means of low-level resistance. Historians mostly ignore these less violent conflicts, because the more spectacular events in urban history are more plentifully attested in the sources. Lantschner's careful analysis of daily conflicts should, however, encourage scholars to focus on the varied nature of conflict because it can tell us more about the political reality of citizens than their violent tribulations do. In addition, Lantschner's laudable methodology to compare the history of cities on a fundamental basis will hopefully stimulate urban historians to contrast the history of cities more than they do today. In addition, the stimulating conclusion of the book, comparing coeval conflict in the Middle East, Europe and Japan, seems a fruitful incentive for further research.

Two critical remarks can be made. First, Lantschner explains the scarcity of revolt in the city of Lille by, among other reasons, the fact that it was governed by the 'more streamlined state' of Burgundy (p. 92). It is true that the opportunities for office-holding or manipulating judicial channels offered alternative routes to address discontent in this city, though the same can be said of other cities in the county of Flanders which were ruled by the duke of Burgundy. Also, in Ghent and Bruges, governmental institutions were available to citizens, and yet frequent revolts broke out in these cities. So it would seem that the strength of associational life and the political autonomy of the craft guilds are even more crucial to the concentration of urban conflict than Lantschner gave them credit for. Second, such differences demonstrate that the author has avoided a discussion. While clearly showing that the local context is crucial to explain the different patterns of conflict, he fails to examine why precisely the local context varied so much. An in-depth investigation of the origins of the three above-mentioned political systems obviously lay outside the scope of the book, but there can be no doubt that the reasons for their existence are to be found in their twelfth- and thirteenth-century history. We can therefore only hope that Lantschner's analysis will provoke other historians to study the 'earlier' political development of cities in particular and urban history in general from a similar comparative perspective.

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Amy Appleford, *Learning to Die in London, 1380–1540*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015. 320pp. Bibliography. £42.50 hbk and Ebook.
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Amy Appleford's *Learning to Die in London, 1380–1540* is a valuable contribution to our understanding of lay devotional culture on the eve of the Reformation and further demonstrates the prominence of religious literature in the spiritual lives of literate lay Londoners. Indeed, the current strength of revisionist ideas in literary scholarship is starting to realize what Norman Tanner once described as a 'left-wing orthodoxy' in the pre-Reformation church. The fifteenth century was a period in which the spiritual ambition of lay readers was satisfied by an increasingly diverse and sophisticated range of vernacular religious writings, many of which blurred the lines between clerical and secular practice and authority. Recent scholarship includes Vincent Gillespie and Kantik Ghosh's co-edited *After*

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Arundel, which would make an ideal companion to Appleford's study. *Learning to Die in London*, therefore, is a timely book that draws our attention to a neglected tradition of religious writing. Vernacular writings on the 'art of dying', argues Appleford, were central to the formation of spiritual trends in the city and, in turn, the manner in which London was governed.

Chapter 1 lays the necessary groundwork for Appleford's study. A close textual reading of the deathbed manual, *The Visitation of the Sick* (*c*. 1380), demonstrates how the personal experience of dying might be thought of as an opportunity for instruction and governance. The deathbed becomes a site in which the guidance of others may be most fully realized by those in positions of authority. Chapter 2, the longest and richest of Appleford's work, will be of greatest interest to readers of *Urban History* as it weaves a complex picture of the foundation of the Whittington Almshouse, the furnishing of the Guildhall Library and the sponsorship of the *Daunce of Poulys*. These were civic projects prompted by an awareness of personal mortality and the desire to educate future generations of Londoners who would continue to populate and govern the city. The pious motives of Richard Whittington (d. 1423), four times London mayor, and John Carpenter (d. 1442), common clerk, are not tangential to our understanding of how London was governed in this period but, as Appleford argues, essential. The lessons depicted in Whittington's deathbed scene in the *Ordinances for Whittington's Almshouse* are writ large in the very fabric of the city. Chapters 3 and 4 examine lay appropriation of ascetic spiritual traditions. They begin with a survey of the contents of MS Douce 322, commissioned by William Baron (teller to the Exchequer from *c*. 1445 to *c*. 1469), before examining the manner in which asceticism shaped the discourse of death in Hoccleve's *Series.* Finally, chapter 4 offers a survey of the fifteenth-century *ars moriendi*. Appleford argues that Baron's pious reading and Hoccleve's poetry promoted a culture of interiorization in which the soul was to be 'less reliant on the potentially mechanistic economy of purgatorial prayers' (p. 136). The notion that the spirituality of literate Londoners was insulating them from traditional channels of commemorative culture is fascinating but spiritual sophistication and 'parish piety' (as Appleford describes community-dependent purgatorial-oriented spirituality) were not mutually exclusive. Baron sought burial in the London charterhouse as other patrons sought to have their names above the doors of individual cells, not only because he shared a spiritual affinity with the Carthusians but because, as others have demonstrated with the example of the London Grey Friars, the piety and respectability of full-time religious made them an attractive proposition for those seeking commemorative prayer. Baron's spirituality was not necessarily of a 'different order' (p. 108) from his fellow Londoners. It might instead be seen as a new form of personal devotion intended to complement his wider commemorative strategies. Chapter 5 looks ahead to the 1530s and reimagines the public nature of death, no longer in the deathbed, but at the hands of the king.

This is a book that is going to have a broad appeal and that deserves to attract a diverse readership. It is also a dense and intricately wrought piece of literary analysis dealing with a number of unfamiliar texts. The introduction might have done more to frame Appleford's discourse of textual authority and spiritual instruction for those readers simply looking to further their knowledge of civic culture in late medieval London. There are also some omissions which may have furthered the discussion more effectively than the later materials examined in chapter 5. William Caxton translated and printed the *Book of Good Maners* (1487),

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for instance, at the request of a fellow mercer, William Pratt. The *Book of Good Maners* contains discourse on household governance and preparation for death and was evidently circulating in French and English among the sorts of men who dominate Appleford's work. Nevertheless, this is a fascinating study of pious motive and civic obligation written with flair and enthusiasm. Appleford demonstrates that in late medieval London the urban elites did not simply learn how to die, they learned how to govern.

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Marco Mostert and Anna Adamska (eds.), *Writing and the Administration of Medieval Towns: Medieval Urban Literacy I*. Turnhout: Brepols, 2014. xvi + 366pp. 26 illustrations. €90.00 hbk.
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Since Michael Clanchy published *From Memory to Written Record* more than three decades ago, medieval literacy has been a burgeoning field. Based on a workshop, as well as a series of panels and roundtables at the International Medieval Congress from 2007 to 2009, *Writing and the Administration of Medieval Towns* (and its companion volume, *Uses of the Written Word in Medieval Towns: Medieval Urban Literacy II*) presents 16 chapters focused on the development of literacy within urban institutions. For the editors, Marco Mostert and Anna Adamska, this is familiar terrain. But whereas their previous contributions have focused on central and eastern Europe, *Writing and the Administration of Medieval Towns* is marked by a pronounced pan-European focus. Contributions range from the Swedish town of Sigtuna in the north to the Spanish city of Castile in the south, and from the Low Countries in the west to Transylvania in the east. The editors indicate that this constituted a deliberate choice to move beyond the most urbanized parts of late medieval Europe, and instead to look at the peripheries and the development of their urban cultures. This broad geographic spectrum is one of the volume's strengths since it permits pan-European comparisons.

The first, and longest, section, with seven chapters, focuses principally on the origins of administrative literacy. Many contributions, such as Inger Larsson on Sweden, Geertrui Van Synghel and Jeroen Benders on the Low Countries and Hannes Obermair on South Tyrol, chronicle the origins of written records, and detail when towns first got charters and legal codes, or when city councils started to produce written documents such as town books (*Stadtbücher*). As Katalin Szende notes in her chapter on medieval Hungary, the introduction of charters and other written documents is important historically because they introduced literate thinking into a 'pre-literate' context (p. 125), thereby bringing about significant social, political and cultural changes. Record survival is a central issue for such research, and here, as both Szende and Agnieszka Bartoszewicz note, there is a source bias since the vast majority of what survives are legal or financial documents.

The second section shifts to urban chanceries, and how records were kept, and who had access to them. For example, Andreas Litschel notes the growing legal importance of written proofs in medieval Lüneburg, where the council increasingly became a record-keeper for the town. This transformation was in part a response

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