

In short, Jurasinski and Oliver's edition of the *domboc* largely supplants earlier editions and translations while thoroughly embedding itself in the editorial history and scholarly discussions on the laws. It is a great resource for students and established scholars alike, and it will stand as a testament to the memory of Lisi Oliver.

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KATHRYN KERBY-FULTON. *The Clerical Proletariat and the Resurgence of Medieval English Poetry*. The Middle Ages Series. Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2021. Pp. 432. \$89.95 (cloth).
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In the late Middle Ages, England was home to a substantial class of highly educated, underemployed clerics engaged in work other than what they had trained and hoped for—a depiction that both explicitly and implicitly mirrors the state of the contemporary humanities. Performing repetitive salaried or piecework that required specialized skills (primarily linguistic, scribal, and musical) but did not provide the security of a priestly benefice, this precarious proletariat left its mark in marginal jottings, self-referential depictions, and formally inventive poetry—lyrical, satiric, dramatic, pastoral—from the thirteenth to the fifteenth century. In *The Clerical Proletariat*, Kerby-Fulton evokes these clerics' intellectual, social, and literary worlds, arguing that the clerical proletarians' "ambidextrous" engagement (15) with clerical and lay settings encouraged vernacular composition, a tendency furthered in many cases by their communal living or working situations. While the production side of this picture might well evoke today's outpouring of tweets, blogs, fan fiction, and other accessible, often situational creative modes, the "career disappointment" (16) side gives a new poignancy to modern academics' awareness of the medieval roots of the university.

Kerby-Fulton opens with an argument for the value of recapturing a long-ago experience of educated male precarity that can shed light on contemporary, and broader, forms of such precarity. She then sketches out the inhabitants of the clerical class who lacked a priestly benefice, which she regards as the ultimate object of their professional desire. The unbeneficed include, at various levels of precarity, salaried priests, vicars (choral and otherwise), household chaplains, chantry priests, and choristers; many of these, Kerby-Fulton shows, moonlighted as professional scribes in various contexts. Drawing on extensive and well-established historical scholarship (the work of Michael Bennett and K. L. McHardy is particularly central) and her own investigations of clerical communities and networks and showing their relevance for literary history, Kerby-Fulton brings the landscape of these figures to life. Throughout, she acknowledges both the usefulness and the limits of Marxism for understanding clerical proletarians, noting that in many cases they seem to have found genuine spiritual sustenance in their labor even when working in impecunious, "alienated" situations (178).

Following the opening orientation, Kerby-Fulton examines texts, mostly by writers whose names scholars know, that offer self-referential depictions of their authors' (or sometimes their authors' friends') professional hopes and disappointments, ranging from *The Owl and the Nightingale* up through John Audelay and attending along the way to figures both well known (Layamon, Thomas Hoccleve) and less so (Thedmar, John Tyckhill). Tyckhill, a chantry chaplain, wrote an alliterative love lyric on the back of the rent roll he compiled as "cathedral rent collector" at St. Paul's (98) and copied Latin scientific prose into another; these suggestive adjacencies make him a recurring figure in Kerby-Fulton's evocation of clerics working between lay and ecclesiastical communities and genres. The degree of precarity

of these figures varies considerably, as she acknowledges, and the concerns that linked them (including a recurrent interest in the parable of the unjust steward to regionalism to penitence to multilingual urban literary circles) range widely, but their collective portrait, gleaned from both explicit references and contextual clues to the writers' professional lives and training, help us to see how "clerical vocational crisis" (86) gave rise to literary riches.

In the second section, Kerby-Fulton turns to primarily anonymous authors, the clergy who lived, prayed, copied, and sang at cathedrals and who left traces of their underused professional energies and skills in the form of lyrics, cathedral histories, drama, and (in the final chapter) *St. Erkenwald*. Her attention to unbeneficed clergy and their lived experience makes this section clearly continuous with the first, but she paints a more focused and coherent picture, working through evidence that conveys a specific milieu and gradually builds an account of its pleasures, productions, and annoyances. Her account of the *Second Trial before Pilate* of the York Cycle, the Tilemakers' Pageant, is particularly engaging and persuasive; Kerby-Fulton shows how the vicars choral of the cathedral, owners of two city tileworks, produced and sponsored a play that is "heavily inflected with the language of both common law and canon law in anglicized form" (233), bringing new resonance to the "ecclesiastical density" (236) of the pageant's wordplay.

The complexity and reach of *The Clerical Proletariat* stretch beyond what its covers can quite contain, and there are moments when the reader has the sense of scrambling to catch up with a lively conversation already underway among people well versed in its intricacies or when a point made somewhat glancingly or briefly in the text turns out to have a much more substantial underpinning in the footnotes. Kerby-Fulton manages the abundance by careful cross-reference, but because her argument relies on the accumulation of examples and many points are closely interlinked, this results in frequent recurrences of "as we shall see" or "as we have seen"—often helpful, but also at times distracting. The interwoven structure, however, becomes more understandable and productive as one comes to recognize the book's long gestation (350n7, for example, thanks Carter Revard for sharing a work before its publication—in 2001) and Kerby-Fulton's reliance on a lifetime's worth of rich archival and conceptual work. Her expertise on professional scribes, on William Langland's "reformist apocalypticism" (174), on Middle English manuscripts in their full material context, and on books under suspicion, among many other topics, comes extensively into play here.

Late in *The Clerical Proletariat* Kerby-Fulton characterizes cathedral histories as "weaving an unlikely number of strands, some slender, into a strangely hybrid kind of whole cloth" (268). This makes for a delightfully apt description of her own book if we stipulate that "whole cloth" is not intended to indicate any disrespect for the tapestry thus created. By bringing W. A. Pantin's "submerged" clerics (2) into view as authors while submerging the reader in their world, Kerby-Fulton makes newly visible to literary scholars a whole milieu whose effects on medieval English literary production have only now, with her work, begun to be fully appreciated.

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Edited by K. J. Kesselring and Natalie Mears, *Star Chamber Matters: An Early Modern Court and Its Records* is the product of a two-day conference held at Durham in July 2019 to discuss recent work on the Court of Star Chamber, a Crown tribunal that tried civil and criminal cases