Without doubt, this book is an indispensable reference tool for scholars of medieval art, history, religion, literature, and liturgy. Its text and overall structure, however, are geared toward the nonacademic reader. Rosewell's prose is clear and purposeful throughout, but his rudimentary and mildly sentimental summaries of popular biblical texts and saints' lives are cumbersome at times. Moreover, Rosewell did not use footnotes, which impedes the academic reader from following up sources for further analysis. This is particularly problematic regarding medieval documents quoted or discussed in the text, such as wills and contracts, because the author did not include primary sources in the bibliography. These minor criticisms are not meant to detract from the overall value and quality of this impressive contribution to medieval studies. For the academic reader, this book highlights monuments too easily overlooked, and its unparalleled collection of photographs provides visual stimulus for new research. For the enthusiast, this book with its invaluable geographical index is a sophisticated guidebook for intensive church-crawling in England and Wales.

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Gendering Disgust in Medieval Religious Polemic. By **Alexandra Cuffel**. Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007. xviii + 430 pp. $45.00 paper.

In her conclusion to *Gendering Disgust in Medieval Religious Polemic*, Alexandra Cuffel asks her readers, "What do our bodies and our effluvia really mean to us that we should impose abstract connotations on them signifying both great power and great danger?" (244). With this question, Cuffel ponders the psychologically disturbing fact that Islamic, Jewish, and Christian medieval polemic equated the feminine with pollution and then, in turn, gendered the despised Other as feminine. Studying a wide array of sources that include chronicles, poetry, scripture, art, and medical tracts, Cuffel documents the embodiment of religious and sexual difference. *Gendering Disgust* provides copious evidence of the ways that this "polemic of filth" (7) separates the divine from the human by attributing human functions, such as defecating, urinating, menstruating, and eating, to an ungodlike nature. Through both her noteworthy ability to work with Ancient Greek, Latin, Hebrew, and Arabic texts and her skill for locating unsettlingly

divisive polemic, Cuffel's book in many ways has no peer. A necessary text for anyone interested in the subject of medieval Otherness because of the wealth of information amassed in one volume, Cuffel's *Gendering Disgust* can even be considered a type of reference text that provides a compendium of various sources featuring the "polemic of filth." *Gendering Disgust* unfolds in six chapters, which Cuffel divides into two parts; a concise introduction and thoughtful conclusion frame her book.

Part 1, bringing her readers to Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages, unfolds in two chapters that historicize the developing concerns about "rival religious communities" (6). Chapter 1, "The Stench of Humanity: Corporeality and the Divine in Late Antique Religious Thought," addresses concerns about the flesh, especially in regard to such freighted issues as Jesus' growth in Mary's womb, the soul's presence in the body, and the touch of women's menses. In the first chapter, Cuffel charts the ways that Muslim, Jewish, Christian, and Pagan polemic viewed women as the source of death, madness, and poison. This type of criticism against the feminine is eventually translated into prejudicial views against the opposing faith as a type of feminine or, more precisely, as symptoms of the ineffective, the unclean, and the impure. In chapter 2, "The Seeds of Rotten Fruit: Corporeal Disgust and Impurity as Late Antique and Early Medieval Religious Polemic," Cuffel directs us through this evolution as she documents the multiple performances of polemical language, which, for the majority voice, "confirm[s] the inferior, indeed, repugnant status of their opponents" but, for the minority voice, creates a site of "resistance" (48).

Having established the "beginnings" of divisive religious polemic, Cuffel turns our attention to the later life of this polemic in part 2: "Twelfth-Fourteenth Centuries: Intensification and Collision of Jewish-Christian-Muslim Polemic." The last four chapters, which comprise part 2, carefully consider the growing antipathy toward women as Other—a dangerous difference detectable through the presence of "decay, disease, bad smell, and even worms" (101). The first of the chapters in part 2, namely, "Twelfth- and Thirteenth-Century Contexts," serves at once as a bridge between the discussions of humanity and divinity in parts 1 and 2 and as an introduction to the presumed lack of reason and putative bestial characteristics, embodied by the religious Other. The fourth chapter, "Filthy Womb and Foul Believers: The Incarnation and Holy Spaces in the Jewish-Christian-Muslim Debate," closes the rhetorical gap between women and religious Others. Cuffel notes that the opposition between the masculine and the feminine will come to form an analogy between the spirit (as masculine) and matter (as feminine). So when Jews and Muslims are mocked, belittled, or otherwise rendered as signs of the polluted flesh, their behavior likens them to women.

Providing her readers with iconographic images outside and inside cathedrals in the fourth chapter or within the pages of *haggadot* in the sixth chapter, Cuffel nicely positions the language of scripture and medicine within illustrations of the symbolism that connects depictions of women to negative views of religious Others. The last two chapters, chapters 5 and 6, bring the subject of gendering and Otherness full circle by providing extensive documentary evidence of the extent to which the Islamic and Jewish faiths internalized the Otherness imposed upon them. Both chapter 5, "Impure, Sickly Bodies," and chapter 6, "Signs of the Beast: Animal Metaphors as Maledictions of Resistance and Oppression," expose how Islamic and Jewish polemic deployed the Othering strategies of Christian polemic "as a way of signaling Christians' dangerous and undesirable nature" (196).

Cuffel's *Gendering Disgust* offers a refreshing view of medieval religious polemic, and for this reason, Cuffel's book should not be limited to readers interested only in gender studies. Apropos to this point, the sixth chapter unpacks the animal symbolism in Berechiah ha-Naqdan's *Mishlei Shualim*, or Fox Fables, a topic little covered in criticism. Cuffel spends some time talking about Berachiah's subtle reversal of Christian polemic when his fables indicate that a proud animal, such as the lion, signals Jews and that a ridiculed animal, such as the ass, represents Christians. All medievalists should be familiar with this book: Cuffel carefully unpacks the many places where religious polemic diminishes the feminine, and she patiently records the dangerously divisive and deeply hostile rhetoric deployed to distance the religious Other from humanity. Whether Cuffel's readers recognize that there are problems in medieval religious polemic or whether her readers need to be convinced, her *Gendering Disgust* will provide more evidence for the converted and bring round the unbelievers.

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The Gift of Tongues: Women's Xenoglossia in the Later Middle Ages. By **Christine F. Cooper-Rompato**. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010. x + 217 pp. $75.00 cloth.

The instantaneous ability to communicate in a language one does not know is called *xenoglossia*. Christine F. Cooper-Rompato's volume provides the "first book-length study of medieval accounts of xenoglossia" from the twelfth