

Reviews

Bernardi, Gabriella, *Bernard Berenson and Byzantine Art: Correspondence, 1920–1957* (Medieval and Early Modern Europe and the World, 3), Turnhout, Brepols, 2023; hardback; pp. 700; 63 b/w, 55 colour illustrations, 1 colour map; RRP €120.00; ISBN 9782503596716.

The name Bernard Berenson is familiar to most art historians. He was a very prominent figure in the first half of the twentieth century, famed for his attribution of works by Renaissance artists; his ownership of the Villa I Tatti near Florence; which he gifted to Harvard University; and his close relationship with Joseph Duveen, an art dealer with whom he fell out, but not before that association damaged his reputation. Many of his works, including *The Drawings of the Florentine Painters* (Murray, 1903) and *The Italian Painters of the Renaissance* (Phaidon Press, 1952), were of lasting importance. Berenson also had close ties with many significant cultural figures, ranging across Isabella Stewart Gardner, Edith Wharton, Natalie Barney, Kenneth Clark, and Cole Porter. He also had an affair with Bella da Costa Greene, the legendary librarian who managed and developed the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York and became its first director.

Berenson was born in Lithuania but moved to the United States as a boy and lived much of his life in Italy. He died in October 1959 at Villa I Tatti. The letters he left are in several languages. Four collections with different people have been published. This book is different, as it focuses on a specific topic and involves a multitude of writers. Its focus is also unexpected, because Berenson's published work, except for his account of San Marco in Venice, reveals little of his interest and knowledge of Byzantine art. As a student of Italian art, so influenced by Byzantium, this interest is less surprising.

The book is organised into three parts. The first, consisting of five chapters, includes 'A Short Biography', an account of his interest in the Ancient and the Byzantine worlds, a chapter on the church of San Marco in Venice, and finally an essay by Spyros Koulouris, 'Capturing the Byzantine World'. The correspondence itself takes up most of the book, with a useful collection of biographical profiles of his correspondents together with their photographs. There are also forty-eight photographs of sites and artworks mentioned in the text. Finally, in the 'Appendix' are three essays by Berenson himself on Byzantine-related materials.

Most of the letters are to Berenson rather than from him. They are not complete, only including matters related to the topic under investigation. Sometimes the replies are not included, and sometimes it is not Berenson himself who replies. The letters date from 1921 to 1956 and are in English, French, German, and Italian—they reflect the wide range of correspondents that communicated with him about Byzantine art. While figures like Charles Rufus

Morey and Thomas C. Parker are not represented, the letters reveal his familiarity with their activities and developments in the field.

These were interesting, indeed, turbulent times. Although he had converted to Christianity, Berenson was born a Jew and lived in Italy during the Second World War. While his evasion of the Nazis and the help of Italian officials is only alluded to, his correspondence includes letters from such figures as Ernest Thomas DeWald, a Princeton academic who became director of Monuments, Fine Arts and Archives first in Italy and then in Austria, having joined the United States Army.

Berenson's correspondents included Arthur Kingsley Porter from Yale, who wrote ten volumes on *Romanesque Sculpture of the Pilgrimage Roads* (Marshall Jones, 1923) and, in 1918, had mapped medieval monuments damaged by war for the French. He also exchanged letters with the German art historian Wolfgang Volbach and the Italian art historians Adolfo and Franco Venturi, and collectors such as Prince Paul of Yugoslavia, as well as gallery directors such as Sir Eric Maclagan from the Victoria and Albert Museum. These are just a small sample of people featured here.

Like many art historians, Berenson avidly sought out photographs of works that interested him, and photography features in many of these letters. In a time when this was still a scarce resource, and reproductions in books were rare, they were even more precious than now. When I look at my own bookshelves, however, I can see that this collecting of images is still an important feature of art historical research. For me, tracing this interest through these letters was both fascinating and familiar. Two other themes that recur here are the importance of travel and Berenson's interest in United States institutions, particularly those at Harvard University. He travelled extensively throughout the Middle East, from Constantinople to Egypt, Greece, and Italy, taking photographs and exploring sites. He wrote throughout his life to academics at Harvard University, and he was interested in developments at Dumbarton Oaks, an important centre for Byzantine studies, and the Fogg Museum of Art.

The letters reveal Bernard Berenson's fascination with Byzantine art and architecture. His continuing curiosity about it reflected the active role he played in the scholarship of the time and makes this collection an engaging read.

JUDITH COLLARD, *The University of Melbourne*

Cuenca, Esther Liberman, M. Christina **Bruno**, and Anthony **Perron**, eds, *Law, Justice, and Society in the Medieval World: An Introduction through Film* (Fordham Series in Medieval Studies), New York, Fordham University Press, 2025; paperback; pp. 288; RRP US\$29.95; ISBN 9781531510138.

This collection of original essays discusses twenty medieval films by focusing, in each case, on a scene, a plot point, an exchange of dialogue, or even a MacGuffin that is relevant to a legal or some other kind of aspect of medieval society. Each essay begins by discussing the segment of the film, then provides excerpts from relevant medieval texts, and concludes with a series of reading questions. The

authors of the individual essays are, by and large, not among ‘the usual suspects’ who write about cinema medievalia, and the films themselves include some often and some less frequently discussed. The essays are grouped under four headings: ‘Canon Law and the World of the Medieval Church’, ‘“Feudal Law” and the Custom of Lordship’, ‘Women and Representations of Premodern Law’, and ‘Religious Conflict and Forging Communities through Law’.

The first grouping of essays discusses *Becket* (1964), *Pilgrimage* (2017), *Francesco* (1989), *The Name of the Rose* (1986), and *The Passion of Joan of Arc* (1928). Anthony Perron argues that the clash in *Becket* between Henry II and his archbishop was more legal than ecclesiastical. To support his reading of the film, Perron includes excerpts from the 1164 Constitutions of Clarendon and a letter (c. 1169–70) by Gilbert Foliot to Alexander III, asking papal intervention to right wrongs Foliot argues he has suffered at the hands of Becket. Sarah C. Luginbill suggests that the eventually lost relic in *Pilgrimage* moves medieval Ireland from the periphery to the centre of the medieval world. Accompanying texts discuss the role of relics, excommunication, and the concept of anathema in the larger medieval world and in the issue of *furta sacra*. Nathan Melson shows how lighting, cinematography, and score support the attempt in *Francesco* to explain why Francis’s voluntary poverty initially proved so attractive—and then eventually so divisive—among his early followers. Melson provides several excerpts from the 1223 *Rule* of the Franciscan Order to bolster his case. M. Christina Bruno’s essay on *The Name of the Rose* dovetails with Melson’s to discuss how the Franciscan concept of poverty skirted issues of heresy and brought with it the threat of the Inquisition. Excerpts from Bernard Gui’s fourteenth-century *Manual on the Inquisition of Heretical Debate* further make Bruno’s argument. Henry Ansgar Kelly, using the Latin record from Joan’s fifth day in court (1 March 1431), concludes that Joan’s death was nothing less than a judicial murder.

The second group of essays discusses *The Green Knight* (2021), *Kingdom of Heaven* (2005), *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (1938), *The Last Duel* (2021), and *The Advocate* (1993). Coral Lumbley compares Gawain’s discussion with his host about honour with an excerpt from *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* to show how the film inverts its medieval source. Esther Liberman Cuenca interrogates the role of oath-taking in *Kingdom of Heaven*, arguing that oaths formed the basis for almost all medieval promises and testimonies. Cuenca uses an excerpt from the mid-thirteenth-century *Chronicle of Ernoul and Bernard the Treasurer* to support her thesis. Using the 1184 Assize of the Forest and Pleas of the Forest for Nottinghamshire from 1287 and 1334, Casey Ireland suggests that the tension in *The Adventures of Robin Hood* is established not by conflict between Saxon and Norman but by that between aristocratic custom and monarchical overreach. Sara McDougall and David M. Perry, quoting an excerpt from a late fourteenth-century memo by Jean Le Coq, find modern rather than medieval anxiety about the malevolence of patriarchy at work in *The Last Duel*. Julie K. Chamberlin compares the legal dilemmas in *The Advocate* with late thirteenth-century and

c. 1500 legal texts to ground the complexity of modern law within that of its medieval predecessor.

The third grouping of essays discusses *Vision: From the Life of Hildegard von Bingen* (2009), *Alexander Nevsky* (1938), *Sorceress* (1987), *Braveheart* (1995), and *The Little Hours* (2017). With a nod to the sixth-century Rule of St Benedict, Lucy C. Barnhouse suggests that *Vision* makes the case that the Rule facilitated Hildegard's extraordinary life and accomplishments, and allowed women levels of freedom and education denied their lay sisters. Asif A. Siddiqi finds that, in an important subplot, *Alexander Nevsky* traces a possible arc for self-determination that women had in thirteenth-century Novgorod as they faced increased intrusion into their lives by the rules of the Orthodox Church. He cites the Statute of Prince Yaroslav on Church Courts (eleventh–twelfth centuries) to make his case. Rachel Ellen Clark and Lucy C. Barnhouse suggest that, by introducing an ahistorical witch trial into its narrative not found in its source (Étienne de Bourbon's 'Of the Worship of Guinefort the Dog', c. 1250), *Sorceress* relies on debunked myths advanced by second-wave feminists about the history and occurrence of such trials in the Middle Ages. Lorraine Kochanske Stock, contextualising the issue of *jus primae noctis* in *Braveheart* with excerpts from *The Wife of Bath's Tale* and Andreas Capellanus's *De amore*, finds that the *jus* is an important late central motif within the film. Spencer Strub argues that *The Little Hours*—one of a spate of semi-pornographic films more (or less) based on *The Decameron*—undermines episcopal authority by finding good reasons for conventual sexual hijinks as well as for escapes from claustration. After his discussion, Strub includes two medieval texts, Pope Boniface VIII's decretal *Periculoso* (1298), which attempted to reform convent life, and Boccaccio's story of Masetto Lamporecchio.

The final section of this collection discusses *Agora* (2009). *The Message* (1976), *The 13th Warrior* (1999), *Ivanhoe* (1952), and *1492: Conquest of Paradise* (1992). Christopher Bonura discusses *Agora's* take on the status of women under late Roman law, and their opportunities to acquire an education, citing fifth-century accounts of events in the life of the historical Hypatia as further proof of the special status women legally had in the fourth and fifth centuries. Maria Americo reports on the difficulties that those behind *The Message* had in depicting the Prophet on screen, and on the film's emphasis on the Pillars of Islam. Her discussion is supplemented by a quotation from a mid-ninth-century treatise by Al-Bukhari on *hadith* and by a brief passage from the Qur'an. Daniel Armenti and Nahir I. Otaño Gracia suggest that adaptations of medieval texts in *The 13th Warrior* attest to the complexities of cross-cultural encounters during the Middle Ages. Their argument is supported by two excerpts from Ahmad Ibn Fadlān's tenth-century *Risāla* and by a passage from *Beowulf*. Celia Chazelle uses passages from the *Annals* of Roger of Hoveden and from the *Prose Tristan*—both from the late twelfth century—to sort out differences in the depictions of Jews and Saracens between *Ivanhoe*, Scott's novel as its source, and historical records of the treatments of Jews and Saracens/Africans in medieval England. Eugene

Smelyansky concludes the collection, using excerpts from Columbus's journal from his first voyage and records of Spanish Inquisitions between 1484 and 1486 to make a case that *1492* argues for Columbus's role as a bridge between late medieval and early modern Spain.

This collection obviously offers a great deal to think about, but it does not always do so successfully. First, there is the issue of the collection's genre. Is it an extended discussion of medieval film? Of medieval law? Is it, given the reading questions at the end of each essay, a textbook, and, if so, for whom? It is difficult to argue that *Agora*, set in the late Roman Empire, is a medieval film, and the same might be said of *The Message*, given its concern with the founding of Islam, not its medieval blossoming. *1492*'s status as a medieval film depends upon how one reads Columbus's role in Spanish and New World history. Sticky issues of colonialism and postcolonialism are ignored in several essays. Inevitably, in such broad collections, there is also an unevenness among the essays, and this collection is no exception. To cite just two examples, the discussion of the importance of honour in *The Green Knight* could have been better contrasted with Geoffroi de Charnay's fourteenth-century *A Knight's Own Book of Chivalry* than with its Middle English source. On the other hand, the essay on *Braveheart* neatly adds the myth of *jus primae noctis* to the catalogue of tropes in what François Amy de la Brèteque has called the medieval imaginary. Authenticity—what audiences believe to be true about the Middle Ages—always trumps accuracy—what was actually true about the Middle Ages. Insert an incident of an overlord claiming the right of first night, and the director grounds a film in what audiences think was true in the medieval world.

The study of cinema medievalia has, in the last quarter century or so, become a fair field full of folk who have given us successive waves of interesting, as well as groundbreaking, appreciations of film medievalism. Unfortunately, *Law, Justice, and Society in the Medieval World: An Introduction through Film* is not as major a contribution to the field as it might have been.

KEVIN J. HARTY, *La Salle University*

Dance, Richard, Sara M. Pons-Sanz, and Brittany Schorn, eds, *The Legacy of Medieval Scandinavian Encounters with England and the Insular World* (Studies in the Early Middle Ages, 34), Turnhout, Brepols, 2025; hardback; pp. 454; 11 b/w illustrations, 12 b/w tables, 5 b/w and 3 colour maps; RRP €125.00; ISBN 9782503607702.

The chapters in this book originated from a 2018 conference sponsored by the Gersum Project, for which the three editors served—respectively—as Principal Investigator, Co-Investigator, and Research Associate during its Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC)-funded term from 2016 to 2020. Gersum (<https://www.gersum.org>) investigates Scandinavian influence on English vocabulary, cataloguing over 900 words in a corpus of six Middle English alliterative poems made up of the four works of the *Gawain* (or *Pearl*) poet,

along with *St Erkenwald* and *The Wars of Alexander*. The searchable database is founded on rigorous principles for evaluating the evidence for lexical interchange. This is of particular importance in identifying Norse words that have entered the English lexicon, either by borrowing or by imposition. Some cases are uncertain or problematic in view of the close relationship of the languages, and indeed their mutual intelligibility. Two previous works in particular by the investigators contributed to establishing the fundamental techniques for the investigation: Sarah M. Pons-Sanz's *The Lexical Effects of Anglo-Scandinavian Linguistic Contact on Old English* (Brepols, 2013) and Richard Dance's *Words Derived from Old Norse in 'Sir Gawain and the Green Knight': An Etymological Survey* (Publications of the Philological Society, 2019). In the latter, Dance sets out the system of summary category markers that form a shorthand reference to the hierarchy of evidence for each word in the Gersum database.

Although Scandinavian linguistic influence (lexical in particular) is central to the book, the editors and authors seek to explore wider horizons of encounter both inside and outside of England through the evidence of literature, archaeology, place names, and cultural exchange more broadly, from the ninth century to the late medieval period and beyond. Only through such a multidisciplinary approach can the linguistic evidence be properly understood. As the editors point out in their introduction, 'this volume has some of the essential virtues of a handbook' (p. 17). That is to say, each of the specialist chapters not only provides fresh research findings but also reviews existing scholarly approaches, surveys previous research in its field, and offers an up-to-date bibliography of essential items. These features make the book an invaluable and indispensable compendium.

The broader sweep of cultural encounter is explored in the first half of the book, in a section titled 'Meeting, Talking, Writing: Identity and Change in the Viking Age'. In the first chapter, 'Two Baptisms, Some Funerals, and Other Contexts of Interactions: Vikings and the Church in England in the Late Ninth Century', Lesley Abrams examines the period when 'Viking' groups in England, often including women and children, were emerging as new settlers, not simply raiders. She surveys evidence from documentary accounts of the baptism of Guthrum in 878 under Alfred, and the enthronement of Guthrith (between 880 and 885) in ceremonies orchestrated by Eadred, abbot of Carlisle, and Bishop Eadwulf. Other forms of accommodation and blending between pagan and Christian communities are explored in the archaeological evidence of burial practice, and finally, Abrams examines the elusive evidence for ecclesiastical infrastructure within Viking-settled Northumbria, Mercia, and East Anglia.

In 'Scandinavian Runes in England: Dating, Distribution, and Contexts', Judith Jesch combines detailed discussion with an invaluable set of tables laying out the chronological distribution of the nineteen known inscriptions, the graphs employed (Scandinavian runes only, or combined with Anglo-Saxon runes or Roman letters), languages used, textual type, and object type. Some broad conclusions may be drawn from the data. There is no clear evidence of runic use

in the early Danelaw areas. In the tenth century, there is some limited evidence reflecting influence from the Irish Sea region. Scandinavianisation under the eleventh-century Danish kings seems responsible for a ‘runic hotspot’, while inscriptions from the north-west of England bear witness to the use of a hybrid Anglo-Scandinavian language.

In ‘Scandinavians and Verb-Second in Northumbrian Old English’, George Walkden argues that deep syntactic influence of Scandinavian language on English, resulting in the rise of strict verb-second order, is unlikely in the tenth century, and that this feature, as it appears in texts of this time (glosses to the Lindisfarne Gospels, the second part of the Rushworth Gospels, and the Durham Ritual) represents a native phenomenon.

For ‘Ransacking the *Wordhord*: The Stylistic Use of Old English Lexical Borrowings in Viking Age Skaldic Poetry’, Nikolas Gunn selects four lexemes—two new *heiti* for ruler (*harri*, and *hertogi*), and two words associated with the new Christian religion (*sál(a)* ‘soul’, and *goðfaðir* ‘godfather’. These are borrowings from Old English, and, as Gunn argues in his stylistic and sociolinguistic analysis, they are employed as deliberately foregrounded words by skalds.

Elizabeth Ashman Rowe contributes ‘Anglo-Scandinavian Contact from a Scandinavian Perspective: Ecclesiastical and Political Contacts in Norway and Iceland c. 1000–1050’. The evidence for this contact is somewhat elusive. Missionary efforts are not known to have been recorded by English ecclesiastical sources, leading Rowe to suggest that the missions were perhaps a political initiative, first instigated by Æthelred. Later saga accounts are reticent about English activity as well. Nevertheless, several bishops from England or with English connections are known to have been active, and Rowe considers the way the English language may have been used for preaching and how vernacular English texts had an impact. Runic inscriptions at Kuli and Eik, for instance, reveal such influences in their use of English homiletic formulae.

In ‘Some Contexts for Gospatric’s Writ’, David Parsons examines this extraordinary legal document written in English (or even hybrid English-Scandinavian), drawn up in favour of Thorfynn mac Thore (c. 1040–1070), and relating to lands in Cardew and Cumdivock, Cumbria. Parsons provides a close linguistic analysis of the document itself, then places it in a wider geographical and sociolinguistic context through the examination of place names and personal names in Northern Cumberland. Parsons considers that Old English may have been largely supplanted from around 880 to 1040, with an upsurge in Cumbric, Norse, and Goidelic speakers, before the reintroduction of the English language.

Section B, ‘Finding Viking Words: The Scandinavian Legacy in the Middle Ages and Beyond’, moves us into those times and texts after Scandinavian migration and settlement were completed, and when use of the Norse language in the British Isles waned and then ceased, but when the legacy of linguistic interaction is more fully attested in written records. Máire Ní Mhaonaigh moves us elsewhere in the Insular world, to Ireland, with ‘The Scandinavian Influence on

Irish Vocabulary: Evidence from the *Electronic Dictionary of the Irish Language* (*eDIL*). As her preliminary discussion indicates, Irish vocabulary reveals a complex layering of borrowings from Latin, French, and English as well as from Scandinavian. For the latter, the impact is most evident in Middle Irish (c. 900–1200). Ní Mhaonaigh outlines the refinements of methodology and the reassessment of older evidence that are necessary for updating the *DIL* in its treatment of loanwords.

Jayne Carroll, in ‘Old Norse Watery Terms in English Place-Names: A Survey of Medieval Evidence from Two Regions of England’, draws data from Cumberland and Westmorland on the one hand, and northern Lincolnshire on the other to consider how Norse influence may vary regionally, and what this might imply about the proportionality and interactions of speakers across the linguistic divide. Old Norse appears to have survived longer and to have had a more significant impact in the North-West, in comparison with Lincolnshire.

Brittany Schorn takes the reader on a guided tour through the Gersum Project to demonstrate how its data and classificatory system provide ‘a far more nuanced and interesting picture of what English-Norse meant in practice than a simple list of loanwords could’ (p. 327). In the essay following—‘The Lexico-Semantic Distribution of Norse-Derived Terms in Late Middle English Alliterative Poems: Analysing the Gersum Database’—Sara M. Pons-Sanz shows how data from Gersum can be further refined and analysed along lexico-semantic lines, employing the numeric system of sense-classification set out in the *Historical Thesaurus of English*.

In ‘Topographical Vocabulary in *The Wars of Alexander*’, Thorlac Turville-Petre demonstrates that the extraordinarily rich lexis of the poet is not employed simply to fulfil metrical and alliterative demands, but is also part of a strategy to transform the bare prose of the Latin source into a richly descriptive and dramatic narrative for the audience.

Philip Durkin’s ‘Norse Borrowing in the *OED*: A Fresh Examination’ starts with a deceptively simple question: ‘How many Norse loanwords are there in the *Oxford English Dictionary* [...] and what are their first dates of attestation?’ (p. 391). The ensuing discussion ranges across *OED* policies past and present regarding the presentation of etymological information, the need to tag such information more fully for machine analysis, and the potential for further refinement. Durkin’s brief case study of Modern English *sprint* provides an illuminating example of the problems inherent in his opening question.

Matthew Townend’s ‘The Vikings and the Victorians and Dialect’ highlights the contributions of nineteenth-century scholars engaging with English dialects to the understanding of English–Norse contacts and Norse loan words in English. The wordlists collected and published by dialect workers (many of them in volumes of the English Dialect Society) and the evidence distilled into Joseph Wright’s *English Dialect Dictionary* (Henry Frowde, 1898–1905) provide ‘an abundance of neglected old evidence, just waiting for us’ (p. 434).

This volume is admirable in several ways. Its scope is broad yet coherent; the individual contributions are excellent in their review of previous research in their respective areas, presenting new and exciting findings, and pointing to the potential for further research. Many chapters present, as it were, pilot studies for ongoing research, and show the rich potential for new studies aided by digital projects such as Gersum and other historical and lexical digital databases that can now be consulted and employed comparatively. In their 'Introduction', the editors have provided the reader with an outstandingly rich analysis and overview of the chapters that follow it. The book is a landmark contribution to the field.

GREG WAITE, *University of Otago*

Dodds, Lara, and Michelle M. Dowd, *Early Modern Women's Writing and the Future of Literary History*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2025; hardback; pp. 208; RRP £77.00; ISBN 9780198941286.

Lara Dodds and Michelle M. Dowd's *Early Modern Women's Writing and the Future of Literary History* offers a concise and invigorating approach to the theorisation of early modern women's writing. This attractively designed volume is rigorous and accessible in equal measure; it will sit just as comfortably in university libraries as it will in the 'Literary Theory' section of any well-stocked bookshop. Indeed, while this book will most likely appeal to academics who research or teach early modern women's writing, the authors solicit a wider readership as they make the case that early modern women's writing should play an 'indispensable and incontrovertible role' (p. 19) in English literary history. The authors display a keen sense of indebtedness to other scholars of early modern women's writing, but do not set out to provide a comprehensive overview of the field. Rather, this book offers a series of critical interventions that aim, collectively, to move the field beyond its recursive tendencies and resituate early modern women's writing in (early modern) literary studies more broadly.

Each chapter is driven by a strong central thesis that is elucidated through case studies and buttressed by the authors' deep knowledge of the field. Chapter 1 asks 'What is Women's Writing?' With nuance and critical dexterity, the authors make a case for the value of approaching women writers as a category, while recognising the 'historical contingencies and methodological challenges' (p. 24) that complicate this. Dodds and Dowd suggest that 'productive possibilities [...] emerge when we accept early modern women's writing as a category of analysis while simultaneously putting pressure on its presumed homogeneity' (p. 24). Chapter 2 tackles the relationship between early modern women's writing and the canon. Anne Lock's sonnet sequence provides a helpful case study for demonstrating 'how early modern women's multivalent use of textual genres, modes, and material forms exceeds the limits of the traditional canon and provides a model for a more inclusive and diverse literary history' (p. 16). Chapter 3, 'Is it Any Good?', outlines how the 'sexist provocation' (p. 16) is part of the literary gatekeeping the field has faced. Dodds and Dowd take detraction as a starting point

for thinking more expansively about how we ascribe aesthetic value. Margaret Cavendish's 'Nature's Dessert' and 'Nature's Cook' from *Poems and Fancies* (1653)—deliciously put into conversation with a seventeenth-century recipe for apricot marmalade—are used to illustrate the merits of taking a more capacious approach to aesthetic value.

The second part of the volume shifts explicitly from 'Old Questions' to 'New Directions' with a focus on ways in which to take the field forward. Chapter 4 calls for a closer alignment between premodern critical race studies and early modern women's writing. Taking Hester Pulter and Mary Wroth as case studies, it is argued in this chapter that critical race theory can help the field of early modern women's writing to 'reject [...] its longstanding association with white feminism' (p. 17). At the same time, early modern women's writing 'has much to contribute to the work of premodern critical race studies though a (largely) unexamined archive of women's texts that provide new perspectives on the racial logics of the premodern past' (p. 17). Dodds and Dowd note that there is still significant work to be done to integrate early modern women's writing and critical race theory, but they also clarify how both fields stand to benefit by engaging more robustly with each other's scholarship.

Chapter 5 argues for the value of feminist formalism as a methodological tool. Feminist formalism, as Dodds and Dowd explain, 'prioritizes gender as a category of analysis while also giving careful and sustained attention to the various formal techniques deployed by an individual text' (p. 123). Elizabeth Cary's *The Tragedy of Mariam* (1613) and *The Concealed Fancies* (1644) by Elizabeth Brackley and Jane Cavendish are used to illustrate how a feminist formalist analysis can shed new light on these texts as much as on the development of early modern drama. Readers already familiar with Dodds and Dowd's work on feminist formalism will recognise that parts of this chapter, along with parts of the volume's 'Introduction' and 'Coda', have previously appeared elsewhere. However, the idea that feminist formalism 'offers a way to overcome accidents of critical history that previously made formalist inquiry and feminist commitments appear incompatible' (p. 17), is no less compelling for its reiteration.

Chapter 6 takes up the subject of pedagogy and the vital role of the classroom in centralising early modern women's writing in our understanding and practice of literary history. The chapter offers a selective historical overview of teaching early modern women's writing, focusing in particular on the end of the twentieth century and the early 2020s. The comparison between these two periods illustrates the transformation in teaching early modern women's writing thanks to 'increased access to texts and editions, a broader familiarity with early women's writing across the general professoriate, and the productive intersectionality between the study of women's writing and newer theoretical models' (p. 152). The final part of this chapter offers suggestions for pedagogical practices that can enhance students' understanding of the early modern period while creating potential for the production of new knowledge in the field. For example, incorporating creative

assignments that encourage students' affective engagement with early modern women's writing can open up possibilities for fresh readings of these texts, even as how early modern women engage with 'topics such as gendered violence can provide historical contexts and frameworks for contemporary events' (pp. 159–60). The development of skills in formalist analysis and the incorporation of intersectional approaches to gender are also explored as important and productive areas for pedagogical innovation.

The confident yet generous tone of the book, and the abundant use of signposting throughout, make it highly accessible. At the same time, Dodds and Dowd are laudably ambitious in tackling many of the critical Achilles' heels that trouble the field of early modern women's writing. One of the volume's most attractive qualities is the sense that its readers are valued participants in ongoing scholarly discussions about early modern women's writing and, by extension, that we too have a part to play in shaping the future of literary history. It has already won the Society for the Study of Early Modern Women and Gender's Collaborative Project Award and been shortlisted for the Phyllis Goodhart Gordan Book Prize from the Renaissance Society of America. Only time will tell, however, if this book will help to shift the needle and take the field of early modern women's writing forward in new, and less recursive, ways.

ANNA-ROSE SHACK, *University of Freiburg*

Doroszewska, Julia, and Mateusz Kusio, eds, *Boundaries of Holiness, Frontiers of Sainthood: Negotiating the Image of Christian Holy Figures and Saints in Late Antiquity* (Fabulae, 3), Turnhout, Brepols, 2025; hardback; pp. 284; 1 b/w, 4 colour illustrations, 1 b/w table; RRP €85.00; ISBN 9782503614212.

This volume has as its declared objective a focus 'on holiness and sainthood' (p. 9). Seeking insight into contemporary understandings of these concepts 'from their historical and conceptual margins' (p. 10), the contributors collectively aspire to utilise people, places, perceptions, and other types of either physical or conceptual sanctity from the margins of time, place, or culture, as means for both breaking open these concepts of holiness and sainthood and appreciating their interplay with a broader historiography. Like many volumes that follow from conference proceedings, its constituent chapters bring different perspectives and subjects to this common interest. Geographically, the volume contains studies relevant to the histories of Africa, Europe, and Asia, with much of relevance to the cities and cultural and actual empires of Rome and Byzantium. Besides liminal places, this volume also touches on liminal circumstances like narrative and dream, broadly encompassing a diverse range of historical subjects from the great to the practically forgotten. There are certainly some very marginal figures within its covers.

Framed in two parts, the volume's constituent chapters are grouped by boundaries both conceptual and spatial. Leading the section on conceptual

marginalities, Przemysław Piwowarczyk offers a case study of Epiphanius, a Theban monk, who does not fit the expected profile of a famous holy man. Epiphanius is shown to have been a regionally noteworthy holy man to his contemporaries, while at the same time being someone who did not attract sizeable crowds, practise outstanding asceticism, or have miraculous associations. In this, he challenges some more prescriptive scholarly understandings of sanctity. The next chapter explores the phenomenon of literary sainting, or ‘hagiobiography’. Using encomia of St Stephen by Gregory of Nyssa, Mattia C. Chiriatti examines a sort of storied ontological evolution where literary imaging of Christ and representations of a certain spiritual athleticism convey the sense of a man journeying towards sainthood. Following this, Raúl Villegas Marín shifts the volume’s focus from male to female holiness, unearthing interesting aspects of the gravedigging Roman matron Lucina. This approach uncovers some intriguing insights into an apparent shift from relative marginality, through a probable blending of history and fiction, to Lucina’s later, albeit much changed, holy centrality. From there, Simon Loseby and Bryan Ward-Perkins examine that great bagger of saints, literarily speaking, Gregory of Tours. They draw attention to certain times when Gregory considered sanctity as proven without the aid of posthumous miracles, which offers the insight that Gregory’s understanding of the association between holiness and miracles was more nuanced than some later generalisations assume.

Finally, this first section on conceptual boundaries concludes with Jonas Borsch’s investigation of Procopius’s treatment of Justinian’s body, undertaken in light of Roman conceptions of imperial rule and later Byzantine conceptions of instrumentalised divine power in the person of the emperor. This focus on embodied imperialism bridges with the opening of the volume’s second part, focused on spatial boundaries, which opens with a study of George of Pisidia’s representation of imperial holiness during an emperor’s absence. Nikolas Hächler and Sonsoles Costero-Quiroga explore the interplay of politics and culture in the dissemination and appropriation of notions of holiness across territories, central and peripheral. Stephanos Efthymiadis explores the role of mobility in urban space as a pathway to sanctity, refocusing an appreciation of the city as a potential site of sacred action and holiness. This contrasts with broad historiographical stereotypes framed by notions of desert isolation, salving urban temptation. Moving beyond cities to dreams, Fotis Vasileiou then examines the role of liminality and actuality in John Moschos’s *Spiritual Meadows* to argue that this spiritual narrative was primarily and fundamentally ascetically oriented to inculcate in the reader a sense of spiritual serenity. Representations of actual places and negotiating cultic traditions are the focus of Anna Lampadaridi’s study of a Greek narrative of the *Passion of Agatha*. Attentiveness to the role of narrative pace and stylistic oppositions, she suggests, can advance understanding of such a text’s contemporary import and historical influences. Lastly, with reference to an archimandrite named Sabas, Maurits S. De Leeuw posits the notion of ‘Palestinian privilege’ (p. 252) as a means for understanding a discernible interplay of pragmatism and authority in

matters Orthodox. Having an interesting papal association, the concept centres on the role of both precedence and patronage in Byzantine ecclesial history.

Readers will find forgotten figures remembered in this volume and certain generalisations critiqued. While individual chapters may be of most interest to subject specialists, overall, it is fair to say that this was likely an interesting conference that has resulted in a volume that reminds us that holiness can indeed be found on the peripheries and invites us to revisit our approaches to historical sainthood with that in mind.

NICHOLAS D. BRODIE, *Hobart, Tasmania*

Jacques, Michaela, *Grammar and Poetry in Late Medieval and Early Modern Wales: The Transmission and Reception of the Welsh Bardic Grammars*, Cardiff, University of Wales Press, 2024; paperback; pp. 344; RRP £45.00; ISBN 9781837720996.

Grammar and Poetry in Late Medieval and Early Modern Wales is an insightful text that emerged from author Michaela Jacques's postdoctoral fellowship at the University of Toronto. Jacques refreshingly expands the study of insular medieval vernacular literature from the usual Anglocentric constraints, tracing the adaptation and revision of Middle Welsh 'bardic grammars'—texts described as 'treatises that fuse Latin grammatical learning with the sounds and metrical systems of Welsh poetry' (p. 1).

Acknowledging that bardic grammars have 'barely been discussed outside the field of Welsh and Celtic studies'—and are usually only mentioned by scholars informed by 'second-hand information from a select few English-language articles'—Jacques's ambition for this publication is tightly defined: to examine the evolution and adaptation of bardic grammars, in an effort to demonstrate that these unique texts are highly significant and their evolution is worthy of further scholarship (p. 1). She justifies this by claiming and compellingly demonstrating that each adaptation and re-adaptation of a bardic grammar is a surviving witness to the 'shifting organisational patterns' of society—quoting Paul Bertrand's assertion that every copyist of a Welsh bardic grammar across the medieval and early modern period 'was in a sense an author' in their own right (pp. 2, 17).

Jacques argues that analysing the history of the copying and adaptation of bardic grammars from the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries provides us with 'a window into how mainstream scholastic ideas were appropriated [...] in a vernacular context' (p. 2). She states that using the bardic grammars as a lens through which to examine the evolution of social and intellectual history from the Middle Ages to the early modern period reveals that 'grammatical scholarship in Latin and English adapted to meet the needs of a Celtic language' (p. 2). This suggests the study of bardic grammars is of importance not only to the realm of Welsh and Celtic studies, but also to social historians, linguists, and anyone interested in how intellectual and grammatical learning was engaged with, adapted, and refined across communities in medieval and early modern Britain. Crucially,

Jacques points out that these texts are distinctly different from treatises on the subjects of law and religion, because they ‘record some of the ways in which the Welsh bards thought about their products’ and their role in society—giving us a rare glimpse into the lived experiences of individuals from the past (p. 2).

Contrary to existing scholarship that asserted that ‘Welsh bards understood little Latin’, Jacques argues that the boundaries between learning poetic skills and the Latin language may have overlapped more than first acknowledged (pp. 6–7). She points to the fact that bardic grammars are texts of combined Latin grammar and bardic poetry as evidence that clerical and bardic education must have intertwined. However, Jacques encourages us to look beyond the ‘names that came to be associated with these texts’ (such as ‘Einion the Priest’), which previously led scholars to insist that these were authored by clerics (p. 8). The handful of clerical ‘authors’ whose names appear in association with bardic grammars may well have created some original pieces—but they were just as likely to have copied down and compiled versions of grammars that had long been in circulation outside of ecclesiastic communities. ‘After all, the bardic grammars are also *bardic*’, Jacques quips, deciding to instead refer to such ‘authors’ as compilers or revisers in her research (p. 8).

Jacques outlines the complicated three-hundred-year history of the transmission of Welsh bardic grammars, with major revisions to the instructional components of the grammars occurring in the mid-fifteenth and end of the sixteenth centuries. Of the eighty different manuscripts which survive today, Jacques’ study discusses twenty-nine of those copies and helpfully lists their location with a brief outline of their provenance, before breaking down the chronology of their compositional parts in the first chapter. Jacques highlights that the huge textual variety across the grammars means a singular critical edition has never been produced. Nor has a stemma ever been proposed, tracing the relationships between the variations of the grammars back to a singular ‘original’ source manuscript. In theory this would be an ‘essentially impossible’ task; and perhaps a redundant one too when considering ‘certain parts of the grammar may have circulated separately before appearing together in the form in which they have survived’, such as the section ‘Pa ffurf y moler pob peth’ (‘how each thing is to be praised’), which is ‘completely detachable’ as it does not rely on any other part of the text within the grammars (pp. 18, 34). Jacques confidently asserts that what she has to offer in this book is a textual study of a selection of the bardic grammars with ‘discussion centred on the additions, omissions and terminological substitutions which occur’; while also taking into consideration ‘the physical context of each version’—specifically naming the ‘dimensions of a manuscript, the other texts contained within it, the care taken in writing it and its visual appeal (or lack thereof)’ as significant indicators from which we can infer purpose (p. 18).

Chapter 1 is dedicated to exploring the historical circumstances in which the Welsh bardic grammars occurred, starting with the earliest period they are known to have circulated in, then moving through to the earliest extant versions from the

fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Jacques discusses the speculative prehistory of the earliest grammars and pins down what order they must have been assembled in. She concludes that adaptations of ‘Latin grammatical material’ formed the basis for all later additions to the texts, and proposes that Latin texts from Priscian, Donatus, and Geoffrey of Vinsauf were likely available and engaged with by the Welsh compilers (p. 19).

Chapter 2 looks at the changing use and reception of the grammars by the initial audience, which could have included ‘any literate nobleman with access to written poetry’, which later evolved to instead ‘assist in the consumption of vernacular poetry, which was increasingly available to read in manuscript’ by the fourteenth century (p. 19). Jacques sides with the current thinking that ‘the bardic grammars are fundamentally unsuitable as documents intended for instruction in poetic composition’ because it would have been almost ‘impossible to produce a poem that met the standards of even the lowest-quality output’ if only the grammars were used as a guide (p. 69). Jacques points to the fact that the texts are ‘believed to represent the distillation of oral bardic learning’ and so only capture a fraction ‘of what would have been passed down from a master bard to his pupils’ (p. 69) during their learning. The chapter concludes with a discussion on *who* might have been consuming this vernacular poetry—not just those learning to compose poetry but also those reading, consuming, and analysing ‘poetry that had already been composed’ (p. 72).

Chapter 3 examines how the copies and new sections inserted into grammars made in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries indicate ‘a dramatic shift’ in the way grammars were ‘being employed by practising bards’ (p. 103). Jacques closely analyses five different manuscripts to argue that the inclusion of instructional sections on *cynghanedd* (a complex sound-pattern), syllables, and diphthongs—and the emphasis made on the technical faults a professional bard should avoid—indicates the function of grammars had shifted in the later medieval period to become ‘tools not just for the consumption of poetry, but for its production as well’ (p. 20). This chapter also offers tantalising evidence and discussion of who *owned* these grammars, with the names of the bards who shared and received them included in these manuscripts. In these attributions, we read how the readers referred to themselves (for example, as a bard, teacher, or scholar) and find descriptions of where they first located copies of the texts, and who was credited with their original production. This provides a unique insight into how Welsh bards thought about themselves, their products, and their personal contributions to the development of intellectual and grammatical learning.

Chapter 4 examines how the grammars might have worked as a quality control document for bards to refer to, ‘something akin to a guild charter’, ensuring their compositions met the standards expected of members of the bardic order, which was later enforced ‘both by the bards themselves and by the Tudor government’ (p. 20). Jacques discusses how membership of the bardic order and holding in-depth knowledge of the compositions and faults of bardic poetry, aided by

grammars, allowed genuine professionals who had trained in their bardic craft to distinguish ‘themselves from amateurish pretenders’ (p. 147) in the early modern period. This justified the continued employment and social standing of bards in early modern society. Jacques summarises the importance of bardic grammars during this period of bureaucratisation in the bardic profession: ‘By taking the bardic grammars as more than just compositional aids, but in fact the official documents of the body responsible for regulating the output of practising bards’, the intricate technicalities written about in the grammars were understood to be ‘objective measures against which the quality of a poem could be judged’ (p. 149). The chapter discusses eisteddfods of the early modern period in this context too, describing events where bards could demonstrate their knowledge of poetic composition and their ability to ‘identify faults that had escaped the notice of the other bards’, thereby standardising bardic output and ‘protecting the industry from the incursion of non-professionals’ (pp. 163–64).

Chapter 5 focuses on a re-edition of the grammars, *Pum Llyfr Kerddwriaeth*, produced in the sixteenth century. Jacques relates the many superfluous revisions made in this edition, plus the inclusion of extra regulatory details and modernised terminologies, to a possible acquaintance with contemporary writers and scholarly discourse of early modern humanist thought. Jacques concludes that although the last iterations of the bardic grammars are *not* strictly humanist texts, they were the product of bardic poets’ interpreting and using contemporary humanist thought within their field, and so they had far ‘more room for innovation’—evolving to become ‘superior tools for humanist scholars and Reformers alike, who wished to make the [Welsh] language more widely accessible’ (pp. 190–91).

Jacques’s writing is accessible, with a convivial tone, clearly laying out the historiography of the grammars and the complexities of their compositions, manuscript evolutions, contested authorships, and methods of dating. The endnotes for each chapter are lengthy, but provide a goldmine for further context—well worth navigating alongside the primary text. Titles and terminologies unique to Welsh poetry are rightfully written in Welsh in the first instance in this book—but as a publication that wants readers from a variety of disciplines to consider its arguments, it is worth suggesting to anyone foraying into the topic of Welsh bardic grammar for the first time to have an internet browser open (or any guides or encyclopaedias on the subject nearby), to clarify any unfamiliar terms. This should not be viewed as an obstacle, though—this book reveals a topic of genuine importance that will benefit a much larger audience than readers of just Welsh or Celtic studies. Jacques does not introduce any concept or terminology without first providing clear context, which makes it a text anyone with even a passing interest in the subject of Welsh poetry can benefit from reading. Educators looking to expand their curriculum beyond the boundaries of Anglocentric medieval and early modern literature will also find many amusing analogies and examples in the source materials from which to draw engagement and stimulating discussion.

REBEKAH DAY-WOOD, *Flinders University*

James, John, *Glory and Tragedy in Notre-Dame d'Etampes: A Forgotten Mystic Endeavour and its Brutal Suppression*, Bega Valley, West Grinstead Publishing, 2024; hardback.; pp. 320; 520 illustrations; RRP £125.00; ISBN 9780975742570.

John James frames his most recent book, *Glory and Tragedy in Notre-Dame d'Etampes: A Forgotten Mystic Endeavour and its Brutal Suppression*, as the coda to a lifetime of study through which his efforts to aid others in understanding the construction of Gothic architecture have also assisted him in learning about himself (p. 297). In his introductory chapter, James disclaims academic concern and instead offers it as a work of love to be shared with those who also love the Gothic (p. 3). Framing the text in this manner raises the questions 'how are we to read and interpret the book?' and 'what is the measure by which it should be judged?' Neither are easy questions to answer, particularly in the very academic context from which James pre-emptively distances himself. I would like to suggest that James's book might be best read precisely as he stakes out his claims about it. It is a book that culminates the work of an architect who fell in love with Gothic architecture. In that vein, the book reads like a conversation between James the author and James the reader, frequently citing his prior books and articles. Perhaps staying focused on James, as an architect, returning to the question of how the idea of a building is materialised offers the reader insight into what it means to be an architect, or at least what James desires an architect to be.

James very much wants his book to trace the history of an innovative adaptation of mystical practices, perhaps of Sufi origin, that was returned to Europe by Crusaders. His central thesis on the design of Notre-Dame d'Étampes argues that the unusual orientation of the building is the result of changes to the primary axis of the church across multiple building campaigns. He argues that the reorientation of the building, when carefully traced through the various phases of its construction, simultaneously tells and proves the story of the shift in the building's purpose.

As an architect myself, the thesis is provocative: a study of the construction of the walls of the church can reveal the particular function of the building and the manner in which that function changed over the course of the project. James's claims resonate with a cliché of architectural reasoning that form follows function. The axiom is a simplification of the late-nineteenth century architect Louis H. Sullivan's position on the novel form of office towers. For Sullivan, 'form ever follows function', but more critically in his discussion of the new building type, he espoused the form of the office building as an 'answer to a call' within which 'a new grouping of social conditions has found a habitation and a name' ('The Tall Office Building Artistically Considered', *Lippincott's Magazine*, 57 (March 1896), p. 403). James likewise perceives the form of the building and the manner in which it potentially highlights an obscured axis across its volume as evidence of a possible, historical space that supports the novel social condition of former Crusaders, who, upon return, practise their religion differently.

If I follow James's logic correctly, his basic argument is that by tracing the construction campaigns that occur across the development of the church, he can reconstruct a historical space within the twelfth-century iteration of the church, which he believes was intended to be a large north–south-oriented volume. This open space within the building would have aligned with what he identifies as the 'Glory axis' of the church and would have enabled a form of mystical dance similar to more contemporary mystical practices, such as the Zikr (pp. 24–26). This idea is evocative, and it brings to mind James Miller's suggestion of a solemn dance within the sanctuary of the fifth-century church at Qal'at Lozeh (*Measures of Wisdom: The Cosmic Dance in Classical and Christian Antiquity* (Toronto University Press, 1986), pp. 516–17). James leaves to the reader the task of wresting cultural connection from his description of church construction.

I reference Sullivan's discussion of form and function in relation to James's attempt to recover the prior intentions of the builders at Notre-Dame d'Étampes simply to reinforce the idea that architects do think in this manner about the built environment. Further, the odd alignment and irregularity of Notre-Dame do beg the contemporary architect to ask why did this happen, particularly given the cost and effort that would have been required to make the change?

James begins *Glory and Tragedy* with the conclusions he has reached and follows with a record of his highly detailed approach to analysing the masonry of the building he has studied. In effect, he opens the book with his belief that Louis VII sponsored and led a group of radical patrons and canons, heavily influenced by Sufi-adjacent mystical practices brought back from the Crusades, to create a unique worship space to replace the original buildings at Notre-Dame d'Étampes. Across the body of the book, he analyses the masonry to build a 3D model that reveals the phases of a building's construction. Subsequently, he uses that model to discuss four stages of the work at Notre-Dame d'Étampes, which he identifies as four separate church projects. Of these four churches, the second, dating from the twelfth century, is the most important to James, as he identifies an unusual axis through the building and the aforementioned singular large space, which he speculates must have served a nontraditional and mystical purpose. The core of the book (chapters 12–16) is thereby devoted to the examination of the walls of the church to reveal the intended construction of that space. He ends the book with a similar analysis of the final campaign at Notre-Dames d'Étampes, the fourth church, concluding and lamenting that this final phase of the works realised an inglorious end to the alternative religious practices he proposes as the programme of the second church.

James begins and ends *Glory and Tragedy* with an argument that the construction of the church tells a story that first supports some form of nontraditional, Christian mystical practice that subsequently fell out of favour, thereby resulting in an intentional reorientation of the building to obscure and block that practice. This thesis, and its presentation within the book, that a new form of religious practice informed a likewise novel orientation of the church,

is difficult to reconcile with the stone-by-stone review of the project's possible construction campaigns, which makes up the bulk of the book. Sarah Thompson, exploring the adaptation of Notre-Dame d'Étampes in the thirteenth century, acknowledges the emphasis of the southern facade of the building as the primary entrance of the church before its reorientation to focus on an east–west axis ('Adaptation and Audience: Remodeling Notre-Dame d'Étampes in the Thirteenth Century', *Avista Forum Journal*, 22 (2012), p. 54). However, she also notes that its prior form and function are debatable ('Adaptation', p. 56). She also downplays the significance of the small chapel on the northern side of the nave that is the primary focus of James's Glory axis and his speculations about the church's use following the Crusades. Thompson concludes her own study of the renovations of the building with the belief that the shifting focus from a possible southern entrance to a western entrance into the building was undertaken as a means to encourage pilgrimage ('Adaptation', p. 65).

James's approach to making and supporting his arguments about the fabrication of medieval buildings has been controversial in the past, and continues to be with *Glory and Tragedy*. Reviews by Robert Mark and Stephen Murray in 1979 and by Lon R. Selby in 1980 simultaneously praise the careful documentation of the masonry and construction in James's initial work on Gothic construction, *The Contractors of Chartres* (*The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 38.3 (1979), pp. 278–81). Selby in particular lauds the inherent value of James's stone-by-stone record of the manner in which the walls of that cathedral rose from the ground ('The Contractors of Chartres', *Gesta*, 22.1 (1981), p. 173). At the same time, these reviewers of James's prior works question how and why his detailed analysis of a building's construction supports his claims about the cultural significance of the buildings he examines. Selby, in particular, expresses concern that James's singular focus on construction and geometry without reference to the documentary history of Gothic architecture leads his conclusions to be out of sync with what we do know from textual sources ('Contractors', p. 174). As Sarah Thompson has noted, the textual record that might provide additional information about the various stages of construction at Notre Dame d'Étampes is very limited and makes conclusions about the early orientation of the church difficult to reach ('Adaptations', p. 56). James admits as much, beginning his book by acknowledging the 'silence' of the church's history and claiming in effect that the architecture will speak in that absence (p. 1). Unfortunately, the stones do not speak so clearly as he would suggest. As a source of data, including a large number of photographs, models, and careful comparison of carved features of the Notre-Dame d'Étampes stonework, *Glory and Tragedy* is invaluable, but the argument that the analysis of the stone reveals a rejected history of alternative forms of mystical practice is not supported by that analysis.

JASON CROW, *Monash University*

Naismith, Rory, ed., *Small Change in the Early Middle Ages: New Perspectives on Coined Money, c. 400–1100* (Studies in the Early Middle Ages, 35), Turnhout, Brepols, 2025; hardback; pp. 268; 32 b/w illustrations, 2 b/w tables, 11 b/w maps; RRP £85.00; ISBN 9782503615370.

This book gives precisely what its title promises, which is sometimes unusual for edited volumes of essays. In focusing on small coinage in the early Middle Ages, however, this volume's constituent essays offer not only new perspectives on the coined money itself but also tackle some big socio-economic questions. This is a book on coins, therefore, which is of more than just numismatic interest. Just as the seemingly humblest penny can reveal things about the society that produced, used, and valued it, so early medieval coinage is a window into ways of thinking as well as economics. Coins have the potential to illuminate ideologies of power as well as networks of exchange, although they come with a heavy methodological burden. The archaeology of their recovery, for instance, can highlight past concentrations of wealth or modern rules about metal detecting and cultures of self-reporting. As this absorbing book shows, nothing in the world of small change is quite so simple as it might first seem.

Opening the collection, Rory Naismith lays down a compelling challenge to the old commercial revolution model of the Middle Ages. He firmly reminds scholars that coinage could determine the framework of economic behaviours even where the coins themselves might have been absent, because a wider economic and social reality was at play. Small change, therefore, needs to be understood beyond narrow numismatic confines, particularly outdated ones. Approaching the volume's end, Naismith returns to many of the issues flagged in his introduction, asking whether there was an early medieval monetary economy. He answers this with a multilayered affirmative, concluding that there was 'a deep level of conceptual monetisation' (p. 251) and nudging scholars 'towards a more flexible, qualitative definition of a money economy' (p. 251). A concluding reflection by Chris Wickham picks up the book's many threads, hammering the point, among other reflections, that coinage should be seen as an entry into the study of economies and societies, deserving more nuanced treatment than a mechanical association of coin quantity with quality of economic function.

Between these fascinating broad sweeps are a series of intriguing case studies. Simon Loseby focuses on quasi-imperial coinage in southern Gaul, providing a fascinating example of how sensitive study of small coinage can contribute to fresh understandings of cultural heritage, regionalism, and wider economic integration. Thomas Laver uses the extraordinarily well-documented case of Egypt to make a compelling argument for a two-tiered economic structure, wherein there were differential experiences of monetisation for elites and smallholders, urban and rural dwellers. This has significant implications for other, less well documentarily observable societies. Simon Coupland then uses the case of the Carolingian obole to unpick intergenerational historical prejudice, using this overlooked coin to investigate dynastic policies and regional economic developments.

Italy then occupies the focus of a series of contributors. Caroline Goodson explores the role of household necessity and social connections, examining economic systems that, including institutional households, go some way to explaining the apparent lack of small change in those societies. Similarly, Alessia Rovelli addresses the issue of seemingly relatively coinless Italian economies, which speaks to economic changes, but also the enduring importance of small change as a measure of value. Finally, James Norrie rounds out the Italian sequence with an intriguing assessment of gendered coinage considerations, positing that increasing monetisation was likely experienced differently by gender as women basically began to enter a coin economy. Leaving Italy, the focus then shifts northwards again to the Koblenz Toll Tariff. Charles West uses this as a means for exploring regional patterns of commerce, discovering tantalising signs of cultural as well as geographical and other economic factors, which remind us that sometimes societies can only make small changes in the face of long tradition.

Overall, the findings in this book offer new perspectives on specific coins, medieval coinage itself, and more. Presenting important reflections on the nature of the early medieval economy in Europe, the Mediterranean, and select regions, these reflections by extension also bear on how scholars might understand what followed. Encompassing a golden age of antique coinage through a medieval silver revolution, this volume highlights how the value of an edited volume is best measured not by its size nor the quantity of its contributions. Rather, what counts is the quality of the provocations it makes. In that regard, this book amounts to much more than just small change.

NICHOLAS D. BRODIE, *Hobart, Tasmania*

Parish, Debra, *Prophets and Witches: Witchcraft, Gender and Politics in Revolutionary England*, London, Routledge, 2026; paperback; pp. 232; RRP AUD\$84.00; ISBN 9781032579689.

The plethora of books on witchcraft suggests the field continues to enthuse, attract, and produce stimulating interpretations. Debra Parish explores the relationship between female prophets and witches by examining political and religious conflicts during the English Revolutionary period. Parish sees the witch as a constructed category and a term of persecution. Such women were vulnerable to hostile accusations and severe oppression. Female prophets presented themselves as divine oracles, but hearers judged whether their inspiration was divine or Satanic. There were several hundred such women in the 1640s and 1650s, including Anna Trapnel, who turns up regularly in this book (p. 2). Parish claims that prophecy could be understood as any divinely inspired utterance and was compared with preaching (p. 3). This was problematic. It competed with male authority, challenged gender categories and disrupted patriarchal social order. Accusations of witchcraft became a weapon deployed to keep women in their place. This book endeavours to identify who used that weapon and why.

Another important factor that comes through clearly in these pages is insecurity on the part of the Church and its ministers. Anglicans and Presbyterians alike were increasingly uneasy about doctrines of toleration and freedom of conscience. This would never do when God's truths required robust defence. Trapnel presented a clear and present threat, unafraid to challenge the authority of priests, ministers, and professors (pp. 30–31). These prophets were denounced as witches, and the porous boundaries formed an increasingly thin, ominous line. Prophecy was foretelling and forthtelling. One was as intolerable as the other. Trapnel was arrested and put on trial. The charges included troublemaking and inciting rebellion. Presbyterian ministers were especially active (pp. 179, 182, 192, 196, 208, 209). They utilised witchcraft vocabulary to support their interests in constricting liberty of conscience, curbing religious freedom, and fortifying the church. Not everyone was convinced. The Reverend John Gaule denounced the activities of Matthew Hopkins and John Stearne and castigated witch-hunting as fearmongering, superstitious, and questionable (pp. 55–57). Reginald Scot and Thomas Ady might also be mentioned. The political uses of the witchcraft threat were evident. An anonymous pamphleteer denounced Elizabeth Poole as a witch not only to discredit her but also to question Cromwell's legitimacy (pp. 70–72).

Witches were false prophets. Parish argues this important factor has not attracted sufficient attention (p. 80). Anna Trapnel and others fought back and suggested their detractors were the real false prophets who were corrupt enemies of God. The Presbyterian Thomas Edwards shrilly denounced toleration as the last bastion of the devil (pp. 90–91). Female prophet-witches promoted irregular ideas, sowed discord, and undermined the kingdom of God. Quakers came in for special critique. Their inner light doctrine was equated with witchcraft and demonic inspiration. Indignant Quakers fired back. More than three hundred anti-Quaker texts appeared in the 1650s as Quakers and Ranters were (inappropriately) amalgamated. Quaking was an example of 'witchcraft fits'. The fight was on.

Parish argues the role of the female prophet was a theatrical 'visionary performance' that placed women in peril. Curious spectators gathered to witness trances, spiritual songs, and visionary utterances that sometimes lasted for days, weeks, or even months. Mary Cary, Elizabeth Poole, Sarah Wight, and Anna Trapnel held forth, and spectators decided if God or the devil was the choreographer (pp. 108–29). Audiences were hard-pressed to determine if the prophetic performances were divine or demonic. Clergy and witch-hunters drew parallels between female weakness and instruments of evil. The Presbyterian Thomas Hall lumped together a diverse multitude he called 'Hereticks, Witches and Devils' with malingering 'quaking sots' (pp. 144–45). Such miscreants endangered society. Mother Shipton was only one malignant figure, and the host was increasing. Trapnel was 'a Quaker and pretended Prophetess' (p. 164). Political elements and gendered fear equated the female prophet with the servants of Satan.

Repression followed. Witch-Hunters went on the prowl. Witch-Prickers were employed. Suspected witches were subjected to swimming exercises. Court trials were convened. Propaganda swept the land. Women came under renewed threat. Martha Simmonds was suspected of being both a witch and a whore. Female prophets, godless witches, and the rapid spread of Quakerism were blamed for the unravelling of social order. The Quaker prophet Margaret Fell rejected the stereotype outright. She blamed the clergy for the vicious lies and uproar, and averred that they were the true witches.

Rebellion was the sin and the result of witchcraft and registered on the religious Richter scale as a series of alarming tremors, causing increasing disorder. Female prophets were at the centre of power struggles. No one was safe. King Charles's son was suspected of being a witch, and his dog Boy a familiar, a devil, or a witch. Boy was immune to the power of the Church, remained 'weapon prooffe', was multilingual, possessed the gift of prophecy, and was able to make himself invisible. It comes as no surprise to learn that Boy was once a woman (pp. 199–200). Heretics, female prophets, and women-turned-canines represented rebellion against God, the King and the Church. It was all the same alarming thing: witchcraft. George Fox, James Nayler, and even Oliver Cromwell were called witches, but women in general were ever more susceptible to the blanket condemnation.

Unfortunately, the book lacks a bibliography. The words 'blurred' and 'slippery' are overused. There is considerable repetition. Names are not consistently given. It is puzzling why full citations are repeated in the endnotes sometimes a dozen times on the same page. A line is repeated on page 22. These are all copy-editing matters the publisher should have attended to.

This is a fascinating book. Twenty-six illustrations enhance the text. Parish entertains, illuminates, stimulates, and instructs. She points out that the boundaries between prophets and witches were disputed, and that power conflicts and polemical debates shaped the discourse, making them essential for understanding the relationship between female prophets and witches. Her final sentence is worth repeating: 'Witchcraft is revealed not only as a label to demonise or silence an outspoken woman with a prophetic vision, but like the Devil, the witch played a prominent role in the political discourses and religious power conflicts of these turbulent times' (p. 226).

THOMAS A. FUDGE, *University of New England*

Peikola, Matti, Jukka Tyrkkö, and Mari-Liisa Varila, eds, *Graphic Practices and Literacies in the History of English* (Utrecht Studies in Medieval Literacy, 61), Turnhout, Brepols, 2025; hardback; pp. xv, 355; 37 b/w, 12 colour illustrations; RRP €100.00; ISBN 9782503600451.

Unified by similar methodologies and all dealing with English texts from the Middle Ages to the end of the early modern period, the eleven chapters of *Graphic Practices and Literacies in the History of English* cover a wide range of

topics: churchwardens' accounts; medical writings; letters; tables; chronologies; choreography; and grammar books. This diversity helps readers to gain a general idea of how the field of historical visual pragmatics is developing.

The introduction by the editors Matti Peikola, Jukka Tyrkkö, and Mari-Liisa Varila, 'Graphic Practices in Early English Texts', is clear in outlining how the volume fits into the study of visual aspects of historical written communication that has burgeoned since the material turn in the humanities. Due consideration is given to the pioneering work of M. B. Parkes and others, as well as Jeremy J. Smith's work on historical pragmatics in English linguistics, though the publication details of Smith's 2020 paper 'The Pragmatics of Punctuation in Middle English Documentary Texts'—in *Records of Real People: Linguistic Variation in Middle English Local Documents*, ed. by Merja Stenroos, and Kjetil V. Thengs (*Advances in Historical Sociolinguistics*, 11), (Benjamins, 2020), pp. 205–18—are lacking in footnotes and the otherwise comprehensive bibliography. Smith himself provides a brief 'Afterword' to the volume. The rationale of having the book in the series Utrecht Studies in Medieval Literacy is that, like the lexical elements of texts, the graphical elements—including punctuation, layout, images, diagrams, and tables—require readers and producers to become 'visually literate' to interpret them competently.

Usefully, the first chapter, Colette Moore's 'Conventionalising Strategies of Verbal and Visual Information', presents a theoretical approach to how meaningful 'marks and variations on the page [...] become conventional' (p. 27). For instance, Moore uses the ampersand as an example of how a word (*et*) can become routine as an information-bearing graphic device (&) that became accepted to mean English *and* (but her mention of the variant use of the Tironian *et* used in Old English texts is vitiated by a typographical error—'the sign,' should be 'the sign 7' (p. 39)). In her formulation of how variant features of text and design can become regularised and then take on 'textual functionality', with the potential to become conventional, even specialised or obligatory, Moore has produced a useful model that can be tested against the works in this volume and are borne out by classic studies like Parkes's *Pause and Effect*; she gives the development of the title page as an example. Of note, she undogmatically accepts variations in processes and points out that 'conventionalisation is continual' (p. 34)—while she notes that the Middle English period is crucial in developing textual and graphical norms, such processes are still occurring.

Of course, not all graphical or lexical practices become conventional, and there are a few examples in the volume of experiments that never 'took'. In 'The Pragmatics of Late Medieval English Accounts: A Case Study', Kjetil V. Thengs analyses a short-lived variation to the layout of churchwardens' manuscript accounts; Hanna Salmi's 'Verbal and Visual Instruction in Early Dance Manuals: The Curious Case of John Playford's Tables' shows how an innovative design in Playford's first edition of *The English Dancing Master* (1651) was abandoned in later editions, due probably to printing difficulties; and Olga Timofeevna charts

the fortunes of some lexical binomials, some which became conventional and others not, in 'A Visual and Linguistic Interpretation of the *Pater Noster* Table of the Vernon Manuscript'.

Timofeevna's paper is intriguing, though I think her ingenious attempt to see the *Pater Noster* table in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Eng. Poet. a. 1, fol. 231^v as a chessboard is problematic. While her discussion of the allegorical and mnemonic uses of chess and chessboards (including in the Exchequer) is interesting, her pleading that a medieval reader might associate the *Pater Noster* table (reproduced on p. 183 and schematised on pp. 184–85) with a chessboard founders on the fact that it bears little resemblance to contemporary depictions of chessboards and exchequers (pp. 187, 191): all chessboards may be tables, but not all tables are like chessboards.

Most of the papers deal with non-literary texts: a useful corrective to earlier biases. Only English texts are analysed, though as Aino Liira, Matti Peikola, and Marjo Kaartinen acknowledge in 'Visual Chronologies in Early Modern English Historiography', works translated into English may take over visual elements from their sources; some of the chapters do make valuable comparisons with Latin or German models, including 'Graphic Elements in Early Printed Grammar Books', by Janne Skaffari and Jukka Tyrkkö; 'Visual Representation of Information in Medical Texts, 1500–1700' by Mari-Liisa Varila, Carla Suhr, and Jukka Tyrkkö; and 'Plague on the Page: *Mise-en-page* and Visual Highlighting in the *John of Burgundy Plague Tract* from the Fourteenth to the Seventeenth Century' by Alpo Honkapohja.

One chapter does deal with a well-known text, and is detailed in its comparison with the Latin original(s): Wendy Scase's 'The *A* to *Z* of Middle English Indexing? The Tables of John Trevisa's *Polychronicon*'. Through analysis of manuscripts of Ranulph Higden's original, and employing the terms *tabula communis* and *tabula specialis* found in one Latin manuscript, Scase persuasively reinterprets the English tables in copies of Trevisa's translation as complementary to the 'common' Latin table keyed to chapters in the intermediate and long versions of Higden. She sees them as 'a special resource for those with minimal education' (p. 180). Students of the *Polychronicon* and of book history will find this chapter important.

Scase's chapter makes good use of images, but would have benefited from examples of the English tables. Generally, the provision of images is good throughout the volume, though some papers are deficient, including those on visual chronologies and Playford's tables (which both rely on diagrams), and especially Ingrid Ticken-Boon van Ostade's 'Visual Pragmatics and Late Modern English Letters'. This last compares visual features in letters, including manuscript and printed copies, and suffers by having no images—particularly as the author strays into graphology, seeing graphic choices as revealing something about a scribe's/author's personality.

This stimulating collection will be welcomed by students of historical pragmatics—who particularly may be interested in the methodologies, including generally nuanced use of digitised corpora—, as well by those interested in book history, palaeography, choreography, history of medicine, and more. The volume contains a useful index and bibliography, and there are few typographical errors.

BRUCE MCCLINTOCK, *Perth, Western Australia*

Seah, Michele L. C., *Financing Queenship in Late Fifteenth-Century England* (Gender in the Middle Ages, 25), Woodbridge, The Boydell Press, 2025; hardback; pp. 298; 4 b/w maps, 9 b/w tables; RRP £85.00; ISBN 9781837650460.

Michele Seah's book examines the financial and economic resources of queens consort during the Wars of the Roses. The turmoil of late medieval England provides the perfect backdrop for this study, thanks to the 'startlingly large' number of changes in royal power (p. 1). Seah notes that between 1450 and 1509, there were four queens consort (Margaret of Anjou, Elizabeth Woodville, Anne Neville (not a subject of this study), and Elizabeth of York). While contemporary with one another, these women hailed from diverse backgrounds. They therefore offer the scope to examine the variety of ways royal women earned, accessed, and used their money, as well as the ability to explore commonalities and differences amongst them. Seah's book makes a meaningful contribution to current literature. Traditional examinations of these queens have been largely biographical in nature. Through the lens of finance, Seah adds complexity to our understanding of their lives and reigns. Moreover, as Seah aptly notes, financial resources were central to the exercise of queenship because they allowed queens to 'dispense patronage, exercise power, establish and maintain political and social networks, and make a variety of contributions in social and cultural terms' (p. 3). An analysis of queenly economics presents significant insights into the structure, function, and administration of medieval queenship.

Chapter 1 provides a useful overview of queenly finances by identifying and defining the revenue sources available to the queens. This chapter lays the groundwork for the rest of the book, which delves into the specifics of these revenue streams. Significantly, it tests and advances Hilda Johnstone's landmark study from the early twentieth century on thirteenth- and fourteenth-century queenly households. Seah confirms that Johnstone's framework of revenue categories can be applied to fifteenth-century queens, with the main and most important streams of income ranging from monetary payments (such as the queen's gold and dower grants) to land-based resources. Seah further finds that during the fifteenth century land-based resources became paramount, because they offered long-term 'stability and consistency', while monetary payments (such as the queen's gold) became less dependable compared to previous centuries (p. 47). Early in the chapter, Seah helpfully explores the nuances between terms such as 'dower', 'dowry', and

‘jointure’ (p. 17). The complexities outlined in this discussion provide a useful framework for any scholar of late medieval England.

Chapters 2 and 3 (comprising Part I) provide an in-depth analysis of the queens’ most important income: their lands and estates. Chapter 2 begins with an examination of the queens’ legal position and rights as landholders before moving on to examine the distribution and extent of the queens’ lands. Seah helpfully provides the reader with maps which visually exemplify the distribution of each queen’s lands, and uses this chapter to clearly define the types of landholdings (including manors, castles, and forests) that queens commonly held. Seah discovers that while queenly landholdings of the late fifteenth century were smaller than those of preceding centuries, they were relatively consistent with one another, which is interesting given the successional turmoil of this time. Chapter 3 delves into the human resources and administration of the queens’ lands and similarly finds continuities in how the queens’ lands were run and organised. The continuities in the size of queenly estates, their administration, and their human resources demonstrate that queens were ‘an essential and accepted part of the economic landscape no matter who occupied the position at any one time’ (p. 87).

Chapters 4 and 5 (comprising Part II) are concerned with the spending of the queens’ wealth, specifically on their households and their affinity. As Seah explains, the household and affinity were ‘crucial elements of the queen’s life and position’ (p. 12). Chapter 4 clearly outlines and explains the structure of the queen’s household, and Seah provides valuable tables that list the members of each queen’s household. Table 9, which lists the ‘Queen’s Ladies’, is particularly helpful for anyone studying late medieval English courts (p. 170). Seah draws some insightful conclusions regarding the value placed on certain household positions. For example, between Margaret of Anjou’s tenure and Elizabeth of York’s tenure, the importance of the queen’s chamber increased drastically. Customs surrounding the recruitment of members for the queens’ households, however, remained relatively consistent, with family loyalty and traditions of service valued above all. Chapter 5 flows naturally from the previous one to consider the queen’s affinity, which extended beyond the members of her household to include her retinue or entourage who accompanied her to courtly events. Being a member of the queen’s affinity came with financial benefits, which ranged from monetary gifts such as jewels, annuities, and commercial holdings to political gains such as a favourable marriage. This chapter demonstrates that ‘ties of affinity’ were web-like networks bound by traditions of loyalty, service, social connection, and, of course, economic resources.

This book provides fresh and nuanced insight into the financial administration of queenship in late fifteenth-century England. The most compelling inference of the study is the consistencies in economic resources and spending of Margaret of Anjou, Elizabeth Woodville, and Elizabeth of York. In discovering and extrapolating these consistencies, Seah convincingly asserts the indispensability of queens in the economic system of late fifteenth-century England. In addition to

the comprehensive qualitative analysis presented in chapters 1–5, Seah provides extensive appendices that list the queens' land holdings, their fee-farms, and the manorial documents that were consulted. These appendices are a valuable resource for any scholar of late medieval queenship. This book is recommended to historians of queenship as well as those interested in economic history, material history, late medieval England, and the Wars of the Roses.

GRACE WAYE-HARRIS, *Adelaide University*

Welch, Evelyn, *Renaissance Skin*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2025; paperback; pp. 400; 296 colour illustrations; RRP £55.00; ISBN 9781526167750.

Framing skin as a bodily surface, as physical matter, and as a dynamic site of medical knowledge, Evelyn Welch's *Renaissance Skin* explores the ways that skin was conceptualised, managed, and used in Renaissance Europe. In doing so, Welch draws important new conclusions about how early modern Europeans conceived of and experienced their bodies and those of others, and provides an effective methodological model for historians seeking to put themselves in others' skin.

Despite its omnipresence in people's lived experience and daily practice, Welch highlights the challenge of locating Renaissance skin, pointing to the paucity of dedicated medical and anatomical studies of skin in early modern Europe. Given that activities such as washing hands, combing the hair, or bandaging wounds were considered mundane and normative, Welch explains, 'skin was often silent' (p. 9) and much contemporary understanding of skin constituted tacit knowledge that was rarely explicated in text.

Welch therefore builds upon art historian Michael Baxendall's influential concept of the 'period eye', seeking to access the 'period body' to better appreciate how Renaissance skin was understood and experienced in both domestic and professional settings. To facilitate a closer encounter with the Renaissance body and recognising the inability of print to record fleeting practices or short-lived beliefs, Welch looks first to visual and material evidence before turning to textual sources. *Renaissance Skin* is, therefore, necessarily extraordinarily illustrated, featuring almost three hundred colour illustrations. Many were revelations to this reviewer. These diverse visual sources, spanning art, print, material culture, and scientific illustration, form a compelling basis for Welch's analysis, rather than simply illustrating it.

Renaissance Skin is structured in three thematic parts. Part I conceives of skin as a surface, one that signified what lay beneath. Building upon scholarship on early modern medical humoral theory, Chapter 2 explores how early modern Europeans 'read' the skins of themselves and others, highlighting skin's function, well canvassed by scholars, as a physiological signifier of people's health, humoral constitution, and even identity. Skin was thus watched carefully, and chapters 3 and 4 frame 'broken' and 'ugly' skin as understandable sites of anxiety,

and surfaces that required active management and treatment. While a 1694 diary of a young English trader enables Welch to draw a compelling link between printed theoretical guidance for reading the body and actual practice, Chapter 4's discussion of medical authority and beauty practices makes explicit that everyday knowledge and practice pertaining to skincare were being co-opted by elite publications and put into theory, rather than the inverse.

Part II frames skin as physical matter that was variously handled—touched, rubbed, stroked, and peeled—in daily practice. Chapters 5 and 6 foreground the active management of skin that was required to maintain or improve bodily health. Welch shows that Renaissance European 'skincare' thus took wide-ranging forms, including haircare and bathing, perspiratory and olfactory practices, and choice of diet and undergarments. Chapters 7 and 8 turn to animal skin and its use, manipulation, and commodification. As animal skins covering human hands, gloves offer Welch a particularly apt site for exploring early modern judgements of skin quality and cutaneous hierarchies. Just as *Renaissance Skin* signals the cultural value attached to the physical qualities of human skin and notes the emergence of racist hierarchies that favoured whiteness, Welch stresses that, when transformed into parchment, leather, and furs, animal skin was also scrutinised, classified, and appraised. Chapter 8, which takes place in the kitchen, guides the reader through the skinning of carcasses, the sharpening of knives, and the carving of meats, to ascertain material understandings of skin in Renaissance Europe. In the process, Welch highlights the practical intersections between food preparation and anatomical knowledge that are acknowledged in textual sources and, perhaps, were recognised by domestic practitioners.

Indeed, Welch's inclusion of animal skins in this study facilitates broader conclusions about connections and differentiations early modern Europeans perceived between their bodies and those of animals, ultimately moving closer to a 'period body'. And although Welch's analysis centres on the skin of human and animal bodies, she also signals the value of a more-than-human approach by engaging with broader early modern understandings of natural surfaces and highlighting lines drawn in Renaissance sources between human bodies and plant matter—connections made between human skin and natural 'skins' like tree bark and pomegranate rind.

The final part of *Renaissance Skin* explores skin as a generator of new knowledge, but also a site of authority and power. Broadly, Welch asserts that the 'kitchen' knowledge of skin that was gleaned through 'daily tactile, material experiences of skin' was 'transformed, co-opted and theorised by those claiming authority over bodily surfaces and interiors' (p. 214). Part III emphasises the role that new and diverse visual means of communication, including microscopic technology, anatomical dissections, print culture, and graphic techniques and formats, played in conveying evidence about and authority over Renaissance bodies. Chapter 9 strips skin away, considering the dissection of skin in anatomical theory, practice, and 'lift-the-flap' anatomies, while Chapter 10 focuses on

Renaissance skin under the microscope. Welch concludes that, while microscopic findings brought about new understandings of skin and its porosity, they primarily fostered inconclusive disputes among elite groups about how skin should be understood, driven above all by competition for financial reward, recognition, and authority. In Chapter 11, Welch contends that, as colonial expansionism and the transatlantic trade in enslaved people made increasingly globalised varieties of skin visible in European spaces, colour emerged as the skin's most important characteristic, bringing with it political, economic, and scientific implications for how early modern people understood their skin and that of others.

For such an expansive, interdisciplinary approach to Renaissance skin, Welch's book is remarkably succinct and will be accessible and engaging to both students and established scholars. Particularly impressive is Welch's ability to zoom out from the granular, sometimes microscopic, details to draw broad conclusions about the way bodies were understood and experienced in early modern Europe. These conclusions constitute new and significant contributions to histories of the body, medicine, science, and art, and early modern cultural history. Welch provides revelatory insights into the knowledge and meaning that was garnered when scabs were picked, when skin was scratched, when bodies were dissected or microscopically inspected, and, in the process, convincingly presents Renaissance skin as a site of contest, of change, and of contradiction.

VICTORIA MUNN, *University of Auckland*

Znorovszky, Andrea-Bianka, ed., *Representations of Saint Anne and the Virgin Mary from the Middle Ages to the Early Modern Period: Exploring Iconographic Flexibility and Permeability* (Women of the Past, 3), Turnhout, Brepols, 2025; paperback; pp. 189; 31 b/w, 39 colour illustrations, 1 map; RRP €115.00; ISBN 9782503608853.

As Mother of God, the Virgin Mary is central to Christian liturgy and devotion. Her first known image dates from around the third century CE, and by the Middle Ages, she was abundantly represented in art. However, unlike the Virgin Mary, her mother, St Anne, is not mentioned in the canonical scriptures, and the details of her life are entirely apocryphal. St Anne appears as early as the second century CE, in the *Protoevangelium of James* and the later *Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew*, but remains a relatively minor figure until the late Middle Ages, when intense devotion to the Virgin Mary and the subsequent focus on her genealogy ensured that St Anne assumed her own individual identity. The narrative of St Anne's life was included in two popular thirteenth-century compendia, Vincent de Beauvais's *Speculum historiale* and Jacobus Voragine's *Legenda aurea*, both of which provided sources for her visual representation.

While both the Virgin Mary and St Anne have been the subject of numerous individual studies, they have rarely been discussed together. This collection of eight essays addresses various aspects of their relationship from the eleventh to the eighteenth centuries. The picture that emerges amply demonstrates the editor's

claim to 'iconographic flexibility and permeability'; theologically and visually, the connections between the Virgin Mary and her apocryphal mother are fluid, and change in response to social, cultural, and political imperatives.

Only one of the authors is from the anglophone world, and a notable strength of the volume is that most of the essays focus on regions hitherto understudied by art historians, including Hungary, Georgia, the Greek Ionian islands, and Brazil.

The essays are presented in order of chronology. Several are case studies of single artworks, all of which deal with the genealogy of the Virgin Mary via St Anne. Nina Chichinadze examines a late eleventh-century monumental wall painting of the Virgin and Child with St Anne in the Orthodox Church of the Archangels in Iprari, Georgia. The iconography is atypical for the region, and Chichinadze argues that the artist Tevdore, who was the painter of King Davit IV, was employed to stress the king's claim of his descent from King David through the Virgin and her mother, St Anne.

Mihnea Alexandru Mihail also studies a wall painting, this one in the parish church of Csaroda, Hungary. The early fourteenth-century work represents the Holy Kinship, an iconography that includes the Virgin Mary, Christ Child, St Anne, and extended family. According to apocryphal sources, after giving birth to the Virgin Mary, the thrice-married St Anne had two more daughters, Mary Cleophas and Mary Salome, both of whom are shown in the Hungarian wall painting along with their children. At the time, the cult of the Three Marys was confined to France, and exactly how it was transmitted to Hungary remains a mystery.

Elliott D. Wise focuses on the complex, allegorical panel painting *Priesthood of the Virgin*, now in the Musée du Louvre. Dated 1438, the work is a visual poem painted for the annual poetry competition of the Confraternity of Notre-Dame de Puy at Amiens Cathedral, and depicts the Virgin in the cathedral, dressed as a Levitical high priest. The cult of St Anne was particularly strong in northern France, and in his nuanced, persuasive essay, Wise argues that the iconography of *Virgo sacerdos* refers to Christ's priestly ordination through his mother and grandmother.

The final essay, by Letícia Martins de Andrade, takes us to eighteenth-century Brazil and a small, undated wooden sculpture of the type known as the *Anna Selbdritt*, showing St Anne, the Virgin Mary, and the Christ Child. The trio are seated under a richly symbolic apple tree, which, the author argues, refers primarily to St Anne as the fruitful patron saint of fertility. St Anne was particularly popular in Brazil as the patron saint of infertile women, and the sculpture was likely made for a private oratory.

Among other studies, Andrea-Bianka Znorovszky examines images of pregnancies in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Franco-Flemish illumination. She shows that in the absence of biblical narratives or textual sources, identities are permeable, with Anne and other pregnant figures becoming a second Mary. Fiammetta Campagnoli looks at debates surrounding the Immaculate Conception

of the Virgin in sixteenth-century Piacenza and how St Anne, who was herself not considered free of original sin, was pictured as immaculately conceiving the Virgin Mary.

The importation of the *Anna Selbdritt* iconography to the Tyrolean region is explored by Stefanie Paulmichl, who traces this highly popular late-medieval iconography to its waning by the late 1530s. After this time, St Anne loses her dominance, to be again 'consigned to the supporting cast'. Eirini Panou's essay on St Anne images in four Ionian islands from the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries is unfortunately marred by the absence of supporting images, which she was unable to obtain.

The broad temporal and geographical scope of the essays in this volume together paint a convincing picture of the complex, multivalent relationship between the iconographies of the Virgin Mary and St Anne. With the one exception, the essays are copiously illustrated, and all are well documented with lengthy footnotes and bibliographies. An index to the collection would have been useful, and the map of the provenance of the artworks would be much more legible if reproduced in colour.

HILARY MADDOCKS, *The University of Melbourne*