

Book reviews

G. Krutzler, *Kult und Tabu. Wahrnehmungen der Germania bei Bonifatius*. Vienna/Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2011 (Anthropologie des Mittelalters, 2), 439 pp. ISBN 978-3-643-50251-3. € 34.90.

The book under review originated as a Ph.D. thesis written at the University of Vienna and focusses on the ways in which sources connected to the activities of Boniface depict the Germanic peoples among which this Anglo-Saxon missionary was active. The study concentrates mainly on the Hessen, the Thuringians, the Saxons, the Frisians, and the Bavarians. The intriguing correspondence of Boniface forms the backbone of the documentation in this study, which is enriched by an impressive array of other sources: textual, archaeological, linguistic, and toponymical. The textual sources discussed range from the period of antiquity to the eleventh century. The author identified three main themes which were at the heart of the otherness that Boniface and his correspondents observed among the populations in the Germanic lands where the missionary was active. First of all, the pagan character of their religion was emphasized, possibly relating to formal pagan cults, but more generally referring to less formal forms of religious behaviour. The second main theme that can be inferred from Boniface's correspondence regards the consumption of particular kinds of food. The third theme concerns patterns of choosing a wife.

It is the investigation of what we know about these three themes – religion, food, and marriage – that form the cornerstone of this study. Particularly regarding the theme of forms of religious behaviour that Boniface encountered, a lot of recent research suggests that our sources do not describe actual practice among the Germanic peoples, but rather construct a particular view of pagan religion that relies mainly on existing literary *topoi*. This study seems to result from a feeling of unease with this particular approach. It, therefore, assesses the literary as well as other source material in order to establish whether we can say anything about the actual religion of the Hessen, Thuringians, Saxons, Frisians, or Bavarians in the eighth century. What becomes clear is that our sources do not permit us to distinguish between these peoples as far as their religiosity is concerned. Because of this lack of specificity, this study at times reads like old-fashioned research into Germanic religion as such, bringing together sources from a great variety of backgrounds in order to reconstruct 'the Germanic religion'. The fact that the author regularly refers to outmoded literature, such as the *Altgermanische Religionsgeschichte* by Jan de Vries

or the *Handwörterbuch des deutschen Aberglaubens* without questioning their method or approach, underlines this impression.

The discussion of specific topics is, moreover, very uneven. Is it really necessary to devote 16 pages to an analysis of the Etruscan and Roman ways of divination by means of reading the entrails of an animal, the *aruspicia*, especially when it is not even certain that the use of that term by Boniface or his biographer Willibald refers to such a practice and not to divination in general? The analysis of sources more closely related to Boniface's activities is covered in a mere 4 pages, where glosses in Old High German are discussed, which are, however, neither precisely dated nor located. The author then concludes that the existence of such rituals in the Germanic world is made plausible because of the general adherence to such rituals using sacrificial animals as it is documented by the history of religions (*Religionsgeschichte*). Strangely, there is no discussion in this context of headings 13 and 16 of the famous *Indiculus Superstitionum*, the document most probably listing topics for further discussion in Bonifatian circles about questionable religious practices. These tersely formulated indications of discussion topics might reveal something of such a ritual, although possibly related to the brain of an animal. Canon 23 of the *Paenitentiale Oxoniense II*, a text that is related to missionary activity in the eighth century, moreover censures eating the entrails of animals while these are still alive and, in the following canon, censures foretelling the future, thereby suggesting an association of these two canons. I would have preferred to read a careful analysis of these texts instead of the ample discussion of Roman practices.

Whereas the feelings of unease regarding the prevailing view on descriptions of paganism in early-medieval sources as a purely literary construct without any relation with actual practice is understandable, this study is not careful enough in its analysis of the sources that can be closely related to Boniface and his surroundings to argue convincingly that we are able to say something specific about actual forms of religious behaviour in the Germanic lands in the eighth century. Unfortunately, the same conclusion must be reached regarding the two other main topics discussed in this book: dietary and marriage patterns. This study, while adducing a lot of material, unfortunately lacks a sophisticated methodological discussion of the rich mass of sources presented here to be able to reach firm and convincing conclusions.

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Steven Vanderputten, *Monastic Reform as Process: Realities and Representations in Medieval Flanders, 900–1100*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2013. 264 pp. ISBN 978-0-8014-5171-3. € 55.00.

Church history gravitates around a nexus of practices and ideologies that promote, profess, and, occasionally, even deliver reform. Despite the undeniable centrality of *imitatio Christi* to images of Christian perfection, magnets of Christian reform have been quite diverse: Eden, the Apostolic Community, the Desert Fathers, to name a famous few. But the inspiration of the past as a model of reform is so pervasive in the history of medieval Christianity that it is often used to set premodern Western societies apart from their allegedly forward-looking heirs. Ironically, before the false juxtaposition of (religious) reform and (social, political, intellectual, and economic) progress began to hold sway on Western imaginations, the *absence* of reform was used as a cudgel against ecclesiastical authorities. Accordingly, the Protestant Reformation is often depicted as a unique and dramatic event, a phoenix rising from the ashes of an institution that strayed too far from its original design, or, in other words, was not adequately reformed until a belated and reactive Catholic Reformation. Conversely, failed attempts to pursue Apostolic ideals in earlier times won accolades from some observers and was dubbed as heretical by others – religious differences of opinion often augmented and shaped by linguistic, ethnic, and political identities.

Invested to varying degrees in denominational and nationalist polemics, generations of monastic historians in particular have shown that, rather than being an alien term, *reformatio* was, in fact, a cherished value throughout the Middle Ages. (And, here, monastic historians tread much more solid ground compared with those seeking proof of earlier Renaissances, for instance). However, as Steven Vanderputten ably shows, attempts to demonstrate the relevance of reform and trace its history have tended to focus on the universal at the expense of the particular, and emphasize the cohesiveness of reform ideologies (neatly divided into waves) over the contingencies of reform processes, even at the regional or individual level. Until quite recently, few scholars have managed to resist the tempting view of reform's synchronized ebbs and flows, working, as they were, within a paradigm that obscured the local-political biases shaping their sources. Historians have thus mistaken the centrality of reform as a theme in monastic texts, images, and material remains for proof of an ideological horizon shared by all those involved in its promotion, be it among secular or especially regular milieus.

To challenge this somewhat naïve view, *Monastic Reform as Process* traces the history of several Benedictine foundations in the County

of Flanders between the tenth and the twelfth centuries. Advancing chronologically and with masterly command of the available sources, Vanderputten proposes his own version of reform, inspired in part by modern political theory and sociology, in part by literary criticism, and without in any way diminishing from the significance of reform as a key discourse shaping monastic memory and identity. Essentially, this book examines how contemporaries responded to the inherent tensions between structure and agency, as they emerge from a wide variety of sources. Vanderputten's inclusivity, in combination with his careful analysis of chronicles and *gesta*, account books, bequests, liturgical texts, saints' lives, and their accompanying illuminations, provides a far more complex and thus compelling account than we have been accustomed to reading, even beyond the particularities of each monastic foundation. The prosopographies of the region's abbots (meticulously laid out in an appendix), the building campaigns they undertook, the libraries they assembled, the regimens they prescribed, and the patronage networks they sought to enter all speak to the changing circumstances in which they operated, complicating an accepted chronology. They also deeply challenge the common tendency to pin reforms entirely on charismatic individuals.

To be sure, abbots had a major stake in prayer factories. Yet, there were numerous ways to leverage the social and political capital they generated, which could, moreover, be limited. Who benefited from monasteries' appeal, how, and to what ends, depended on a variety of factors, as Vanderputten thoroughly explains. From the detailed perspective he develops, the success or failure of what appears to be a coherent program of reform, albeit only from a distance, was, in fact, a productive if occasional overlap between the *discrete* interests of abbots, bishops, and lay rulers. The overlap itself was hardly a forgone conclusion. Both bishops and secular rulers strove to consolidate their authority over routinely contested territories, a prerogative that could be synergetic as well as antagonistic, even before considering the forces affecting their ability to operate or their attitudes towards monasticism specifically. For their part (and most germane to this book's argument), abbots, both before and after, recognized waves of reform, periods pregnant with charisma, and so forth, pursued a dichotomous and hierarchical worldview in which they and they alone were to act as the community's contact with the secular world. And they did so for the spiritual benefit of all parties involved. In short, none of these agendas necessarily chimed with one another, at least not before each stakeholder was convinced that his or her interests could be met by reforming local monasteries. It is in this sense that reform can be

more accurately and adequately understood as a multifaceted negotiation, not a flash-point event.

As a meticulous and concise regional history of Benedictine monasticism, this book will surely please many. From a broader perspective, however, Vanderputten has achieved even more. In a methodological sense, he has shown how monastic history can be integrated more deeply (by which I do not mean collapsed) into medieval political history, especially in a period that is more sparsely documented. Furthermore, his conclusions would resonate strongly with religious historians working on later and more richly documented foundations, where local and regional contexts complicate idealist or top-down views, *inter alia*, of the history of the Dominican Order, the Observance Movement, and the Jesuits, by broadening the scope of stakeholding in the success, failure, and function of reforming religious orders.

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E.H.P. Cordfunke, *Willem II, graaf van Holland en Roomsconing. Een zoektocht naar het koningsgraf in Middelburg, met bijdragen van George J.R. Maat en Eveline Altena, Risha Smeding en Peter de Knijff. Zutphen: Walburg pers, 2013. 96 pp., ill. ISBN 978-90-5730-922-9. € 19.95.*

On January 28, 1256, count William II of Holland was killed in battle while trying to subjugate the rebellious inhabitants of West Friesland (the northern part of the present day Dutch province of North Holland). The death of this young prince – born in 1228 – caused much international excitement, for he was also king of the Holy Roman Empire. In 1247, he had been elected as antiking by the papal and Guelf parties in Germany, with the aim of undermining the position of the emperor, Frederick II. In 1250, after Frederick's death, William was able to gain substantial support and to strengthen his position, which, in 1255, resulted in the imperial crown beckoning.

But before William could travel to Rome to be crowned by the pope, he felt he had to suppress the rebellion of his Frisian subjects. In December, an army was assembled, which invaded Frisian territory in January over the frozen lakes and marshes. William, riding ahead of his troops, spotted a few enemies and attacked them single-handedly. But the ice he was riding on proved too thin to bear the combined weight of a heavy knight and a horse, and it broke beneath the hooves of his steed. At that moment, the Frisians rushed ahead at the now defenceless count and killed him. Possibly it was only after the act that they recognized the person they had slain – the chronicles are not unanimous on this point – but it is certain that they hurriedly abducted the corpse and buried it in a secret place, under the hearth of a house in the Frisian village of Hoogwoud. It was only after many years, in 1282, that William's son, count Floris V, was able to defeat the West-Frisians and locate the body. He had the remains of his father dug up and given an honourable reburial in the church of Middelburg abbey.

It is a rather strange, colourful story, and many a modern historian has doubted its truthfulness. But there are no reasons to do so, as is shown once again by Erik Cordfunke, who re-opened the case with this book. William's death, his burial in Hoogwoud, and reburial in Middelburg are testified to by reliable witnesses, whose stories in essence agree. We do not only have the chronicles of Melis Stoke and Willem Procurator, which were written at the comital court or in its close proximity, and which therefore can have a partisan outlook favouring the Holland side, but there are also more objective contemporary testimonies such as the chronicle of the Frisan abbot Menko (1256) and a factual letter to the king of England (1282).

Another problem is posed by the question as to what happened to William's grave after 1282. Cordfunke gives a clear overview of our knowledge. In the late Middle Ages, the coffin with William's remains stood in the church, but after two destructive fires, in 1492 and 1568, and the iconoclastic fury of the 'Beeldenstorm' of 1566, it was stored away in a safe place, and gradually passed into oblivion. But in 1817, a skeleton and part of a tombstone were discovered behind a brick wall in a niche of the church. Soon, a debate arose about the precise nature of the findings. Were these the remains and the tombstone of William II, or perhaps of his brother Floris, who had been buried in the same church in 1258, or even of one of the other members of the comital family who were interred here during the thirteenth century? Cordfunke has now put an end to this uncertainty by systematically evaluating the old arguments used in this discussion and, more importantly, presenting new evidence.

These fresh data were obtained by renewed physical-anthropological research of the skeleton and by using an advanced method of radiocarbon dating to determine its age. As a result, it is now practically certain that the remains are from the thirteenth century, to which should be added that the C14 date had to be corrected for a full century in order to account for the fact that the person in question had eaten a diet rich in fish during his lifetime, as could be inferred from the bones – although it is perhaps pushing it too far, as Cordfunke (84) does, to link this diet to the piousness of count William, who would have strictly adhered to the commandment of the church to abstain from meat on holy days. The anthropological examination also showed that we are dealing with a man who had suffered a violent death at an age between 26 and 34. Those details could refer to both William and Floris, as the latter was killed in a tournament, at the same age. But the conclusion that the body had lain in the earth for some time definitely points to William, who had reposed in Frisian soil for twenty-six years; Floris had been entombed in the abbey church directly after his death. The conclusion must be that the bones in Middelburg could well be those of count William II. The tombstone, which was found at the same place and which has brought about much confusion, as it depicts a coat of arms with only the lion of Holland and not the eagle of the Holy Roman Empire, most probably once covered the tomb of Floris.

Also tested was the DNA of the skeleton to see whether this could be matched with one of the other bodily remains that are thought, or once were thought, to have belonged to members of the comital family. But the results were disappointing. In the end, a comparison could be made with just one skeleton that had suitable DNA, that is to say, the remains, in all likelihood, of count Florens I (d. 1061); these had been excavated in the

former abbey of Egmond. However, the DNA in both samples showed no resemblance at all, so that a family relationship must be ruled out. From this follows that one of the two identifications must be incorrect. As the man from Middelburg probably is William II, the person from Egmond has become an enigma. Cordfunke suggests that somewhere in the comital blood line a child perhaps was not fathered by the husband of the mother. He illustrates this assumption with some rather arbitrary examples of noble ladies rumoured to have committed adultery in the eleventh and twelfth centuries (88-89).

It is good to know that it is very well possible that William II is entombed in Middelburg abbey, but for a monograph this is a somewhat meagre result. It is a pity that the author, who has published a lot on the medieval history of Holland, did not come up with a broader study on this prince who, after all, played a leading role in the Holy Roman Empire and in European politics for a short period. William surely deserves a full biography, but we still have to make do with the hopelessly outdated studies by Hintze (not Hinze, as he is called twice in the book; 1885), Ulrich (1882), or even Meerman (1783-1797, in five volumes). Moreover, a comprehensive biography evaluating William's life, works, and international stature has only recently become possible, as in the past decades complete editions have been published of the deeds issued by him as a count of Holland and as a king (as is pointed out by Cordfunke himself, 13). Nevertheless, the book contains only a somewhat conventional introduction, which is partly based, at times literally, on the chapter on William II in the book that was written earlier by the author, together with D.E.H. de Boer, on the counts of Holland.

Thus, we still lack an all-encompassing study on the activities and importance of William as Roman king and as count of Holland. Cordfunke concludes – too easily in my opinion – that William's kingship can be judged a success, but we would like to have an analysis of the goals this prince had set himself in Holland and in the Empire, and whether he was able to achieve those before his untimely death. This also goes for the interaction between his two *personae*, as a king and as a count. Earlier studies have shown that the comital administration of Holland was influenced by royal institutions such as the Council and the chancery, while others have pointed at the royal status that William wanted to effuse by building a palace in The Hague. But also his actions as a count must be evaluated anew. For instance, during his reign he issued a great number of extensive town privileges, which are an indication of the rapid growth of the towns and their commercial activities in Holland and Zeeland, but it is still not sufficiently clear to which extent these privileges were initiated by William, who wished to promote the development of the

county, or by the towns themselves. Fresh insights into comital policies are possible, as is shown by Cordfunke himself in the chapter discussing the relations between the count and Middelburg abbey, which he ties to the prolonged dispute with Flanders about the possession of Zeeland Bewesten Schelde (41). The author notices that all burials in the abbey of members of the comital family date from the thirteenth century, the period the controversy was most vehement, and he is probably right in suggesting that these comital tombs in Middelburg were meant to bind Zeeland closer to the House of Holland.

The book is well-structured, but the information is sometimes presented rather confusingly in bits and pieces, because of the rigorous division of the work in separate compartments, some of them in the form of technical contributions written by others. It is only at the end, where the author weaves all threads together, that the reader is given a full bird's eye view. Then one can appreciate the precision with which the argument is laid out, in spite of a few typographical slips and the occasional error (for instance, on p. 43 William is mistakenly called 'emperor'). The book is handsomely produced, with many beautiful and appropriate illustrations in colour.

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S.J. Molvarec and T. Gaens (eds), *A Fish out of Water? From Contemplative Solitude to Carthusian Involvement in Pastoral Care and Reform Activity*. Proceedings of the Symposium *Ordo pre ceteris commendatus* Held in Zelem, Belgium, September 2008 (Miscellanea Neerlandica, 41; Studia Cartusiana, 2). Leuven: Peeters, 2013. 289 pp, ill., 3 tabl. ISBN 978-90-429-2980-7. € 49.00.

The Carthusian monk living as a hermit in his cell in solitary seclusion is shown impressively in the movie *Into great silence*, produced by Philip Gröning in 2005. This has long been the general image of the Carthusians. But were they as *A Fish out of Water* when out of their cells? This question, posed by the title of the book, refers to the Customary of Guigo I (after the 1120s) where he says that ‘just as water for fish... so does the Carthusian deem the cell necessary for his life and salvation’ (17). The articles of the volume approach this question from different angles. Seven articles, four in English and three in Dutch, were presented at the symposium *Ordo pre ceteris commendatus* which was organised by Cartusiana in 2008 in the former charterhouse of Zelem. These articles are preceded by two introductory articles, each written by one of the editors, showing the insights into the Carthusian way of life that were gained during four annual sessions of Cartusiana at the Medieval Conferences in Leeds from 2009 until 2012. I will first give an overview of the content of the articles and then I will discuss the progress that was made by this type of research.

The opening contribution of Stephen Molvarec, *Vox clamentis in deserto*, deals with the Carthusian position towards the surrounding society from the start of the order and the development of its attitude in the High Middle Ages. Whereas scholars so far mainly emphasized the separateness of the charterhouse, Molvarec illustrates their participation in ecclesiastical and social networks from the very beginning and shows that the relationships inside and outside the first charterhouse at Grenoble were carefully regulated in the Customary of Guigo I. According to Molvarec, the Carthusians participated in ecclesiastical networks and in society not only in a passive way. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries they were involved in a series of experiments, organizing the contact with the outside world. Later, in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, Molvarec demonstrates a tendency to build charterhouses in the city. In this new type of charterhouse, the city and the desert were brought together. The books that were copied and distributed by Carthusians made them present in the world around.

In his long article, *Fons hortorum irriguus, ceteras irrigans religiones*, Tom Gaens focuses on the influence of the Carthusians on the monastic reform in Germany and the Low Countries in the fourteenth and fifteenth

centuries. Gaens gives many examples of the reform actions undertaken and supported by Carthusian monks. These actions were of an individual and uncoordinated nature and were not always supportive of a solitary and contemplative life. As a result of their spiritual and moral fame, Carthusians had a great influence in reform activities and literature and they were wanted as visitors of monasteries, as a Carthusian visitation gave the guarantee of good quality. The two introductory articles constitute the context for the following articles.

The first contribution from the 2008 conference at Zelem, titled *Ruusbroec at the Charterhouse of Herne*, deals with the foundation of contemplative, mystical theology in the fourteenth century. Rob Faesen investigates the intentions of the Carthusians of Herne when they asked Ruusbroec to clarify the expression of unity with God ‘without difference’. According to Faesen, they did not mean to interrogate Ruusbroec and question his orthodoxy, but invited him as a trustworthy expert to explain the words in more detail in a turbulent and uncertain time after the condemnation of Meister Eckhart. Ruusbroec’s answer is laid down in the ‘Little Book of Enlightenment’. By analysing the letters of Geert Grote to the abbey of Kamp, Rudolf van Dijk discusses how Grote inspired the Cistercian reform movement in his article *Tussen kartuizers en cisterciënzers*. Grote’s reform teaching and advice were influenced by the education he received from the Carthusians of Monnikhuizen after his conversion. In an appendix, two of Grote’s letters to the Cistercian monastery of Kamp are edited and translated into Dutch. In his contribution *In hoc praecedunt Carthusienses*, Pieter Mannaerts examines Radulph de Rivo’s (d. 1403) references to Carthusian liturgy. Radulph, a conservative reformer, was born in Breda and later became rector at the University of Cologne. Mannaert concludes that Radulph promotes the sober and traditional ideal of the Carthusian liturgy. All references from De Rivo’s *De canonum observantia* (1397) and his *Tractatus de psalterio observando* (1400) to Carthusian liturgy are edited in an appendix.

The following two articles circle around Denys the Carthusian. In the first, *Dionysius de Kartuiser en de tertiarissen van het Kapittel van Zepperen*, Hildo van Engen comments on two treatises that were written by Denys c. 1450/55 at the request of Bartholomew Opstegen, the minister general of the Third order of Saint Francis in the diocese of Liège. In this diocese the Third order communities were united in the Chapter of Zepperen. It concerns the treatises *Enarratio in tertiam regulam sancti Francisci*, in which Denys comments on the use of the rule for professed brothers in communities, and *De obedientia superioribus praestanda tractatulus fructuosissimus*, dealing with obedience to the Chapter officials. These two treatises, registered under the *opera minora*

of Denys and hardly studied so far, provided rules in the transition from an active to a more contemplative life. Krijn Pansters' contribution, *Cor, cella, claustrum, ecclesia*, analyzes the meaning of *discretio* as an aspect of Denys' mystical theology, and the context in which it was used. According to Pansters, Denys usually equates *discretio* with *prudentia*, the mother of all virtues. By his use of the word, Denys identifies himself as someone belonging to the monastic tradition. Two new concepts are introduced in his mysticism, *refrenatio passionum* and *reformatio*, and these show the connection between morals and mysticism, which is characteristic of Denys' mystical theology.

The final two articles deal with Carthusian networks. In his article, *Ende gaet inder sartroeyesen ordine*, Geert Claassens investigates the Carthusian involvement in the dissemination of the cult of Catherina of Siena (d. 1380) in the Low Countries. The secretary of Catherina, Stephanus de Maconi, who entered into the Carthusian order after her death, distributed documents on her life. These documents that led to her canonisation, mention that he also sent her vita to Ghent in Flanders. The oldest extant manuscript comes from the charterhouse of Herne. These data lead Claassens to a survey of the Carthusian involvement in the veneration of Catherina. Finally, Frans Gooskens' contribution, *Curialists, Carthusians, and Hospitals*, focuses on the networks that were set up by the curialists Felix Fabri around Breda and Antwerp, and by Nicholas of Cusa in the region of Trier. Windesheim priors and Carthusians, both considered as good reform examples, participated in their networks. These networks initiated the reformation of city hospitals and apostle houses, whose rules were inspired by those of the *donati* of the orders mentioned. These houses were a good alternative for the *donati* whose entrance in the monasteries was restricted.

The book is concluded by a list of the bibliographical references of all contributions and two indexes, one of names and places and one of archives and manuscripts. Knowledge of the Latin language is a precondition for the reader of the book, as Latin quotations are not translated into English or Dutch. It is less problematic if the reader is not able to read Dutch, as the three Dutch articles (Van Dijk, Van Engen and Claassens) all have a good summary in English.

In the last decade, the interest in the Carthusians seems to have been aroused in the Low Countries, which is evident, for example, from the exhibition in 2009 in the former Roermond charterhouse with a beautiful catalogue *Het geheim van de stilte*, and the first volume of the series *Studia Cartusiana*, *Amo te, sacer ordo Carthusiensis* (2012), dedicated to the passionate researcher Jan De Grauwe. The two introductory articles in the present volume demonstrate clearly that the medieval manuscripts

still contain much information regarding Carthusian texts and authors, especially from the Low Countries, that remained unknown to scholars so far. The authors show that the present general view on the pastoral involvement of the Carthusian order is very limited and that unexplored sources can shed new light on the situation. Especially the article of Tom Gaens gives the reader an abundance of information on many Carthusian monks and texts. These would deserve more attention to get a clearer and more detailed picture of the Carthusian activities in the Low Countries. From Gaens' dense description it is clear that many Carthusians were highly influential in reform networks.

Most of the following seven articles do not depart from Carthusian sources and are exemplary for how scholars, studying medieval religious literature, generally get in touch with the Carthusians: working on their own specific order, author, library, or type of text, they discover a connection with, or influence from the Carthusians. In this volume, various starting points are presented, such as the authors Jan van Ruusbroec and Geert Grote, the liturgy, the Catharina of Siena cult, the Third order of Saint Francis and its Chapter of Zepperen, and Modern Devout networks. In some cases, like the letters of Geert Grote to the Cistercians, the focus on Carthusian influence is only an indirect aspect of the argument. In the case of the dissemination of the Catherina of Siena cult, this main focus on the Carthusian role in dissemination seems to limit the consideration of other options. The oeuvre of only one Carthusian author is the object of investigation in two of the seven articles, namely, that of Denys the Carthusian, whose work is massive and varied. One of these two contributions (Pansters), however, does not so much deal with pastoral activities, but with concepts of Denys' mystical theology.

So the volume departs from two different perspectives on the Carthusian reform activities. Some of the contributions focus on the Carthusian literature and networks, but the majority starts from the world around the charterhouses, and focuses on other authors or orders that were in contact with the Carthusians and had some form of exchange with them. In the latter case, the focus on the Carthusians is secondary, derived from the main research perspective and sometimes coincidental. Contributions of both sorts fit well in this volume, even though the relevance to the central question varies. In my view, it seems likely that more substantial insight into the Carthusian role can be expected from the research starting from Carthusian sources and I would hope that this volume inspires scholars to concentrate on the content of Carthusian literature, even though this literature cannot be qualified as creative or original in the modern sense of the word. It is clear that much progress can be made on the basis of the Carthusian sources.

Together, the nine contributions of this volume expose different aspects of the Carthusian pastoral and reform activities and discuss how the Carthusians were involved in the surrounding religious world and influenced it. The research presented in the volume gives a clear answer to the question posed by the title: No, a Carthusian was not as a fish out of water, when he was outside his cell. He did not only address the outside world by writing treatises and letters, but he also left his cell, for instance, to participate in networks and to act as visitor. There was more to Carthusian life than the desert of the cell in which the monk concentrated solely on God.

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Joost van Driel, *Meesters van het woord. Middelnederlandse schrijvers en hun kunst*. Hilversum: Verloren, 2012 (Middleeuwse Studies en Bronnen, 138). 182 pp. ISBN 978-90-8704-277-6. € 19.00.

In the last few years, Joost van Driel and Mike Kestemont have rekindled interest in the stylistics of medieval Dutch literature. Van Driel's first monograph, *Prikkeling der Zinnen* ('Incitement of the Senses', Zutphen: Walburg Press, 2007), explored the field from a rather traditional point of view, characterising Middle Dutch texts according to their handling of rhyming technique, density of information, repetitiveness, dialogue, and graphic portrayal. His second book, *Meesters van het woord* ('Masters of the word') elaborates further on two issues touched upon in his previous book: 'Regional styles' and 'Authors'. Through an analysis of the formal features listed above, Van Driel argues for a literary style particular to Flanders at the end of the thirteenth century. However, the major part of his book is devoted to a discussion of the aesthetics of a number of authors writing between c. 1250 and 1350. Some of the authors and oeuvres discussed by Van Driel also appear in Mike Kestemont's recently published *Het gewicht van de auteur. Stylometrische auteursherkennenning in Middelnederlandse literatuur* ('The Weight of the Author. Stylometric Author-Recognition in Middle Dutch Literature', Ghent: KANTL, 2013). In this book, Kestemont presents a computational analysis of highly-frequent rhyming words in Middle Dutch texts, which opens up new possibilities for the clustering of anonymous oeuvres or the attribution of currently anonymous texts to identified authors. Since both approaches are very different, but highly complementary, in my conclusion I will also refer to Kestemont's monograph.

First and foremost: Van Driel has delivered a well-written, enthusing, and luxuriously illustrated book, with a clever and deliberate structure. In the preface (10), Van Driel launches his project: with this book he wants to demonstrate the individuality and originality of our medieval authors. Some questions summarize the author's mission statement: 'It is unclear if Middle Dutch authors preferred or dismissed certain styles, and a number of questions remain unanswered: why did an author write the way he did? In what ways did he diverge from his contemporaries? What importance did beauty have for these authors? Did they experiment with language and style?' The answer to these questions is supported through the authors' own explicitly formulated poetics, when available, but always exemplified by a close reading of the texts.

The first chapter sets the scene for the remainder of the book. First, Van Driel emphasizes that in contrast to the generally held romantic view, most of our medieval authors were not carefree minstrels wandering from

court to court, but, by contrast, men of letters, clerks educated to varying degrees, and performing a whole range of duties in the cities and in and around aristocratic courts. Literature was by no means a full-time job. In a second part of this chapter, some contrastive case studies demonstrate Van Driel's methodology in showing the individuality and originality of medieval authors. These concise examples also introduce the hypothesis that in the second half of the thirteenth century, authors in Flanders wrote in a particularly extravagant literary style. Van Driel connects this stylistic exuberance to the socio-economic circumstances and wealth of the region, promoting a taste for luxury in tapestry, painting, but also literature.

The next chapters are devoted to four authors and their oeuvres. The stylistic individuality and originality of each of them is underlined by well-chosen excerpts. Willem, the author of *Vanden Vos Reynaerde*, is presented as a virtuoso poet, moderately applying assonance, alliteration, and internal rhyme. His writing is marked by a keen eye for gruesome detail, lively dialogue, and an extremely manipulative narrator, stressing the deceptive nature of language. Although Maerlant's style is concise and clear, he applies a range of rhyming techniques and figures of speech, with a rich vocabulary, which is always functional and pragmatic. Even in his formally innovative, strophic verse the message takes centre stage. Hadewijch is revered for her formal flexibility, her use of intricate strophic forms, and the creativity of her 'hermetic, experimental poetry' (106). Finally, Van Driel suggests that Jan van Boendale had written prose rather than verse, but needed to compromise to accommodate his youthful and uneducated layman's audience. In his stylistic analysis of these authors, Van Driel largely abandons the comparative approach he so brilliantly applied in the first chapter. For instance, when it comes to Willem's individuality, the reader has to rely solely on Van Driel's expertise. Apart from some brief episodes from *Floris ende Blancefloer* (41), no comparative material is presented as evidence of Willem's extraordinary position. Given the compelling nature of the comparative cases presented in the first chapter, this seems like a missed opportunity.

In a last chapter, Van Driel comes to the truly experimental art of some fourteenth-century poets. Whereas Maerlant had been hesitant as regards formal innovation, his 'disciples' (the anonymous poet of the fourth *Martijn*, Jan de Weert and Lodewijk van Velthem) became increasingly confident in their strophic compositions. Other poets, notably the authors of the Dutch *Rinclus*, may have struggled with the overly ambitious versification of their French source. Finally, in the dialogues of the *Martijns*, Van Praet's *Spiegel der Wijsheid* ('Mirror of Wisdom') and the polyphonic direct discourse of some of the Gruuthuse poetry, Van Driel sees forerunners of vernacular theatre.

Van Driel's interpretations of his poets' aesthetics and their attitude towards language are highly suggestive, but sometimes involve a hazardous descent from written, textual evidence into the author's psyche. Well-known passages from *Der naturen bloeme* ('The Best Nature Has to Offer') and *Spiegel historiael* ('Mirror of History') acquire additional meaning when read together with the prologue of *Sente franciscus leven* ('Life of Saint Francis'). Potentially, Maerlant's disapproval of fictitious accounts and excessively ornate language must be interpreted in the framework of a more general aversion towards the vanity of outward appearances in the light of Apocalypse. Likewise, seen in collusion with the previous chapter of his *Lekenspiegel*, Boendale's *Hoe dichters dichten selen ende watsi hantieren selen* ('How authors should write and the sources they should use') becomes a pamphlet inciting clerks to take up their pens along with their ethical responsibility to educate the general audience through literature. The confrontation of Hadewijch, Maerlant, and Willem and their evaluation of what can(not) be achieved through language (109) is most enlightening and leaves the reader wanting more.

Once or twice Van Driel pushes the boundaries: that Maerlant's outbursts against other authors are connected to the aforementioned (but hypothetical) exuberance of the literary climate in Flanders seems programmatic. Equally, the statement that 'also in his choice for verse, he served later authors as a guide' (62) probably gives Maerlant far too much credit. Admittedly, in the chapter on Jan van Boendale, the former is duly nuanced. Here, Van Driel suggests that regional preferences may have dictated the author's selection of form. That the Western regions Flanders and Holland preferred verse, while in the early production of prose texts in the East suggests that Brabant and Guelders were more receptive to prose, raises some thought-provoking questions. What about the equally late appearance of narrative prose in German? And doesn't this put Flanders in a rather awkward position? The number of manuscripts of francophone prose romance and historiography copied there indeed suggests a keen awareness of the possibilities of the prose form.

Finally, Van Driel's suggestion that Hadewijch's oeuvre may be a 'formal compendium' written by different authors with different styles (111-114) brings us to the limits of his methodology. In the first chapter already, the author notes that '[t]he attribution of anonymous texts to an author on the basis of stylistic characteristics is only possible when the constants and variables of his style have been charted, and those can only be distilled from an oeuvre that has been established with certainty' (26). Although Kestemont frequently points out that 'the stylometric method does not have a lease on the literary-historical truth' (187), his study provides interesting arguments to the contrary. The best example of

this is the clustering of *Moriaen*, *Lantsloot vander Haghedochte* and *Karel ende Elegast*, suggesting that these texts might have been composed by the same poet (259–272). Potentially – and provided that his method can be adapted to include prose – the case ‘Hadewijch’ calls for a stylometric analysis à la Kestemont.

With this book, Van Driel takes his reader on a tour through the stylistic history of the later thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries and shows off the exciting beauty he has discovered. In doing so, he duly notes the evaluations of previous scholarship without making his narrative indigestible to non-expert readers. In line with his intention ‘to revive the beautiful words of these old poets’, he adds to his own appreciation, which is underlined with numerous well-chosen examples. This is in stark contrast with Kestemont’s computational approach. The charts in his book, generated on the basis of not consciously controlled ‘functors’, neatly demonstrate the difference/similarity between certain texts and/or authors. They do not give a real feel of what exactly it is that makes them original or excentric. Therefore, Van Driel’s ear for the ‘wealth of language’ and Kestemont’s capacity to exceed the limits of traditional stylistic analysis are most certainly complementary. Indeed, using different methods altogether, both Kestemont and Van Driel have uncovered, not only the stylistic cornucopia of medieval Dutch literature, but also that the style of our medieval authors is not always stable (Van Driel, 158; Kestemont, 279). One final recommendation with regards to both books (but Van Driel in particular): to be used with *Vogala* (www.vogala.org).

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Werner Paravicini (ed.), *La cour de Bourgogne et l'Europe. Le rayonnement et les limites d'un modèle culturel*, Stuttgart: Thorbecke, 2013 (Beihefte der Francia, Band 73). 796 pp, ill. ISBN 978-3-7995-7464-8. € 88.00.

The volume reviewed here appeared in 2013 as the proceedings of a colloquium held in 2007 in the German historical Institute in Paris on the occasion of the retirement of its director Werner Paravicini. During his long and fruitful career, Werner Paravicini became well known as an outstanding specialist in late medieval history, who made and initiated several important editions of sources and who wrote a great number of articles on late medieval nobility and court life, being especially fascinated by the Burgundian court and by Charles the Bold, the last Valois duke. In this light, it comes as no surprise that the present volume elaborates on one of his most important articles: 'The court of the dukes of Burgundy. A model for Europe?' that appeared in 1991. The result is a massive volume, consisting of nearly 800 pages, written by 45 specialists of the history of the Burgundian house, and the court-history. It is remarkable that the Low Countries are only represented by six scholars: five from Belgium and only one (!) from the Netherlands.

In his 1991 article, Paravicini questioned the generally accepted idea that the Burgundian court served as a shining example for the late medieval and early modern courts of Europe. He established five characteristics that distinguished the Burgundian court from its contemporary neighbours, or that were at least more markedly visible at the Burgundian court than elsewhere:

- A preponderance of nobility and knights in the ducal household
- Many functions of court were shared by several courtiers, who only served part-time
- A far-reaching sacralisation of the dukes and a ritualization of their contacts with courtiers and visitors
- A preponderance of nobility and knights in the ducal household
- The existence of a systematic and thorough regulation of court life by ordinances
- The sheer size and splendour of the court more or less dwarfed other princes' courts.

Since 1991, the question of the archetypical role of the Burgundian court was discussed repeatedly in literature, and it is again leading in the present volume. At the same time, it contains the contributions of many specialists on the Burgundian court itself.

Thanks to the abundant source-material, the Burgundian court, here defined as *la cour au sens large, [le] monde mouvant et muable, qui trouve son centre et sa raison d'être en la personne du prince* (10), must be one of

the best investigated late medieval courts. The first part of the volume is devoted to the characteristics of the Burgundian court and Burgundian government: Is the existing image of Burgundian wealth correct, or is our view distorted by the exceptional availability of administrative sources, or by the abundance of cultural artefacts, most of them commissioned by the dukes themselves, or by our own love for beauty, peace, order, and power? Generally spoken, the existing assumptions among scholars are confirmed: the Burgundian government did create extensive archives, an 'embarrassment of richness' for scholars; the dukes did centralize government and culture, thus creating some order into the multitude of polities they ruled; they did rely on the nobility and they did pursue a cultural policy, stimulating literature, sculpture, music and so on.

Two articles stand out in this first part of the volume. One is the fascinating contribution by Jean-François Lassalmonie (ENS, Paris), specialist in the history of princely finances. He treats the fundamental question of how the (presumed) wealth of the Burgundian dukes relates to that of other princes. It is interesting to note that the Burgundian dukes were very rich indeed, around 1400 being on the sixth place of the western- and southern-European princes, able to spend the equivalent of seventeen tons of silver each year; three quarters of a century later they had doubled their income to 35 tons eq. and had risen to the second place – way behind their great adversaries, the kings of France, who could spend 75 tons. It was especially the revenues of the newly acquired principalities of the Low Countries that allowed the growth of the Burgundian wealth, against an international trend of slow decline of the princely finances. A second interesting observation by Lassalmonie is the change in pattern of spending. During the reign of the first Burgundian duke, Philip the Bold (1363–1404), 56–75% of the net revenues of the Burgundian dynasty were spent on the court we are therefore still in a more or less traditional court society. During the reign of his grandson Philip the Good (1419–1467), this percentage came down to *c.* 40%, to reach its temporary nadir at *c.* 15% during Charles the Bold's reign (1467–1477). By then, the military expenses had risen to 60% of the net revenues, the army thus marginalizing the importance of the court.

While most contributions in this volume take a more or less positivistic approach, discussing the artifacts left behind by the Burgundian court, or its administrative functioning, the German historian, Ulf Christian Ewert (Münster), makes use of the conceptual models developed by economists. His basic assumption is that the court ordinances and the creation of a well-organized government served to integrate the nobility of the composite states into a more coherent unity. For the dukes, these were a low-cost solution to the acute problem of the unification of the

Burgundian realm, enabling them to strengthen their power at low costs, and to realize a far-reaching sovereignty with regard to the Emperor and the King of France on the one hand, and the aspiring regional nobility on the other.

The second part of the volume is devoted to the question of whether the Burgundian court played a pioneering role, if it functioned as an example for the Emperor, the kings of France, and England, etc. Given the fact that nearly half of the volume is devoted to this question, the answer is rather meager. Even if there were regular contacts with the other dynasties, the Burgundian court generally did not serve as a direct example. For obvious reasons only the Habsburg court built on the Burgundian example. In this regard, the observation by Malcolm Vale (453) and Adeline Rucquoi (587) is interesting. According to the social conventions of the time, the status of the Burgundian princes as 'mere dukes' made it virtually impossible that a royal court could imitate the Burgundian style. Princes were by definition inferior to emperors and kings: 'A king ought not to be outdone or outshone by a duke'. This negative result does not imply that the second part of the volume isn't worth reading, for it holds several interesting articles on the courts in southern Europe (Italy, Iberian Peninsula), England, Scotland, France, and the Holy Roman Empire.

The volume is concluded by an article by Wim Blockmans, who places the contributions in the economical, political, and cultural context of the seventeen Low Countries. He establishes the growing distance between ostentatious chivalric culture of the courtly society and the culture of the large towns of the Low Countries, a rift that became unbridgeable when the court established itself more or less permanently on the Iberian Peninsula.

The present volume, containing articles written by the most prominent specialists, underlines the exceptional position of the Burgundian court – that is for modern (art) historians; in its own time its role appears to have been more moderate. The individual contributions are generally of a high level and will be useful for many scholars researching late medieval courts. At the same time, it reflects state of art research and it shows the challenges for future research. In this regard, three approaches might be fruitful:

1. The Burgundian court is generally considered as a (cultural and institutional) offspring of the French court, probably rightfully so. At the same time, it was also the successor to six or seven native regional courts – Brabant, Flanders, Hainault-Holland, etc. Further research into the importance of this regional heritage is necessary.

2. As the article written by Ewert in the present volume suggests, it will be very useful to systematically apply social-economic models and theories, especially those developed in German and Anglosaxon scientific worlds, to the research of the Burgundian court.
3. In the middle of the fifteenth century, the Burgundian dukes reigned over a territory of more than 100,000 km², inhabited by *c.* 3,000,000 subjects. How did the court function, when we consider the fact that the court itself only counted *c.* 1000 courtiers, and most of the time stayed in Brabant, Flanders, or Paris? Who were the powerbrokers at a regional level?

Finally, when reading through this volume, one can agree with the famous words of the English courtier Walter Map, writing in the late twelfth century: 'In the court I exist and of the court I speak, but what the court is, God knows, I know not'. This extensive volume contains a large number of high quality contributions. At the same time, it underlines the need of a good synthesis on the Burgundian court, despite – or due to – the extent of available sources and the great number of specialists. One hopes that a scholar will take up the gauntlet.

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Frits van Oostrom, *Wereld in woorden. Geschiedenis van de Nederlandse literatuur 1300–1400*, Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 2013, 650 pp., 64 pl. ISBN 9789035139404. € 45.00.

Wereld in woorden. Geschiedenis van de Nederlandse literatuur 1300–1400 is the second volume – and indeed, the second authored by Frits van Oostrom – in a projected eight-volume series (in ten parts) designed to re-write the history of Dutch literature (from the earliest beginnings to 2005) for the first time in over fifty years. The series, which goes by the title of *Geschiedenis van de Nederlandse Literatuur* (A History of Dutch Literature), was conceived toward the end of the last century (1997), and constitutes an ambitious and comprehensive effort unrivalled, so far as I am aware, in any other national tradition.

Some of my best friends are professors of Dutch literature, so I hope they won't take it amiss when I remark that one could hardly have found an author better qualified to explicate the Dutch literature of the fourteenth century (Van Oostrom won the Wijnaendts Francken Prize for his *Het woord van eer*, the AKO Literatuurprijs for *Maerlants wereld*, as well as the Spinoza Prize, the highest honour bestowed by the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research). He was one of the pioneers of the cultural approach in Middle Dutch studies with his book on Maerlant. By maintaining that approach here, Van Oostrom has produced a book that will no doubt be the standard for decades to come, not least because it is an inclusive treatment of the entire spectrum of literature produced in the period, from so-called literary masterpieces, to non-literary texts of all kinds, to ephemera, *membra disiecta*, and recently discovered inscriptions (The *Leisteen Lopikerkapel*, 397–8). Above all else, perhaps, what stands out in this book is Van Oostrom's style. Indeed, nearly every review published to date remarks on this: the book is an actual page-turner; it reads like a novel, and a good one, at that. Most of these reviews are rather fearlessly and conveniently collected on the *Wereld in woorden* website (<http://www.wereld-in-woorden.nl/recensiesinterviews>). The result is a book that combines deep erudition with a readable, inviting narrative. It is no wonder that it has been a best seller in the Dutch-speaking parts of the world. But, as a medievalist, I hasten to observe that just because Van Oostrom writes in a style that appeals to and draws in the general public, this is no *Fourteenth-century Dutch Literature for Dummies*; the book sacrifices nothing in terms of rigour or specialist information, even as it makes that information available to the non-specialist.

Wereld in woorden is concerned with that most tumultuous and famous of epochs in all of European history, what Barbara Tuchman famously referred to as the 'Calamitous Fourteenth Century'. It was, we have always

been led to believe, an age of death, plague, warfare, bloody rebellion, schism, and social unrest. Johan Huizinga's famous work made much the same case for the period as a one of pessimism and deterioration. While Van Oostrom does not refute these views, his overarching thesis is that out of disaster arose opportunity, and among the opportunities that emerged from the calamities of the fourteenth century in the medieval Low Countries were an increase in literary production and an expansion of this literature into new genres. New emphases emerged: new audiences, new authors, a rise in significance of writing in the vernacular, a turn to a greater interest in the practical, as well as an awareness among authors that they could write about their own lives, interests, and things that were happening around them.

The book is divided into an introductory chapter (*Profiel van een eeuw/* Profile of a century), three main sections entitled, *De wereld, Het heil, and De verbeelding* (The World, Salvation, and the Imagination, respectively), and, finally, a triptych of short chapters on *Drie milieus omstreeks 1400* (Three milieus c. 1400). The volume includes a full apparatus of notes, an index providing attributions for the many illustrations, a full bibliography of works consulted, and a general index.

Van Oostrom's narrative approach to literary history, as a story in and of itself, is immediately apparent from the very first page of the introductory section. It opens with the kind of anecdote that typifies Van Oostrom's style and makes this such a compelling book to read. He recounts the tale of one Charles van Hulthem, a Flemish antiquarian, who purchases a manuscript at an auction in Brussels in 1811. A bachelor, Van Hulthem kept a house in Brussels that was famous for its books, left more than 76,000 volumes in his will and testament, bought his last book on the day he died (16 December, 1832), and his collection would form the core of the newly-founded Royal Library in Brussels (parallels with Sir Robert Cotton come to mind here). Toward the end of his life, we are told, Van Hulthem occupied a house in Ghent with fifteen rooms, all of which were stacked to the ceiling with his books. He had forbidden his assistant, Joseph Delforge, to build a fire anywhere in the house (would that Sir Robert Cotton had done the same more than a hundred years before!), and so he would have his assistant place folios over his feet to keep them warm during the frigidly cold nights (10). As it turns out, the manuscript he bought at that auction in 1811 is one of the treasures of medieval Dutch literature. A rather unprepossessing volume, Van Oostrom reports that the most recent accounting puts its contents at some 686 texts (11). When it was restored in 2000, it gave up two further intriguing contents: a copious amount of sand used some 600 years previous to dry the ink after writing, and the nib of a pen that a sixteenth-century censor had broken off

in anger while censoring a satirical, anti-clerical poem. This, then, is the context for one of the most significant manuscripts containing (largely) fourteenth-century Dutch literature. And it is a bewildering miscellany: there is a copy of *De Reis van Sint Brendaan* ('The Voyage of St. Brendan'), over 500 poems in rhyming verse, among them 100 *sproken* (one of the relatively new and greatly expanded genres of the period), as well as songs, psalms, prayers, a chronicle, a 'novella' about Pyramus and Thisbe, laments for the dead, dialogues, and literary love letters. It contains as well a 'parliament of fowls', lascivious *boerden* (fabliaux), side-by-side with more serious works, as well as dramatic texts. And what to make of this, a poem that employs a single rhyme scheme, and whose contents defy any attempt to explain its inclusion on thematic grounds:

Ic quam geгаen met liste
 daer ic mijn zoete lief wiste.
 Ic sprac: Lief, waer biste?
 Wat maecste, kakste of piste?

[I went stealthily/ to where my sweet love was. | I spoke, 'Love, where are you? | What are you doing, pooping or peeing?']

There are proverbs, a description of the route to Santiago de Compostela, a praise poem on wine attributed to King Salomon, and a dialogue between a father and son on which provides the most joy: wine or women. The richness and variety of this manuscript's contents is astounding, but also characteristic of the literary landscape in the fourteenth century and Van Oostrom's approach to the subject. The Van Hulthem manuscript embodies the expansion of existing genres and the creation of new ones he describes, even as it represents perfectly Van Oostrom's move away from the practice of previous literary histories to highlight aesthetic masterpieces or authors, and instead make room for the prosaic, the practical, the ephemeral. 'We gaan van pantheon naar rommelzolder' (We move from the pantheon to the junk-filled attic; 48). The manuscript has been called the 'Nightwatch of Middle Dutch Literature', but Van Oostrom gives it a much more apt name: 'Noah's Ark'. For in addition to the diversity and variety of what it preserves in its folios, there are things here that survive nowhere else, like, for example, the *abele spelen*, which comprise some of the earliest Western European secular dramatic texts in the vernacular.

The label 'Noah's Ark' applies equally well, in my view, to *Wereld in woorden*, for, as John Dryden so famously said of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*: 'It is sufficient to say, according to the proverb, that *here is God's plenty*'. As other reviewers have pointed out, Van Oostrom dedicates pages in this history to subjects, authors, and texts that receive little

attention or do not appear at all in previous histories. The *abele spelen*, the Bible Translator of 1360, urban texts like the *Keurboek van Ieper* (a deluxe, illuminated fourteenth-century manuscript containing detailed descriptions of textile production in Ypres, the subject of a heart-breaking story of its tragic loss during WWI), and others too numerous to even list here, all pass before the reader's eye as one follows this narrative tour of fourteenth-century literature of the Low Countries. For example, the phenomenon of the *sprookspreker* ('speaker', reciter of short poems) is one that will be more familiar to students of the German Middle Ages than to those of the English tradition. It is also one that came into its own in the Low Countries of the fourteenth century. These were itinerant performers of the spoken word, reciting poems of on average 200 lines, and whose performances Van Oostrom estimates at no more than half an hour. Unlike musicians, they were hardly indispensable at feasts and festivals, but may have really come into their own in the taverns of the period. Unfortunately, such taverns did not maintain detailed financial records of payments to these itinerant performers, while such records do exist for the ones paid to ply their trade at the courts of the Counts of Holland and other such lofty venues. They are largely anonymous, though some names are attached to the poems that were recorded. The most famous of these was a man named Willem van Hildegaersberch, to whom Van Oostrom devotes no fewer than eight pages. A considerable oeuvre has come down to us: fully 120 poems attributed to him alone. Though the corpus as a whole may not be uniform in quality, these 'speakers' created an entirely new genre, and their pithy poems often packed a punch in the form of a well-delivered moral. Van Oostrom calls them the 'first columnists in the history of Dutch literature' (411). He also notes that here, too, there are opportunities for further research, in this case especially regarding 'betrekkingen, parallelen en contrasten tussen de Middelnederlandse sproken en omringende taalgebieden' (connections, parallels, and contrasts between the Middle Dutch *sproken* and those of the surrounding language areas; 405).

In addition to painting a rich and detailed picture of the literature of the period, then, *Wereld in woorden* issues an emphatic invitation to further research. Moreover, there are entire sections in which Van Oostrom's comments are based on very recent work, sometimes as late as the past couple of decades (among others, the *artes* literature, 85-6), and others where his is the first attempt to make sense of a subject for many years. Critics will quibble with some of his conclusions (see, e.g., Youri Desplenter, 'De vloek van Van Mierlo verbroken', in *Queeste. Tijdschrift over middeleeuwse letterkunde in de Nederlanden* 20 (2013), 134-139), or point out gaps in coverage, but that seems inevitable in an endeavour of this scope

and breadth. The book is, in short, a stunning accomplishment. Above all else, it constitutes a magisterial synthesis of the work of hundreds of scholars, critics, and literary historians who have contributed their work to the field in the past one hundred years or more.

I would urge the reader to follow this link to the website devoted to the book, even if s/he does not read Dutch, to get an impression of the riches to be found there: <http://www.wereld-in-woorden.nl/>. Among these one will find an introduction, table of contents, notes, illustrations, a select anthology of texts discussed in the book, weblinks to relevant subjects, such as fully digitized versions of important manuscripts, a section on 'The making of...', audio and video clips relevant to the book, a map of the Low Countries with hotlinks listing places and their connections to objects of literary interest, reviews, and a section – already well-populated – devoted to corrections and additions. These range from typographical issues to much more significant corrections of analyses presented in the book, based on recently published scholarship. Finally, of particular note is the section 'Zelf Middeleeuws schrift lezen' (Reading medieval writing on one's own). Here, the reader will find nearly twenty high-resolution images of manuscripts discussed in *Wereld in woorden*, together with transcriptions designed to allow the reader to test her or her own readings of the texts they contain – it amounts to a mini-course in paleography, which was included here at the suggestion of a reader. These web resources appear to be Van Oostrom's own initiative, and not an integral part of the larger *History of Dutch Literature*, for while a similar site exists for the very first volume, *Stemmen op schrift* (<http://www.fritsvanoostrom.nl/publicaties/stemmen-op-schrift>), I could discover nothing like them for the other volumes in the series that have appeared to date.

I should like to end this review with a plea. As an anglicist – I work primarily in the fields of Old and Middle English language and literature – I was trained in a program that stressed the inter- and transnational dimensions of medieval European literature. My mentors crossed freely between geographical, linguistic, and chronological boundaries in their research, and I have done my best to follow their lead. As such, I have developed an abiding interest in Middle Dutch literature, in particular the Arthurian romances (as products of the earlier period, they are discussed by Van Oostrom in *Stemmen op schrift*), but also more generally, specifically where that literature shows similarities and connections with the literature of other European traditions, especially the English, German, and French ones. Now, there's an irony in reviewing this book in English, for a new journal targetting a largely international, English- and French-speaking audience. Those amongst its readership who read Dutch will in all likelihood already know about Van Oostrom's work and may even have

read this and other volumes in the series. Those who cannot read Dutch will now have some small idea of what they are missing. But unless the *Taalunie* and publisher Bert Bakker have plans to have this monumental *History of Dutch Literature* translated into English once the series is complete, those unfortunate enough not to be able to read Dutch will miss out on a storehouse of information about the literature of the Low Countries. Of course, histories of Dutch literature have appeared in other languages, including English, most recently the one supported by the Nederlandse Taalunie, the Vlaams Fonds voor de Letteren, the Nederlands Literair Productie- en Vertalingenfonds and the Prins Bernhard Cultuurfonds (*A Literary History of the Low Countries*, ed. Theo Hermans. (Rochester, NY: Camden House. 2009)). This volume, weighing in at over 700 pages (there is a chapter by Van Oostrom on medieval Dutch literature to 1400) covers the full span of Dutch literary production, from its beginnings to the modern age. Consequently, the architects and authors of the *History of Dutch Literature* may be justified in feeling that the need to have this new series translated into English or French in its entirety (no doubt at great expense) is less than urgent. Be that as it may, I would urge them at the very least to commission a translation of the two volumes that comprise the history of medieval Dutch literature, of which *this* volume is one (the other being, of course, Van Oostrom's companion volume, *Stemmen op schrift*), which I am convinced would find an equally eager and thankful audience amongst all readers interested in the literature of the European Middle Ages, both professional and lay medievalists alike. *Wereld in woorden* is a rich, layered, and fascinating history of the literature of the Low Countries in the fourteenth century, recounted in inimicable style that gives the lie to the notion that literary history has to be less exciting and interesting than the best literature it records.

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Huib J. Zuidervaart, *Ridders, priesters en predikanten in Schelluinen. De geschiedenis van een commanderie van de ridderlijke Duitse orde, Balije van Utrecht [met een transcriptie van de oudste rekening (1373–1375) door Eef Dijkhof]*, Hilversum: Verloren, 2013. 160 pp, ill. ISBN 978-90-8704-389-6. € 20.00.

The church of *Schelluinen*, not far removed from the small castle on the *Schelluinderberg*, is the silent relict of a rich and often turbulent history. The church belonged to a former commandery of the Teutonic Order, which was dependent on the central house of Utrecht. Although most of the material traces of this preceptory have been erased from history, Huib Zuidervaart reveals its past in *Ridders, priesters en predikanten in Schelluinen*. With this work, Zuidervaart intends to further our knowledge about the local history of one of the earliest foundations of the Teutonic Order in the Netherlands.

Much in contra to the history of other monastic orders, the military orders are still poorly researched. Only recently with the endeavours of historians such as Jonathan Riley-Smith, Alan Forey, Anthony Luttrell, and Helen Nicholson, has our understanding of these orders significantly progressed. Local and regional studies have a more established tradition, but also these often elude a general academic interest. However, in the Netherlands this interest has been rekindled due to the substantial work of J.M. Van Winter and J.A. Mol. With this publication, Zuidervaart further enriches this scholastic tradition.

Ridders, priesters en predikanten in Schelluinen comprises eight chronologically ordered chapters, which detail the history of the commandery from its foundation in the first half of the thirteenth century to the late nineteenth century, when the last remains of the commandery, the parish church, were demolished. These chapters are followed by an extensive appendix, revealing the most important sources used within the work. This edition of primary source material, from the hand of Huib Zuidervaart and Eef Dijkhof, is one of the most valuable assets of the work.

The first chapter focusses on the earliest history of the commandery. Starting with the foundation of the preceptory, Zuidervaart forwards an interesting hypothesis concerning the origins of *Schelluinen*, a bastardization of Ashkelon, by dating it back to the twelfth century and by connecting its foundation to the crusading interests of the lords of Altena. The author then continues with the thirteenth-century history of the preceptory, focusing on the first commander Everwacker, the abandonment of the house and its second foundation. He ends the chapter with a somewhat out-of-place description of the mission of the Teutonic Order and its organization within the Northern Low Countries.

In the next chapter, Zuidervaart continues with the history of the preceptory during the fourteenth and the fifteenth centuries. The first part of the chapter consists of a descriptive and sometimes anecdotal representation of the events during these centuries, with particular attention on the link between the Order and the lords of Arkel and the financial troubles of the commandery. The financial situation of the house is then further investigated in a more transparent and better organized second part of the chapter. Especially this latter part demonstrates the value of the study of local houses. It renders the reader a transparent overview of how commanderies as local units of exploitation were often struggling to keep their affairs running.

The material commandery is the subject of the third chapter. Its buildings and goods were meticulously described in the sixteenth century, allowing for a detailed insight in the interior of a commandery. The sober, though knightly, interior of the living quarters were remarkable, as was the great amount of books present in the commandery. Amongst these books, the *Constitutio Scalunensis* is a veritable pearl to understand the religious services rendered by a local commandery.

The fourth chapter deals with the profound impact of the Reformation on the commandery of *Schelluinen*. Although this chapter contains few new insights to the subject of the precarious position of the military orders in this period of religious reorientation, it does render a more concrete view of how a local foundation of such an order was able to overcome several obstacles. Especially the political, yet subtle, protest in the form of the ceremonial entrance of a new Catholic commander, while at the same time a reformed preacher was installed at the house of *Schelluinen*, forms an interesting case study demonstrating how the *Utrechtse Balije* of a Catholic order hoped to navigate the troubled waters of the Reformation.

The commandery of *Schelluinen* remained in the possession of the *Utrechtse Balije* of the Teutonic Order, now an independent and reformed institution, but it did not house a commander anymore. The commander of *Schelluinen* was transformed into a nominal title held by one of the knights residing in the central house of Utrecht. This would result in an increasing disinterest of the *Utrechtse balije* for the commandery and a gradual deterioration of the condition of buildings. This evolution and the problems faced by the local parish experienced are described in the final chapters of the book. Eventually, the *Utrechtse Balije* would sell the commandery in 1822 and the medieval church was to be demolished in 1899, thus ending the rich history of the preceptory of *Schelluinen*.

Zuidervaart delivers what he promised in the first pages of his work, an updated local history of the commandery of *Schelluinen*, written in a way that conforms with academic standards, but also appealing to a wider

interested audience. Furthermore, the book is beautifully illustrated, further enhancing its appeal for an expert and non-expert audience alike. Consequently, I do not think that criticizing this work for its descriptive, and sometimes anecdotal, character would be fair. However, some points of criticism need to be made as well. First, there are some problems with the structural choices the author made. The introduction, which is part of the first chapter, is too concise and renders the reader barely any knowledge about the methodology and the perspectives the author employed during his research. Furthermore, the author's choice to persevere with an often strenuously chronological arrangement throughout the book decreases the clarity of its discourse and often impedes more profound insights in the considered matters. Although the chronological succession of the chapters is done with proper care, the subject matter of each chapter would be better served by a thematic approach. Finally, some parts of the book are too densely written. This mostly concerns the relation between the commandery and the noble families of Altena and Arkel, which is scattered between the first and second chapter. The reader needs to make a great effort in keeping track of the confusing genealogy of these families. The fact that the author spreads this matter over two separate chapters only adds to this confusion.

Second, there are some problems relating to the content. Although Zuidervaart clearly made an effort to link the local history of the commandery of *Schelluinen* to broader historical developments of the Northern Low Countries and of the Teutonic Order, which is a remarkable improvement compared to many other local or even regional studies about the military orders, a true comparative approach is still lacking. Consequently, it remains unclear to what extent the situation of *Schelluinen* was unique compared with that of other commanderies of the *Balijs Utrecht*. Also, the relation between the commandery and the noble network wherein it resided needs more careful consideration. Certainly, Zuidervaart has revealed an unmistakably well-established link between the Teutonic knights of *Schelluinen* and the lords of Altena and, later, the lords of Arkel. However, it is important to notice that genealogical links on themselves do not explain why some members of these families took a profound interest in the order. A true understanding of the role which separate commanderies and military orders held for noblemen can only arise from an analysis of the socio-political position these persons held within their respective noble networks.

In conclusion, this work does not comprise great academic breakthroughs or fundamentally changing perspectives with respect to the history of the Teutonic Order. This work never claimed the intention of doing so. Its goals were to render a good and up-to-date local history of

the commandery of *Schelluinen*, and it certainly rose up to the challenge. It will serve as the work of reference concerning the commandery of *Schelluinen* and will prove indispensable for anyone interested in the history of the Teutonic Order in the Netherlands or in the local history of *Schelluinen*. What the work especially reveals is the great amount of questions still left to be answered. In this respect, the work has been a valuable exploration of the field of the commanderies of the military orders in the Low Countries, now waiting to be mined by more specific and comparative research.

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Robert Stein, *De hertog en zijn Staten. De eenwording van de Bourgondische Nederlanden, c. 1380–1480*, Hilversum: Verloren, 2014 (Middeleeuwse Studies en Bronnen, 146). 318 pp. ISBN 978-90-8704-388-9. € 33.00.

With his work, Robert Stein has endeavoured to present us an overview of the creation and growth, within the geographical limits of the Low Countries, of the ‘Burgundian Union’ (cf. the title of Chapter 1). This is a very laudable and welcome effort: although no-one could claim the Valois dukes of Burgundy or the late medieval Low Countries have been neglected by historians, most studies are quite specific or focus either predominantly on the governors and the central level (e.g., Schernb’s 1999 *L’État bourguignon*), or on the governed and local developments (e.g., Blockmans’ 2010 *Metropolen aan de Noordzee*). The last large synthesis that provided a more balanced view already dates from 1998, namely, *Prinsen en poorters*, edited by Walter Prevenier. However, Stein’s approach differs markedly from the one chosen in Prevenier’s edition. The focus is not on cultural or social developments, but on the forms, functioning, and development of the Burgundian ‘composite’ State.

Yet, if this may sound like another study that merely treats princely institutions, top-down reforms, legislation, and so on, the author intends to demonstrate how this Burgundian construct was as much the result of the influence of the Estates and the governed of the Low Countries as of the efforts made by the successive dukes and their administration (11–12), hence the title *De hertog en zijn Staten*. This point is pressed home, in particular in chapter 4 (*De aantrekkingskracht van de eenheid*), in which Stein, after focusing first on the Burgundian dynasty and the Estates of the Low Countries in chapters 2 and 3 respectively, convincingly shows how the ascendancy of the house of Valois within the different old principalities of the Netherlands depended first and foremost on the consent and interests of the local leading classes and their representative bodies. In the next four chapters, albeit not always with the same intensity, Stein further stresses the interactions between the duke and his (new) subjects when he treats, consecutively, the Burgundian governmental reform, the administration of justice, the financial structure of the Valois’ composite state, and, finally, their fiscal organisation, policies, and ambitions.

In all of this, the author presents his reader with a structured, pleasantly readable narrative. Stein’s synthesis has clear merits: it gives a large overview of the expansion of the Burgundian state complex within the puzzle of the different late medieval seigniories, counties, and duchies of the Low Countries, bundling information from a large variety of articles and monographs focused on one specific principality or reign. Likewise,

the chapters that treat the Burgundian institutions that would start to govern and (partially, at least) integrate these different new possessions, surmise the findings of several previous studies that each discussed that particular regional court, this local institution, or that particular *Chambre des Comptes*. Throughout these chapters, one can clearly follow Stein's central line of thought that, even if perhaps the dukes held power, it was the Estates that clearly exercised a very large influence on the application of that power (see his final conclusions, 274).

Nevertheless, some remarks are in order. In part, these stem from the very nature of a synthesis like the work of Stein: some issues will inevitably receive less attention than others. Still, for a work that focuses on the 'Burgundian Netherlands' in its broadest geographical meaning, some principalities receive only a very limited amount of attention. The narrative is predominantly focused on Brabant – in itself perhaps a welcome variation, since many other 'Burgundian' studies are often highly Flandrocentric – to the detriment especially of the French-speaking possessions of the dukes situated within the kingdom of France: Artois, Picardy, Boulogne, Ponthieu, and the Somme-cities. Even if Stein does rank Artois between the Burgundian core principalities (the *kerngewesten*), albeit without much further consequence, the other acquisitions of the dukes within the realm are hardly even mentioned. In fact, the often very tense relations between Philip the Good and the French Crown, or the troubled Burgundian possession of the Picardy region even after 1435, are almost entirely brushed aside (see p. 28, 42 and 52 for some rare, casual remarks). This is all the more striking because in the data provided by the author in chapter 5.2 the importance of these possessions and their elites within the network of the Burgundian State becomes quite apparent, while the recent monograph of A.-B. Spitzbarth (*Ambassades et ambassadeurs de Philippe le Bon, troisième duc Valois de Bourgogne (1419–1467)*), Turnhout: Brepols, 2013, not included in the bibliography) has likewise stressed the importance the ducal government attributed to these south-westerly 'royal' possessions.

Another point of critique that can be made is that, for all his focus on the relations between (and interdependence of) the Estates and the dukes and their entourage, Stein pays only scant attention to their inner workings and composition, or the rivalries and factions that influenced their attitudes and policies. For example, the noble Croÿ family is only mentioned three times in the index, even though its members were among the most influential courtiers of the dukes and they *de facto* represented and detained ducal power and authority in Hainaut, Namur, and large parts of Picardy and Artois during the second half of Philip the Good's reign. Popular complaints or revolts that occurred outside the framework

of the Estates and their regulated, 'consensual' dealings with the duke and his administration are also largely neglected or ignored. Again, this is in part the inevitable consequence of the lines set out by the author and his general, synthetic objective, yet the final paragraph of his conclusion (277) does, I suggest, simplify matters a bit too much. The events and perturbations of 1477 cannot, in my opinion, be trivialised to such an extent as to declare that within a mere couple of months everything was business as usual again ('Enkele maanden later was de orde weer hersteld', Stein's final sentence). The same goes for the author's conclusions regarding the withering power of the local nobility, which seem to conflict with the events of the sixteenth century (the Revolt) and the creation of vast, increasingly powerful conglomerate seigniories, or the increased farming of local bailiwicks by noblemen (cf. Buylaert 2010), which already took place during the fifteenth century.

De hertog en zijn Staten fulfils its own aims to provide an overview of the growth, structures, and principal institutions of the Burgundian composite state, and it does so in an altogether accomplished manner. It does, however, remain a synthesis and, in part, an introduction to the field and research concerning the late medieval Low Countries. As such, it can and should be augmented by more detailed studies that support, but in some cases challenge as well, Stein's viewpoint on the role and influence of the Estates and the dukes in the making of the 'Burgundian Union'.

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Rudolph Ladan, *Gezondheidszorg in Leiden in de late middeleeuwen*, Hilversum: Verloren, 2012. 360 pp. ISBN 978-90-8704-315-5. € 32.00.

In this book, originally defended as a Ph.D. thesis at the University of Leiden, Rudolph Ladan deals extensively and systematically with the health care system in the important town of Leiden in the county of Holland during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries (1395–1610). His main research topic is the way in which the people of Leiden, the municipality, and the medical professionals dealt with the need for medical care in reaction to illness and disease. According to Ladan, this occurred in a ‘medical market’, with the sick people on the demand side and the suppliers of medical care on the other. The book starts with a general introduction into medieval health care, and an outline of some characteristics of research into it. It continues its introduction with the history of Leiden, with its rapid changes in population, followed by an overview of late medieval health care in Leiden properly. Next to a chapter on mortality crises and epidemics in Leiden, chapters follow on hospitals in Leiden, on the physicians or *doctores medicinae*, on surgeons and barbers, on midwives, and, finally, on apothecaries. Appendices follow with the names of all of the ‘medical people’, with some details on their lives in the endnotes, as well as a discussion of the data on all of the mortality crises.

The book fills a gap in Dutch historiography. Most of the older studies are institutional stories, outlining the history of a hospital from the 1400s or 1600s until the twentieth century, or of a particular medical profession. Most new research focuses on the Early Modern or Modern period. However, Ladan makes a strong case for the Later Middle Ages as a crucial formative period in medical care, especially in Leiden during the 1450s and 1460s, in reaction to the rapid growth of the population and all its ensuing problems and pressures. Ladan uses mainly administrative sources, like accounts of hospitals, town regulations, and judicial actions. On the basis of this, he reconstructs, as completely as possible for a town in Holland, the medical professions, how they were regulated and how they functioned and conflicted. His research is thorough and solid, his scrutiny admirable, his picture more complete and encompassing than earlier studies. On average, Leiden numbered, from the end of the fifteenth century onwards, between two to five physicians, ten to twenty surgeon-barbers, four to seven midwives, and two and five apothecaries – for a population varying between 14,000 and 24,000.

Especially two aspects of this study seem to me to be relevant to other fields too. The first one is his precise reconstruction of the mortality crises in over two centuries, calculated from a 20% (39 times) and a 50%

(28 times) increase in mortality over 216 years, compared to a moving nine-year average. This meant a mortality crisis once every six years, and a severe crisis once every eight years. Almost always, acute infectious diseases were to blame for severe mortality crises; at least eighteen out of twenty times, the disease was the plague. Famine itself was not an important independent cause of peak mortality; war even less so, although both could accelerate the outbreak or consequences of disease. Ladan's series is a fine bench mark for future research, to test and compare other data.

The second aspect concerns the role of the municipal government, or the comital one. The role of the count or the county of Holland was negligible. Neither was the town council responsible for the arrangement of most of the medical care system, apart from some exceptional cases like the English sweating disease or the arrival of syphilis. The aldermen rarely discussed it, rarely anticipated problems or took precautions, and most often just reacted during a crisis. It was the urban community itself who took care of most of the burden by spreading this throughout the town. Here, Ladan makes some acute observations on the way the aldermen conceived and perceived the 'common good' for which they were responsible. This entailed in the first place the general state of affairs in the town, not the fate of the individual citizen or the medical care system itself.

Ladan's book suffers from several shortcomings, however. One of them is a lack of comparison and a lack of a broader view. It seems to me to be more and more characteristic of some Dutch Ph.D. theses to stick resolutely and rigorously to one's own topic, Leiden in this instance, hardly glancing over its walls at all. This comes with two consequences: a loss of relevance of results, and a missed opportunity to fill gaps in Leiden's data and archivalia with material, conclusions, and hypotheses from elsewhere. I have rarely read a Dutch Ph.D thesis using so little of the abundant material in French (one secondary source) or German historiography (two German secondary sources, one of them specifically dealing with Leiden), barely referenced at all. Dutch historiography suffers the same fate, however. Female medical professionals are dealt with by a reference to a book by Monica Green. The interesting cultural discussion in the work of Orlanda Lie is passed over. The most important Dutch book on the history of the medieval medical profession of the past century, Huizenga's thorough discussion of the relation between physicians and surgeons, suffers the same fate, although Ladan succinctly discusses the topic.

Several times a more thorough discussion is lacking. Seven of the mortality crises are not elucidated or explained in Leiden's sources. Ladan does not use any outside material to try to solve this problem; maybe sources from Amsterdam, Haarlem, or Utrecht mention the plague? In

1581, 87% of Leiden's hospital population consisted of women. One of several possible explanations made by Ladan might be a 'cultural patron'. Tantalizing! However, no further comparison is made with other cities. Only once, salaries, expenses, and all the other important financial information in his study are contextualized by a comparison with wages in Leiden. They are rarely compared to other towns: Was Leiden cheap or did it invest heavily in its medical care system? Maybe the recent comparative dissertation of Auke Rijpma on public services in the Low Countries was still unavailable during the writing of the book, but comparable work from elsewhere certainly was available. Ladan here defends himself, stating the impossibility of researching all these topics. Quite true, but was this not just as crucial, or even more crucial, for evaluating the role of Leiden's government as some other questions dealt with extensively? The same holds true for the *meesteressen*, female surgeons, or medical professionals who also treated men; any context out of Leiden is missing. A typical example of this attitude is featured on page 190, where Ladan states 'that no hard evidence exists for Leiden' to prove his suggestion that a midwife was involved in every birthing. What about other places?

Municipal records have their shortcomings. Ladan discusses all the physicians mentioned in Leiden's sources. Almost no physician is mentioned in them for the first half of the fifteenth century. But does this mean that the citizens of Leiden had no access to physicians at all? A look outside municipals records suggests otherwise. Physicians were university trained. Most early students were in clerical orders. Studies on clergy and university students of the first half of the fifteenth century show three physicians of the counts of Holland originating from Leiden (Jan Reiniersz, Sr. and Jr., and Jan van Leiden). Furthermore, other Leidenaars like Willem Woman van Gouda, and Bartholomeus van Ethen, brother to Leiden's pensionary, were *doctores medicinae*. Three of them were rector and professor of medicine at the universities of Paris or Cologne; at least two of them were canons of Leiden, and at least two of them were in possession of medical treatises (the last a factor Ladan was searching for). It cannot be proved that they practised in Leiden – although Jan van Leiden treated the countess of Holland in nearby Teilingen, but they certainly were part of a learned, medical network, which the municipality or the citizens of Leiden could consult.

Ladan often expertly discusses his sources. Elsewhere, a more critical attitude is absent. Examples of this are his discussion of the title *magister* – who could hold a doctorate regardless of what Ladan states – and the career of the surgeon-doctor Jacob van der Werchorst. The best examples, however, are the conflicts around the physician Andries Salomon, and his ultimate punishment and banishment in 1561, and the surgeon Jan de Juede

(John the Jew) in 1466. Nowhere in his discussion does Ladan deem it necessary to mention that both contested professionals were Jews – one wonders whether antisemitism could have played a role? This is further highlighted by the fact that his secondary sources do tackle it.

Finally, the author's main research topic is the 'medical market', with its demand and supply. Ladan tries to write a new kind of social history of medicine, no longer only focusing on the institutions and professionals, but with a keen interest in the reciprocity of demand and supply. Here, however, his municipal records fail him. Illustrative is Ladan's conclusion that quacks could not have had a fair share in the market because the guilds had strict regulations and measures, and because municipal records only rarely mention them. A lot is not mentioned there, or strictly regulated, but nevertheless does occur. The author is aware of the role of family, of self-help, of religion, of masses, processions, and pilgrimages, and the manifold apotropeic options open to the public, but he never discusses them – because his institutional and municipal sources rarely mention them. In the end, his study of a medical market of demand and supply is very much a study in supply, never starting from the side of demand and the public. It is a valuable contribution, rich in information, but biased and one-sided by limiting itself to Leiden's institutional sources.

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Patricia Stoop, *Schrijven in commissie. De zusters uit het Brusselse klooster Jericho en de preken van hun biechtvaders (c. 1456–1510)*. Hilversum: Verloren, 2013 (Middeleeuwse Studies en Bronnen, 127). 495 pp, ill. ISBN 978-90-8704-195-3. € 39.00.

In 1459, Maria van Pee (d. 1511), a canoness and later prioress of the Jericho Monastery in Brussels (1456), decided to publish from memory the sermons of her rector and confessor Jan Storm (d. 1488). This was the start of a long tradition resulting in the most extensive collection of conventual sermons (*conventspreken*) ever produced in the Low Countries. The collection is unique because of its long prologues and the fact that it mentions the names of most priests and sisters involved. The latter, intending to honor God and the name of their confessors, recorded the work of their spiritual fathers ‘for their own salvation and that of their sisters’. In *Writing in commission. The Sisters of the Jericho Monastery in Brussels and the Sermons of their Confessors (c. 1456–1510)*, Patricia Stoop analyzes these sermons and the methods used to record them. She shows that the collections are the result of a collective authorship and the nucleus of a much broader monastic writing culture.

In the first chapter, Stoop deals with the manuscript tradition and textual transmission. The eight collections consist of approximately 350 (unique) sermons in total. Most of them were recorded for internal use, although these sisters also wrote dozens of books for others (*pro pretio*). Their authorship was complex: a preacher/confessor delivered the sermons, a sister recorded them afterwards from memory, and another sister collected and edited these recorded sermons. In the words of Stoop’s promotor, Thom Mertens: ‘the “skeleton” of the sermon was the work of the preacher; the sisters who did the writing were to a large extent responsible for the “flesh” that brought these bones to life’ (35).

In the second chapter, Stoop describes the historical context. A short history of the monastery ‘Onze Lieve Vrouw ter Rosen gheplant in Jericho’ is followed by a list of monastic offices, ranks, and duties, and a presentation of the main characters: preacher/confessors such as the regular canons Jan Storm, Paul van Someren, and Willem Storm; and the sermon writers and collectors (Maria van Pee, Janne Colijns, Elisabeth van Poyle, Barbara Cuyermans, Mergriete van Steenberg, and Anne Jordaens). Obviously, these six sisters belonged to the more intellectual among the fifty or so living in Jericho during the second half of the fifteenth century.

In the third chapter, Stoop describes the main aspects of the monastic writing culture at Jericho: the scriptorium (*scrijfcamere*), and who made use of it; intellectual and spiritual formation, the monastic school, and

training; writing and copying manuscripts; the style of writing (mostly 'a neat and uniform *littera hybrida*', 119); illumination; payments and sales; buyers (mostly priests and male (!) monasteries); and the collection of 29 manuscripts in Middle Dutch that is, in fact, the third largest of all collections stemming from female monasteries. The library of Jericho furthermore contained liturgical books such as books of hours and missals, most of them now lost, as well as spiritual treatises (e.g., Ruusbroec, Hendrik Herp), bible commentaries, *vitae*, devotional texts (*exempla*, miracles, meditations), and some incunabula (e.g., Ludolph of Saxony, Otto of Passau). This chapter includes sixteen beautiful full-page color plates, mainly showing a colophon, initials, and images of the Jericho manuscripts that are now in Brussels and Ghent.

In the fourth chapter, Stoop describes the structure, contents, style, and metaphorical language of these sermons against the background of the use of the liturgical calendar, annual cycles of seasons and feast-days, and the sisters' *lectio-meditatio-oratio* reading practice. Many of the normal characteristics of Middle Dutch sermons can be found in them: *divisiones* (subdivisions); *dilatationes* (explanations), *rationes* (argumentations), *auctoritates* (authorities), and so on. Of particular importance are the prologues, in which the sisters (despite all conventionalism, literary topos, and *Bescheidenheidsformeln*) not only claim their share of authorship, but also explain their own methods and motives. It appears that they themselves instigated these recordings with the memory of their dear fathers, their own salvation, and the spiritual welfare of their sisters in mind. Their goal is thus the honor of their memorable preachers (*totten love ende weerdicheit des ghedincelijken predicaers*, 182), their own spiritual profit (*selfs orbore ende salicheit*, 184), and the spiritual nourishment of their sisters (*te treckenne ten smake der sueticheit*, 185).

A large portion of the book (190-311) is dedicated to the characteristics of individual sermons and the female authors' individual styles, including their allegorical explanations of key religious themes and their specific, mostly female, spiritual foci. Among the many themes we encounter in the works of Maria van Pee, for example, are the merits of Mary, the beauty of virtues, the jewels in the crown of John the Baptist, the sun-like appearance of St. Catharine, the grace in Mary Magdalene, and the seven works of mercy. Most illustrative is Maria's explanation of the conversion of Paul in connection to Psalm 76,11 and in terms of the four changes brought forth by God: substantial, natural, miraculous, and spiritual (199). Most sermons seem to be reproduced from memory: a number of them are incomplete or contain illogical repetitions; *rationes* and *auctoritates* are missing from the general structure (*divisio*); the images are lively; and numbers and lists abound. These things should not surprise us, as Maria

had already stated in her prologue that she intended to reproduce the 'drift' (*den bloeten sin*) of the words of her confessor only. The other five women writers equally reproduce more the internal senses than the intact sermons, constructing new texts rather than reconstructing existing ones (210).

Even more important than individual accents in the selection and elaboration of devotional themes is the genesis and structure of each collection as a whole. This is the subject of the fifth and final chapter. The collections are the result of a complex editing process, involving several (anonymous) people and consisting of five (overlapping) phases (p. 358): (1) the delivery of the actual sermons (predication); (2) the recording of a selection of them on separate sheets (redaction); (3) the gathering and organizing of the material according to the liturgical calendar (collection); (4) the editing of the collection (edition); and (5) the copying of the collection and the addition of a prologue and an index (codification). The sisters thus 'wrote together' (*Schrijven in commissie*), neither being 'in commission' nor working 'on commission' as the misleading title may suggest.

It is this systematization and division of labor that is most striking even beyond the level of religious fervor that these writers displayed or the measure of authority that they enjoyed among their sisters (359). The *auctores intellectuales* of the sermons did not disappear behind the texts, but in each collection and in every production phase different contributors found ways to give expression to their own spirituality and creativity (360). At the same time, the general purpose shared by all was the deepening of devotion and the promotion of spiritual virtue. Thus, both a strong collaboration and shared contemplation (in which 'physical activity and spiritual edification' were combined (146), constituted the community's identity – a collective identity that was maintained by the preaching of faith, the production of books, and the practice of virtue.

In its creative solutions in rendering an existing discourse in an exciting new way, its broad attention to devotional forms of living spirituality, its intelligent use of the intellectual work of others, its sensitivity to the connection between individual authority and collective identity, its strong codicological as well as internal focus, and its incidental repetitiveness and lengthiness, *Schrijven in commissie* very much resembles the fifteenth-century collections that it presents so carefully here.

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***Church History and Religious Culture* 93:2 (special issue *Challenging the Paradigms: Holy Writ and Lay Readers in Late Medieval Europe*, ed. Sabrina Corbellini) (2013). ISSN 1871-241X.**

The journal *Church History and Religious Culture* (the former *Nederlands Archief voor Kerkgeschiedenis/Dutch Review of Church History*) has devoted its second issue of 2013 to the main results of the research project, 'Holy Writ and Lay Readers: A Social History of Vernacular Bible Translations in the Late Middle Ages', which aimed to reconstruct the process of translation and dissemination of vernacular Bibles during the late Middle Ages. Founded by the European Research Council (ERC) and the University of Groningen, this project ran from 2009 to 2013.

This issue of *Church History* opens with an introductory explanation of the project, written by its principal investigator Sabrina Corbellini. The project was inspired by the work of Andrew Gow, who recently challenged the view that the pivotal point of the Reformation was its attitude towards Bible reading. He noted that there was an abundant circulation of vernacular Bibles in late medieval Germany, which invalidates the so-called 'Protestant Paradigm' that protestant reformers considered individual Bible reading to be the core of their devotion, but that the Roman Catholic Church strictly controlled the translation of the Bible into the vernacular and its perusal by laymen. Whereas Gow's argument only applied to Germany, Corbellini turned his hypothesis into the foundation of a much broader research project. She and her team studied over one thousand late medieval vernacular Bibles – not just the 'complete' Bibles that have been frequently studied in past decades, but also separate Bible books, biblical material that was re-arranged according to the liturgical calendar, glossed Bibles, and biblical fragments. The team focused on the way these were read and used by lay believers in France, the Low Countries, and Italy.

The research project set out to challenge several paradigms. Next to the Protestant Paradigm, Corbellini has identified a different paradigm at work in each of her research areas. In France, the Protestant Paradigm was coloured by the Republican Paradigm, in which the nobility and members of the Church were seen as enjoying all sorts of privileges – undisturbed Bible reading being one of them – at the expense of the rest of society. In the Low Countries, researchers have tended to study each and every late medieval religious text through the lens of the Modern Devotion, the religious reform movement of that era. The Modern Devotion Paradigm implies that texts were produced by the Modern Devout and disseminated to passive laymen who did not in any way contribute to

these texts themselves. In Italy, the Catholic Reform Paradigm presents the Council of Trent (1545–1563), which prohibited vernacular Bible translations, as the culmination of a continuous process of medieval prohibitions. Finally and more generally, the Printing Paradigm assumes that printing was a marginal phenomenon in the years leading up to the Reformation, and only became successful as part of the Protestant Paradigm. All of these paradigms are challenged by Corbellini and her team, who argue that vernacular Bibles were widespread in late medieval France, that Dutchmen read the Bible even if they were not connected to the Modern Devotion, that the Trent prohibition was not the result of a long evolution but emerged very suddenly, and that printing was important for the emancipation of the vernacular Bible before the start of the Reformation.

They do this in four articles. First of all, an article by Sabrina Corbellini discusses the extent to which laymen were agents in the production and dissemination of vernacular Bible texts in Italy. She argues that the Italian *non-docti* were not particularly interested in the complete Bible, but preferred Bible fragments and adaptations: specific Bible books, Gospel harmonies, and liturgical adaptations of the text. Non-professional scribes wrote many of these texts as part of a private library. Laymen could also buy pieces of vernacular religious literature in booksellers' shops. Networks of religiously interested laymen exchanged books among themselves, and religious institutions were keen to participate in these borrowing networks. Institutions sold their books to laymen, laymen donated their books to religious institutions after their death, and monastic libraries were sometimes open to the general public as well. Corbellini concludes that laymen were involved in every stage of the dissemination of the Holy Writ in late medieval Italy.

Suzan Folkerts has studied the Middle Dutch situation. She notes that the Dutch sources are deceptive. On the one hand, almost every vernacular Bible has been edited by De Bruin (d. 1988), which greatly facilitates research. On the other hand, De Bruin was a Protestant who viewed the Bible as one complete book that contained the Word of God. As a result, he did not edit Bible fragments, adaptations, or paratextual elements (such as glosses), which has greatly hampered the practical usability of his editions. This makes it difficult to categorize the edited bibles from a production point of view; and Folkerts notes that it is equally difficult to categorize Bibles based on their context of use because continuous reading, paraliturgical reading and study could be done in one and the same manuscript. It is clear, however, that the Dutch did not usually read complete Bibles, but preferred miscellanies with biblical excerpts and manuscripts with the lessons for the liturgical year. Their dissemination

of these fragmentary Bibles can be tracked: females read 69% of them. Only 10% of them were laywomen, while the other 59% consisted of either religious women or religious institutions for women. Folkerts emphasizes that the boundaries between laywomen and religious women were very fluid because an institution could sell or donate a book to a laywomen, or vice versa. Both institutions and laywomen were used to reading the Bible according to the liturgical year, a tradition that was strengthened even further with the arrival of the printing press.

Margriet Hoogvliet concentrated on France, with a specific focus on the northernmost region. Many partial Bible translations circulated in this region, and the text was often adapted to situated religious practices. Most Frenchmen and women were especially interested in the Passion of Christ, as well as in moral lessons and recommendations. Hoogvliet argues that there are so many fragments in so many textual varieties, that it seems very unlikely that these vernacular Bibles were in any way prescribed by the Catholic Church. On the contrary, numerous late-medieval vernacular texts stress the importance of Bible reading, which was seen as the cornerstone of religious life. It would not be correct to classify these texts as proto-protestant, as its authors were all respected members of the Church and the texts highly orthodox. In short, both elites and commoners embraced the perusal of vernacular biblical texts in late medieval France.

Mart van Duijn finally engages with the first printed Bible in Dutch: the so-called Delft Bible of 1477. He shows that in the Low Countries as well as in Germany, Italy, France and England, religious texts formed a large part of the total print production before 1501 (from 23% in Italy to 44% in England). Those religious texts were often published in the vernacular: in England, for example, 106 out of 210 religious texts were published in the vernacular. The Low Countries, and Delft in particular, also had a strong tradition in vernacular religious printed texts. Van Duijn notes that the Dutch public was heavily involved in the life cycle of the Delft Bible. The public influenced its production because they created demand, and in some instances printed it themselves (often, once again, in cooperation with members of the religious orders and clergy). Van Duijn thus challenges the traditional dichotomies between 'printers' and 'public', 'lay' and 'religious'. Secondly, he notes that printers tried to reach as large an audience as possible of lay and religious readers by printing the Bible on loose quires, so that the audience could construct their own Bibles based on their situated demands. The men and women who constructed their own Bibles could use them as guidance for everyday life, as an object for (or of) devotion, as a study book, and sometimes even as a repository for private notes they did not want to lose.

The strength of this issue of Church history is simultaneously its weakness. It engages with one clear point, the 'Protestant Paradigm', and hammers it home that this Paradigm should be abandoned. The articles can feel a bit repetitive in their description of the despised Paradigm(s), as well as somewhat descriptive in their eagerness to list each and every argument to challenge them. They keep coming back to a handful of themes. First of all, the extreme porosity of the boundaries between laymen and religious individuals is constantly underlined. Second, all authors emphasize that there is a variety of translations and traditions in each linguistic area, which indicates that the audience had a very active approach towards these Bibles. Third, the Bible was often 'domesticated' (transposed and translated into the domestic sphere of the lay audience) and used in the liturgical context of the home. Fourth, the translation and dissemination of vernacular Bibles was always a product of local social and political developments, such as the wish of a king to promote his vernacular as the 'new Latin'. Fifth, the vernacular Bibles were read by a very broad social range of lay readers, from kings to artisans. Finally, it is clear that the Bible translations are the result of a drawn-out process of linguistic, political, and cultural negotiation; and are not the clear-cut symptoms of a turning point in history.

Even though the articles err on the side of descriptiveness, and there are a handful of editorial oversights (examples are '64%' instead of '6.4%' on p. 278, and sentences like 'great number different texts were in circulation' on p. 248), these are minor points. Sabrina Corbellini and her team manage to convince the reader that the 'Protestant Paradigm' should not only be rejected in a German context, but also for late medieval Italy, northern France, and the Low Countries. Adapted versions of vernacular Bibles were widely read throughout Western Europe in the decades leading up to the Reformation.

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Judith Keßler, *Princesse der rederijkers. Het oeuvre van Anna Bijns: argumentatieanalyse – structuuranalyse – beeldvorming*. Verloren, Hilversum, 2013. 336 pp. ISBN 978-90-8704-347-6. € 33.00.

Judith Keßler has written an innovative and convincing study about one of the most enigmatic poetic voices of sixteenth-century neerlandophone 'rhetorician' literature: that of Anna Bijns of Antwerp (1495–1575). The fame of this 'virgin' was created through the printed text of less than 200 'refrains' (the rhetorician ballade) and a series of well-placed paratexts written by the author and her editors issued and reissued in volumes during her lifetime in 1528 (reprints in 41, 48, 64), 1548 (reprints in 53, 65) and 1567 (reprints in 1602 and 1611), and in two editions of her collected works in 1646 and 1668. A Latin translation of the first volume was published in 1529 by the Ghent humanist Elichius Eucharius. Her work was also collected in at least 16 extent manuscripts containing at least one poem and in three printed collections with work by various authors in 1590, 1605, and 1623.

In her carefully argued book, Keßler provides a new model for the argument analysis of rhetorician ballades and collections of ballades, not just those of Bijns. From a wider cultural perspective, her work also provides insights into how the oeuvre and reputation of this female rhetorician can be used to better understand the complexities of Catholic responses to the rise of Lutheran and other doctrinal communities in the Low Countries. Here, in fact, Keßler's fruitful analysis of the structure and content of Bijns's anti-Lutheran arguments lays bare one of the great omissions in the historiography on Protestantism and its impact in the Low Countries: the lack of interest in and understanding of the subtlety of Catholic responses apart from repression and (later) reconciliation.

The most remarkable aspect about Bijns is the appearance of her texts and female persona in print, sanctioned as truly Christian, that is, pious, virtuous, learned, artful, and full of truth. As a true prophet raising her voice in eschatological times, she addresses her nation – through its most virtuous (and dangerous) community of the rhetoricians – unmasking heretical vice and deceit, uncovering general abuses, calling out for conversion and reform and pointing out the route to recovery. Keßler's study shows how a female rhetorician came to be the elevated figurehead of an organized Franciscan response to the threat of Lutheran doctrine to the Roman Catholic Church and the Christian nation. Keßler also shows how this Franciscan voice was steeped in the Scriptures.

Using modern argument analysis, Keßler is able to overcome a methodological problem in the study of rhetorician literature and turn the focus to the textual content. Scholars have tended to focus

largely on poetic form, formal structure, or use of sources rather than on the argument of texts, even though it has been firmly established that rhetorician literature was highly argumentative. By showing the shortcomings of an analysis that uses the formal method of ancient rhetoric, Keßler turns to an analysis of texts in their immediate textual context: a manuscript or printed collection, with its paratexts that influence the position of a single text within the whole of a volume. She analyses the external argumentation with a focus on the ordering of arguments and the internal argumentation with a focus on the sorts of arguments used. The analysis takes place on the level of single poem and single verse (which in a refrain always concludes with the repetitive refrain-line) and on the level of the collection. Here she shows that the various poems and paratexts in the printed collections of Bijns's poems were consciously ordered into a larger argument against the Lutherans.

Keßler identifies the rhetorical principle of *copia et varietas* stressed by Agricola and Erasmus as the quintessence of Bijnsian refrain writing. Instead of building a singular argument following a linear structure, a refrain is structured in a circular way by adding argument upon argument in order to sustain the main thesis which is expressed in the repetitive refrain line. A typology of arguments used by Bijns features arguments based on signs (that is on observations of the world), arguments based on analogy, and arguments based on authority. Keßler thus adds to our knowledge of the way in which Flemish-Dutch rhetoricians developed a rhetorical practice of their own rather than copying formal prescriptions of ancient rhetoric, in accordance however with the ancient rhetorical rule of *kairos* or *decorum*. The rhetorical quality of Bijns's argumentation raises some questions about the relationship of her truth claims with the highly probabilistic nature of rhetorician cultural practices. Indeed, if we look carefully into the way in which she addresses her audience, which is much less constructed of already convinced Catholics than Keßler is willing to believe, the great subtlety of her argumentation also raises questions about Bijns's and Franciscan strategies to counter heresy.

The highly argumentative structure of Bijns's poems in their printed order is related to the key problem identified in Bijns's anti-Lutheran poetry: Lutheran doctrine and the deceitful way in which its teachers aim to establish its truth, by hypocritically singling out the sins of others, and in particular the clergy, and by misrepresenting the teachings of the Scriptures. Keßler shows that the pro-Catholic, anti-Lutheran nature of Bijns's poems in the printed collections is enhanced by small redactions of the texts compared to their manuscript versions, thematic clustering, and the addition of paratexts. The ordering principle is based on content, rather than genealogy, which underlines Keßler's conclusion that these

printed collections present an overall argument. Framed as an expert diagnosis, the printed collection of 1528 sets out to identify vilification as the major vice of the times. Bijns claims that slanderers who appear to be virtuous are deceiving the people with a false doctrine, which is then identified with the teachings of the 'Duytsce doctoren': 'false prophets' and 'devilish artists'. After having undermined the Scriptural claims of the Lutheran preachers and the legitimacy of their attacks on the vices of the clergy, Bijns concludes with a Scriptural defence of the Catholic Church, *sola scriptura* in defence of *sola ecclesia*, nullifying any false contradiction.

While five exemplary refrains from the first collection are studied in-depth, in her analysis of the second and third collection Keßler focuses on the overall argument. The second collection turns out to be openly anti-Lutheran from the start and contains a polemic with authors of Lutheran refrains. The book concludes with an exchange of refrains with a certain 'Stevijn', who praises Bijns as the 'Princess and lady of the rhetoricians'. The exchange focuses on the responsibility of the clergy (Stevijn) and of the laity (Bijns) in countering the Lutheran threat. Bijns final refrain ends with a call for action to the almighty Princes. The third collection has a triumphant nature. After a lengthy preface in which the Franciscan editor Henrick Pippinck dedicates the book to the wife of the 'savoir of the Netherlands', Peter Ernst Count of Mansfelt, the commander in chief who defeated the Calvinist army at Oosterweel near Antwerp on March 13, 1567, Bijns's argument begins with a cluster of refrains on the majesty and might of God and Christ, a praise of Mary, followed by a series of New Year poems with good intentions and a call for repentance and betterment, a cluster of refrains in which a lyrical, psalmist voice repents, calling God for mercy. The collection concludes with refrains speaking of victory, hopeful prayers for concord, and one last complaint identifying the cause of the major troubles in the contemporary world: Luther.

Keßler explains the differences between the collections from the shifting contexts to which the editors geared Bijns's message. By 1548, Protestant doctrine had survived and its disciples had at times turned violent, requiring less sophisticated rebuttals. Between April 1566 and Spring 1567, a series of tumultuous events, from the Request of the Nobles, the Iconoclast Fury, and a nascent war between Calvinists and the government had upset the Catholics of the Low Countries. Keßler's view of the context in which the third collection was published is somewhat hampered by her misreading of the date of the privilege (252). It was awarded March 6, 1566, which seems before the fateful events, but it was dated according to Brabantian Easter style, in 1567, and hence after the victory of the Catholics. The editor of the book, Henrick Pippinck, Provincial Minister of the Minorites in Lower Germany and a fierce anti-protestant

polemicist, stresses the danger of the sects which have shown their effects in the Iconoclast Fury of the Summer of 1566, when the monastery of the Franciscans of Antwerp was also destroyed. The triumphant nature of the book is evident from its dedication (dated May 6, 1567) to Maria de Montmorency, wife of Peter Ernst Count of Mansfelt, commander in chief of the army which defeated the Calvinists at Oosterweel near Antwerp two months earlier, hailed by Pippinck as 'one of the saviours of the Netherlands.' Keßler underestimates the triumphant nature of the third collection and misses the apparent Franciscan ambition to acquire a role in the restoration of peace; her reading of the third collection is less convincing than that of the first and second.

An issue that is open to further scrutiny is Keßler's belief that the audience of Bijns's anti-Lutheran arguments must have been restricted to likeminded Catholics. This is not confirmed by the evidence from both the printed books and the manuscripts. First, while Bijns was made to speak from within a Franciscan community by her editors, the audience that her books addressed was explicitly identified with the community of rhetoricians, who, given her later reputation and the manuscript record, did appreciate and appropriate her work. Second, Bijns's admonishments and warnings are not addressing the already convinced, but rather a diverse public whose members are called out to choose, take side with the ancient Roman Catholic Church and its less than perfect representatives, study the signs of heresy and consequently avoid the heretics. The latter too are addressed and condemned as included in the community of readers, even though at times they are excluded through the use of third person references, 'si' (they). As a result, Bijns's Lutheranism is a danger inside the Christian nation (even though the dangerous doctrine is also presented time and again as foreign and its disciples should be evaded). She closely relates its success to the faults of the nation and the members of the Church who are called upon to repent and do better. To Bijns, heresy is not just a demonic evil, but an intensification of existing vices such as slander, deceit, and hypocrisy. It seems that to Bijns, the Lutherans, at least the disciples, are still accepted as interlocutors, as sinners that need to repent, as members of the community of sinners that Bijns imagines her nation to be.

Judith Keßler has written a book that one must hope will become the corner stone not only for the study of Bijns, but for the study of refrain culture in general. Her reading of Bijns also provides many new opportunities for the study of the Catholic response to the rise of Protestantism in the Low Countries. The study of that response has focused too much on the repression (which is then almost always misrepresented as a tyrannical policy pursued by the central government and despised by

local governments and the people). The case of Anna Bijns and the making of her fame points to the need to study the non-violent forms of response and resistance grounded in movements for Catholic renewal and their success. Keßler's careful and respectful reading of Bijns calls for a wider, cultural study of the Catholic response to Protestantism before and after 1566, which pays detailed attention to the sort of arguments and recipes developed and promoted by various strands within engaged groups of supporters of the Catholic Church, the organization of their responses, and the political and cultural impact of their discourses and actions. The relevance of this book to the study of Catholic renewal in Reformation Europe could have been made more visible through a comparison of the case of Bijns with literature on other Catholic polemicists and apologists of the time. I am referring, for example, to James Simpson's inspiring study of the debate between Thomas More and William Tyndale in his *Burning to Read*, in which More's arguments too are carefully and respectfully read and evaluated. Indeed, this is not a study of the entire oeuvre of Anna Bijns, but rather of her anti-Lutheran work, in particular as it appeared in print.

Here, the title of Keßler's study promises too much, and in a way claims too little. After all, the manuscript record shows that Bijns's reputation was not only built on her anti-Lutheran refrains, but on a highly diversified set of themes. Keßler's evaluation of Bijns's relations with and reception and appropriation in rhetorician circles certainly calls for further study, not only to understand Bijns as a unique figure, but also to use her case in order to gain a deeper insight into rhetorician culture itself into which she was certainly more integrated than Keßler is willing to admit. On the other hand, new readings of Bijns will profit greatly from Keßler's methodical departing from an established and highly sexist tradition obsessed with speculations about Bijns's life. These speculations were partly based on a misogynistic reading of her texts as expressions of emotions and personal experience (singling out Bijns as an angry and frustrated female rather than studying her texts qua texts). Here, too, Keßler has set an example for new and intensified readings of the rest of Bijns's oeuvre, such as her poems on love and marriage, and by extension, of the works of other rhetoricians as well as of other participants in the controversies brought about by Luther and other Protestant reformers.

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Erik Thoen, Guus J. Borger, Adriaan M. J. de Kraker, Tim Soens, Dries Tys, Lies Vervaet and Henk J. T. Weerts, (eds), *Landscapes or Seascapes? The History of the Coastal Environment in the North Sea Area Reconsidered*. Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2013 (CORN Publication Series 13). x+428 pp. ISBN 978-2-503-54058-0. Pbk € 75.00.

Logically connected to contemporary concerns over climate change and ecological degradation, environmental history over the past decade has become one of the most significant strands of historical research. *Environmental History* is one of the most frequently cited history journals now, while older established journals such as the *Economic History Review* and the *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* have become increasingly devoted to issues linked with climate change such as the 'Little Ice Age' or the 'Medieval Warm Period'. Despite the best efforts of academic networks such as the CORN (*Comparative History of the North Sea Area*), rural history still remains a niche and peripheral strand of the overall historical discipline. Yet, as this recent CORN volume demonstrates, a way forward for rural history may be to connect traditional social and economic concerns with the new 'trendy' work and ideas in environmental history.

This volume of 18 papers, largely the product of a conference in Ghent on water management and the coastal environment in 2010, addresses the environmental fortunes and ecological stability of coastal regions in the North Sea area over the very long term of the pre-industrial period. One basic and essential contribution is to (once and for all) categorically dispute the impact of 'marine transgressions' on the environmental development of the coastal areas – that is, the chapters taken together offer evidence counter to a previously-held view that flooding in the North Sea area (from the Roman period to the Middle Ages) was predominantly dictated by geologic processes whereby the sea level rose relative to the land. In turn, the argument against the impact of marine transgressions has consequences for the reconstruction of population and settlement in much of the coastal area between Northern France and Mid-Denmark. Previous scholarship had suggested that occupation remained thin (as a result of these transgressions) from the third century BCE all the way up to the eleventh or twelfth centuries CE. This volume, instead, places the coastal regions within a more 'general' demographic outline for Western Europe – a higher population and exploitation of land up to the end of the Western Roman Empire, followed by a population nadir in the fifth to seventh centuries (although as Dirk Meier notes in his essay, very little concrete information on habitation is available for many coastal areas between 400 and 700 (92)), continued low-level settlement up

to the tenth century, which was only reversed in the late-Carolingian period with intense demographic growth and repopulation in the high Middle Ages. Essentially, this volume suggests that terrible events such as storm flooding were more important than marine transgressions, and that the environmental and economic impact of these events varied from region to region of the coastal area, dictated by strong divergences in social structure. As has been made rather fashionable in the 'disaster studies' literature over the past ten years, exogenous shocks and terrible environmental events have a 'social' and a 'human' dimension. In arguably the most impressive chapter of the book, Dries Tys quite rightly states that 'in order to understand the coastal landscape, we not only have to look to the sea, but also to the land, power(s), and to society' (200).

Many of the chapters in this volume confirm a distinction between water management techniques which were more 'defensive' in nature, that is to say, predominantly protection against the sea and flooding, and those that were more 'offensive' in nature, that is to say, dikes and technology used to reclaim previously sodden and marshy land into a more cultivable, 'productive' (inverted commas are used because 'wastes' and marshes had important functions also for rural medieval peoples), or habitable state such as new polders. Linked to this, one of the interesting questions discussed throughout the volume tends to be over the social conditions that make land reclamation and colonisation more likely. Which social groups push it through? How do such systems become sustainable?

Johannes Mol, in his chapter on Friesland, concentrates on ecclesiastical institutions by focusing in on the reclamation and water management activities of high- and late-medieval monasteries. His use of new GIS mapping (like many other chapters in the book) is highly impressive en route to spatially reconstructing monastic granges, though how he frames his paper is a little unconventional. Initial research in the middle of the twentieth-century thought that the Cistercian orders were the principle frontiersmen of the high Middle Ages, and this view has since been revised. Mol's work turns this position back on its head by asserting the role of monastic orders (with further nuances), but in his pre-amble he pits himself against the older scholarship of Georges Duby without mention of the more recent revisionist literature of (for example) Isabel Alfonso and her classic article entitled, 'Cistercians and Feudalism' from 1991 in the *Past and Present*. The inclusion of a chapter on the Po Valley in Northern Italy is also quite strange for a book dedicated to the North Sea area of Europe, but at least this represents one of the strongest essays in the volume. Michele Campopiano presents a story of considerable complexity and a new spin on the classic work of Bryce Lyon in the *American Historical Review* whereby he shows that the dismantlement

of serfdom and the reclamation of new territories did not bring new freedoms for rural communities – they were simply usurped under new cadres of control by urban governments instead. Campopiano presents a story which in many ways has parallels with that of Dries Tys on coastal Flanders, where the hydraulic systems that emerged there came to be used almost as a socio-political tool – supporting in this case a ‘princely ideology with a powerful territorial position’ (231).

Another interesting chapter was that of Otto Knottnerus on the medieval reclamation of three regions in Northern and Northeast Groningen. What he argues ultimately is that a ‘social balance’ between interest groups was vital in maintaining the sustainability of coastal environments here in the Middle Ages. While the medieval Dollard region (essentially what came to be called Reiderland and the Oldambt by the thirteenth century) descended into a chaotic society of tribal conflict, disturbed by the sheer numbers of peat-land peasant colonists, the system was better maintained in nearby Fivelgo, where a local elite layer served as a negotiating buffer between the diverse interests of the inland colonist peasants and the coastal aristocracies. Knottnerus’s argumentation is significant in that it links up with other work by James Galloway and Tim Soens (two of the most prominent scholars currently working on pre-industrial water management and land reclamation), who show that significant developments in the transition to the late Middle Ages (the waning of manorialism and increasing inequalities in the distribution of landed property, respectively) had knock-on consequences for the commitment and incentive to invest in water management infrastructure.

If there are to be any criticisms of this volume, it is not necessarily on the scholarship itself, which is quite high, but more attributable to the CORN series as a whole. It is becoming increasingly difficult to market these books as a ‘Comparative History of the North Sea Area’, in that there is a distinct bias towards (what is now) the Dutch-speaking Low Countries. If we take away the introduction and final synthesising chapter, as well as two chapters addressing the North Sea area in general, we find that half of the fourteen chapters refer to regions of coastal Flanders and the Netherlands. The problem is that this volume is far from being the worst offender – volume 14 in the series had all its chapters except one focusing on the Netherlands and Flanders! On the one hand, it could be indicative of the general strength of rural history in the Low Countries (which undeniably is high), but is also linked to the fact that 31 out of 38 editors in the published volumes to date are Dutch and Belgian, the series editors are Dutch and Belgian, CORN is funded by the ‘Research Foundation – Flanders’ (FWO), and, of course, the publishing house is based in Belgium. This is all despite a frequent rhetoric offered in

many of the volumes highlighting the commitment to cross-borders investigation. Furthermore, very few of the contributors to the CORN series actually perform 'cross-borders research' (that is transcending national historiographies) themselves. It is laudable that Erik Thoen offers an insightful and considered synthesizing chapter to end the book on a high note (some of the volumes do not, and end rather abruptly with a regional case study), but this is not about the 'evolution of coastal landscapes in the North Sea area' as suggested in his chapter title, but a synthesis of all material relevant to the Dutch-speaking coastal areas of the Low Countries. Other places outside the Low Countries are mentioned cursorily, and only by referring to the papers in the same volume.

It is undeniable that CORN has been one of the key torchbearers for rural history over the past 15 years and more, and has given an international audience exposure to regions where very little English-language literature once existed. Yet, while 10 to 15 years ago, these CORN publications represented the best example of comparative rural history, in 2014, we also now have the COST-financed 'Rural History in Europe' with scholars contributing from all across Western, Central, Mediterranean, and sometimes Eastern Europe. While CORN is crystallising an intellectual divide between the Northern and Southern European rural historical discipline, this new COST series is breaking it down. Such criticisms of the CORN series itself, however, should not detract from the basic fact that this particular volume (no. 13 in the series) is one of the strongest to appear in recent years.

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Peter Bitter, Viera Bonenkampová, Koen Goudriaan, (eds), *Graven spreken. Perspectieven op grafcultuur in de middeleeuwse en vroegmoderne Nederlanden*, Hilversum: Verloren, 2013. 256 pp, many black and white figures and 16 pages with colour plates. ISBN 978-90-8704-320-9. € 25.00.

This is an important collection of essays, giving an excellent insight into what is being done in the field of research on graves, burials, and burial places in the Netherlands in recent years. A serious critique that can be voiced at once is the fact that all of the essays are in Dutch and there are no English summaries either. This is a pity as the publication, the results of a workshop held on 27 and 28 January 2011 at the Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam, aims at making public the new Dutch research and to set it off against what has been done in neighbouring countries.

The title in translation is 'Graves have a lot to say. Perspectives on the funerary culture in medieval and early modern Netherlands'. After an 'Introduction' by the editors, there are thirteen articles divided into four themes, the first of which is 'Care for the dead body' with the articles 'Burying in Brabant sandy soil. The archaeology of changing burial rituals, c. 1000-1900' (Nico Arts); 'Burying below tomb slabs. Archaeological and archival research into eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century burial customs in the Great Church in Alkmaar' (Peter Bitter); 'Interment and embalment of the first members of the house of Nassau in the Low Countries' (George Maat). The section 'Ceremonials' contains 'Ephemeral memory. The *castrum doloris*' (Peter van Dael); 'A *chapelle ardente* and a *castrum doloris* in verse. The grave of William III and the *Regret Guillaume* (1339)' (Janet F. van der Meulen); 'The rise of the funeral oration' (Koen Goudriaan). In the section 'Aristocratic identity' there are the articles '*Pleurant* or *priant*. An iconographical motive in medieval sepulchral art' (Sanne Frequin); 'Long live death, long live life. The tomb and the altar retable in the chapel of the Van Brederode family in the Great Church at Vianen' (Trudi Brink); 'Counterparts in life and death. Piety, identity and authority in the testamentary dispositions of Anna van Croy, duchess of Aarschot and princess-countess of Arenberg (1564-1635)' (Mirella Marini). The section 'Group consciousness' contains 'Carved in stone. Utrecht canons and their grave slabs: the relation with administrative changes' (Bram van den Hoven van Genderen); 'Were 'rich stinkers' really rich? The social stratification of the citizens of Delft and their graves in the Old Church' (Viera Bonenkampová); 'The churchyard as a place of memory and devotion. The sisters of Saint-Agnes at Amersfoort and their graveyard' (Jan de Geest and Koen Goudriaan); "'Thinking of Holland'. Funerary culture of immigrants in Het Bildt (province of Friesland)

1547–1649’ (Kees Kuiken). There is also an extensive ‘Bibliography’ of sixteen pages.

The *Introduction* describes in broad outline how the research into death, burial, and burial places in the Netherlands is positioned in comparison with the neighbouring countries of England, Germany, France, and Belgium. There, the research on burials and burial practices has been booming from the 1980s onwards. Until recently, Dutch research lagged far behind. There is a Dutch tradition of research into burial fields and their graves, but only as far as it concerns the Early Middle Ages (up to the ninth century). The most conspicuous new research in the Netherlands is the so-called MeMO project on medieval memory culture, carried out at the University of Utrecht and coming to a close in 2013. Several of the authors that contributed to this collection of essays already knew each other from there. The innovative goal of this publication is the interdisciplinary dialogue between (physical) anthropologists, archaeologists, historians, and art historians. There is still a lot to win by integrating historical and archaeological research. The grouping of the essays into sections is useful, but remains sometimes a bit arbitrary. The interdisciplinary aspect of the whole is left to the reader, who can clearly see what different kinds of approaches are possible and how they can complement each other. It is a rich collection of different approaches.

The first two essays in the section ‘Care for the dead body’ are two excellent examples of recent Dutch research of the Late-Medieval and Early Modern period. The first treats five burial areas in the Brabant town of Eindhoven and neighbouring villages and in the town of ’s-Hertogenbosch. It gives the results of extensive research into burials inside churches and in churchyards. The way in which the bodies were buried, the grave gifts including coins, and the grouping of different kinds of people are all treated in such a way that changing methods over time become clear. The beginning of the nineteenth century is also included, when gradually burying inside churches and in urban areas is officially being forbidden. A notable aspect is the grave gifts from the middle of the nineteenth century onwards, consisting of religious medals and little crosses. Some general remarks on the ethical aspect of dealing with bodily remains, especially recent ones, give the essay an extra dimension.

The second essay is based on similar research, in this case of the burials in the Great Church of Alkmaar. This is combined with archival research, so that all kinds of interesting aspects come to the fore. It not only deals with the distribution of adult and child burials inside the church and in the churchyard, but also the costs of burials and the resulting debts, the

different methods of burials with extra ceremonial aspects as bell ringing, etc. The costs could be very high, but clearly declining in later periods. A striking aspect, for me, was the observation that the bodies found below the funerary slabs hardly ever were those mentioned on the slabs, the original occupants of the graves being overlaid by more recent (family) members. The slabs themselves, rows of similar slabs covering the whole floor and made uniform in the eighteenth century, are not dealt with separately. They have been described elsewhere by Carla Rogge, mentioned in a note, but not found in the bibliography.

The third essay in this section gives a detailed account of the way the seven bodies found in the vault below the funerary monument to Engelbrecht I and Jan IV and their wives in the Great Church of Breda were embalmed. The findings largely corroborate what is known from the description by Pieter van Foreest, the personal physician of William of Orange (†1584), of how he was embalmed and buried in Delft. The cleaving of the female genital joint of the body of Cimburga is not described by Foreest and the reason here is puzzling. This specific aspect and the trepanation and the sawing through of the sternum are awful aspects to read about. The question of why people of the highest ranks of society chose for such practices, only to preserve their bodies for a longer period, does not belong to the subject of this article, but remains interesting, I would say. Neither does the article go into the subject of the tomb structure above ground, although three of the seven persons buried had their monument quite some distance to the north in the church.

Two of the three essays in the section 'Ceremonials' describe the so-called *castrum doloris*, the elaborate structure that was set up over the coffin or the dead body of an important person in a *chappelle ardente* or in the choir of the church. They were all temporary structures of which we mainly have an idea from representations in miniatures in prayers, books, etc. In the first essay, the point of departure is the famous extensive description of the burial ceremonial of Anne de Bretagne of 1512. In all, 12 miniatures with such structures are described, all from the Late Middle Ages in Flanders, Northern France, and the Netherlands. More than representations of actual structures, they are depictions of what could be built or what the patrons of the prayer books had in mind for their own funerals.

The second essay also discusses a *castrum doloris*, but then, surprisingly enough, one in the form of a poem, the *Regret Guillaume* by Jean de le Mote on the burial ceremonies of William III, count of Holland and Zeeland in the Franciscan church in Valenciennes and written in 1339. According to the author, the term occurs earlier than is said in the preceding article (neatly referenced in a note). The poem is dealt with

in a very detailed way, making clear what the aim of the poem really is: a political lamentation by the patron, the English queen Philippa, daughter of William III and wife of Edward III, towards her brother and his wife, to urge them to choose for the English side against the French. In this way light is also shed on the meaning of the *castrum doloris* in miniatures.

In the third essay, the rise and development of the funeral oration are discussed. All kinds of new insights are brought to the fore. Probably originating in parochial use of burial rituals in the fourteenth century, it is still in development in the sixteenth. It is not a typical Protestant phenomenon; it was rejected by Calvinists but tolerated by Lutherans. The new insights make it a very interesting contribution.

The first article in 'Aristocratic identity' deals with the so-called 'weepers' (in French, *pleurants*), mostly thought to be the mourning figures carved on the sides of tombs. Here the subject is how such figures occur in miniatures. The author convincingly proves that they are more than just mourners, their main function being to pray for the deceased. It is proposed that the same may be true for the weepers that occur on actual tombs.

Those 'weepers' that are 'kinship' figures are left out from the discussion, but even more disturbing, to me, is the suggestion to replace the name *pleurant* by *priant*. In art-historical literature, the latter term is explicitly used for kneeling and praying figures that occur on tomb structures. The specific phenomenon of small figures on tombs, even if they represent, in the first place, prayers for the deceased, should really be treated in a wider context, including also the funeral scenes, sometimes very detailed, as seen in, *e.g.*, Spanish tombs.

The only article in the whole publication in which a funerary monument is the explicit focus of attention is the second article here. It deals with the grand tomb to Reinoud III van Brederode (d. 1556) and family in the church at Vianen, province of Utrecht. It is a so-called double tomb on which the figures of Van Brederode and his wife are represented lying in shroud clothes on the top slab while below is seen one transi figure of a skeleton eaten by worms. Although just one year earlier an extensive monograph on this particular tomb was published (*Matrijs*, by Jos de Meyere), the article holds its own as it not only concisely proves that, *e.g.*, on the basis of the different stones used (Baumberger ánd Avesnes), it is the work of Colijn de Nole, the Cambray sculptor running an atelier in Utrecht at the time, but also that the badly damaged stone altar retable in the same chapel formed part of the funerary structure.

Next to the critique on the sole use of the Dutch language in this publication, it may be remarked that the study of Dutch church monuments proper is probably more important than suggested by this publication. See the latest issue of *Church Monuments. Journal of the Church Monuments Society* 28 (2013), with an interesting general article (Nigel Llewellyn, 'The state of play. Reflections on the state of research into church monuments'), and a fine article on Dutch grave slabs (Sophie Oosterwijk, 'Death or resurrection? The iconography of two sixteenth-century incised slabs in Oudelande (Zeeland) and other Netherlandish shroud effigies').

The article on the testament of Anna Croy is an excellent example of how detailed such a testament could be and tells a lot of how intensely a person was concerned with his or her funeral and memory. In this case, Anna succeeded in stressing both the continuity of what her husband had done in his will twenty years earlier, and also her ideas of how she saw her own authority and identity.

In the section 'Group consciousness' the first article gives a masterly overview of how the canons of Utrecht cathedral came to be commemorated in their cathedral by individual grave slabs. This only occurred in the Late Middle Ages, after *c.* 1350, and it was a long process from the collective memory in the High Middle Ages towards an individual memory culture with individual grave slabs. This appears to be closely related to the change in ecclesiastical affairs in the town, where the canons are gradually withdrawing themselves into their precincts, making the cathedral church their prerogative place of burial. In between, the current idea among researchers that before the Late Middle Ages canons were buried in the quadrangle or the churchyard is corrected with convincing arguments, namely, that the idea is based on a wrong interpretation of the so-called 'rules of Wstinc' of 1342. It is an authoritative article with many new insights.

The general idea of 'rich stinkers', meaning that only rich and influential people were buried inside a church building, is greatly nuanced in the next study. It is based on an investigation of the registers of grave owners in the Old Church of Delft and on other archival material on the social status and wealth of the citizens of the town. With the exception of the 20% poor people of the town, all citizens with a certain wealth could opt for an intramural grave. Even the hierarchy in location inside the church was more determined by availability of place than by status.

The article on the convent of Saint-Agnes in Amersfoort gives a detailed insight in how the churchyard was used. After a new church was built at the beginning of the sixteenth century, all graves were transported towards a special graveyard. The preserved *Memorial*, in which all this is

found, also informs us of how this graveyard, most strikingly, was used as a place of spiritual pilgrimage (in the mind to Jerusalem or Rome) by the inhabitants of the convent.

The last article deals in detail with 33 armorial slabs found in the three churches of the polder of Het Bildt in the province of Friesland. The heraldry makes clear how engineers from the region around Dordrecht in Holland came diking in this special area in faraway Friesland, how they settled there, and, in the end, intermingled with Frisian people. The armorial bearings show that initially there existed a 'farmers' republic', but that gradually the Frisian nobility took over.

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