

notes, and index. The notes are quite extensive, and while they occur after the text (instead of as footnotes), the notes are handily labeled by page. The book has but one plate, an illustration of King Cnut and Queen Ælgyfu, which Klein analyzes to establish her topic in her introduction. Similar plates with similar analyses in other chapters would have been highly interesting and relevant, but, of course, appropriate illustrations may not have been extant or available. Despite its strengths, *Ruling Queens* may disappoint readers on two counts, however. Firstly, Klein confines historical Anglo-Saxon queens, such as Æthelflæd of Mercia, to passing references. Such figures may be beyond the scope of her study, which focuses on *literary* queens; however, both the title *Ruling Queens* and the promise to consider cultural and historical influences raise the expectation of longer discussions of historical figures. It was in fact surprising not to find a chapter on queens in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. Secondly, the very eclectic theoretical approach inevitably necessitates long discussions of other textual and historical issues: conversion, politics, heroics, peaceweaving, hagiography, counsel, and translation, to name a few. Klein even admits this problem in her final chapter (pp. 191-92). These discussions are, however, necessary to understanding Klein's analysis, and are not digressions so much as pathways to her conclusions.

M. Wendy Hennequin
Tennessee State University



**Katharina M. Wilson
and Nadia Margolis, eds.**
*Women in the Middle
Ages: An Encyclopedia.*
Greenwood Press, 2004. 2
vols. pp. xxxii + 510 (v. 1);
xviii + 486 (v.2), continuous
pagination; illus.

Reference books, by their nature, are not meant for cover-to-cover reading. They are consulted for basic information about a subject. Their designation as reference books implies that the information they contain is credible. It is unlikely that the people who turn to reference works read the editorial information that sets out the work's aims, criteria for the selection of the content, and arrangement of the material, but it is that material that provides a reviewer with a standard by which to measure how well the work meets its objectives.

The editors and contributors of *Women in the Middle Ages* have produced an excellent reference source in terms of both content and presentation. As Nadia Margolis' introduction clearly and concisely explains, *Women in the Middle Ages* is intended to situate the history of women in the European Middle Ages in a global context and to do so in terms that make the information both accessible to undergraduates and general readers and useful to upper-level students and faculty.

The tradeoff for providing this global contextualization and setting a

chronological frame extending from the second through the fifteenth centuries CE, as the editor points out, is the exclusion of topics that might have been included, but the structure of any reference work requires decisions about limits, inclusion, and exclusion.

Late antiquity, defined by the editors of *Late Antiquity: A Guide to the Postclassical World* (1999) as 250 CE to 800 CE, was the formative period for the development of Christianity which, as it became institutionalized in Catholicism, was the foundation of medieval European cultural identity. Many entries in *Women in the Middle Ages* demonstrate the importance of religion and religious institutions for medieval women.

Women in the Middle Ages includes entries for “Aztec Warrior Women,” “China, Women in,” and “Fatimid Egypt, Women in,” and for individuals such as Sei Shonagon, Murasaki Shikibu, Xue Tao, and these do provide some perspective on the European Middle Ages’ place in the global scheme of things. The intent of most of the 300 and some entries, both biographical and topical, is to convey women’s involvement in the entire range of medieval human activities, material, spiritual, and intellectual. The articles are substantial, a number of them several pages in length. The contributors’ directive was to present current scholarship in intelligible terms, and overall, they do. The articles often illustrate how scholars draw upon multiple sources of

information, material objects as well as textual. The list of contributors includes many of the scholars who are authoritative on the topics they cover.

One of the best features of *Women in the Middle Ages* is the generous allotment of space for the bibliographies that accompany the entries. A reference book, especially in an academic collection, should provide directions to more detailed sources of information on a subject. Most of the bibliographies include both primary and secondary sources. “Music, Women Composers and Musicians” has an extensive discography as well. If English translations of primary sources are available, they are cited in addition to the original. Editions and translations that are notable for supporting material are noted. The secondary sources are multilingual, which may frustrate English-only users, or, in some cases, those without Arabic, Old Norse, or Greek, but is in keeping with the editorial objective of serving advanced students and faculty.

Each volume includes an alphabetical list of entries and guide to related topics. The latter feature gives some examples of how entries could be related under such headings as “Artists, Craftswomen, and Scribes,” “Laws, Customs, Edicts, Oaths, Privileges/Prohibitions, and Rules,” “Mystics and Visionary Authors,” and “Rulers,” which is subdivided into Popes (Joan, of course), Empresses, Queens, and Noblewomen. Some entries can be found in multiple groups: as just one example, “Medea

in the Middle Ages” falls into the groups “Doctors, Healers, and Caregivers,” “Fairies, Magicians, and Witches,” “Literary Characters, Genres, Myths, and Themes,” and “Lovers and Beloveds.” There is a short “Select Bibliography” at the end of the second volume followed by a useful index and the list of contributors.

Women in the Middle Ages may not be as accessible as the editors wished to undergraduates and general readers. Though the entries I sampled are well written, and, in most cases, translations of titles and terminology have been provided, the general level of vocabulary and the background in cultural literacy needed to fully understand the information *Women in the Middle Ages* offers will be problematic for some. Even so, and in spite of the alphabetical arrangement dictated by the encyclopedia format, browsing *Women in the Middle Ages* leads to a cumulative picture of medieval women and their world(s) that is very different from our own but whose history is also ours and whose times shaped our present. *Women in the Middle Ages: An Encyclopedia* should be in any academic library.

Chris Africa
University of Iowa



Nicholas Watson and
Jacqueline Jenkins, ed.
*The Writings of Julian of
Norwich: A Vision Showed
to a Devout Woman and
A Revelation of Love.*
The Pennsylvania State
University Press, 2006.
pp. xii + 474.

This most recent edition of the writings of one of the most unique voices in medieval literature is certainly an ambitious undertaking, both for the editors and for its readers. Julian of Norwich’s story is familiar to most scholars of both medieval and women’s writings; a fourteenth-century ascetic, who has herself walled into an anchoritic cell attached to a church in Norwich, suffers from a painful, near-fatal illness during which she experiences ecstatic visions of Christ’s Passion. After meditating on the visions for twenty years, Julian set down her account and her interpretation of them in two texts, first a short account, then an expanded version. Very little is known about who Julian was; she exists almost exclusively within her texts.

Rather than merely translating Julian’s texts, particularly the longer, better known *A Revelation of Love* (entitled *Revelations of Divine Love* in previous publications), or even presenting an updated edition of the original Middle English, the Watson and Jenkins text presents the most complete edition of Julian’s