Confraternitas

Cite this review

orthodox but it was not unorthodox either. These hybrid practices formed a unique type of religiosity, which Dierksmeier calls "Nahua Christianity," that was specific to the region. Dierksmeier's study is thus a very valuable contribution to scholarship on Latin America, colonial, and indigenous histories.

Nilab Ferozan
McMaster University

Folkerts, Suzan (ed.) *Religious Connectivity in Urban Communities (1400–1550). Reading, Worshipping, and Connecting through the Continuum of Sacred and Secular.* Turnhout: Brepols, 2021. Pp. 285 + 14 ill., 5 tables. ISBN 978-2-503-59081-3 (hardcover) €80.

Developed from a 2015 conference at the University of Groningen, convened to explore religious connectivity during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Suzan Folkerts' edited volume seeks to examine how the titular concept evolved and operated in late medieval municipalities and how "producers and consumers" (12) of religious material objects and rites were socially and professionally interrelated.

The introductory chapter, penned by the editor, explains that the present perception of connectivity extends beyond the technological dictionary definition of the word and is more concerned with the "mechanisms" (15) of the subject area being investigated, rather than its theory. Accordingly, the essays that make up this edited collection employ connectivity "as a methodological tool to analyse and describe human relations and human communications" (16) within the complicated organism that was the medieval world. Furthermore, this methodological approach is relatively free from disciplinary boundaries. For instance, the cultural, literary and social historians who contributed to this book were given the same procedural remit as the archaeologist and the confraternity scholars: to demonstrate "cultures of shared piety and interactions between people, texts and religious practices" (17) by investigating the networks, energy, and impetuses that drove the complicated wheels and gears that powered medieval urban society. Similarly, the artificial boundaries between the sacred and the secular worlds are abandoned and viewed, not as separate entities, but as a "continuum" (12) that encouraged intricate community interrelations to flourish.

Refreshingly, the organisation of the volume also reflects the lack of disciplinary and conceptual boundaries as, between the traditional introductory chapters and the two indexes denoting the end of the volume, the ten essays that form the main research corpus of the book are

visibly unrestricted by formal sectioning according to topic. This does not however mean that the essays are not grouped together by theme. The first three take the form of "case studies on lay citizens embracing religious morals and practices" (18) and the second trio concentrate on the interchanges between lay religious and ordained people. A further three articles explore connectivity in relation to print culture and the final essay, composed by the editor, investigates the various intersections between the people of Deventer, religious understanding and devotional literature. Furthermore, while the geographical parameters of the volume are mainly circumscribed to take in the Low Countries, there are two articles that fall outside of this boundary: one concentrating on the Italian peninsula, the other on a Scottish borough.

While a few of the essays will be of immediate interest to confraternity scholars, the overarching theme of the volume, with its almost organic approach to religious connectivity, will perhaps resonate with those who specialise in aspects of piety, charity, or ritual kinship and who are familiar with similar sodality-based edited collections, produced in order to question the authenticity of various human-imposed margins: Konrad Eisenbichler's *Crossing the Boundaries: Christian Piety and the Arts in Italian Medieval and Renaissance Confraternities* (Medieval Institute Publications: Kalamazoo, 1991), being amongst the most notable examples.

Returning to the book under review, the first article, entitled "Urban Society and Lay Religious Communities: Notes on Confraternities in Italian Communes and Signories," is presented by Marina Gazzini. Effectively, deftly and without becoming lost in "the complexity of the world of […] confraternities," (23) Gazzini presents an overview of the range of lay associations that were open to individuals in medieval Italy and explains how these sodalities were formed and developed. The author also employs her breadth of knowledge to assess confraternal operations (how they were organised internally, their charitable and festive aspects and their critical role as emissaries of communal redemption) in relation to their impact on civic life and public spaces. She concludes that "as much as [confraternities] fitted themselves to designs modelled on religious and ecclesiastical authorities," (35) these lay institutions directly coached and influenced the conduct of all, thereby transcending any artificially constructed boundaries and effecting the collective bearing of society in general.

Moving the discussion from Italy to the Low Countries, Cora Zwart's essay on "Religion as a Connecting Force in the Late Medieval City of Utrecht" investigates how the practical and personal choices that an individual makes can be viewed as cohesive acts: performances or undertakings that ensure lasting interrelations between not only the sacred and the secular, but also amongst the living and the dead. Using a case study on Dirck Borre van Amerongen, Zwart clearly and convincingly illustrates

how this lesser-patrician (by employing words, deeds, and purse) main-
tained cohesion between his familial sphere and the many and various
civic, social, and spiritual circles that intersected with his existence like a
complicated Venn diagram.

Cutting across the spiritual and temporal boundary is likewise the
subject of the next article, Megan Edward Alvarez's "Fleshers, Saints and
Bones: Connectivities that Transcend the Sacred-Secular Divide within
the Medieval Scottish Burgh of Perth." Sticking firmly to the volume's re-
mit of "analytical holism," (75) Alvarez's compelling investigation employs
a "combination of archaeology, documentary research, and material cul-
ture analysis" (75) to show how the confraternal operations of the Fleshers'
Guild and the practical skills involved in butchery and the sale of animal
flesh products had "visceral connections" (87) to the drudgery of everyday
life and simultaneously encouraged associations with the afterlife; these
influences surviving the Reformation and evolving beyond it.

Returning to the Low Countries, Johanneke Uphoff's essay on "Dit
boec heft gegeven: Book Donation as an Indicator of a Shared Culture of
Devotion in the Late Medieval Low Countries" aims to demonstrate how
useful the "reconstruction of the practice of book donation" (99) is to the
subject of religious connectivity. Uphoff validates this opening statement
by establishing that book donation was a common, non "gender exclusive"
(100) practice during this period. Simultaneously, she carefully illustrates
(by way of a case study of the manuscript Leiden, UB, LTK 318) that the
written word, when bound in volume and disseminated, acts simultane-
ously as a "social tool," (100) an instrument to encourage "co-operative
piety" (100) and a material object capable of "bridging the worlds of [its]
multiple users" (117)—whether they be lay religious or ordained.

An-Katrien Hanselaer also looks at print culture. In an essay en-
titled, "Recycled Piety or a Self-made Community: The Late Medieval
Manuscripts of the Tertiaries of Sint-Catharinadal in Hasselt," she explores
those who chose the "middle way between the monastic and the secular
worlds." (125) By charting and examining the origins and the content of
the extant texts of the Sisters of Hasselt, Hanselaer is able to establish and
illustrate the mindful selection of manuscripts being made by the order,
which helped to "shape [the sisters'] spiritual and devotional identity."
(144) Furthermore, through comparative analyses of these documents, she
is able to better contextualise this sisterhood's origins as a lay community
and illustrate their connections to wider society, via the literary works that
they chose to adopt and consume.

Musical scores, too, have their place within this section on litera-
ture. Cécile de Morrée's "The Re-Use of Melodies as an Indication of the
Connection of Religious Song to the Urban Environment" explores how
Middle Dutch religious songs created a continuous and varied "dialogue

between the sacred and the secular." (159) Employing the Dutch Song Database and concentrating on three printed songbooks, Morrée's self-proclaimed "tentative survey" (159) explores how melody was transmitted throughout the soundscape of the Low Countries during the Middle Ages. Ultimately, the author determines that the earthly motifs that permeated religious songs, left a hesitant "footprint of the late medieval sonic city," (179) resulting in a spiritual song culture that operated independently of secular society, yet was inextricably associated with it.

Moving from the possession, reception, and consumption of literature, the three penultimate essays concentrate on aspects surrounding the production of printed works. The first of these is Delphine Mercuzot's "Caxton's Press and Pilgrimages: Shaping Groups of Travellers into a New Community of Interpretation?" By way of a study that examines Caxton's production of printed indulgences and his "small book" (197) concerning the life of St Winifred, Mercuzot argues that the business interactions between publisher, commissioner, purchaser, and user worked to consolidate relations between the laity and religious institutions. The author further contends (and credibly advocates) that the dissemination of spiritual knowledge and the reception of religious printed literature was not a "top down" process, but rather a series of multi-directional dynamisms (institutional and individual, lay and ordained) that all effected the conveyance of information.

The second essay in this ternary moves the discussion from one type of text to another: from the written word to the emblematic. Focussing the discussion on various continental European editions of *Figures of the Bible*, Elsa Kammerer's essay, "How *Figures of the Bible* Connected Printers, Artist, and Friends," discusses how "commercial networks," (215) creative associations between individuals and contemporaneous notions of philosophy and artistic aestheticism (not to be confused with the nineteenth-century "arts for art's sake" theory) linked those who produced the books and those who consumed them, all the while respecting the "continuum between the sacred and the profane." (223) Kammerer also includes an intriguing section that discusses *Figures of the Bible* as *libri amicorum*: volumes that traditionally contained emblems, allegories, armorial designs, poems, and quotations (religious and profane) that related to the owner's friends, the pages of which could then be autographed by the said associates. And although this short section is exploratory in nature, it brings future research avenues to the reader's attention and allows the author to plausibly conclude the following: that the *Figures of the Bible* genre, because of the size of the extant corpus and the various uses that the books were put to, provides a rich field of enquiry where "all possible cases of mutual opposition, cohabitation and porosity between the sacred and the secular can be observed." (234)

The final offering in the category of print culture is Maria José Vega's "The Coalman and the Devil," a cautionary "theological fiction" (240) that was told and re-told throughout Early Modern Europe by various authors: lay and ordained. Accordingly, Vega explores the origins of the tale and separates the various versions into "canonical" and "developed" texts (240). Examining first the Catholic versions of the story and then the Protestant accounts, the author is able to roughly measure the levels of connectivity or separation between religious culture and the lay community that the re-telling of this tale encouraged. Moreover, Vega concludes (perhaps prematurely, as the statement appears within the essay's introduction), that this "constantly reconstructed" tale and "its very proliferation […] defines a verbal space" (240) in which religious connectivity and other similar and divergent interactions may be discussed.

The main research corpus of this volume concludes with the editor's contribution, "People, Passion, and Prayer: Religious Connectivity in the Hanseatic City of Deventer." This study focusses on the dissemination of Bible translations in the Netherlandish city of Deventer and places this municipality in its wider topographical and historical context. It aims to show how the people of the city "established religious connectivity by producing, exchanging and reading the New Testament and other religious books." (263) The author first explains the public nature of book reading in the Low Countries and follows this with a short section on book purchasers. Folkerts then identifies and contextualises some of the extant Middle Dutch manuscripts that would have been available to religious and lay people during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The analysis proper then brings together evidence gleaned from the exploration of various relationships between Deventer printers and ordained individuals, with tales of book donations that breached convent walls. The conclusion of this article not only acts as a satisfactory and logical closure to the discussion proffered by Folkerts, but also works to underscore the methodological remit of the articles that preceded it and emphasises the apparently borderless organisation of this volume. As a final note, Folkerts questions whether margins between the sacred and secular did in fact exist and reiterates the notion with which she introduced this edited volume: that the religious aspects of life (experienced by urban communities between 1400 and 1550) were omnipresent, "all-encompassing" (274) and the resulting communal interrelations between the ordained and non-ordained, the hallowed and the profane, were "established by processes of religious connectivity." (274)

Given that this edited volume spans several academic disciplines and touches on various subgenres therein, Folkerts has successfully established and preserved the focus of the book's titular concept throughout by selecting the contributors whose articles were sure to underwrite to the book's objectives. And while some papers endorse the collection's aims more than

others, each contribution presents material or notions that will prove useful to scholars and students who are participating in, or looking to embark upon, qualitative investigations of an holistic nature.

Samantha J.C. Hughes-Johnson
Stoke-on-Trent, UK

Frank, Thomas. *Religione, diritto, economia in confraternite e ospedali medievali*. Trans. Simona Clodiani and Giovanna Targia. Pavia: Pavia University Press, 2019. Pp. xvi, 287. ISBN 978-88-6952-099-0 (paperback) €30.

This volume is, in many ways, a *summa* of Thomas Frank's several decades of research on late medieval Italian and German confraternities. It brings together ten of his previously published articles (most of them originally in German) and re-presents them for an English (articles 1 and 10) or Italian (articles 2–9) reading public. Given the extensive growth of scholarship on confraternities over the last three decades, Frank has slightly revised his articles, updated the bibliography, and taken into consideration both his many conversations with colleagues in the field and the new questions that scholarship on confraternities has raised. Not surprisingly, one of these questions is the relationship between the religious and secular sphere in the world of late medieval confraternities; no longer a clear-cut separation, especially when one looks at the work carried out by confraternities in the health-care system of the time (the managing of hospitals in particular), or when one looks at clerical confraternities (which, the author suggests perhaps teasingly, could be seen as "guilds").

 The various chapters are arranged into three general sections: confraternities (chs. 1–4), associations of clerics (chs. 5–6), and hospitals (chs. 6–10). The first chapter on the construction of *memoria* in confraternities (pp. 3–20)—originally published in this journal in 2006—starts off with a look at how confraternities themselves created *memoria*, and then moves on to examine how this construction lined up with the legal world of statutes, regulations, and canonists' opinions. The main case study in this chapter is centred on the city of Assisi. The chapter ends with some considerations on the impact of these legal considerations on our modern understanding of confraternities. The second chapter (pp. 21–45) looks at the material aid confraternities offered to members and non-members by way of alms or hospital care. The four case studies in this chapter come from Cologne, Strasbourg, Viterbo, and Lodi. The third chapter (pp. 47–63) looks at how the statutes of German and Italian confraternities related to their own institutions and the legal world beyond. It groups statutes into