

fruitful relations with local populations, aristocrats, and the Scottish and English Crowns. The volume's chapters on Scotland and Ireland illustrate how lay and royal support for the black friars remained strong down to the sixteenth century. The privileging of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries in several of the essays on England, however, means that the Dominicans' evolving position in late medieval English society and culture is not fully addressed in the collection. The English black friars' pastoral activities in the post-Black Death period receive little attention (for instance, there are just two passing references to the celebrated preacher John Bromyard), and their late medieval role in the universities likewise remains largely unexplored. The theme of antifraternalism also features little.

As a whole, however, this collection provides a very useful introduction to the varied activities of, and sources for, the English Dominican province between the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries. It contains a number of helpful tables and maps, and the color illustrations are particularly welcome (and partially justify the high price of the volume). The *Companion to the English Dominican Province* fills an important niche in the scholarship on the mendicants and will serve as an essential point of reference for the study of the black friars in Britain and Ireland for the foreseeable future.

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***Materiality and Religious Practice in Medieval Denmark.* Edited by Sarah Croix and Mads Vedel Heilskov. *Acta Scandinavica* 12. Turnhout: Brepols, 2021. 296 pp. \$111.00 cloth.**

In this interdisciplinary anthology, the authors approach the materiality of Christian religious practice in medieval Denmark from theological, archaeological, art historical, and religious studies perspectives. Medieval religious culture was characterized by ritual piety and oriented towards the material, which often was part of the everyday life of the medieval faithful (9–10). Using material items, artifacts, and written sources, the work convincingly integrates the microhistories of the Danish case-studies into the larger history of western European medieval religious culture. Medieval Denmark encompassed Jutland, Funen, Zealand, southern Sweden (Scania), and several Baltic islands, and the chapters cover both rural and urban localities from the Viking Age to the Reformation.

The anthology is bookended by an introduction and an epilogue that serve to lay out the framework and situate the work within broader discussions of materiality and religious practice across medieval Europe. In the introduction, Mads Vedel Heilskov and Sarah Croix present a brief historiography of international trends in medieval church history and religious culture and explore the theoretical underpinnings of the debate. The epilogue by Mette Svart Kristiansen and Mercedes Pérez Vidal nicely sums up the key focus areas of the preceding chapters, as well as ongoing research questions.

The first chapter by Morten Larsen provides an excellent overview of the different approaches and advances in the study of religious materiality in Denmark. Many

readers will likely be unfamiliar with the Danish scholarship, and Larsen ably presents the source material and how scholars have approached it through the previous century.

The following three chapters examine the materiality of church rites, with an emphasis on the Christian liturgy and its ritual within the church space. The authors consider the objects used in the church ceremony, highlighting their significance in proper observance of the ritual. For Bertil Nilsson, it was “through the uses of the different material objects in pontifical liturgies, [that] the church building and the cemetery respectively were elevated out of the profane sphere and sanctified” (67). Nils Holger Petersen deals specifically with how the Gospel Book, being a representative of Christ, was honored during Mass, while Martin Wangsgaard Jürgensen develops a framework for describing the roles and characteristics objects had for medieval people, particularly in the liturgy.

Several authors investigate sacred or devotional objects and their use. Some such items are themselves holy matter and by their very makeup have sacred meaning. Thus, Lena Liepe considers the role of the St. Lucius skull relic and reliquary in a devotional setting. For Laura Katrine Skinnebach, the use of wax in Christian religious practice was closely related to what wax was more widely understood to represent. Other objects become sacred not because of their material makeup, but rather gain potency through other means. Mads Vedel Heilskov, in his study of the Weeping Madonna, shows how, whether mechanical or miraculous, the wooden representation of the Virgin acted as a person, and was interacted with as if alive. The chapter by Mette Højmark Søvsø and Maria Knudsen offers an archaeological examination of small devotional objects found in the vicinity of the town of Ribe. They show how a belief in the power of things was not exclusively reserved for sacred objects owned by the Church, but rather was a widespread phenomenon, that could encompass even mundane or plain objects. In the final chapter, archaeologists Jakob Tue Christensen and Mikael Manøe Bjerregaard, considers how burial practices, drawn from excavations in the town of Odense, changed over time, from the Viking Age through the Middle Ages, highlighting how the material remains of burials reflected religious ideology.

There are several areas where the anthology shines. The authors are particularly effective at elucidating the medieval mindset regarding objects and their use in religious devotion. As Larsen points out, scholars of medieval religious culture are in danger of letting their own religious background influence their interpretations of past devotion. Thus, for example, past research into areas such as the use of relics has been more concerned with ideas of fraud than how they were understood to function in the Middle Ages. Heilskov argues that the Church was perfectly aware that many of the relics housed in churches and monasteries were fraudulent, but it held that acts performed in their name were equally valid whether the relic was real or not. Likewise, Jürgensen shows how the objects in a church were just as important to the ceremony of the liturgy as the spoken words or performed gestures, pushing back against the previous research that has regarded them as mere props.

In addition, the volume aptly argues that Denmark was part of Europe, and not just on the periphery. The Danish sources on the liturgy, for example, show that the Danish medieval Church was fully integrated in Latin Christian practices. Danish people took part in similar types of devotional experiences, such as going on pilgrimage, as is clear from the types of souvenirs manufactured in Danish towns. Where Denmark is distinct is in the sheer number of objects that has been preserved from rural parishes, not necessarily in how they featured in devotional practice. Burial practices also followed European trends. The use of images and illustrations throughout is another high point and is particularly helpful in the discussions of the different types of religious objects and their use.

Organizationally, subsections that grouped thematically similar chapters might have been helpful in further illustrating how the chapters fit together. A short overview on how Christianity came to Denmark, where it was practiced, and how it was spread, would also give context and ground the reader in the religious history, particularly one unfamiliar with medieval Denmark. Nonetheless, the anthology admirably explores “the crucial role of material culture in connecting the lived reality of medieval people with the sacred reality of their faith” (20).

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***Illuminated Manuscript Production in Medieval Iceland: Literary and Artistic Activities of the Monastery of Helgafell in the Fourteenth Century.* By Stefan Drechsler. Turnhout: Brepols, 2021. 275 pp. €120.**

Stefan Drechsler’s book studies a group of sixteen manuscripts dated to the fourteenth century that have been associated with the Augustinian monastery at Helgafell, Iceland. These manuscripts have been identified as a group, on the basis of their common palaeographical and iconographical features, since the middle of the twentieth century; this scholarship is meticulously attested in the footnotes of this book. Drechsler proposes to corroborate that evidence, and to show that these manuscripts were produced in a workshop where scribes and illuminators relied more on interregional and international networks than has been previously recognized.

Chapter 1 introduces the methodological premises of the book; it relies, as is common in such studies, on palaeography (text and paratext) and art history. Drechsler begins by dividing the sixteen manuscripts into an internal group (those produced by two main scribes) and an external one (those that acted as textual, iconographic, or stylistic models for internal manuscripts but were not produced by the two main scribes). He argues that the illuminators applied their material with great innovation, deviating from classical iconography, and claims that his analysis of the use and reuse of images in different contexts (*interpicturality*, as he puts it) will allow him to identify the techniques applied in the creation of the Helgafell iconography. Finally, he will reconstruct the social network of the manuscripts, to “combine and visualise the art-historical and philological data of all the internal and external manuscripts and their various stages of production” (39).

Chapter 2 outlines the history of the Helgafell site, with special interest in the fourteenth century, the time when the manuscripts were produced. Drechsler glosses over Icelandic sources that show Helgafell (“Holy Mountain”) as a place of worship already in the ninth century and a possible connection to the Augustinian canons regular of St Victor in the twelfth century (this connection is later dismissed in Chapter 5). But the chapter’s focus is on the connections between Helgafell and other secular and religious centers in Iceland in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, when the flourishing of literary production in Iceland is also reflected in Helgafell. By the end of the fourteenth century, Helgafell had grown considerably, both in number of canons and in owned