

Reviews

MARCO NIEVERGELT, *Allegorical Quests from Deguileville to Spenser* (DS Brewer, 2012) ISBN 978-1-84384-328-3 (hardcover); xii + 244 pages; £50.

Marco Nievergelt has written a beautifully-plotted journey through the development of the chivalric allegorical quest, bravely traversing the wandering wood of medieval and renaissance periodization, and boldly tackling the blatant beast of the emergence of the modern self. Beginning with Guillaume de Deguileville's *Pelerinage de la Vie Humaine* as the foundational 'paradigm' for the allegorical pilgrimage-quest, he takes us diachronically, but never in simplistically teleological fashion, through the web of four clearly-derived fifteenth-century works (Jean de Courcy's *Le Chemin de Vaillance*, Thomas de Saluces' *Le Livre du Chevalier errant*, René d'Anjou's *Le livre du cuer d'amour espris* and Olivier de la Marche's *Le Chevalier délibéré* – a translation itself of the Spanish *El caballero determinado*). In lengthier chapters he develops the responses to the new conditions facing the Tudor knight, taking his examples across a confessional range including Protestant and Catholic-authored texts, and finally to what he sees as the culmination of the engagement with the form and its developments in Edmund Spenser's *Faerie Queene*.

Nievergelt disavows a set original 'goal' for his book, echoing in the form of his own work his account of the quest as an experientially-developed process of becoming. He does, however, delineate a number of distinctly emerging towers to the city of his destination. He wishes to, following in the fresh tracks of other medievalists including David Aers and Lee Paterson, and countering the backsliding drift towards a monolithically understood Middle Ages of Stephen Greenblatt's *The Swerve*, to emphasize the continuity of a metaphysical and social understanding of the self from the medieval to the early modern period. More than this, Nievergelt asserts that the modern or 'private' self emerges as the continuation of a dialectical engagement, central to the medieval texts, between the transcendently-directed self and the engaged, socially and temporally situated self. Nievergelt has chosen his paradigm of the pilgrimage-quest as one which engages directly, throughout its history, with the tension between these selves. To simplify, the first might be associated with the pilgrimage and pilgrim, the other with the knight and quest. The allegorical knightly pilgrimages the author addresses are all engaged in wedding the two. Overall the thread Nievergelt is tracing is that of how the poets, often figures of courtly power themselves, are working around the possibility of the synthesis or integration of the social and historical with the transcendental and the spiritual goals and *mores*. These are indeed pressures which appear to intensify in the sixteenth-century context, but it is rather because the courts and nation-states of Henry VIII and Elizabeth I appear in different ways to offer hope of convergence between temporal advancement and virtue and spiritual, transcendental goals than that they displace the metaphysical with the social, as Jonathan Dollimore has argued. Ultimately, but particularly in

the atmosphere of more politicized apocalypticism Nievergelt identifies in the Reformation period, the shadowy hope is even of a this-worldly apotheosis or perfection, the shimmering grail or marriage held out for at the end of the quest.

However he stresses that within the perspective of eternity there tends to be a point of failure, which either corresponds to an untenable, uneasy integration (as in the case of Jean de Courcy) the substitution of an ersatz, false Jerusalem (René d'Anjou), with premonitions of modern existential doubt and even agnosticism (Olivier de la Marche) or a deliberately framed sense of deferred eschatological perfection (Thomas de Saluces, and, after a long attempt at 'secularized' quest, Stephen Hawes). Despite the apocalyptic setting Stephen Bateman brings to his extensive adaptation of *Le Chevalier délibéré* and the development of the idea of the Reformation as an event in its timeframe or model, its pre-anticipation he finally, too, in orthodox manner abandons all to Christ's true Second Coming. Nievergelt also touches on yet another key area of development in early modern studies: the concept of the popular and pragmatic fluidity between religious confessions as developed by cross-fertilisation and translation between spiritual works from the Catholic continental and English Protestant traditions. He brings into play the easy adaptation by the Protestant merchant William Goodyear of a Catholic counter-reformation didactic allegory. Nievergelt also includes an explicitly Catholic allegory, Lewis Lewknor's version of *Le Chevalier délibéré*, and uses it to demonstrate how similar tensions of national and spiritual loyalty are opened up in a text which is both a 'manifesto of Catholic loyalism' and an implicit critique of the abuses of the Elizabethan court.

Perhaps the most weighty chapter of Nievergelt's book is the final one, in which he attempts to use the Deguivillian tradition as a new approach to Spenser criticism. As is true throughout this work, Nievergelt eschews source study in favour of an investigation of the development of the paradigm of the quest-pilgrimage itself. For Nievergelt Spenser solves certain crucial tensions. The division of exploits across different knights create an inherently communal and corporate quest, diffusing the pressure on the self. His knights' exploits in pursuit of the virtues and in the service of the Elizabethan court are *vita activa* 'drafts' of a spiritual quest still to come, and indeed an effectual 'prefiguration' of the cosmic, apocalyptic struggle.

A coda does some crucially important theoretical work in exploring how the 'predetermined' nature of John Bunyan's pilgrimage allegory works to found, in its doctrinaire formulation, the nineteenth-century assumption of allegorical 'flatness'. Here Nievergelt argues Bunyan writes the self as pre-given in its salvation, and the metaphors of struggle and journey become merely exercises of patience and endurance rather than formative processes of becoming. If this is a recognizably alienated, modern self it is only so through a new theological development, and one which relates to the transcendentalising moves of earlier quest allegories.

This is a brilliant book which accomplishes its specific task immensely well, and also opens up onto so many crucial questions for medieval and early modern literary and historical study. There are, however, necessary reservations. The first is a perhaps inevitable one: the distinctions Nievergelt has drawn to develop his

'family' of texts do make some rather crucial and harsh divisions. It is not entirely clear, at the outset, why Deguileville 'makes' the 'pilgrimage of life' category he adopts from Siegfried Wenzel and *Piers Plowman*, for example, does not. The poet-narrator as figure of human *errance*, questions of the resolution of the active and the contemplative life, and the apocalyptic frame, hopes for social-spiritual apotheosis and its final deferral are all played out also in William Langland's poem in a manner of great sophistication. The poet-narrator may not be precisely a knightly figure, amphibious as he is between the clerical and the lay, but after all Nievergelt has had to skew his reading of a Cistercian monastic allegory to claim it is innately chivalric. He himself points out the good arguments in favour of Langland's own knowledge of Deguileville, advanced in Colin Burrow and the thesis of Josephine Houghton-Meyer.

Nievergelt argues that in his later writings, Spenser finally turns away reluctantly, under the pressure of the cloying contingency of historical event and disaster in Ireland, from his delight in cosmically figuring action and history. On the one hand he finds a pastoral and temporary apotheosis in Protestant marriage, and specifically his to Elizabeth Boyle, a private union which replaces the historical with the domestic apotheosis. Ultimately Nievergelt argues that he makes a final transcendental leap, vowing the self towards the contemplation of the timeless, eternal, still and universal. I would however somewhat quibble with the reading on which this depends, that of the final 'Mutabilitie Cantos' which 'close' the apparently unfinished quest that is the *Faerie Queene* as a staging of the attempt of the Titaness Mutabilitie, a daughter of Chaos, to demonstrate her rightful dominion over all the gods and Nature herself. Her extraordinary procession of hours, times and seasons is countered in strikingly few words indeed by Nature, who articulates a Thomistic understanding of the perfection of forms through time, by which change is dominated by the very things it thinks it rules. Using the word 'dilate' in a way which prefigures Derrida – dilate it is the frequentative of defer, containing the senses of differ and defer whose etymological divergence Derrida restores in his concept of 'différance' – Spenser speaks of a transformation in space and time which is more deeply extension than mutation, a state-change towards greater being rather than an (impossible) ontological shift. This verb, otherwise, Spenser uses to speak of narrative telling of the sort he himself is engaged in. Hence poetry itself is engaged in the necessary 'dilation' of experiential existence by which, in the process of becoming, the various and changeable events of history and expression in story are *necessary* instruments of changeless eternity itself. Nievergelt rightly acknowledges the Hebrew pun of Spenser's final prayer to the 'Sabboath God' of heavenly hosts (sabboath) and battle and then for a 'Sabboath's sight' – the sight of rest (sabbath) and changelessness, but he does not give enough weight to its ambivalence. Even in the midst of visioning stasis Spenser infuses it with the trace of action. It should be pointed out that the location of his final verses, Arlo Hill itself contains a similar equivocation; heavenly paradise and faeryland, although given over to the wolves of destruction its very name, in this anglicised version of 'Harlo' or 'Arlow' can be derived as *herle* and *hlaw*, the hill of the army. Its Gaelic name, Aherlow, gives 'between two heights' and the whole functions well as an allegory of the earthly condition with its expectation of what appears

here as an apocatastatic restoration, rather than an abandonment of things earthly for things heavenly. Nievergelt also misses the equivocation of the lines of the penultimate stanza on Spenser's own relationship to this world of action and history:

When I bethinke me on that speech whyleare,
Of *Mutability*, and well it way:
Me seemes, that though she all vnworthy were
Of the Heav'ns Rule ; yet very sooth to say,
In all things else she beares the greatest sway.
Which makes me loath this state of life so tickle,
And loue of things so vaine to cast away;
Whose flowring pride, so fading and so fickle,
Short *Time* shall soon cut down with his consuming sickle.

Does Spenser 'loath this state of life' and does he 'cast away' 'loue of things so vaine' or, read again, is he 'loath this state of life so tickle, And loue of things so vaine to cast away'? The balance, then, does not quite fall as Nievergelt suggests it does towards Spenser as 'a resolutely transcendentalising poet'.

Arabella Milbank
EMMANUEL COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE

MARY C FLANNERY and KATIE L WALTER, eds., *The Culture of Inquisition in Medieval England* (DS Brewer, 2013); ISBN 9781843843368 (hardcover); viii+193 pages; £60.

By considering the wider cultural impact of burgeoning inquisitional practices in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century England, the aim of this volume is to extend the purview of recent historical work – by Ian Forrest and John Arnold, among others – on the origins and processes of late medieval *inquisitio*. Nine of the ten essays are by literary scholars – Forrest's own contribution is the only one from a fully-fledged historian – and emphasis is duly given both to "the varied and extensive textual culture" (2) produced by inquisition and to "inquisition as a concept and a discourse" (2). Part of the subject, in other words, is "imagined inquisition" (78; 159); and as Emily Steiner notes in her concluding essay, "The question that drives [the book] is: what does inquisition have to do with imagination?" (164). Above all, the editors are interested in conceptualizing inquisition as "a dialogic mode of inquiry, a means of discerning, producing or rewriting truth, and an often adversarial form of invention and literary authority" (1). This literary angle is certainly productive, though one might demur at the claim that the book is "the first to treat these discursive and cultural implications" (2) since the project evidently has some distinguished precursors, including Dyan Elliott's *Proving Woman: Female Spirituality and Inquisitional Culture in the Later Middle Ages*

(Princeton University Press, 2004) and Katherine Little's *Confession and Resistance: Defining the Self in Late Medieval England* (University of Notre Dame Press, 2006).

Inquisitio was a canon law procedure (not an institution) first explicitly prescribed at the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215. The procedure involved the ecclesiastical investigation, *ex officio*, of those formally suspected of specific wrongdoing. Suspicion was formally established only when two or more reputable persons testified that a suspect was widely believed to be guilty of a crime, and the burden of proof lay with the inquisitor. The practice was arguably an improvement on the older procedure of *accusatio*, wherein an individual could accuse another of a crime before an ecclesiastical arbiter, but only by accepting the burden of proof himself, with the attendant risk that if guilt could not be established the accuser would suffer the same penalty as the one he sought for the accused. As the editors of this volume are at pains to point out, *inquisitio* was not – as is often believed – deployed exclusively in the fight against heresy, but much more widely, especially in ecclesiastical attempts to regulate sexual relations. As a result, “it was bound up with sanctions like excommunication and public penance, as well as confession” (1), “imbricat[ed] with a number of other mechanisms of medieval canon law” (1) and “enmeshed in a complex set of pastoral, legal, social and literary structures” (2). Nonetheless, the new threat of heresy in fifteenth-century England – following the condemnation of the Wycliffite conclusions at the Blackfriars council in 1382 – undoubtedly provided a major stimulus to *inquisitio*, both real and imagined, and heresy trials are central to several of the essays in the book.

The first three essays situate late medieval *inquisitio* within a wider context of canon law. In the opening essay on “Inquisition, Public Fame and Confession”, Henry Ansgar Kelly – a literary scholar with a longstanding interest in inquisitional practice – sets out the case for considering *inquisitio* in a wider context than that of heresy and describes the development of inquisition in European canon law and its particular application in England. He also spells out some of the connections between the public and private forms of confession sought respectively by the inquisitor and the more mundane confessor – a theme that will be picked up in subsequent essays. Kelly is careful to emphasise that inquisitors undertook their work with a pastoral intent and that inquisition, at least insofar as it was practised in England, was a relatively sophisticated legal procedure with its own due process – not the crude and bludgeoning instrument of pathological hatred so often imagined. In “The Imperatives of *Denunciatio*”, Edwin Craun’s expertise in pastoral literature makes for an enlightening comparison between inquisition and canon law provisions for the admonishment of sinners within the community – a practice (*denunciatio*) rooted in Christ’s prescription in Matthew 18:15–17 (“If your brother shall offend you, go and rebuke him...”). Ian Forrest describes his essay (“English Provincial Constitutions and Inquisition into Lollardy”) as a rectification of an omission from his much-admired book *The Detection of Heresy in Late Medieval England* (OUP, 2005). In it he describes the fillip given to provincial interest in local canon law collections in the second decade of the fifteenth-century – “the period in which lollardy was being defined and prosecuted” (46) in England following Arundel’s 1407 anti-heresy legislation.

Following these essays setting out the historical background, a central contribution in the volume is provided by the editors, Mary Flannery and Katie Walter: "Modes of Inquiry and the Dynamics of Interiority in Vernacular Literature." Their chief contention is that, as a procedure concerned with the discernment of inner states, often unknowable, inquisition is related to sacramental confession; like confession, moreover, inquisition — especially "imagined inquisition" — is a mode of self-fashioning. The authors draw on several examples of the metaphorical application of inquisitional discourse in vernacular literature: from the dialogic commentary on the ten commandments *Dives and Pauper* (c.1405), the exempla collection *Jacob's Well* (c.1450), Lydgate's poem *The Fall of Princes* (c. 1431-38/0) and the Middle English translation of the spiritual treatise *De doctrina cordis*. These examples, the authors contend, "demonstrate the ways in which imagined inquisition provides an alternative model for the self-scrutiny and subject-formation traditionally understood to have been produced and fostered in medieval confessional practices" (78). One wonders if a third overlapping discourse — that of *discretio spirituum* (the discernment of spirits) — might profitably have been invoked in this chapter, for it too was a discursive mode of inquiry into inner states not immediately legible to the observing eye. Margery Kempe, who is only briefly mentioned in this book, certainly provides a striking case of "subject-formation" in which inquisition, confession and *discretio* are closely intertwined.

Three of the essays deal more or less directly with heresy trials and the textual production — by inquisitors and accused alike — that they precipitated. Diane Vincent (in "The Contest Over the Public Imagination of Inquisition, 1380-1480") focuses primarily on the propaganda war fought over the inquisitorial examinations of Nicholas Hereford, Philip Repingdon and John Aston in 1382, and the trial of the "Lollard knight" John Oldcastle in 1413-14. Vincent's main point is that "engagement between the ecclesiastical hierarchy and the Wycliffites over inquisitorial question and answer was deliberately placed in the public sphere by both sides" (61). Genelle Gertz's essay ("Heresy Inquisition and Authorship, 1400-1560") reprises the main argument of her recent monograph, *Heresy Trials and English Women Writers 1400-1670* (CUP, 2012). Her chief contention, as expressed in that book, is that "heresy trial encouraged authorship about belief" (20). Inquisitorial procedure, in other words, often generated acts of authorship on the part of those under interrogation, whether in the form of simple "belief papers" or fuller, semi-fictionalized trial narratives. Here Gertz focuses on the way that statements of abjuration — essential components of heresy trials — often functioned as models for the production of dissenting statements of belief. The examples are mainly from the sixteenth century, Anne Askew prominent among them. In "Imitating Inquisition: Dialectical Bias in Protestant Prison Writings", Ruth Ahnert also deals with sixteenth-century material, and (like Gertz) passes in silence over the fifteenth-century cases of William Thorpe and Richard Wyche. Ahnert's is a slightly strange essay insofar as its conclusion is surely one with which few would disagree: that most accounts of trials, whether by the ecclesiastical authorities or by those charged with heresy, are affected by "bias" of one kind or another.

The remaining essays address other literary texts. According to Jenny Lee's reading of Thomas Usk, "key discourses of inquisition ... shaped his textual imagination and self-fashioning in his written compositions both within the legal system (his *Appeal*) and outside of it (his literary *Testament of Love*)" (97). James Wade considers the unusually central place given to confession – and to what he regards as "inquisition masquerading as confession" (126) – in the late fourteenth-century romance *The Erle of Toulous*. Whether his reading of this little-known poem finally demonstrates "the cultural embeddedness of *inquisitio* in the period" (112) is questionable, but Wade's essay, which draws on other examples from romance including the problematic confession scenes in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, certainly makes an interesting case for more constructive thinking about the relationship between medieval romance and the devotional and pastoral genres it is usually thought to exclude or subsume.

In her concluding "Response Essay", Emily Steiner thinks through some implications of Chaucer's putative allusions to inquisitorial discourse in the prologue to *The Legend of Good Women*. Particularly provocative in this sometimes rather gnomic piece is Steiner's observation that inquisition is motivated by desires from which neither literary critics nor historians are exempt: "they include the desire to extract information, to exact punishment and to take pleasure in the dynamics of subordination and dominion" (166). In seeking to understand the past, we are all sometimes implicated in quasi-inquisitorial methods – a theme that John Arnold has more directly addressed in an article omitted from Steiner's footnotes and Flannery and Walter's bibliography: "The Historian as Inquisitor: The Ethics of Interrogating Subaltern Voices", *Rethinking History: The Journal of Theory and Practice*, 2:3 (2009).

Collections such as this often constitute a *potpourri*, but this is an unusually coherent volume in terms of agenda and thematics, though this coherence is frequently made too self-consciously explicit by unnecessary cross-reference between essays. ("As X says in this volume...") In making their case for the collection, the editors are also prone to occasional overstatement. To argue that "the discourses ... of inquisition and confession interact with one another and even overlap" (2) is reasonable enough; but this quickly gives way to the much stronger – and less tenable – claim that "confession and inquisition are inextricable" (2). Even the title of the volume might be viewed as slightly overblown. The book is concerned with particular cases of inquisition and more widely with the cultural valence of inquisitorial "discourse" – with the way in which aspects of *inquisitio* were used metaphorically – but it is not clear that the examples adduced, fascinating though they are, demonstrate an entire *culture* of inquisition in medieval England. One final quibble: given that two of the essays deal primarily with sixteenth-century material, the title of the book is slightly misleading in terms of periodization. For all these caveats, however, this is an engaging and informative volume that makes a provocative case for the importance of inquisition – real and imagined – and for the need to further our own inquiries with both imagination and tact.

Phil Robins

RICHARD GAMESON, ed., *The Cambridge history of the book in Britain, vol. 1 c. 400-1100* (Cambridge University Press, 2012) ISBN 9780521583459 (hardcover); xx + 827 pp. + 54 plates; £110.00.

After a long gestation the publishers of the series *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain* have gathered into a single serviceable volume -- thirty-nine chapters by thirty-two authors on the British medieval book, from the oldest glimpse of writing in Roman Britain (the Vindolanda tablets) to manuscripts after the Norman Conquest. This is the first of the series planned in seven volumes, of which six have already been published, and it deals with the longest period; despite the series' own stated chronological limits, c. 400-1100, it covers, we find roughly the first thousand years of the book's existence. The volume's editor, Richard Gameson, author of six of the chapters printed here, has done well to deliver up a basic work of reference for this long and important chapter in the history of the book from the British Isles.

There are 395,000 words in the volume, divided into five unequal parts: 'The Making of Books', 'The Circulation of Books', 'Types of Books and their Uses', 'Collections of Books', 'Coda'. To this is prefixed an introductory chapter by the editor himself, 'From Vindolanda to Domesday: the book in Britain from the Romans to the Normans'; then, after the body of the text, added, more or less independently, the book's final chapter, 'The Study of Early British Books', on modern scholarship and new avenues of research. The apparatus includes three indexes: of manuscripts by name, e.g. the 'Tiberius Bede' (incidentally not listed here, but so called in the main text); of manuscripts by home and shelf-mark, e.g. London, Cotton Tiberius C. ii; and of names and topics generally. The bibliography provides adequate coverage of the vast literature in this rapidly developing subject-area. The plates, at the back of the book, plus one frontispiece, all in black-and-white, (presumably not at natural size, unstated) are of generally high quality. The rule-proving exception is the irredeemably bad image of fol. 259r of the 'Lindisfarne Gospels' (cf. Plate 4.2). Disappointingly, the in-text illustrations, tables, figures, line-drawings, etc. do not appear to be listed anywhere in the volume.

Part I, 'The Making of Books', contains ten chapters, each of varying length. The first, by Richard Gameson, is an account - long, detailed, technical - of the construction and appearance of British medieval books; the second, a study of scribes and scribal communities in Anglo-Saxon England, also from his pen. In the following chapters, the separate contributors have attempted to illustrate aspects of the distribution of script and decoration throughout large regions of Britain. Here many ways of research are opened for enquiry. Michelle P. Brown reviews the Insular hand, its origin and phases of calligraphic growth, while Helen McKee explores farther-flung script home-zones in areas of Wales, Scotland and Cornwall. The history of English vernacular script is discussed by Julia Crick, while that of Latin handwriting in England is dealt with in three parts: David Ganz discusses

script-reform and the phases of tenth-century Square minuscule; Rebecca Rushforth zooms in on the impact and adoption of Caroline script-forms; and Teresa Webber concentrates on post-Conquest scribes and scriptoria. While Nancy Netzer gives an account of gospel-books and other liturgical volumes which include Insular decoration, Nancy Edwards examines those books with decoration having connexions or possible connexions to Wales, and Richard Gameson discusses decorated books for which an English origin or provenance has been claimed or was possible from Alfred's reign until early Norman times. Michael Gullick's trailblazing study of old bindings from early British books brings this section to a close.

Part II, 'The Circulation of Books', contains three chapters, and is of critical importance because the accounts of the contributors included in it are so invaluable, providing as they do a firm basis for the study of the historical transmission of books to and from the British Isles. Rosamond McKitterick, with her splendidly clear exposition, reminds us what fresh results can be yielded by digging down deeply into the research of manuscript traditions and the transmission of texts within the Continent. Helen McKee, on the Celtic realms' rôle in the diffusion of books, has been able to trace out of (mainly) lost sources indications of manuscripts' wanderings through these regions. Finally, Richard Gameson himself charts the spread of books on both sides of the sea from Alfred's time until after the Conquest.

Part III, 'Types of Books and their Uses', contains twelve chapters. 'The book in Roman Britain' by R. S. O. Tomlin begins by asking from which periods and regions in Britain the book first of all emerged. Then, T. M. Charles-Edwards looks at its function in 'The use of the book in Wales, c. 400-1100'. In the following chapters, the individual contributors have attempted the classification of what books survive in their respective fields, in order to develop a picture of what types were read where and by whom in medieval Britain. The sequence follows a certain logic: Richard Marsden's survey of Latin biblical codices, 'The biblical manuscripts of Anglo-Saxon England' complements Patrick McGurk's, 'Anglo-Saxon gospel-books, c.900-1066'. As 'Liturgical books' by Richard Pfaff goes well with Barbara Raw, 'Anglo-Saxon prayerbooks', so 'Psalms' by M. Jane Toswell does with 'Music books' by Susan Rankin. Scott Gwara's study of 'Anglo-Saxon schoolbooks' is followed by that of the late Patrick Wormald who, with his clear and lucid prose, reflects on 'Lawbooks' of the Old English period. As a conclusion to this part, Simon Keynes offers a highly compressed account of the story of the Alfredian Common Stock and its tenth- and eleventh-century accretions, 'Manuscripts of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*'; and Donald Scragg offers an informative account of vernacular collections of poems and homilies, 'Old English homilies and poetic manuscripts'.

Part IV, 'Collections of Books' - an exciting section - contains twelve chapters, which by attempting to give bulk to the general stock of books known by this or that author between the fifth and the twelfth centuries, adds much of literary and historical interest for the period. For while the collections themselves have long been dispersed, the contributors have tried to show, on the basis of three kinds of evidence - surviving manuscripts, surviving inventories, and citations from

classical and patristic works – not only what books were known by a certain scholar, or group of scholars, but also what texts were available at a particular school or foundation of learning. Thus the contributors have been able to uncover the contents of a number of British medieval libraries, whose books have otherwise vanished without trace. Of early Irish books ‘Patrick, apostle of Ireland’ by David Howlett, is accompanied by Thomas O’Loughlin, ‘The library of Iona at the time of Adomnán’. The study of the Anglo-Saxons’ literacy practices, ‘Literacy in Anglo-Saxon England’ by M. R. Godden is followed by a series of case-studies on those books more or less certainly known by specific British authors: ‘Aldhelm’s library’ by Andy Orchard; ‘The library of the Venerable Bede’ by Rosalind Love; ‘The library of Alcuin’s York’ by Mary Garrison; ‘The library of Cynewulf’ by Fiona Gameson; ‘King Alfred and his circle’ by Rohini Jayatilaka; ‘Ælfric’s library’ by M. R. Godden; ‘The library of Byrhtferth’ by Michael Lapidge; and ‘Wulfstan of York’ by Andy Orchard. The tale of two brothers and a well-stocked family library at Llanbadarn Fawr, ‘Rhygyfarch ap Sulien and Ieuan ap Sulien’ by David Howlett, brings the section to a close.

There are very few misprints in the volume, and those that do exist are minor. This volume may be characterized as a classic: the most detailed account of its subject that has appeared so far in print.

Nicholas A. Sparks
INSTITUTE OF ENGLISH STUDIES, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

ANNEKE B. MULDER-BAKKER, ed., *Living Saints of the Thirteenth Century: The Lives of Yvette, anchoress of Huy; Juliana of Cornillon, Author of the Corpus Christi Feast; and Margaret the Lame, anchoress of Magdeburg* (Brepols, 2011) ISBN 9782503520773 (hardcover); ix + 416 pages; EUR 95 excl. tax.

The translations contained in this volume represent the most up-to-date English editions of the *vitae* of three important holy women from the thirteenth century: widowed anchoress and mother Yvette of Huy (1158-1228); prioress, prophetess and recluse Juliana of Cornillon (1192/3-1258); and disabled anchoress Margaret the Lame of Magdeburg (ca. 1210-1250). Blossoming interest in new forms of female devotional practices in the period is testified by Brepols’ publication of relevant volumes in the *Medieval Women: Texts and Contexts* (MWTC) series, to which this current work also belongs (vol. 20). This publication complements earlier releases of the Middle English critical editions of Elizabeth of Spalbeek, Christina the Astonishing, and Marie of Oignies (MWTC, vol. 23), and modern English translations of the *vitae* of Christina the Astonishing, Margaret of Ypres, and Lutgard of Aywières (MWTC, vol. 19). Scholarship of such texts finds on the significance of the *mulieres religiosae*, a heterogeneous grouping of holy women who expressed their devotion both as lay women and monastics.

The translations are supple and engaging throughout, balancing accessibility of English idiom with academic precision. Footnotes provided are extremely useful, pinpointing Biblical references and intriguing particularities of

Latin *lexis* for further study. Appended to each translation is a chronology of key events in the protagonist's lifetime, and significant happenings afterwards. These timelines are most welcome, offering the reader a means to place *vitae's* happenings in broader social and historical contexts.

Each translation is preceded by an interpretive essay on the given text. Barbara Newman's (Northwestern University) introduction to Juliana of Cornillon's biography deftly situates the saint in her specific socio-cultural milieu (146-175.) The saint is much studied due to her tireless promotion of the Corpus Christi Feast, a rite she prophesied via mystical vision. Newman's clear dissection of the particularities of the Feast and its institution provide excellent anchoring material for research on this topic (162-170). Discussions relating to the network of powerful clerics supporting Juliana (165-6), her support system of other religious women, and her staunch opponents (152-6) also show the intricate relationships in which the saint was embroiled. Moreover, such analyses point to the complexities of Juliana's life as holy woman, balancing spiritual power and ecclesiastical obedience. An appendix also contains translations of two other documents highly important to the study of Juliana's influence as a religious woman: the papal bull of Pope Urban IV to Eve of St-Martin in 1264 signalling the official adoption of the Corpus Christi Feast and the letter of Robert, bishop of Liège, establishing the Feast in his diocese in 1246 (298-302). Jo Ann McNamara's (Hunter College, City University of New York; sadly now deceased) introductory essay to the Life of Yvette of Huy amply delineates the key issues thrown up by the text (49-66). The unique positioning of Yvette, mother and widow, as an exemplarily pious 'manly woman' is well situated, as is her dislike of men and their sexual filth (50-54). Yvette's devotion to charity, the sick, and poor is also highlighted (60-66). Analyses of potential disobedience on the part of the saint, including her possible refusal to detail her visions to her confessor, are nuanced and subtly drawn (58). The translators' introduction to Margaret's *vita* grounds the biography briefly, highlighting central research questions, including suffering as a form of particularly female devotion (305-309). Compared to the other translations' introductions in this volume, this essay feels overly abbreviated, skimming over the surface of Margaret and her context. However, it does provide references to other relevant recent scholarship. In any case, the appearance of an English translation of Margaret's biography is significant. Margaret is under-represented in contemporary hagiographical studies. Most likely this is because of her *vita's* omission from the *Acta Sanctorum* and the relatively recent appearance of a critical Latin edition in the early 1990s. The text's neglect plausibly also relates to a lack of widely available English translation. Gertrud Jaron Lewis (Laurentian University) and Tilman Lewis' translation of Margaret's *vita* in this volume thus responds to a significant gap and acts as a stimulus for interrogation of this frequently ignored text.

A canon of twenty-seven thirteenth-century saints' Lives from the southern Low Countries is provided, offering a useful starting point for research (43-5). Groupings organised by gender and religious activity (holy laymen/women or nuns/monks) offer insight into the variance of the *corpus* at a glance. Indeed, Anneke B. Mulder-Bakker's (Rijksuniversiteit Groningen) general introduction

emphasises the importance of reckoning with the inherent differences between the lives of the holy laity and those in ecclesiastical institutions (3-5; 1-42). This 'diversity,' she argues, is often marginalised in recent scholarship in favour of a focus on monastics, and must be explored to its fullest. It is essential to unpack the term *mulieres religiosae*, carefully discerning typology and authorial methodology. Mulder-Bakker provides three broad subsets of *mulieres religiosae*: (1) holy virgins and beguines (10-18); (2) holy matrons, widows and holy knights (18-21); (3) anchoresses and hermits (21-27). In each instance, the author provides synoptic mini-essays with many examples of individuals fitting her classifications drawn from her canon. These sections function as sharp analytical overviews, essential reading for researchers seeking a starting point with the material. Given the book's broader focus on three female religious biographies, Mulder-Bakker's concentration on material relating to female individuals is natural, though these pages also contain brief discussions of holy men. Further, Mulder-Bakker highlights instances of mobility between categories, ensuring her taxonomy fits the fluid nature of the religious lifestyles under discussion. For example, Mary of Oignies, Odilia of Liège, and Yvette of Huy were all widows and entered anchorholds (19, 21) – thereby variously positioned in sets (2) and (3).

Mulder-Bakker urges scholars to recognise the texts as definitively not 'historically trustworthy' biographies, but instead carefully selected and shaped excerpts with varying claims to authenticity (5). James of Vitry utilises the term *fragmenta* in his prologue of the *vita* of Mary of Oignies to signify circulating stories relating to a saint (29). Mulder-Bakker draws on Vitry's terminology to explain a tripartite production process: the saint's body and actual life (relics), which generate stories about the saint (*fragmenta*), then concretised by authors into hagiography (*exempla*) (29-30). Crucially, an *exemplum* is glossed specifically as a story which re-occurs in the instance it is read or spoken: *vitae* reanimate saints and thus ultimately coincide with the saint's corporeal remains and relics, offering traces of real presence (30). Mulder-Bakker argues that these *vitae* are not, *sensu stricto*, hagiographies. None of the texts were intended to promote the saints for canonisation, and all focus on the experiences of women living salvation very much in the contemporary world (30-2). For this reason, she maintains that rather than bearing the label *vita*, such a text should be identified as *Liber Vitae* (book of life) (32-3). Again, James of Vitry's vocabulary inspires Mulder-Bakker, as he proclaimed that Ur-beguine Mary of Oignies 'read' to her community from 'the book of life' through her manner of existence (33). There is a dearth of references to intended audience within the works, though most extant manuscript copies are found in male monasteries (37-42). Cistercian abbeys such as Wahlberg and Sint-Truiden welcomed men and women from the urban centres on feast days. In this monastic setting the lay urban folk were exposed to the *vitae* and such vital, exemplary narratives played into their own religious development and self-fashioning (40).

With such attention paid to the constructed-ness of the texts themselves, greater attention to detail regarding the precise composition of the canonical corpus would be most welcome. Inclusion in Mulder-Bakker's corpus depends on fulfilment of the category of Latin *vitae* composed shortly after the death of late

twelfth- and thirteenth-century religious men and women of the Southern Low Countries (6-8). Despite some deliberation on selection criteria and the canonical *vitae*, comments here are unsatisfying as to important issues regarding other scholars' consideration of *vitae* either within or outside of such a canon. The inclusion of Margaret of Magdeburg is unconvincing, seeming primarily to fit the editor's desire for the text's inclusion in the volume. Though she lived in the thirteenth-century and lived a holy life, Margaret did not live in the region of Brabant- Liège (6). Her biographer, as Mulder-Bakker points out, refers to beguines in the text and there is evidence the work had an audience in the medieval Southern Netherlands (6, 33) However, Friar Johannes uses the example of the beguines to point out Margaret's superior religiosity, not simply to group her in with them (388). Margaret is not included in other canons of female biographies of the period, including that provided by Walter Simons in his 2010 chapter 'Holy Women of the Low Countries: A Survey' (647-8). Nor is she included in *City of Ladies*, Simons' seminal study of beguines in the medieval Low Countries from 2001. Additionally, more analysis of variances within the canonical corpus more generally would be enlightening. For example, Mulder-Bakker includes Alice of Schaerbeek and Odilia of Liège in her canon, whereas Walter Simons explicitly excludes the former (*Cities of Ladies*, 170n.9) and Margot H. King and Ludo Jongen's 2007 bibliography (online, via *Monastic Matrix*) elides the latter in groupings of thirteenth-century female hagiographies from the region. Nevertheless, this work is indispensable for scholars of thirteenth-century female devotion in the Low Countries, whether as an entry-point to the field generally or for specific analyses of the given saints.

Alicia Spencer-Hall
UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, LONDON