

memory. Some may also have had recourse to short or fragmentary manuscripts containing collections of tunes with small ranges, written in simplified notation.

Taylor's contribution, chapters 11–13, undertakes the equally difficult task of relating the surviving written narratives of the late Middle Ages to what we can know about their means of transmission. As with Rastall's work, Taylor foregrounds his sources, acknowledging their limitations and carefully drawing tentative conclusions about the role of recitation from memory, limited improvisation, reading aloud, and private reading in the transmission of medieval literature to its audiences. These chapters expand the book's geographical range and timeframe, looking beyond the "late medieval England" of the title to works in Old English and Occitan.

Rastall's collaboration with Taylor suggests a possible solution to a long-standing mystery: why do medieval fictions so frequently mention storytellers called *gestours*, *rymours*, or *disours*, when the account books mention them so seldom? In regard to royal minstrels, Taylor notes that the vast majority played an instrument, whatever else they might have done, and "a minstrel's favoured instrument provided the most convenient designation for the book-keepers ... Any one of the minstrels identified as a still musician could well have included storytelling or chanting or singing in his repertory" (293–94). Harpers are well represented in records of minstrelsy, and they in particular were likely to have played their instruments as accompaniment to singing, chanting, and speaking. Although in the twentieth century a strong reaction against romantic fantasies about wandering merry minstrels led to a deep skepticism about the circulation of versions of the surviving texts in any medium but writing, Taylor's "very tentative conclusions" suggest that performance by "professionals of various kinds played a significant role" in the transmission of certain types of chivalric works (311). His sensible suggestion is that we need not think of written texts as supplanting orally delivered narrative entertainments in the later Middle Ages; different forms of transmission can co-exist, as they do today.

Record by record, *Minstrels and Minstrelsy* extends our knowledge of the pay, travels, and duties of these medieval entertainers. Rastall frequently points out where more research is needed and occasionally offers advice on how it might be conducted. With its larger scale and more theoretical bent, Taylor's contribution contrasts with the detailed archival approach of most of the rest of the book, but its emphasis on the limits and relative merits of the available sources harmonizes with Rastall's presentation. Informative chapter titles and subheads lead the reader through a study that often relies on minute particulars, and its many tables present detailed information in accessible format. Boydell & Brewer deserves mention for persisting in the reader-friendly practice of placing notes at the bottom of the page.

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Nicole R. Rice. *The Medieval Hospital: Literary Culture and Community in England, 1350–1550*

ReFormations: Medieval and Early Modern. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2023. Pp. 391. \$95.00 (cloth).

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This book explores how it may be possible to "recover" a literary community from the manuscripts compiled and owned by certain clerics within an institutional setting during

the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Drawing on the work of Mary Erler, in particular, for St Mark's hospital in Bristol, and to a lesser extent for St Bartholomew's hospital in Smithfield (London), as well as the ideas of Caroline Barron, Kathryn Kerby-Fulton, and Euan Roger, Nicole Rice offers readers her in-depth analysis of the texts linked to several priests, scribes, and book collectors who worked or resided in the precincts of these two hospitals. In addition to these two case studies, she assesses the association between St Leonard's hospital in York and the *Purification* pageant in its earliest known form during the first decades of the fifteenth century, and how this link and the later pageant text may offer ideas about how the hospital sought to position itself as a place of female devotion that was also pertinent to the social life of the city more broadly.

St Leonard's hospital, founded in the eleventh century, is the first and shortest of Rice's case studies. Thereafter, she moves to London and St Bartholomew's priory and hospital, which offer some very interesting texts and compilers. It is these texts and their compilers that supply the skeletal framework as she provides detailed readings of, for example, *The Book of the Foundation of St Bartholomew's Church* in conjunction with *The Smithfield Decretals*, and the slightly later works attributed to John Mirfield, who seemingly resided there in the later fourteenth century. By exploring the extant copies of his *Florarium Bartholomei* and *Breviarium Bartholomei* alongside *The Book of the Foundation*, Rice postulates how his *Breviarium*, as a book on bodily health, offered those in authority at the hospital a regime whereby it was right and proper to aid pregnant and postpartum poor women, whereas such "women's sexualized bodies [were viewed] as dangerous to the priory's ethos" (99).

Keeping with St Bartholomew's, Rice continues her close-reading approach to investigate the community of elite Londoners who had come to reside within the hospital's precincts in the fifteenth century. Using John Shirley's final anthology (Bodleian MS Ashmole 59) as her route in, she argues that the purpose behind this compilation by the well-known London bibliophile was to offer moral guidance to his fellow residents—men, women, and children, thereby informing and influencing this "literary community" (101). Rice builds her argument carefully by comparing Shirley's source texts, such as works by Lydgate and Scogan on virtue and avoidance of vices, as she sees him seeking to shape the moral and spiritual lives of his neighbors.

Taking this sense for the potential of a highly varied readership within the hospital's precincts and "the permeability of their institutions as lay-clerical spaces" (143), Rice draws on the works of two Augustinian brothers at St Mark's in Bristol, as well as one of their counterparts at Smithfield. Again, she adopts a close-reading method of these Latin and Middle English compilations and suggests that through a variety of approaches these texts could offer instruction on how to live a contemplative lifestyle without necessarily joining a monastery, and instead remaining in lay society. For the readers and literary culture envisaged by Rice, the hospital offered a good space, yet others have noted that such an understanding and desire to live a Mixed Life was also viewed by late medieval contemporaries as applicable within the parish and household.

Being part of the ReFormations series, her last chapters are important as she assesses the impact of the mid-sixteenth-century religious changes on her three hospitals in the light of earlier Tudor poetic commentaries on the value or otherwise of the hospital. Drawing on even earlier Lollard criticism, as well as Copland's *Hye Way* and Fish's *Supplication*, she concludes that even though some writers (and presumably readers) were critical, for others the hospital remained valuable, even if flawed. Thus, in the more difficult social and economic conditions, as well as a time that would see the disappearance of the belief in purgatory, the hospital was still viewed as a potentially useful charitable institution. Not, of course, that all survived, and Rice considers a number of textual sources to examine the differing fates of her three hospitals. As she discusses, St Leonard's was the least successful and practically disappeared, being unable to muster civic support in York when its rich holdings attracted royal attention. In contrast, although lost as a hospital, St Mark's in Bristol was repurposed


as a civic chapel, allowing one of the hospital's brothers to retain a living as curate there. He ministered to some within the old hospital's neighborhood, and, as Rice concludes from the limited textual evidence, seemingly continued to hold to the "old ways" (275) until at least the early years of Edward VI. Yet in terms of continuity, it was St Bartholomew's that was the most successful, as Rice charts using a combination of texts in the form of letters, petitions, and agreements between Londoners and Henry VIII. Her detailed discussion of these sources demonstrates how the authorities viewed their new hospital's value as a place of "worship, charity, and medical care" (275).

Thus, through her detailed reading of a wide variety of textual sources, Rice offers a fascinating assessment of her three hospitals that will be of considerable interest to those working on book culture and reading practices in late medieval and Tudor society.

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Mark Stoye. *A Murderous Midsummer: The Western Rising of 1549*

New Haven: Yale University Press, 2022. Pp. 384. \$60.00 (cloth).

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Historians, despite our best efforts, often fall victim to teleology. Knowing the outcome of an event leads to the temptation to see not just the roots of its success or its failure long before any of the participants would, but also a kind of conclusive inevitability. It is a rare book that can take a familiar incident and make it seem both urgent and uncertain in outcome. Mark Stoye's intricately researched *A Murderous Midsummer* accomplishes this to brilliant effect. Here, the event is the Western Uprising of 1549, otherwise known as the Prayer Book Rebellion or, to its contemporaries, the "commocion time" of the restless summer when it seemed as if all of southern England was on the verge of mutiny. Though historians have often studied these events, *A Murderous Midsummer* manages to hold the reader in suspense, moving with astonishing detail through the week-by-week, even day-by-day, story of this rebellion. While explained clearly enough for the nonspecialist reader, its conclusions make important interventions in our understanding of the mid-Tudor polity. Throughout the book, the overwhelming impression is just how close English history came to taking a very different tack.

A Murderous Midsummer begins with an overview of the South West, and the context provided sets up the events to come in an evocative, pacey fashion. The book really hits its stride, however, in part two, which in four chapters takes us through the events of June, July, and August 1549, when thousands of rebels (a contentious term, Stoye argues) began to move against the centralizing, reformist policies of Edward VI's government, as led by the duke of Somerset. Stoye argues that the resistance in the West was based on twinned anger at English cultural imperialism and evangelical Protestant reformation. He claims this uprising was thus unlike the uprisings in the East, most notably Kett's Rebellion, insofar as it was not "primarily a social conflict" (294). The interconnection of these disruptions waits until Part III, where Stoye moves to the gruesome fates of the failed