

thirteenth-century Helfta (quotations from Gertrude in the poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins, 77; allusions to Gertrude in Teresa of Avila, 111-112), there is a slight tendency to historical anachronism in the interpretation of Gertrude's spirituality. This is especially evident in Chapter 9, which compresses the intricate development of devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus into a well-established biblically-based tradition unfolding through the centuries in the Western Church. Finnegan's handling of early Christian material (for example, the discussion of Origen of Alexandria and his profile in Latin Christianity, 41) is not nearly as strong and insightful as her understanding of medieval theology. To pick a small nit: the name of Origen's English translator should be Rowan A. Greer, not Green (154, note 23).

These are very small complaints in the face of what this new edition has to offer: a thorough literary overview of the writings of Mechtilde and Gertrude. Should the new edition of Finnegan's book appear in paperback, it could be read together with Caroline Walker Bynum's essays on Helfta in Jesus as Mother, and the Cistercian Publications' translation of the writings of Gertrude the Great. This combination of books would make it at last possible to teach an in-depth course, or at least a section of a course, on the scholars and mystics of thirteenth-century Helfta.

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David Herlihy. "Opera muliebria": Women and Work in Medieval Europe. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1990.

AT FIRST GLANCE, Opera muliebria seems to be just the sort of textbook every teacher of medieval women's history has been waiting for. Short (just over 200 pages), reasonably priced, clearly organized, and embellished with just enough illustrations to revive a student's flagging attention, David Herlihy's latest (and, sadly, last) book is intended to provide a survey of women's work throughout the Western Middle Ages, covering every aspect of women's day-to-day labors from weaving and spinning, cooking and cleaning, to tavern-keeping and retailing, preaching and healing. For such a book to be written by one of the most eminent social historians of the day—and a pioneer in the field of women's history—seemed to give this book every promise of success. It is with great regret, therefore, that one must issue the warning caveat magistra: let the teacher beware! For despite all its excellent ingredients, Opera muliebria is a fundamentally flawed book that can be recommended as a teaching text only to the wary few willing to take the time to separate the wheat of new information and intriguing interpretation from the chaff of error and omission.

Opera muliebria is part of a series entitled "New Perspectives on European History." The series editor, Raymond Grew, introduces Herlihy's book with a statement of the intentions of the series. Among other objectives, books in the series are meant to provide modern syntheses that can be of use to student and teacher alike. "The modern synthesis," Grew writes, "must relate the latest findings to the relevant theories, [and] is also expected to address the scholarly debates from which central questions derive" (viii). One would expect, therefore, that Opera muliebria would situate itself squarely within, or at least alongside, the historiographical tradition of feminist analyses of women's work in the Middle Ages, which has recently produced such invaluable studies as those of Barbara Hanawalt, Maryanne Kowaleski, Judith Bennett, Martha Howell, and Herlihy's

own former collaborator, Christiane Klapisch-Zuber. Although these and many other fine studies are listed in Herlihy's bibliography, he has incorporated neither their factual findings nor their interpretive conclusions here. Instead, Herlihy offers up his own survey of women's work, taking as his central theme women's involvement in textile production from the *gynaecea* ("women's quarters") of late antiquity to the commercialized piece-work systems at the end of the Middle Ages. This work is intriguing and, to my knowledge, has never been surveyed before in such breadth. Herlihy gets into trouble, however, when he moves beyond this central focus on textiles into other aspects of women's work.

Relying on a cursory survey of secondary literature and his own, apparently random reading of hagiographical material, Herlihy pulls together a pastiche of anecdote and generalization. Discomfiting errors and questionable assertions work their way into the text, as do abstruse "reassessments" of certain contested historical problems. Naturally, one expects a few minor errors of detail in a work of synthesis which aims to cover more than a millenium of historical development, but Herlihy's effort often adds up to no more than the statement of banal verities at best and specious or ill-considered arguments at worst.

Readers familiar with Professor Herlihy's earlier work in statistical social history will turn to Chapter 6, a quantitative study of tax rolls for late thirteenth- and early fourteenth-century Paris, expecting that at least here Herlihy will take us onto firmer ground. Herlihy's many charts, graphs, and tables are indeed impressive, as is the fascinating array of female occupations that he documents. However, I had occasion to recheck Herlihy's work on one category of women workers—health-care providers, which is my own area of research—and found surprising errors in both his math and his interpretive categories. Herlihy refers indiscriminately to "lady doctors" when he actually means physicians, midwives, and other practitioners; he counts *nourrices* among health-care workers even though these are almost certainly wet-nurses with no specific medical duties; he refers to "guilds" of midwives in several French towns even though the source he cites for this information says nothing at all about such formal alliances of birth attendants. He counts thirteen female barbers in 1292 and 1313, which is correct for the earlier year but wrong for the later (there is only one in 1313). These are minor details in and of themselves, but they add up to a profound suspicion that this disappointing book was hastily and carelessly prepared. One can only hope that *Opera muliebria* will be quickly superseded by the kind of scholarly synthesis this field deserves.

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Bella Millet and Jocelyn Wogan-Browne. Medieval English Devotional Prose for Women: Selections from the Katherine Group and *Ancrene Wisse*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990. xliii + 219.

Katherina M. Wilson and Elizabeth M. Makowski. Wykked Wyves and the Woes of Marriage: Misogamous Literature from Juvenal to Chaucer. Albany, NY: State Univ. of New York Press, 1990. pp. ix + 206.

MILLET AND WOGAN-BROWNE undertake a desiderata of medieval feminist