Carole Hill, *Women and Religion in Late Medieval Norwich*. Woodbridge: Boydell, 2017. xiii + 204pp. 20 illustrations. 3 appendices. Bibliography. £50.00 hbk; £19.99 pbk.
doi:10.1017/S0963926819000051

Women and Religion in Late Medieval Norwich explores the pious practices of women from the city's mercantile elite with a particular focus on incarnational piety. The book is divided into five main sections, the first four dealing with the cults of St Anne, St Margaret of Antioch, St Mary Magdalene and St Bridget of Sweden, and the last looking at how the women of Norwich engaged with the seven corporal acts of mercy. This offers the reader an insight into both the individual experiences of some of Norwich's women and broader themes of popular piety in the region. While many of the subjects explored in the book are well known, Norwich provides an interesting case-study given its location and close trading links with Germany and the Low Countries, which allowed for the city to act as 'a conduit for ideas and innovations'. Hill argues that this is what enabled Norwich to become 'cutting edge' in piety, particularly among women (p. 6).

The study relies quite heavily on testamentary evidence, but Hill adds to this by drawing on other well-known East Anglian sources including the works of Margery Kempe, Julian of Norwich, Osbern of Bokenham, the *N-town Play*, the Digby plays and the Paston letters. Hill also examines surviving physical evidence of these saints' cults found in parish churches, hospitals and chapels, with particular attention being given to images and dedications. The material evidence for the cults of St Anne, St Margaret of Antioch and St Mary Magdalene in Norwich and Norfolk are also listed in the three appendices Hill provides, while 20 colour images bring to life some of the examples discussed.

The cult of St Anne is given the most attention in the book and is the first saint Hill examines. As a thrice married merchant's wife, Anne appealed to the women of the mercantile classes for obvious reasons. In Norwich, it was not uncommon for women to be married three, four or five times and so Anne's remarriages, fertility and pregnancy were all powerful elements of her popularity (p. 23). The other three female saints are also shown to be important exemplars of female piety: St Margaret of Antioch as the virgin protector of women during childbirth, Mary Magdalene as a symbol of reform and redemption and St Bridget of Sweden as a chaste widow. Hill highlights the variety in models of piety offered to the women of Norwich through these four saints and the impact that these cults had is clear through the number of guilds, chapels and side altars dedicated to them. Hill's research also suggests that the women of Norwich were more involved in carrying out the seven corporal acts of mercy than elsewhere. For example, in comparison to London, where fewer than a fifth of testators left bequests to hospitals, in Norwich this figure was closer to a third (p. 123).

The study certainly offers some interesting insights into trends in female piety and it is clear that Norwich's position as a centre for trade provided the right environment and material provisions to allow for types of piety which were of particular interest to women. Hill notes that this can clearly be seen in 'the revelatory spiritual autobiographies written by two Norfolk women both living in busy urban centres of industry and trade' (p. 167). What is not so clear, however, is how this compares more widely across England. Women's interest in incarnational

piety was not unique to Norwich, or East Anglia more generally, and it would have been useful for Hill to situate her work more broadly in the literature on women's piety in order to highlight the unique nature of Norwich in this period. *Women and Religion in Late Medieval Norwich* offers a useful and detailed addition for scholars examining women's relationships with the cults of certain female saints and incarnational piety. It also sheds light on the pious practices of women from the social strata below that of the nobility or gentry, looking at how these women sought to combine pragmatic concerns with spiritual benefits through bequests left in their wills and charitable deeds carried out during their lifetimes.

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John Hinks and **Catherine Armstrong** (eds.), *The English Urban Renaissance Revisited*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2018. ix + 239pp. £61.99 hbk.
doi:10.1017/S0963926819000063

It is a tribute to the longevity and continued relevance of Peter Borsay's *The English Urban Renaissance* that in 2014 a symposium at the Centre for Urban History, University of Leicester, celebrated the twenty-fifth anniversary of the publication of this seminal book. The volume under review continues that celebration. It comprises six of the symposium papers, including one by Borsay himself, together with an introduction incorporating both the opening remarks and issues raised in the concluding discussion. There are four further chapters broadening the discussion, both geographically and thematically. The overall effect is to demonstrate the continued relevance of Borsay's thesis and the applicability of the basic arguments regarding urban development to different regions and to different times.

A common criticism of edited volumes is that they lack a strong unifying theme. This is clearly not the case here, where the various essays serve to emphasize the range of issues covered by and in some cases omitted from the original book. The original book's key theme was the cultural revival of English provincial towns from the late seventeenth century based on a combination of economic and social forces. In a broad review of the book's antecedents and the debates following its publication, Borsay provides both a critical assessment of his own work and a historiography of the subject in the preceding and subsequent periods. Borsay highlights those areas identified as omissions by himself and his critics. These have subsequently formed areas of study in his own career and that of others. A number are the basis of the contributions to this volume.

Adrian Green considers the role of large town houses in reflecting the political and social standing of the pre-eminent families of particular towns and cities, focusing on north-east England. One of these cities, York, is also the subject of Ann-Marie Akehurst's study. Using a similar approach to that taken by Borsay in respect of Warwick, she characterizes York as a city transformed into England's northern social capital by its neo-classical architecture and literary emphasis on its Roman past. The city was consciously promoted as a tourist destination mirroring the nation's history. Akehurst reflects the debate stemming from Borsay's work