

government on the study of religion and note a renewed vigour and support for such studies after the democratic changes of the early 1990s.

In a work of this kind, the absence of an index is rather disappointing. The English translations are uneven and the book is not free from typographical errors. Nonetheless, this book is a reference volume of considerable usefulness to ethnologists of religion, not least for the thorough bibliographies and the exhaustive contact details of scholars and research centres. But it is also a snapshot of a discipline that is still relatively youthful. According to several contributors, popular religion is 'on the rise', in terms both of practice and academic study, in Eastern and Western Europe. But a common lament is the relatively weak presence of the discipline in universities and other institutions of higher education. For many of the countries treated, this book offers the first ever report in English on the state of ethnology of religion within their borders; and for some of them, it offers the first in any language. This book is the first volume in the publisher's series of Studies in Ethnology, but it is unlikely to be the last.

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Nixon, Virginia. *Mary's Mother: Saint Anne in Late Medieval Europe*. University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004. xiii, 216 pp., 36 illustrations. ISBN 0-271-02466-6

This book is a historical survey of the cult of Saint Anne in Northern Europe, specifically in Germany, from its beginnings in the early Middle Ages to its decline in the seventeenth century. Nixon focuses on the height of the cult in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

Nixon argues that the cult of Saint Anne had four major aspects: first, that it represented a means of controlling female lay piety; second, that it was an important economic resource for churches and related institutions; third, that it was a means of defining and discussing models of marriage; fourth, that was an important part of the German pietistic use of devotional images.

The book is of interest to scholars working on confraternities because these are among the church institutions that Nixon argues saw particular importance in Saint Anne. For example, Nixon discusses the way in which the Sponheim Benedictine abbot Johannes Trithemius and his circle founded confraternities through which to spread the cult of Saint Anne throughout the Rhineland and the Netherlands (28–31). She also traces the relationship between the Saint Anne confraternities and others, such as the Rosary and Seven Sorrows confraternities, from which she shows the Saint Anne confraternities borrowed structures and goals (67–69). In one section, Nixon addresses the way in which the cult was later used by Luther as an example of an abuse, and how Luther's claims differed from

the stated goals and practices of the Saint Anne confraternities he criticized (43–46).

Perhaps the most interesting part of Nixon's book is a brief study (85–98) of the Saint Anne confraternity at Augsburg and at Annaberg, which, she says, "offers a capsule version of the larger schema" that she traces. She shows that the Augsburg Carmelites introduced the Saint Anne cult into the city in the 1490s as a response to financial shortages, and that the resulting confraternity was, at least for a while, a successful fundraiser for the order. In Annaberg, the same pattern took place but with greater success; here, the cult and its confraternity's activities greatly enriched not only the local churches but also the town and its founder, Duke George of Saxony.

Nixon's study is illuminating as a study of the cult of sainthood, in its economic in addition to its social and salvific aspects.

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Wilson-Allen, Anne. *Convent Chronicles. Women Writing About Women and Reform in the Late Middle Ages*. University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004. xviii, 345 pp., 10 ill., 1 map. ISBN 0-271-02460-7 US.\$ 55.

As Ann Winston-Allen notes in the introduction, "Aside from a few mystical works composed by female visionaries, almost all primary texts used by modern scholars to study medieval women were recorded by men." (3) In her efforts to recover women's writings from this "literary-historical obscurity" which "has led to the mistaken assumption that they left no substantial written records about themselves," (1) she has provided a useful blueprint on how to undertake such a project. Indeed, a glance at the map provided in the introduction shows the remarkable amount, geographical diffusion, and great variety of nun's writings she has examined: sister books, annals, convent chronicles, foundation narratives, letters, poems, mystical works, and devotional texts. Thus, this study makes an excellent contribution to the growing evidence that women could and did participate in the historical enterprise.

Chapter 1 provides a useful synthesis of the environment of late-medieval nunneries in German and Dutch speaking lands for the non-specialist. Chapter 2 focuses on the convent foundation narratives which depict women as front and centre in various late-medieval religious currents focussing in particular on those associated with the fifteenth-century Observant reforms. Chapters 3 and 4 focus on nuns as proponents and detractors of these reforms and both contain lively first-hand accounts of women's responses to religious change and their creative strategies for influencing the events in which they believed themselves to have a