knights were highly selective in their use of them (p. 50).

Having discussed specific knightly notions of the religious aspect of chivalry, Kaeuper moves on to look at what would have influenced the two knights' religious ideas. Chapter 3 examines the context of religious chivalry. Again, Kaeuper states that his purpose is not to investigate how clerical reforms influenced chivalry, already a well-researched subject. He is interested in another religious aspect of medieval life, that is the atmosphere of asceticism that created the necessary environment for chivalry. It was this asceticism that informed knightly ideas of meritorious suffering (p. 65).

Yet, even though ideas of asceticism were directly related to clerical writings, Chapter 4 shows how the independent spirit of the knights informed their own religious ideas of chivalry. In Chapter 5, Kaeuper examines how these religious ideas were disseminated through *chansons*, romances, chronicles and crusade propaganda. Kaeuper ends this chapter with the assertion that the religious justification of the crusades came to justify all warfare fought in a good cause during the medieval period (p. 115).

Chapters 6, 7, and 8 discuss how religious ideas of chivalry infiltrated the life of the knight. Chapter 6 examines the knight's identification with the suffering Christ, Chapter 7 looks at how knightly activities were viewed as sacred work, and Chapter 8 deals with the place of confession and penance in the life of the knight. The final chapter moves forward to the Early Modern period and considers why chivalry died. Kaeuper's conclusion is that sovereign power mediated the knight's relationship with God as the wars of religion were fought to decide whether particular kingdoms should be Catholic or Protestant.

Kaeuper's book offers much to the understanding of knighthood because it examines a little understood aspect of chivalry in detail, namely, the religious ideas of chivalry and their application in the daily life of the knight. It will be of great interest to both students and researchers. His style is lively and interesting, and his examples from knightly treatises and medieval literature will ensure that the book will be read across disciplines. This is a book that makes a significant contribution to our understanding of how knights justified their activities.

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Kleist, Aaron J., ed., *The Old English Homily: Precedent, Practice and Appropriation* (Studies in the Early Middle Ages, 17), Turnhout, Brepols, 2007; hardback; pp. xiii, 532; R.R.P. €90.00; ISBN 9782503517926.

This collection of essays styles itself as an update to Szarmach and Huppé's 1978 *The Old English Homily and its Backgrounds*. The new generation of scholars represented here certainly provide a wealth of information, ideas and analysis. The scope of this volume is broader than the 1978 collection, collocating discussions ranging from the Latin precedents for Old English homilies to Tudor and Stuart antiquarianism. The papers are arranged in three sections.

In 'Precedent', Charles D. Wright gives a lengthy and very detailed discussion of approaches to Latin sources for Old English homilies, discussing the issues surrounding the range of uses of these sources from direct translation to borrowing and blending of themes. Most of this section consists of close analysis of various homiletic collections. Nancy M. Thompson suggests that the Blickling Book, which incorporates homilies and other material, draws its inspiration from the Carolingian *De Festivitatibus*. Ælfric's Old Testament materials are the focus of Rachel Anderson's paper, which examines an approach adopted by Ælfric in which translation is liberally blended with interpretation. Ælfric is a recurring theme, with Stephen J. Harris assessing the rogationtide liturgical context for Ælfric's homilies. Joyce Hill draws some very interesting conclusions about the possible versions of Paul the Deacon that would have been available to Ælfric.

In 'Practice', the Blickling homilies are discussed by M. J. Toswell. His examination of the codicology of the manuscript leads him to the important

conclusion that consideration of this collection as a unified whole is inappropriate, since it was almost certainly not created or used in that way. Samantha Zacher looks at the homilies of the Vercelli Book, suggesting that, far from being poor cousins to the poetic texts in that manuscript, the homilies are highly accomplished texts with clear purpose and function. Thomas N. Hall, surveying manuscripts contemporaneous with Ælfric, concludes that Ælfric followed the mainstream European practice of preparing homilies on saints for reading during the monastic night office. The homily on Cecilia is used by Robert K. Upchurch to demonstrate Ælfric's blurring of the distinction between lay and priestly audiences in their quest for spiritual purity. Loredana Teresi poses the question 'Ælfric's or not?' of temporale collections, but in fact makes a very broad and informative survey of Proper homilies and their arrangement in collections. Andy Orchard leavens this Ælfric-heavy section with a refreshing review of Wulfstan-related homiletic materials in their context. His alliterative claim that Wulfstan's 'literary legacy has languished' (p. 341) is rather borne out by the under-representation of Wulfstan in this volume.

In 'Appropriation', the subsequent uses of Anglo-Saxon homilies from the eleventh to the seventeenth centuries are discussed. Mary P. Richards analyses the reuse of homiletic and other material in the poem *Seasons for Fasting* to conclude that the poem is almost wholly derivative, with old materials applied to new purposes. Aidan Conti reviews a newly discovered connection between the Latin homilies in MS Bodley 343 and the Homiliary of Angers, and argues that the extensive reuse of Anglo-Saxon texts during the twelfth century, when few new texts in English were being produced, had less to do with antiquarian motivations than with a strong interest in preaching in English. This theme is also taken up by Mary Swan, whose investigation of MSS Lambeth Palace 487 and Cotton Vespasian A.XXII ranges widely across such questions as column rulings in quires (a welcome development from work in this area which tends to overly privilege text) to conclude that a single interpretation of the materials as intended for oral delivery, monastic use or private reading is not productive. Christopher Abram moves beyond Anglo-Saxon shores to investigate the seriously under-studied field of Old Norse-Icelandic homilies and conclude significant Anglo-Saxon influence there. The book's editor, Aaron J. Kleist, completes the collection with a survey of Tudor and Stuart antiquarian interest in Anglo-Saxon homiliaries.

This fascinating collection of information is so dense as to render it difficult to comprehend, and there is little interpretation or analysis of it. Nonetheless,

to have the data painstakingly collected in this way is an immeasurably valuable contribution to scholarship on the homilies, and the capacity to dip into this list, aided by the volume's thorough index, in search of an individual collector or manuscript will assist many a scholar, and will hopefully add a further dimension to the study of homiletic collections.

This collection of essays certainly provides a valuable platform from which scholarship on the Anglo-Saxon homily can continue to build. If the next thirty years can match its advances from Szarmach and Huppé, we may count ourselves fortunate.

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Knight, Leah, *Of Books and Botany in Early Modern England: Sixteenth-Century Plants and Print Culture* (Literary and Scientific Cultures of Early Modernity), Aldershot, Ashgate, 2009; hardback; pp. xvii, 163; 12 b/w illustrations; R.R.P. £50.00; ISBN 9780754665861.

Leah Knight's compact and thought-provoking book *Of Books and Botany in Early Modern England* explores an area which is usually glossed over and has been little examined to date: the deep connection between the Early Modern conception and framing of botanical knowledge and the emergence of print culture. In the second half of the sixteenth century, herbals were being produced at the same time as the printed book and literacy began to thrive (the formation of the Stationers' Company in 1557 signalled the arrival of print as a cultural industry). The shaping and presentation of information about plants, for consumption in the newly emerging markets for books, was dependent on humanist literary traditions and bore strong resemblances to contemporaneous publications of poetry, commonplace books and other literary works.

Knight's work illustrates the reciprocal relationship between books and botanical culture in various ways. She considers how books were often imagined as gardens, collections of plants, and horticultural experiences. Botanical and horticultural metaphors were ubiquitous in titles, prefaces and dedications of works that had nothing to do with botany, while the language of textual collection (the anthology, the florilegium and the sylva) alluded in their etymology to plants. This produced an ambiguity of genre, created by the paratextual material and enhanced by decorative borders like garden hedges.

There were material connections in the substance of books: pages were, and often still are, 'leaves'.

Knight's work illuminates the striking similarities, shared rhetoric and presentation of poetry and plant descriptions. In Chapter 2 she considers the continental contexts, the herbals and traditions that influenced England. She links the gathering of textual fragments, and the reproducing of them in commonplace books, with the gathering of plant specimens. Plants and texts were both collectible objects and Knight's work draws from earlier studies of collecting in Early Modern culture. Herbals resembled the poetic anthologies that became popular in England in the second half of the sixteenth century: anthologies that frequently used botanical metaphors. At the same time, textual order was applied to the garden.

Chapters 3 and 4 focus on the herbalists William Turner and John Gerard. These bring to light the poetics of plant description. Approaches to plant knowledge, collecting and classifying were highly mediated by text. Poets, and classical poets citing classical naturalists, were seen as reliable sources, or in any event worthy of quoting, for herbal knowledge. The humanist value placed on classical antecedent texts extended to the herbals and natural science generally. Thus, these early herbals commonly quoted from sources such as Virgil and Ovid. For example, Gerard relies on Theocritus's reference to daffodils in a meadow, where Europa and her nymphs played, as the authority for the habitat of the flower. Gerard incorporated poetic accounts of plants seamlessly into his botanical descriptions. The emergence of the disciplines and consequent separation of fictional and empirical modes of thought would not begin until the mid-seventeenth century.

One of Knight's skills is to constantly approach her subject from various angles, situating the plant and book cultural connections within various contexts. With the emergence of print culture came a new consciousness of proprietary ownership of texts. Gerard was criticized for plagiarism yet, as Knight observes, his work can be seen as part of the commonplace tradition in which there were assumptions of shared, communal knowledge. She also highlights the traces of Early Modern women's plant collecting and naming practices that paradoxically emerge from Gerard's work, with references to women as anonymous yet authoritative sources.

Finally Knight considers the parallels between the domestication of books and plants and how both came to be part of domestic space. Knight's work brings some valuable insights. She observes similarities in the spatial design of

gardens, with their enclosing borders and internal divisions, and book design. She considers various developments that brought the garden inside the house: the use of plant matter for furnishing and decoration, the increased use of windows in building designs, enabling an internal experience of the external garden, and the development of galleries which replicated the garden walk in inclement weather.

Of Books and Botany in Early Modern England is part of Ashgate's Literary and Scientific Cultures in Early Modernity series, which explores relations between literary and scientific discourses in Europe at a time when both fields were subject to dramatic change. Knight's book will be of value to scholars of Early Modern natural science, early print culture and those interested in the shifts from analogical and mythological modes to empirical modes of thinking and presenting knowledge that took place in the seventeenth century. Her excellent bibliography is itself a rich garden to wander in. Overall the book is a succinct and valuable exploration of the ways in which the cultures of plants and texts intersected in the Early Modern period.

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Mazzola, Elizabeth, *Women's Wealth and Women's Writing in Early Modern England: 'Little Legacies' and the Materials of Motherhood*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2009; hardback; pp. xii, 126; 14 b/w illustrations; R.R.P. €50.00; ISBN 9780754666639.

This book is a study of 'the ways that women's writings in the early modern period concern their wealth', with wealth defined as women's kinship ties and influence, moveables and other property, and investments (p. 3). Elizabeth Mazzola is most interested in how women's writings and other material belongings and productions describe, foster and reproduce relationships between women in Early Modern England. So she explores, for example, the robes of state worn by Mary Tudor and her half-sister Elizabeth at their coronations, and the tapestries produced by Mary Stuart in conjunction with Bess of Hardwick, and sold off in 1610 by Arbella Stuart, as well as Elizabeth I's *The Miroir or Glasse of the Synneful Soul*, and Mary Stuart's casket sonnets.

Mazzola's focus on writing as one of several kinds of material legacies

of women in the period is a fertile one, and enables a series of chapters on selected artefacts of four women: Elizabeth I; Mary Stuart (Queen of Scots); Elizabeth Talbot, Countess of Shrewsbury (Bess of Hardwick); and Arbella Stuart. These four kinswomen are well-chosen and intriguingly interrelated, all jostling around the English throne. Bess acted as keeper at Hardwick Hall to Mary Stuart and later to her grand-daughter (and Mary Stuart's niece) Arbella, each of her charges potential and potentially dangerous heiresses to Elizabeth. Mazzola demonstrates convincingly that the women's 'entanglements' (p. 7), as evinced in their material productions and legacies, are potent expressions of gendered subjectivity and familial and political cultures.

Chapter 1 is described as being on women's education, although its focus is on Elizabeth's translation of Marguerite de Navarre's *Miroir*, presented by the eleven-year-old princess to Katherine Parr. Chapter 2 explores the state robes worn by Mary Tudor and by her sister Elizabeth on their coronations, unpicking with care the signifiers of gender, family and state involved in the sartorial choices of a woman being crowned as monarch. Elizabeth's Catholic and Scottish cousin, Mary Stuart, is the focus of Chapter 4, which reads the Queen of Scots' embroidered tapestries alongside the so-called casket sonnets that were used to incriminate Mary in the murder of her second husband, Henry Stuart, Lord Darnley. Chapter 4 also examines the letters written by Arbella Stuart during her detention by Bess, while Chapter 5 focuses on Arbella's sale in 1610 of Mary Stuart's needlework panels, again teasing out the career of the redoubtable Bess herself.

Each chapter is like a detail picked out of the tapestry of the four women's interwoven lives. But as these details accumulate, Mazzola's insistence on reading the women as 'mothers' and their artefacts as 'mother's legacies', the approach signalled in her subtitle, sits uneasily over them. Elizabeth I and Arbella Stuart were never mothers, and maternity does not seem to be the strongest connection between these four subjects, even if maternity is read, via Wendy Wall, as a metaphorical 'language of legacy' (p. 43). It is also unlikely that these elite women were representative of 'what other early modern mothers and daughters were trying to achieve with each other' (p. 5), a claim which could only be established through exploration of women across a much wider range of classes and with very different material lives. Mazzola's subjects emerge as women of exceptional familial and dynastic standing, revealing far more about how 'aristocratic families were also constructs underwritten by the state' (p. 75), and about the status of women and their artefacts within

these aristocratic constructs, than they do about maternity or maternal legacies.

Mazzola uses Virginia Woolf's tenet that daughters think back through their mothers to define, not only their own critical practice, but the interrelationships between Early Modern women themselves. The result is a somewhat outdated gynocentrism, as she reads women only in relation to other women. The slightness of the book also limits its scope. Her treatment of collaborative lyric-writing and of gift-giving, for example, could have benefited from more extensive consideration of these as practices in which women and men mutually engaged. Esther Inglis (who is relevant to discussions of writing, needlework and gift exchange) receives no mention, and actual 'little legacies', the manuscript mother's advice books which constitute an important genre of women's writing in the period, receive only fleeting treatment.

Mazzola's associative style, with chapters divided into several loosely-related segments, does little to fill these gaps, but this is an evocative study. We are left with details such as a description of Mary Stuart making marmalade in France and at her house in St Andrews, and the inventory of Arbella Stuart's astonishingly spare chamber at Hardwick Hall. The book's limitations notwithstanding, it enhances our understanding of elite women's material lives, and valuably insists that their writing be located not only in a literary context, but in a broader one of aesthetic, material, political and economic cultures.

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Minnis, Alastair and Jane **Roberts**, eds, *Text, Image, Interpretation: Studies in Anglo-Saxon Literature and its Insular Context in Honour of Éamonn Ó Carragáin* (Studies in the Early Middle Ages, 18), Turnhout, Brepols, 2007; hardback; pp. xxiv, 576; R.R.P. €110.00; ISBN 9782503518190.

Éamonn Ó Carragáin is a giant in early medieval scholarship and a kind and generous scholar, particularly noted for his insightful work on the Ruthwell Cross. This volume shows clearly the esteem in which he is held by colleagues and students alike, with papers referring respectfully, playfully or gratefully to his scholarship, leadership and friendship. The book begins with a foreword by Mary Clayton, who sums up Ó Carragáin perfectly when she recalls him singing *Beowulf* to the Irish tune *Sliabh na mBan* to the class of which she was part. It ends with a bibliography of Ó Carragáin's works compiled by his

archaeologist son and University College Cork colleague, Tomás Ó Carragáin, showing that Éamonn Ó Carragáin's contributions to medieval studies take many forms. The book contains 26 outstanding contributions from well-known medieval scholars in fields as diverse as art history, archaeology, Old English and Old Norse. One can imagine Ó Carragáin's delight at Andy Orchard's delicious title 'Intoxication, Fornication, and Multiplication: The Burgeoning Text of *Genesis A*', and Michael Ryan's dedication 'To Éamonn in memory of many al fresco celebrations in Rome and Venice'. However, these are just finishing touches to the mass of thorough and insightful scholarship presented in the book, which must surely delight Ó Carragáin even more.

There is far too much in this book for a review like this to do it justice, so a few comments on the highlights for this reviewer will have to suffice. The first section, 'Looking Outwards', contains papers dealing with comparisons and relationships in literature, church dedications and material culture. Alan Thacker's article on martyr cults and their physical manifestations within and outside the walls of Rome traces the changing attitudes which made it possible for relics of martyrs, originally confined to extramural sites in accordance with pagan tradition, to move within the city walls. It shows an impressive familiarity with textual and archaeological evidence and a willingness to challenge paradigms. Michelle P. Brown reviews the Barberini Gospels with characteristic competence, concluding that a blend of local and international tastes contributed to their decoration. Interestingly, she argues for an 'ultimately Northumbrian background' for the work of one scribe, but evinces parallels in Southumbrian work such as the Gandersheim Casket, Ormside Bowl and sculpture from central Mercia. Anna Maria Luiselli Fadda examines Anglo-Saxon and Irish depictions of the moment of resurrection, giving a fascinating account of the use of bird figures as visual representations of the soul, revealing some refreshingly close examination of sculpture and drawing in comparisons from as far afield as Egypt. The Alfred Jewel and the Fuller Brooch are examined by Charles D. Wright, who finds that the personification of sight is represented holding flowers. He draws on the evidence of a botanical expert to establish that the flowers are very accurately depicted. Elizabeth Coatsworth contributes a survey of embroidered inscriptions, bringing a neglected topic to the fore. She notes the apparently small milieu in which these items were manufactured, and that they were predominantly associated with female commissioners.

The second section, 'Reading Texts', unsurprisingly contains several

articles concerning *The Dream of the Rood* and the Vercelli Book in which it is located. It also contains an impressive reading by Hugh Magennis of *The Seafarer*, in which he points out the unusually individualistic focus of the poem, arguing a Christian purpose for this feature. Jane Roberts discusses *Beowulf* with particular reference to the representation of the humiliation of Hrothgar, in an argument hinging on the interpretation of a pronoun – a not uncommon problem in early medieval studies. A study of *Húsdrápa* by Richard North gives an interesting account of the fragments of a poem describing the carvings in a house, extrapolating from the vocabulary of the poem to possible materials in the carving. While some of these extrapolations seem overly speculative, it is interesting to see so much being imaginatively made of so little.

In the final section, 'Reading Stones', Carol Neuman de Vegvar surveys possible uses of Anglo-Saxon crosses in the landscape, arguing that vegetal motifs, generally accounted as representing the 'true vine', may have had a more physically useful meaning for the local people, whereby the Church was 'willing to save their crops along with their souls'. George Henderson surveys representations of the apostles in Insular stone sculpture, referring particularly to the great cross-slab from Tarbat. His readings are sometimes dubious, asserting, for instance, that the apostles on the Moone cross are 'highly schematized identical figures', whereas the faces are in fact all distinctly individual, as Henderson argues elsewhere.

This collection is a fitting tribute to the honorand, wide-ranging, imaginative and inspiring. It will be of great value to early medieval scholarship.

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Ott, John S., and Anna Trumbore **Jones**, eds, *The Bishop Reformed: Studies of Episcopal Power and Culture in the Central Middle Ages* (Church, Faith and Culture in the Medieval West), Aldershot, Ashgate, 2007; hardback; pp. xvi, 282; 14 b/w illustrations, 4 maps; R.R.P £60.00; ISBN 9780754657651.

Although its focus is on one level of the order of ministry, this book is a wide-ranging survey, encompassing analysis of canon law, liturgy, religious art and the political structures of the post-Carolingian period. Its geographic

range is similarly diverse, covering the British Isles to Croatia.

The contributors, mostly from American universities, explore the period they describe as the 'Central Middle Ages', meaning the period from the final collapse of the Carolingian Empire to the Fourth Lateran Council (1215). Their studies of episcopal power are situated in a range of social, political and religious changes which characterize Western Europe in this period, including the development of municipal governments and city states, the concomitant development of papal power, and the development of new orders and monastic rules.

The editors locate their book in a recent historiographical context that has privileged the voices of women and minorities, voices silenced by hierarchies, including episcopal hierarchies. This book does not so much reassert a traditional focus on institutions and elites (although many of the chapters deal strictly with kings, emperors and noblemen) but instead charts interactions between this hierarchy and other layers of society.

The introduction sketches in the overall significance of bishops and the principal characteristics of the western episcopate, including the noble birth of many bishops. While it announces the editors' intention to provide the first generalized study of the episcopate in this period, the book as a whole offers a fairly impressionistic survey, and most chapters are themselves highly specialized studies of individual bishops, including Gerard of Cambrai-Arras and Wulfstan, Archbishop of Canterbury during the reign of Æthelwold II (the 'Unready').

Nonetheless, the book builds up some general conclusions. In particular most of the bishops surveyed operated within political contours shaped by the end of the Carolingian Empire, where territorial lordships supplanted centralized authority. These circumstances are even extended to Wulfstan in England, with Reneé R. Trilling suggesting that Carolingian ideas on power structures influenced English polity. Another theme uniting many of the chapters is the participation of the laity in the church and, conversely, the political importance of bishops in kingdoms, dukedoms and the Holy Roman Empire. Thus Chapter 2 charts the tensions between the bishops of Poitiers and local magnates, Chapter 3 studies canon law texts which reveal episcopal willingness to work with lay rulers and Chapter 4 on Wulfstan, reconstructs his impact on the law codes of this period.

However, Chapters 5 and 6 consider a more sacerdotal representation of bishops in contemporary sources. The brief Chapter 5 examines the construction

of the episcopal image in visual sources. This analysis precisely (and perhaps ambitiously) dates the emergence of a liturgy expressing the sacramental significance of bishops to the year 1000. Despite this precise dating, the chapter also charts a more gradual transition of bishops taking the lead over monks in the shaping of liturgy. Chapter 6 considers visual representations of bishops, which capture particular moments of bishops participating in liturgical acts. It examines a new iconography of 'liturgical postures' (p. 92). Their focus was benediction, an action which this chapter suggests was integrated in a wider set of religious expectations, such as healing.

Chapter 7 resorts to written rather than visual evidence to draw similar conclusions as to how bishops represented their functions within society and their necessity. It suggests that the work of bishops within the diocese of Cambrai-Arras illuminates how they laid out the parameters of their authority, such as demanding the non-burial of excommunicates. Later chapters draw out the implications of episcopal authority, actions and identity in the nebulous conditions of the post-Carolingian period.

Despite its title, *The Bishop Reformed* suggests less the reform of episcopal office and more the imaginative adjustment by individual bishops to shifting and mutable political circumstances and mostly the success of bishops in making these adjustments. They are reconstructed as energetic lawyers, artistic patrons and political advisers and not least as shepherds of their flocks, encouraging penitence among their people and as central figures in the cultural and political worlds described by the authors.

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Platt, Peter G., *Shakespeare and the Culture of Paradox* (Studies in Performance and Early Modern Drama), Aldershot, Ashgate, 2009; hardback; pp. 251; R.R.P. £55.00; ISBN 9780754665519.

In his latest book, Peter G. Platt argues that a general Renaissance 'culture of paradox' spurred Shakespeare's tendency to use paradox to unsettle the assumptions of his characters, his audiences and his readers. Against those who believe that paradox merely bolsters hegemonic power by paralysing discussion, Platt argues that Shakespearean paradox encourages productive doubt, self-questioning and change. Platt draws on the work of Rosalie Colie, but employs poststructuralist theory, especially the work of Derrida

and Foucault, in order to develop futher our sense, not only of what paradox meant in the Renaissance, but also of what it means for us today.

Platt begins Chapter 1 by examining the roots of paradox in Renaissance culture, which he locates in the literary-rhetorical, logical and Christian traditions. He notes the popularity of paradoxes in the Early Modern period, showing how paradox could be used to challenge seemingly rigid truths and also entertain, as they were in jest books, for example. In this same chapter, Platt moves from his brief summary of Renaissance paradox to a convincingly argued statement on the efficacy of paradox for modern critical thinking. While critics such as Michael Bristol and Paul Stevens have argued that to emphasize paradox simply universalizes and de-historicizes writers such as Shakespeare, placing him out of reach of any politicized criticism, it is Platt's project to show that Shakespeare uses paradox 'paradoxically: sometimes as a passive means of hiding from an assertion, sometimes as an active assault on convention, the doxa, the norm' (p. 55). For Platt, while paradox can sometimes induce paralysis, it is much more likely to provoke an active engagement with important and potentially world-changing issues.

The last three chapters turn to the plays themselves. Chapter 2 focuses on Venice as a paradoxical place, both land and water, Catholic yet defiant of Rome, republican yet authoritarian. This paradoxical place appears in two plays in which paradox is key – *The Merchant of Venice* and *Othello*. *The Merchant of Venice* seems an especially apt example of Platt's thesis, offering as it does numerous paradoxes with no apparent resolution. For example, the binaries that the play invokes – justice/mercy, revenge/love, Jew/Gentile – are never stable and never truly resolved. This remains the case in *Othello* as well, in which the problems of the play also remain unresolved, teaching us, as Platt puts it, 'the methods of paradox' (p. 93).

Chapter 3 turns to the question of equity, which itself occupying a paradoxical position 'between strict justice and mercy' (p. 96), also creates new paradoxes. Platt discusses the place of equity in Renaissance England, paying special attention to James I's use of equity to bolster his claims to absolute rule. It is this absolutist potential in equity that Platt identifies as troubling in *The Merchant of Venice* and in *Measure for Measure*, especially the latter. Platt suggests that the Duke uses equity to bolster his power, creating the very problems he then seems to resolve in a way that only supports his absolute rule. However, although the Duke – and the play – arouses the desire for equity, equity itself remains elusive. In the end, Isabella's paradoxical silence

is what allows the open-endedness of paradox to suggest other possibilities.

In the final chapter, Platt argues that, while Shakespeare's conception of paradox was shaped by his culture, his use of paradox also helped shape the culture of paradox. Platt examines three specific paradoxes: the paradox of the actor, who dramatized the split between 'seems' and 'is'; the paradox of the boy player, who destabilized the meaning of sex, gender and perhaps even meaning itself; and the paradox of the audience-play dynamic, which blurs the line between audience and player. This last paradox brings Platt to his final point, which is that Shakespeare's paradoxes are, at the very least, transformative, and that this transformation runs both ways. That is, we – his readers and audiences – are transformed by the plays, but we also transform the plays by our responses to them.

Shakespeare and the Culture of Paradox is well researched and clearly written, and it offers what seems to be a much-needed revision of the role of paradox in the light of poststructuralist theory. Platt's book demonstrates the active engagement with the text that paradox encourages, and proves his contention that paradox deserves more careful consideration.

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Radulescu, Raluca L. and Edward Donald **Kennedy**, eds, *Broken Lines: Genealogical Literature in Medieval Britain and France* (Medieval Texts and Cultures of Northern Europe, 16), Turnhout, Brepols, 2009; hardback; pp. xiv, 298; R.R.P. €60.00; ISBN 9782503524856.

Although a stress on the importance of genealogies in medieval thought is not in itself a new insight, the essays assembled here demonstrate just how pervasive was a sense of dynastic and family history to contemporary political concerns. Contributors make equal use of imaginative and historical literature as evidence for common patterns of thought and cultural priorities among those seeking to establish their right to rule or simply their right to belong to the social elite.

The construction of genealogies for dynastic legitimization is a recurring motif. One group of essays considers Plantagenet efforts to establish their authority as kings of England by means of a manipulated historical legacy. Matthew Fisher, for example, shows how Edward I 'forcibly yoked together'

(p. 129) various historical and literary traditions in a revisionist effort to justify his claims to sovereignty over the whole of Britain. Another group considers similar themes in the context of other monarchies, including France, Scotland and Wales. Of interest here is the way in which several influential texts (most notably Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia regum Britanniae*) provide material for propagandists of different and often conflicting perspectives to make claims for the strength of their own position. The final section of the book contains three 'case studies', two concerned with various versions of the prose *Brut* and one with John Hardyng's pro-Yorkist chronicle. All of these texts contain a 'deeply genealogical impulse' (p. 206). In their studies, Lister Matheson and Sarah Peverley both demonstrate the centrality of female forebears (both legendary and historical) to claims of legitimacy on behalf of several generations of Plantagenet monarchs.

While most of the essays deal with royal matters, others explore different contexts. Emilia Jamroziak outlines the role of collective memory, expressed through genealogical literature, in the establishment and maintenance of a sense of corporate identity in English monastic houses. She surveys a range of texts (including chronicles and cartularies) that she feels have been under-appreciated by historians outside the specialist field. Of further interest are a number of monastic genealogies that preserve the memory of lay patrons and benefactors.

This theme suggests connections with Jon Denton's essay on social status among the Early Modern English gentry. In one of the collection's most intriguing contributions, Denton shows how the stricter regulation of 'gentle' status in England from the fifteenth century required families (and especially those Johnny-come-lately upstarts such as the Pastons) to 'prove' (that is, manufacture) their lineage. The provision of written genealogies fulfilled vital legal and economic functions: 'rising families could bolster their gentility in return for a fee' (p. 152). Furthermore, Denton observes a 'last of line' anxiety in a number of especially elaborate tombs and memorials that recorded detailed lineages of the deceased. The preservation of past family connections took on extra importance for those afraid that childlessness might condemn them to eternal obscurity. Thus brass and stone could contribute to the construction of individual and family histories just as effectively as paper and parchment.

It is not unusual to find a certain unevenness of quality in edited collections and that is the case here. Several essays rely too heavily on existing secondary literature, to the point where it is not entirely clear what they have to say

that is new. Scholarship on the genealogical theme already has a healthy history of its own, often influenced by the work of Gabrielle Spiegel on the Capetians. A number of contributions have the feel of surveys of primary sources, which establish useful information about available material but do not offer challenging conclusions or methodological insights. Such surveys can still be valuable, and the editors make the point in the brief introduction that many of the texts are not available in edited form and thus remain difficult to access. In that sense readers are sometimes asked to bear witness to the beginnings of the scholarly process and the establishment of parameters for further study. One aspect of these surveys is the discussion of the illustrations and diagrams that frequently provide structure for genealogical material in the manuscripts. Practical matters of cost and authorization may have intervened, but it would have been nice to see some of these examples illustrated.

What is noticeable is that the collection has a higher degree of internal coherence than one sometimes finds in comparable works. Many of the essays are genuinely better read in combination with others in the volume, especially those dealing with the competing claims for the validity of royal lineages between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries. Taken together, these essays reinforce the collection's central emphasis on the uses of genealogical literature for purposes of identity creation and dynastic legitimization in the later medieval period.

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Rorem, Paul, *Hugh of Saint Victor* (Great Medieval Thinkers), New York, Oxford University Press, 2009; pp. xiii, 235; paperback; R.R.P. US$29.95; ISBN 9780195384376.

Hugh of St. Victor might well be considered the 'forgotten man' of twelfth-century Western theology, compared with his famous (and in some cases notorious) contemporaries – including Peter Abelard and Bernard of Clairvaux. Little is known about Hugh's life, and his origins have long been a matter of dispute. One tradition identifies him as a Saxon from Hamersleben, while another claims him as a Fleming from Ypres. The consensus now seems to favour the Saxon version. He arrived at the Augustinian abbey of St. Victor in Paris at some time between 1115 and 1118, and lived and taught there

until his death in 1141. Unlike many of his Parisian contemporaries, he did not become involved in theological controversies and events beyond the walls of his abbey, but he did acquire a reputation as an outstanding teacher and writer – partly because of the breadth and quality of his writings, and partly for the way in which he harmonized the monastic and scholastic approaches to theology and spirituality. Over the next 200 years he was regularly described as one of the major figures of medieval learning – Dante placed him in the Fourth Heaven of Paradise (*Paradiso* xii.133), and Bonaventure described him as combining the skill of Anselm in reasoning, Bernard in preaching, and Richard of St. Victor in contemplation.

Despite this, there is no comprehensive modern English study of his thought. Only a selection of his writings is available in English translation, mostly long out-of-print. A new critical edition of his works is in progress as part of the *Corpus Christianorum* series, but several of them still lack any modern edition at all. In this context, Paul Rorem's new book is particularly welcome.

The sheer diversity and scale of Hugh's writings pose a major challenge for Rorem in identifying 'an effective order' in which to organize his presentation of Hugh's work (p. 13). He adopts what he describes as a 'properly Victorine way': he follows the pedagogical arrangement given in Abbot Gilduin of St. Victor's posthumous list and index, rather than adopting a chronological or thematic approach. This is a sensible choice, which preserves the contemporary framework within which Hugh's work was seen, as well as demonstrating the remarkable coherence of Hugh's own programme of teaching and study.

Rorem begins with Hugh's specifically pedagogical writings, and especially his treatise *Didascalicon* on the art of learning, and then considers works relating to creation and history. Hugh's major doctrinal treatise, *De sacramentis*, provides the focus for the second section, on the 'framework of doctrine'. The final section covers Hugh's mystical and spiritual writings. Hugh's important commentary on the *Celestial Hierarchy* of the Pseudo-Dionysius is also discussed briefly in an appendix.

Rorem provides a clear, readable and reliable account of Hugh's writings, rounded off with a comprehensive bibliography and list of editions and translations. He presents Hugh's works by summarizing their contents, often with extensive quotations, and by showing their relationship to the overall framework of Hugh's thought. But as a general rule he does not venture beyond Hugh's own writings. There are occasional comments on Hugh's

sources, but no systematic attempt to situate him in the context of earlier writers. Similarly, there is very little discussion of the relationship between his ideas and the contemporary debates and controversies, or of his influence on his contemporaries and on subsequent thinkers. So, while this book makes a significant contribution as the first modern study of Hugh of St. Victor in English, it only tells part of the story. A full account of Hugh's importance and significance must still be awaited.

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Ruys, Juanita Feros, ed., *What Nature Does Not Teach: Didactic Literature in the Medieval and Early-Modern Periods* (Disputatio, 15), Turnhout, Brepols, 2007; hardback; pp. xiv, 530; 3 b/w illustrations; R.R.P. €90.00; ISBN 9782503525969.

In his Epistle 94, Seneca writes that advice is important 'because nature does not teach what ought to be done in every specific circumstance.' Following this theme, a conscious choice was made in this volume to focus not on a specific period or place but on the *longue durée* of didactic literature, and to include a variety of sources, provided that they were 'created, transmitted, or received' with a design 'to teach, instruct, advise, edify, inculcate morals, or modify and regulate behaviour' (p. 5).

Juanita Feros Ruys' introduction serves as a programmatic foundation and guide to the volume. Ruys locates didacticism at the intersection of authorial intent, transmission and reception by the audience, and poses a series of questions centred on the creation of meaning in the didactic process. Correspondingly, the volume emphasizes the social context of teaching, the role of gender and the intimate aspects of the exchange of knowledge.

The essays are divided into five thematic sections. The first, 'Constructing Didactic Intent and Persona', opens with Steven J. Williams' study of the Pseudo-Aristotelian *Secret of Secrets*, which reveals both the flexibility and limitations of a well-known medieval didactic text. Kathleen Olive introduces a fascinating example of the *zibaldone* genre of Italian middle-class didactic literature, in this case a commonplace book of religious, classical and vernacular extracts and personal advice set against (mostly) Florentine architectural topography and pride. In focusing on the migrant nature of Christine de

Pizan's authorial voice, Louise D'Arcens explores the layers of authority, objectivity and didactic force that come with an outsider's status – and finds in this 'neglected weapon in her literary armoury' a source of authorial and didactic strength.

'Children and Families', the second section of the volume, moves the emphasis to the intimacy of the household. Maria Nenarokova's essay on Vladimir Monomakh's *Instruction* is an exploration of theological, political and moral characteristics of an ideal Christian ruler in a didactic text that also allows for an attempted reconstruction of its impact. Juanita Feros Ruys uses parental advice to children as a foundation to suggest the movement toward a greater acceptance of personal experience as a didactic method, and offers a revision of the accepted relationship between gender and teaching by example. Catherine England's essay is a study of the pragmatic Florentine approach to education where children were viewed as a precious commodity whose education was expected to secure successful continuation of family lines.

The third section, 'Women, Teaching, Gender', stands out both by its length and by the centrality of its themes to the volume's core aims. Stavroula Constantinou's contribution looks at the interplay of rhetoric and exemplarity in the didactic performance of female Byzantine saints using texts written by their followers as testimony of their success. Albrecht Classen examines views on marriage and gender relations in the works of Thomasin von Zerclaere and Hugo von Trimberg, and discovers a considerable degree of equality and respect for women within an otherwise predictably patriarchal discourse. Julie Hotchin offers a nuanced study of male perspectives on governing cloistered women, supported by the personal experience of an author of a manual for male ecclesiastics. Ursula Potter deftly shows that the true embodiment of a particular male ideal of woman is a 'flat, emblematic character' (p. 281), enough of a foundation for Shakespeare to create vivid characters as its antithesis. Alexandra Barratt carries forward the theme of female captivity to male models of behaviour in her survey of translations of literature made into English for the use of women.

The section titled 'Literacy, Piety, Heresy, Control' begins with John O. Ward's insightful analysis of a text located midway between oral and written culture where he captures some of the richness of allusions and non-textual clues that made up the full context of medieval didactic process. Jason Taliadoros uses an anti-heretical polemic written by Master Vacarius to his friend Hugo Speroni as the foundation for a fascinating exploration of high-

level didacticism missing its mark. Philippa Bright's 'Anglo-Latin Collections of the *Gesta Romanorum* and their role in the Cure of Souls', provides both an analysis of the characteristics peculiar to the Anglo-Latin *gesta* collections and an interpretation of their possible function as a tool to reassert the authority of the church during a climate of reform. Anne Scott discusses the assumptions of readers' literacy and local and other knowledge made by Robert Mannyng in his moral-didactic treatise *Handlyng Synne*.

In the last section, 'Classical tradition and Early-Modern Didactic', Frances Muecke and Robert Forgács study the continuities between medieval and humanistic didactic tradition in a sixteenth-century didactic poem on music by Philomathes. Anthony Miller, quarrying three Renaissance manuals of metallurgy and mining for their *mentalités*, uncovers a rejection of the belief in fallen nature, an embrace of human crafts and confidence among the moderns in being superior to the ancients. Emma Gee explores didactic astronomical works for references to competing classical models of universe during the Copernican Revolution. Finally, Yasmin Haskell reconstructs indirect traces of Lucretian themes in the didactic work of Tommaso Ceva.

Rather than a systematic survey, the book is a florilegium of didactic approaches and ideas on didacticism from which analogous, comparable and even contradictory ones can be chosen. The sources, spread over a wide period and ranging from well known to idiosyncratic private compositions, allow for a colourful and eye-opening introduction to the vastness of didactic literature. Such a diffusion of focus may be distracting, but it implicitly confirms the premises outlined in the introductory chapter referring to the creation of meaning in medieval didactic literature.

Several themes, not limited to any particular section, stand out. The emphasis on gender, one of the strongest aspects of the book, is a refreshing turn from traditional male-dominated histories of education and of intellectual currents. Other well developed themes include the formation of didactic meaning, the role of literacy and its role in the didactic process, the interplay of authority and experience, the anchoring of didacticism in a familiar topography and the potential for failure in the didactic interchange. On the theoretical level the volume is a confirmation of the importance of the work of C. Stephen Jaeger and Thomas Haye, among others.

Although the working definition of didactic literature limits the sources somewhat, the didacticism that emerges is still a large, shape-shifting creature. In a few cases observations would profit by being framed in a

broader, multidisciplinary context or by being more integrated with the introductory questions, and thus made more relevant and meaningful to a wider audience. For instance, after reading the analysis of Monomakh's *Instruction* I was left wondering to what extent the idealized *vitae* of rulers can be used as a measure of didactic effectiveness. Another unanswered question, quite compatible with the thesis of the book, had to do with the extent to which the confused and confusing topography of *Codex Rustici* could be read as an intersection of personal mnemonic places and morally relevant knowledge. The limitations, however, are minor in comparison to the contribution of this strong volume.

What Nature Does not Teach complements gaps left in works of intellectual history and history of education. Apart from being a valuable addition to a medievalist's reading list it will be of interest to students of general history, education and gender studies.

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Salzman, Paul, *Reading Early Modern Women's Writing*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2006; hardback; pp. 256; 1 b/w illustration; R.R.P. £71.00; ISBN 9780199261048.

Inspired by 'the recent interest in the history of reading' (p. 219), Paul Salzman's book uses a case study approach to re-examine the field of Early Modern women's writing, taking both well-known and less familiar examples. Its seven chapters, plus introduction and conclusion explore 'early modern women's writing as a body of knowledge' (p. 1), arguing that the energy and excitement that has surrounded the discovery of manuscripts and writing by women has had as a corollary a lack of reflection about the nature of that work as it is being used by modern scholars.

The category of gender, which has allowed and enabled the study of women's writing, has also entailed a homogenization of that writing where differences are overlooked, and sameness is instantiated in the process of identifying, preserving and disseminating the work of a group of people that has been undervalued historically. Salzman's project is to rethink the way that women's writing is studied and the contexts in which it might be used. This is a thoughtful reflection from a scholar whose own endeavours in the field of bringing women's writing to light has been pioneering.

Salzman builds on the work of feminist historians and critics like Margaret Ezell and Danielle Clark in inclusive and generous ways, acknowledging the work and debates that have preceded his own discussion. While he canvasses material that is now becoming quite familiar, even canonical, to scholars in the field, such as that of Mary Wroth, Mary Sidney and Anne Clifford, he brings to readers the work of other writers such as Eleanor Davies, Margaret Fell and Anna Trapnel. The endeavours of women outside what might be thought of as a literary field, unprotected by a more privileged background, need to be understood, and to become part of a history of Early Modern writing more generally. Now that we have such an extensive corpus of material, as academics and scholars we can make new connections between writings and new distinctions within the category of women's writing. We can move away from the need to reify that writing, and let it stand in its own contexts.

A large part of the point of the book is that seeing women as part of a group unified by gender has entailed a '[f]lattening out … [of] political context' (p. 116), so the question that begins the book, taken from Denise Riley's work, is 'Am I that name?' In other words, is women's writing containable in the category that describes it? This is a timely approach, and one that has been broached before, perhaps in less sympathetic ways, in other fields. Allen J. Frantzen's article 'When women aren't enough' in *Speculum* 1993, discussing the field of medieval women's writing, comes to mind.

The discussion of the history of the work on women's writing is also insightful, assessing, for example, Virginia Woolf's readings of Anne Clifford, and Vita Sackville West's treatment of Aphra Behn. Woolf's desire in *A Room of One's Own* for women to read back through is part of the story here. As Salzman points out in the concluding pages of the book, critics tend to find in the objects of their study what suits the critical mood of the moment. If poststructuralism has taught us that this is inevitable, and even preferable when weighed against the notion of a timeless and objective criticism, it nevertheless does not hurt to be aware of these critical moods. If the trend in Behn criticism is moving away from sexuality to politics, this acknowledges that in terms of temporary mores the kinds of critics interested in women's writing tend to value radicalism over conventionalism and there is more to be said in one area than another – in Salzman's formulation, there is a preference for sinners over saints (p. 218).

While this book does present serious and significant questions for Early Modern scholars and academics, it is not addressed exclusively to an expert

audience, but also 'to those from a wide variety of fields and disciplines' (p. 10). This gives rise to some difficulties, because of the nature of the material. It is hard to convey, for example, what Wroth's material is like, the complexity and interwoven style, and its specific social and political references, without repeating points familiar to Wroth aficionados. Nevertheless, this is a thoughtful, insightful, and generous account of Early Modern women's writing, and the current state of debate about it.

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Schulte, Petra, Marco **Mostert** and Irene van **Renswoude**, eds, *Strategies of Writing: Studies on Text and Trust in the Middle Ages* (Utrecht Studies in Medieval Literacy, 13), Turnhout, Brepols, 2008; hardback; pp. xiii, 413; 36 b/w illustrations; R.R.P. €80.00; ISBN 9782503517582.

The thirteenth volume from the very productive Utrecht Studies in Medieval Literacy group addresses a theme that has been of central interest to scholars in the field since Michael Clanchy's foundational work *From Memory to Written Record* – namely the concept of trust in writing. Clanchy's originality rested in part on seeing writing and literacy, not as natural tools or outcomes of progress, but as technologies and attitudes which were new and unfamiliar, and which fulfilled functions (for example, legal record) already achievable by other means in medieval times. He argued, therefore, that trust in writing had to be earned and sustained for the 'literate mentality' to develop. *From Memory to Written Record* was grounded in a strictly English historical context – that is, in the (roughly) 150 years following the Norman Conquest – but its questions and approaches have influenced scholars of many periods and places ever since. The indebtedness of the present volume to Clanchy is acknowledged in the Preface, and the book is dedicated to him.

There are over twenty chapters, each engaging with the questions of what kind of trust was invested in the written word, and how such trust was established and maintained in medieval European contexts from the Viking Age to fifteenth-century Bruges. In the interests of space, this review will focus on a brief selection of themes that take Clanchy's ideas further, or challenge their blanket application across time and space.

The issue of trust in writing is central to arguments about the use of written evidence in medieval law. Can charters, for example, be seen as 'certificates' to be produced in court, a trustworthy legal 'trump card'? Alternate theories make charters a material by-product of a human theatre of trust, comprising ceremonies and witnesses, a sort of relic of the transaction, which merely happens to be written. Karl Heidecker's brief but significant contribution to this volume shows how both of these 'charters' can be present and interact. He examines two related charters, showing how the second was produced to settle a dispute over the details of the first, which was found on inspection by the donors to contain important interpolations. The witnesses to the second charter were then added to the witness list in the first, as if to seal the entire transaction retrospectively with their approval. A symbolic twig was also attached to the parchment, suggesting the performance of a ritual exchange of some kind. Trust was not entrusted to the written word *per se*, but to a particular group of written words, embedded in a certain context. However, the production of the second charter itself shows that donors understood the role of charters as 'truth', and took steps to rectify errors.

Marco Mostert approaches the issue of trust by examining 'forgery', and how it was understood in medieval times. He is not unique in concluding that 'forgery' as defined by modern diplomatists is an anachronism: clearly in some ways it was considered legitimate to produce a document that 'should have' existed, Heidecker's case study notwithstanding. The analogy Mostert draws between medieval society and the anthropology of remote illiterate tribes, through which he appears to contend that oral societies have no concept of 'untruth', is not, in my opinion, particularly convincing or constructive.

However, a very real contribution is his sophisticated conceptualization of the important observation that the 'literate world' extended beyond those whose hands and eyes were directly involved in producing and reproducing words. The way in which he unwinds the literate/illiterate dichotomy into a dynamic range of 'registers' – literate, semi-literate, semi-*il*literate and illiterate, between which individuals move across time and between different activities – has real potential to facilitate understanding medieval modes of literacy and communication generally.

Placing trust in writing at the centre of literacy studies has moved from innovation to central dogma in the decades since *From Memory to Written Record*. But here, in a well-constructed and persuasive piece, J. W. J. Burgers argues that trust was a secondary phenomenon in the adoption of charters

in twelfth-century Holland. Examining evidence for the exemplars of the earliest extant charters he shows that aspirations to high status, particularly by emulation of papal fashions, probably drove the uptake of the charter form, and that status prompted and promoted trust in the subsequent documents, rather than vice versa. This is a thought-provoking and timely contribution to the ongoing debate, in particular for the way in which it reminds us that enquiry into medieval literacy needs to be strongly contextualized, and that even useful conceptual frameworks should remain under constant challenge.

Having engaged with this volume, one cannot help but wonder whether 'trust in writing' is still a useful investigative principle upon which to base the history of medieval literacy. Does it not actually bias us towards privileging the written artefact above its complete context – a tendency which Clanchy himself explicitly tried to avoid? The strengths of many of the contributions in the present volume are in the way they expand the horizons of the 'trust' question beyond the page. This is surely the future direction of medieval literacy studies as a whole.

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Scott, Virginia and Sara **Sturm-Maddox**, *Performance, Poetry and Politics on the Queen's Day*: *Catherine de Médicis and Pierre de Ronsard at Fontainebleau*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2007; cloth; pp. x, 267; R.R.P. £55.00; ISBN 9780754658399.

In February, 1564, Queen Catherine de Médicis, who was about to embark upon a two-year journey of reconciliation throughout the kingdom with her son, the young king, Charles IX, organized an elaborate festival intended to promote good will among the warring nobles of France. *Performance, Poetry and Politics on the Queen's Day*, a series of interrelated essays recounting the events of this special day, is valuable as much for its form as its content: as much for demonstrating the advantages of interdisciplinary study as for shedding light on the queen's strategies for creating concord within the divided kingdom through this particular event. In alternating chapters, literary specialist Sara Sturm-Maddox and theatre historian Virginia Scott exhaustively analyse the two performances believed to have been held on the Queen's Day. Their densely researched study recreates the tense and complicated background of religious strife against which the plays reveal their meanings, and illuminates

the fabulously complex relationships between politics and performance at the Valois court.

In 1564, the worst of the Wars of French Religion were yet to come. Had Catherine's energetic efforts to create peace among the battling factions – such as the effort exemplified in this study – met with success early on, the queen's reputation would have been entirely different. Throughout her life, Catherine appears to have worked steadfastly for peace, always believing that it was within her grasp if only the nobles would cooperate. However, her strategies for creating harmony have been obscured by the violent controversy she aroused for her presumed role in the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre of 1572. After it, she was cast as a divisive agent, playing the warring sides off against each other, rather than as a mediator for peace. To the everlasting detriment of her reputation, she was unable to bring the powerful nobles to heel.

This study thus supplements our knowledge of Catherine's creative modes of operation. But it also adds a little-discussed dimension to the popular image of Pierre Ronsard, author of the first of the pieces performed on that day, the dramatic poem, *Bergerie*. Ronsard's interventions in politics have been largely overshadowed by his fame as a lyric poet. This study, however, clarifies the extent to which the poet was active in the promotion of royal policy. Despite his fame, he had difficulty obtaining royal preferment early in his career (his epic the *Franciade* was never completed). Finally in 1558 he assumed a public role with a royal pension as a chronicler of the events of his day. Still, the *Bergerie* was his last attempt at a poetic play, and his attempts to create national peace generally have been forgotten.

The first chapter, 'Setting the Scene', sets out the historical context of the Queen's Day festival. Meant to effect reconciliation among the houses of Guise, Bourbon and Montmorency, which had entered into conflict after the death of Henri II in 1559, the festival encouraged loyalty to the crown through the performances it presented. Chapter 2, 'The Prince of Poets and the Medici Queen', complements the historical contextualization of the preceding chapter with information on Ronsard's lyric career and Italian literary interests, and it traces how these appealed to Catherine in her search for an idiom through which to express her political programme.

Chapters 3 and 4, 'Carlin the Shepherd-King: Pastoral at Fontainebleau' and 'Performing *Bergerie*', address more specifically Ronsard's contribution to the festival. A script of *Bergerie* remains, however, no definitive proof that it was actually performed at the festival. First, Sturm-Maddox offers an interpretation

of this pastoral as a means of promoting peace. In the matching chapter, Scott presents her case that the piece was performed. Except for the young king, the royal children served as the principal actors, and of this Scott theorizes: '[r]oyal children needed to learn not only presentation but also representation, the art of manifesting and symbolizing their royal rôles' (p. 99). Also, observing the children of the principal members of the warring factions as they vowed their allegiance on stage to the accompaniment of the music of the spheres must have profoundly affected the audience, or at least this was the hope.

In Chapters 5 and 6, 'Ronsard, Ariosto, and a Scottish Princess: La Belle Genièvre' and 'Une Autre Polynesse', the authors analyse the first known dramatic adaptation of Ariosto's *Orlando furioso* in either Italian or French. No text of the piece remains. Nonetheless, sufficient evidence attests to its performance on that day. The chapters are particularly interested in situating the piece within the overlapping networks of the Este court in Ferrara (patrons of Ariosto) and the French royal court with its numerous Italianophiles.

A conclusion and a postscript follow the analyses of the two performances, inserting these more generally into recent studies of performance and queenship. Catherine's sad heritage is also traced in some detail.

Focusing attention on a single day, Scott and Sturm-Maddox capture the moment, bringing to life the phenomenon of ritual at the Valois court and revealing some of the layers of meaning that may have been activated through the performances of *Bergerie* and *La Belle Genièvre*.

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Sobecki, Sebastian I., *The Sea and Medieval English Literature* (Studies in Medieval Romance), Cambridge, D. S. Brewer, 2007; hardback; pp. xii, 205; R.R.P. £45.00; ISBN 9781843841371.

In this book, Sebastian Sobecki makes an ambitious attempt to place medieval English literature's presentation of the sea into broader contexts, chronological, geographical and disciplinary. In this, he is only partially successful. Chronologically, he gives a deeply interesting context from classical poets to Winston Churchill. Geographically and politically, he betrays a limited understanding of the makeup of the British Isles in both medieval and modern times, which damages the credibility of his overall argument. I would also argue that his understanding of the role of the sea in early medieval insular

communities is flawed, leading to significant problems in his attempt to situate his core material in a continuum with early medieval Gaelic attitudes to the sea.

As early as the introduction, Sobecki asserts that '[u]ntil the unequivocal formulation of the notion of territorial waters … the sea is in constant movement [and] can only be traversed by man or, for purposes of fishing, visited' (p. 5). The evidence he evinces for this in the very early period seems sound enough, incorporating Pliny the Elder, Plutarch and Gregory of Nazianzus. However, he leaps unconcernedly thence to Bernard of Clairvaux, seemingly ignoring the 700-odd years in between.

As an early medievalist, I take exception to this dismissal, but it is soon contradicted by a discussion of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*'s report of the three Irishmen who landed in Cornwall in 891. This discussion on the one hand, admits that the Irish had a more trusting relationship with the sea than did the English, and on the other hand denies any difference between the conditions in the English Channel that had hindered Julius Caesar and those in the Irish Sea with which the Irish were apparently quite at home.

This leads Sobecki to a discussion of Paolo Squatriti's 'paradigm-shifting' suggestion that the Irish Sea formed a Mediterranean-style connectivity rather than a barrier. This suggestion clearly does not shift any paradigms, being a restatement of paradigms widely accepted by those who study this region, and stated many times over by numerous authors over many years.

Sobecki moves on to a discussion of the so-called '*peregrinatio pro amore Dei*', and supports his contention that pilgrimage was an essential part of a scholar's life by citing Thomas Charles-Edwards' claim that Bede did not consider a man a *peregrinus* until he had travelled to Ireland or the Continent. Few, however, would be reckless enough to suggest that Bede was not a scholar, but it is generally accepted that he never left Northumbria. The point might have had more weight (or indeed not been attempted) had Sobecki actually read Charles-Edwards' article, which he cites out of context through a secondary reference. The citing of reasonably accessible primary and secondary literature through secondary references is common throughout Sobecki's book, and leads one to wonder just how thorough his research can have been.

A chapter titled 'Deserts and Forests in the Ocean' deals with Benedeit's *Voyage de Saint Brandan* and Thomas of Britain's *Tristan*. The former is inevitably compared to the Irish *Navigatio Brendani*, not always successfully.

Having acknowledged David Dumville's translation of *immram* (the generic Old Irish name for this kind of tale) as 'rowing about', Sobecki then gives an altogether inaccurate description of the journey. He begins by claiming that the journey is undertaken in an 'unseaworthy' coracle (p. 49), a suggestion for which there is no evidence in the sources. He describes the 'refusal to use one's oars and/or rudder' (p. 50), apparently ignorant of the fact that a coracle does not have a rudder and that there is again no evidence in the sources that oars were not used. Citing *Immram Snédgus ocus Maic Riagla*, Sobecki relies on Whitley Stokes' century-old translation, and even so, asserts that the monks 'discard their oars' (p. 50), which is stated in neither the original text nor Stokes' translation. Similarly, in the Old Norse version of *Tristan*, Sobecki is keen to identify Tristan's departure as a setting adrift, apparently on the evidence of the words 'I wish to go away, wherever God in his infinite grace may let me land to obtain help', despite the clear statement in the text that Tristan 'sailed out onto the sea' (p. 57).

A valiant attempt to move beyond his home discipline of literature sees Sobecki discussing the Ebstorf Mappa Mundi, a discussion that is not without interest. It is, however, severely marred by his description of what is clearly the right foot of Christ as the left, and more alarmingly, his assertion that Britain 'is synonymous with England on this map as Scotland is assigned a separate island', when the separate island, labelled 'Scotia' clearly represents Ireland (p. 87). A far more successful venture into the world of graphic representation occurs in his discussion of Leviathan, where Sobecki describes his discovery of the depiction of a circular whale in an illustration of *Patience*, echoing and possibly inspired by the depictions of Leviathan in Jewish manuscripts.

This book had the potential to give an in-depth treatment to a fascinating and under-studied topic. Unfortunately, its flaws are of a magnitude that leaves that potential unrealized, although there are moments of considerable interest.

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Spinks, Jennifer, *Monstrous Births and Visual Culture in Sixteenth-Century Germany* (Religious Cultures in the Early Modern World, 5), London, Pickering and Chatto, 2009; hardback; pp. 224; 66 b/w illustrations; R.R.P. $US99.00, £60.00; ISBN 9781851966301.

Tales of monstrous births were well known across Europe in the late medieval and early modern period. They were used symbolically by authors in a variety of media to 'represent and debate issues of morality, religion and politics' (p. 3). Curiously, there were more printed references in Germany than anywhere else, which suggests something other than a passing interest. Jennifer Spinks examines a number of illustrated printed publications, such as broadsheets, pamphlets and books, which appeared in sixteenth-century Germany. Beginning with instances of monstrous births in the late fifteenth century, she maps the development of such material across the Reformation, finally ending her discussion in the late sixteenth century. Central to her argument are the religious conflicts of the Reformation and early Counter-Reformation, and the role the resultant polemical propaganda played in promoting a visual culture grounded in natural and unnatural occurrences. In a world shaken to the core by religious disorder, monstrous births and other such phenomena were used didactically and apocalyptically: they were understood as messages from a God who was unhappy with the moral state of that world.

Spinks begins by briefly outlining classical and early Christian ideas of monstrous births, before leading the reader to the sixteenth century where there is a 'rich array of visual and textual materials for understanding natural wonders and prodigies . . . [and which are] best encountered through illustrated print catalogues' (p. 8). This cultural history is laid out chronologically within a structure that analyses specific types of printed material – from crude woodcuts to sophisticated texts – together. The central focus is the positive and negative meanings which sixteenth-century people gave to monstrous births and how we, as modern historians, can access those meanings through a close analysis of this printed material. Spinks argues that her discussion 'places considerably more weight than any previous study on the positive interpretations given to monstrous births in the period immediately preceding the Reformation' (p. 10). Furthermore, she claims the evidence points to a marked increase in negative and apocalyptic interpretations which peaked mid-century. Different meanings were now being attached to monstrous

births in order to interpret emerging topics of concern.

Travel narratives brought tales of monstrous races home to local audiences prior to the sixteenth century. Chapter 1 briefly discusses such travel literature, the visual effect it had on audiences, and the mentalities that developed with regard to those living on the outer edges of the world. Medieval imagery saw the idea of monstrous races and monstrous births as one body, as exemplified in John Mandeville's *Travels*. However, by the sixteenth century, monstrous births came to be seen as unique and unrelated to those marginalized races. Spinks analyses what she calls the 'culture of prodigies' (p. 23) that emerged during the reign of Maximilian I, and how the emperor used wondrous signs and monstrous births for political ends. The remainder of the chapter examines Sebastian Brant's broadsheets that brought the representation of monstrous births to a wider audience through an appealing combination of words and images, and paved the way for the outpouring of works seen during the sixteenth century.

Chapter 2 places images of monstrous births firmly within the expanding visual culture of the early sixteenth century. Using the work of Albrecht Dürer and Hans Burgkmair the Elder, Spinks outlines the varying methods and approaches used to construct images of monstrous births that resulted in more naturalistic dimensions to artists' illustrations.

Chapter 3 examines the images of the Monk Calf and the Papal Ass in the polemic pamphlets of Martin Luther and Philipp Melanchthon where they used the images as allegories of the Catholic Church. As Spinks argues, monstrous bodies 'became texts to be read and argumentatively decoded using highly visual language' (p. 11).

Chapter 4 demonstrates that, by mid-century, there was an increase in the number of books that focused on monstrous births. Specifically, she examines three Protestant authors: Jakob Rueff, Job Fincel and Konrad Lycosthenes. These authors look at the cumulative, and therefore more terrifying, effect of such phenomena rather than examining each monstrous birth or wondrous event individually, while adding a certain graphic satire to their works.

This idea of satire is taken further in Chapter 5 where Spinks examines the complex anti-Lutheran work of Johann Nas. Nas' *Ecclesia Militans* (1569) takes many Protestant themes and, as Spinks argues, inverts them to produce a highly apocalyptic and complex broadsheet reminding the historian that late sixteenth-century Germany should be understood in Catholic as well as Protestant terms.

Jennifer Spinks has produced an interesting and highly detailed text showing how politics, religious turmoil, and print culture 'turned monstrous births into iconic figures in a world teeming with disturbing wondrous signs' (p. 12).

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Van Engen, John, *Brothers and Sisters of the Common Life: The Devotio Moderna and the World of the Later Middle Ages*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008: cloth; pp. xii, 438; 19 b/w illustrations; R.R.P US$59.95; ISBN 9780812241198.

There have been earlier studies of the *Devotio Moderna*, a religious movement emerging from late medieval Holland, but John Van Engen's new study of this topic surpasses them in terms of the breadth and depth of his engagement with surviving archival records and the thoroughness and complexity of his argument.

He engages fully with complexity of defining or locating these communities, in terms of what to call them and the difficulty of establishing a working definition of the area of their main influence, be it Flanders, the Netherlands or Lower Germany. On one level, the brothers and sisters of the *Devotio Moderna* appear in Van Engen's work as part of a wider religious fabric, which included beguines and others who lived in communities but without a rule. However, the brothers and sisters also presented particular interpretative problems to their contemporaries, who called them Lollards or beguines, largely because they struggled to find other terminology to do justice to these small communities of men and women.

The difficulties the contemporaries of the brothers and sisters experienced in naming them are reflected in the modern literature and not least in Van Engen's own work. Much of the opening chapters of this book is given over to teasing out the self-generated and externally imposed names for the brothers and sisters and to establishing the nomenclature for the areas where they were territorially strong.

The greatest strength of this study, besides the knowledge Van Engen exhibits of the contemporary sources, is the skill he shows in conveying the complexity of this order, both for contemporary observers and for later

historians. He reconstructs a world in which the brothers and sisters, and other communities living without rules, were both derided and defended. As Van Engen points out, it was quite possible for papally-endorsed inquisitors and bishops to clash with each other over how to deal with communities living together but not governed by a rule or under the jurisdiction of an abbot or a prior.

The confusion the brothers and sisters generated among their contemporary observers is reflected in how modern scholars have approached them. For much of the twentieth century, the brothers and sisters (as were other groups such as Lollards) were conceived of as proto-reformers or as evidence of an early reformation before the actual Reformation of the sixteenth century. Cruder historiographic methodologies that traced continuities between medieval religious groups and the reformers of the sixteenth century have since given way to more nuanced readings, such as Van Engen's, which are prepared to evaluate Lollards, brothers and sisters and others on their own terms rather than as premature Protestants.

Van Engen's subtitle refers to the 'medieval world' and he stakes a claim for the significance of the brothers and sisters in a wider world of late medieval religion, rather than as reformers in waiting. He adeptly reconstructs a world of late medieval religious diversity, showing the brothers and sisters as one of many competing forces, others including the Free Spirits. Van Engen does full justice to the complexity of this landscape, asserting that binary opposition between orthodoxy and unorthodoxy is a methodology which does not do justice to the variety encompassed by the *Devotio Moderna* or the complexity of official church responses to it.

Van Engen makes clear that contemporary observers were often nonplussed by the appearance of sisters and brothers, a response identifiable in surviving evidence, which indicates the visibility and accessibility of the devotees in their contemporary contexts. As Van Engen points out, the brothers and sisters were identifiable by their garb (normally a hooded gown) and other unusual touches, such as overlarge shoes for the insufficiently humble.

This book teases out the further implications of this pronounced and enduring suspicion, especially the tension between official acceptance and suspicion. Many communities incurred official church suspicion, for example, but their goods were also notarially registered with town councils and the archival evidence shows their scrupulous efforts to register and manage their property, which was normally urban.

A few minor stylistic errors are grating, such as the persistent use of 'comprised of', but the depth of his archival research means that Van Engen's charting of the development and progress of different brotherhoods and sisterhoods is firmly grounded and thorough.

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Ward, Haruko Nawata, *Women Religious Leaders in Japan's Christian Century, 1549–1650* (Women and Gender in the Early Modern World), Aldershot, Ashgate, 2009; hardback; pp.422; 12 b/w illustrations; R.R.P. £65.00; ISBN 9780754664789.

Haruko Nawata Ward's work is a study of the apostolic ministries of Japanese women converts to Christianity during the Portuguese Jesuit mission to Japan, which began with the visit of Francis Xavier in 1549. She describes the personal, social and religious struggles of women who became proselytizers and catechists working alongside and supporting the Jesuits. One of the reasons the Christian faith was attractive to these women was that it offered the hope of salvation equally for women as for men, while Shinto-Buddhist beliefs held that after death most women would suffer eternally in the hell of 'blood-lake' (*ketsubon)* due to the impurity of women's bodies as evidenced by the blood of menstruation and child-birth. State suppression of Christianity began in 1587, but the *Edict of Expulsion of the Padres* was only enforced after 1612, to be followed by several decades of deportations and executions of Japanese Christians. By 1640 there was little trace in the urban centres of the Christian communities that had grown in some cases to the tens of thousands (around 60,000 in Nagasaki and surrounding areas in 1583). Some communities fled to mountainous regions, however, where Christian traditions survived into the twentieth century.

Ward argues that, contrary to Jesuit policies and some official reports sent back to Europe that prescribed a very limited role for women, the Society of Jesus found women invaluable to the establishment and growth of the mission and the conversion of Japanese women and men in every social rank. Women converts who exercised leadership in the missionary enterprise were most frequently of high social rank, highly literate, and versed in Shinto-Buddhist dialectic and scholarship. In accordance with their practices of cultural accommodation, Jesuits made use of Zen methods of disputation

between teacher and devotee and cited authorities in the creation of Christian catechisms and other religious literature in Japanese, with women featuring as protagonists in central texts such as the *Myōtei mondō*. Ward seeks women's own understanding of their new vocations in the mainly Portuguese Jesuit literature and documents such as Luís Fróis' *História de Japão,* paying careful attention to their former religious beliefs and practices, and the volatile political climate of the period. She also draws on the fragmentary evidence of the lives of her protagonists available in Japanese chronicles.

After an introduction, the work is divided into four parts, each focusing on a type of ministry: Nuns, Witches, Catechists and Sisters. The study relies on biographical and historical detail to relate the stories of individual women, and their relationships with the Jesuits, their families and dependents. Each section of the book begins with a helpful preface to introduce the protagonists and main arguments and ends with an epilogue summarizing the writer's conclusions.

The three chapters in part one examine the lives of women who chose monastic vocations, living in community: Hibaya Monica (c.1549–77), Naitō Julia (c.1566–1627) and her community in exile, the Beatas of Manila (1615–46). Part two is a study of the wife of the diamō Ōtomo Sōrin, whom the Jesuits represented as a witch, and named Jezebel due to her efforts to resist the conversion to Christianity of her family and court of Bungo. Ōtomo-Nata Jezebel (whose own name was not recorded in any surviving sources) affirmed her identity as a priestess of the Shinto-Buddhist sect of Hachiman (p. 119). Part three looks at Hosokawa Tama Gracia (1563–1600) who was recognized by Frois as a great scholar and teacher (p. 205), and other women catechists in her circle and beyond: Kihohara Ito Maria (n.d.), Catarina of Tanba (c.1515–c.1587), Kyōgoko Maria (c.1543–1618) and Kyakyjin Magelena (d. 1600). Part four concerns the works of mercy and ministry to the poor undertaken by women in the lay confraternities founded after the model of the Portuguese *Santa Casa di Misericórdia*, with a particular focus on Justa of Nagasaki.

This very readable volume represents an extraordinary degree of scholarship, drawing on original sources in Portuguese, Japanese and Latin, with secondary material also in German, and working with theoretical and analytic tools from disciplines including history, feminism, theology and ethnology. The author explicates with equal clarity the Christian humanist training and missionary expectations of her Jesuit informants and the complexities of

Shinto-Buddhist religious beliefs and Japanese social mores. She sensitively presents the religious, political and personal consequences of the meeting of these two worldviews in the lives of individual women during Japan's 'Christian century'.

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Whetter, K. S., *Understanding Genre and Medieval Romance*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2008; hardback; pp. 218; 12 b/w illustrations; R.R.P. £55.00; ISBN 9780754661429

Keith Whetter's ambitions in *Understanding Genre and Medieval Romance* are large, if we trust his title; their actual reach encompasses both less and more. For the most part, he discusses genre as it bears on medieval English romances. But, although not mentioned in the title, *Morte Darthur* also proves significant – taking up almost a third of the book – perhaps suggesting it is Whetter's real object all along.

In his compact account of genre, based in Frye and Fowler – representatives of different approaches – Whetter questions whether genre, as textual contract, is socially or formally established, and tackles important breaks like those between genre and mode, theory and history. He argues that genres are properly established by reference to actual texts, within periods, in line with practices recognized by composers and consumers, making up what he terms a 'community of users'. He denies that they necessarily relate to social experience, by social or ideological function.

Yet, although sympathetic to Frye's semantic, modal typology, he insists on the historical specificity of genres, but prefers to define them in formalist, syntactic terms, like Propp's fairy tale. Where Propp's analysis of fairy tale is essentially structuralist, however, Whetter places his version of romance in diachronic relationship with earlier and later narrative forms, specifically novel and epic. If Whetter's romantic essentials – 'love, ladies, adventure and the happy ending' – relate to Propp's actants and plot functions, they also distinguish romance sharply from epic.

His reading of romance as genre, then, recalls Jauss' important study. Both wish to break down the Aristotelian notion of genre as a universal, literary class, by introducing history as the locus of generic change. Transformation

is more important for Jauss than for Whetter, but the latter does insist on the specificity of medieval romance against other forms. For both, too, history is an extra-textual aspect of the text; the historically determined 'horizon of expectations' to which genre relates, according to Jauss, looks more abstract than Whetter's 'community of users', yet the latter is similarly extrapolated from meta-textual elements of self-referentiality and parody.

If discussion of genre has ancient beginnings, discussion of romance is comparatively modern, but reaches back to the nineteenth century and includes numerous significant contributions. Whetter's own concern with particularizing the genre in terms of essential components means that much of his discussion simply illustrates the presence of his sentimental matrix. I have no doubt that a sense of romance is crucial to understanding texts, but worry when genre analysis seems to complete critical performance, diverting readers from other critical business. Whetter's own developed readings of texts like *Havelok* and *Gawain and the Green Knight* miss so much that the question of generic function can seem mismanaged.

In many respects, Whetter's account of medieval romance accords closely with those of other scholars, in emphasising love and adventure, but, where most are reluctant to define the genre by eliminating texts on the ground that essential components do not figure, Whetter is not. 'Family resemblances', Wittgenstein's approach to language categorization, will not do, however attractive to others, because it proposes the relational role of overlapping similarities, rather than fixed, key components. Whereas Davenport, for example, argues that medieval terms for narrative forms never seem 'to have very sharp edges', Whetter sees the edges as very sharp indeed. Love and adventure are necessary; so are women and happy endings. In an important argument, then, he claims that where the happy ending is lacking, despite the presence of other typical characteristics, what we face is not a romance, but a generic hybrid, mixing romance and tragedy.

What is most valuable for Whetter in the modern debate on genre is recognition that generic structures are binding, but inevitably open to adaptation. Since this permits him to argue that Middle English romance is a specific form, he can establish a strong base for reading Malory. *Morte Darthur* not only exemplifies the principle that texts are often generically mixed, but also serves as a leading example of texts that, by their double generic debt, become something more than hybrid, a 'new generic type'. Tragedy is so pervasive in the *Morte*, shaping narrative and framing character, that it is

properly recognized not as mode, but genre, fusing with romance in a new formation. Despite Whetter's distressing expression for this coupling ('generic hendiadys'), this is an important insight, drawing the author towards his most extended textual discussion and his most consistent argumentation.

Nevertheless, it prompts questions. If the *Morte* concentrates on grief, and coming to grief, it is difficult to see how this takes a strictly generic form recognized by any late medieval 'community of users'. Commentary on tragedy, such as the complaints of Chaucer's knight, includes wretched ends, but the generic models available to Malory do not offer anything like what he produced. The *Morte* includes much tragic incident in its ongoing history, but tragic history is not the same as generic tragedy. Maybe we should settle for Brewer's looser term, mode; or maybe we should recognize that Malory's extraordinary, tragic romance is a sport.

Whetter has been rather busy with this book's central issues, it seems, since completing the doctoral thesis where this discussion began. His drive to stake out a position too often results in strained argument, repetition, solecisms and unnecessary combativeness. The upside to that combative drive is the energy with which argument is here invested: Whetter's presentation of his ideas insists on their being heard. I doubt that his take on genre will 'fruitfully be applied by readers (users) of any literary (or artistic) text or time period', but I am sure his work will be appreciated for renewing discussion of romance as genre, and especially for its forceful reminder of the radical reformations of genre that take place in Malory.

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Zorach, Rebecca, *Blood, Milk, Ink, Gold: Abundance and Excess in the French Renaissance*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2005; cloth; pp. 314; 127 b/w illustrations, 16 colour plates; R.R.P. US$45.00; ISBN 0226989372.

Abundant garlands of fruits and flowers are typical of French Renaissance art, but until now their distinctive cultural meanings in sixteenth-century France have not been explored. Rebecca Zorach's lavishly illustrated study may have begun with the relatively modest aim to explore these meanings, but her monograph abounds with exciting new interpretations of an impressive range of cultural objects. As she argues, these symbols and images mattered

in the Renaissance, and contemporaries teased out, debated and transformed their meanings as they copied, developed and critiqued their use in new forms.

The study is chiefly occupied with works created for the 'high end' of town. While it might be assumed that many of the buildings, artworks, material objects, texts and tapestries she examines have been well studied, the art of the French Renaissance has received far less attention than that of Renaissance or Baroque Italy or Reformation Germany. Although the reign of Francis I promised a glittering era of royal magnificence, the religious tensions and civil wars that followed saw a shift in the direction and type of works produced. Zorach makes up for this deficit, and further includes analysis of the transmission of the relevant ideas as they were received, replicated or reworked in more widely circulating objects such as prints and coins.

Zorach's main thesis explores ideas and anxieties surrounding wealth and excess as they are conveyed in images and texts. She employs careful observation and interpretation and draws upon literary and cultural theories (sometimes adding an unnecessary level of complexity to the presentation of her ideas). She argues that under Francis I's patronage and possible guidance, artists created a vision of France as a bountiful, feminine landscape controlled by male labour and political order. The creation of diverse containers considered feminine, such as vessels and jugs, and displaying reproductive female bodies, all bellies and breasts, reflected this motif of fertility. This, Zorach argues, was a deliberate political creation of a secular mythology of Mother Nature, France, that could steer the country away from potential religious factionalism.

Each of her loosely chronological chapters takes a key liquid as the leitmotif for analysis, although these do not limit her discussion from ranging much more widely beyond its framing concept. In 'Blood', Zorach identifies key associations of land, nobility, generation and Christian sacrifice. A key text for analysis in this chapter is the Galerie François Premier at Fontainebleau, a notoriously complex work. Zorach places emphasis on multiplicity – of personalities who were involved in the gallery's creation, of national and intertextual influences, and ultimately of meanings. She suggests that it conveys a range of meanings, intended to be understood by different kinds of visitors: a suggestion offered some support by the fact that even contemporaries offered no clear consensus on its interpretation. At a closer level, Zorach focuses attention on the gallery's emphatic focus on male genitalia in scenes of circumcision and castration, which, she argues, develop a wider narrative of male sacrifice and loyalty to the good of the nation. Through an intricate

re-reading of the gallery in the context of Francis I's personal and political motivations, the nation's religious tensions, Rosso's own biography and the (later Calvinist) printer Robert Estienne's possible influence, Zorach offers a powerful new interpretation that crosses the frescos to the stucco side panels and friezes.

In 'Milk', Zorach highlights a different form of productivity, in connections between nature, production and particularly French agricultural production. This is a shift, she argues, from the masculine forms of the gallery to a more feminine iconography. Some of the artists explored here, such as sculptor Sambin and designer Thiry, trained at Fontainebleau. In these works, multiple breasts, pressed and squeezed, abound, and through them Zorach explores meanings ostensibly maternal and deeply philosophical but also highly erotic. Some of the arguments advanced here feel less convincing, especially those relating to diplomatic portraiture for royal marriages, and are marred by a mix-up between two Marguerites (of Austria and Angoulême).

In the fourth chapter, 'Ink', Zorach turns her attention to the fascinating textual collaboration of designer Thiry with engraver Boyvin. This introduces a discussion of the reproduction but inherent instability of ideas in print, a notion that will be familiar to most readers. Zorach follows the life of the gallery designs in print, especially the luxurious garlands of fruits and foliage, exploring the meanings these conveyed when separated from their original context at Fontainebleau. Their use in Thiry and Boyvin's strange sexualized images for the 1563 *Livre de la conqueste de la Toison d'or* leads to a provocative analysis of homosocial and homosexual bonding, in art and the Renaissance male workplaces, as she explores 'the eroticism of collaboration in a homosocial framework' (p. 187).

Finally, in 'Gold', Zorach explores the connections between images of luxury and concerns with inflation, increase and excess more generally in later sixteenth-century French culture. Although conventional artworks remain present, this chapter takes an expansive turn, examining literary, economic and political texts (written, woven, performed and stamped in coin) that critiqued or attempted to control consumption. This too is tied to a gender analysis, arguing that such messages were aimed in part at the court of Henri III, a king whose love of fashion, finery and *mignons* destabilized the conventions of political culture and traditional notions of the power and authority of the monarch.

Thus, throughout the book and (Zorach would argue) throughout sixteenth-century France, the celebration of abundance and wealth is balanced by fears

of artificiality and excess – linking forms of generation, of the land, of bodies, of print and of money in new and different ways across the century. What is innovative here is not so much the conclusions Zorach arrives at about France in this period, but rather the way in which she demonstrates the exploration of contemporary ideas and anxieties across such a wide and diverse range of objects. Zorach's interpretations of the individual objects and presentations are sometimes challenging, but always thought-provoking. Her book will make essential reading for scholars of French art and cultural history but should also find an interested readership among scholars of Early Modern French politics, economics and literature.

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