

A Companion to Medieval Miracle Collections. Edited by
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ix + 378 pp. \$274.00 hardback.

As the word “Companion” in the title of this well-considered volume suggests, the selection of essays will be of particular relevance to students and scholars new to the field of saints’ cults and medieval miracle collections. Nonetheless, there is also much of interest here for those already familiar with the literature of this area of academic research, including thought-provoking discussions about methodology, examples of pioneering new research, and suggestions for lines of inquiry as yet to be explored.

The volume comprises an introduction followed by fifteen chapters, divided into two sections, followed by a selected bibliography and an index. In the first section, Chapters 1–5 discuss the “evolution and contexts of miracle collections and canonization processes” (10). Chapters 1 and 2 focus on miracle collections recorded at shrines housed in monastic communities, and the implications of such shrines and their attendant miracles for those communities. Chapters 3–5 examine canonization inquests, their origins, development, and the way the records of such inquests could be used by scholars. The second section (Chapters 6–15) provides a series of case studies exemplifying how miracle narratives can be used to explore a wide variety of aspects of medieval life.

The introduction to the volume provides a useful survey of the key texts and themes in what is a burgeoning field of study (2–10), as well as an indication of the new avenues of research opening up (7–10). The editors comment that while many of the early seminal works published in this field—such as Ronald Finucane’s *Miracles and Pilgrims* or André Vauchez’s *La sainteté en Occident aux derniers siècles du Moyen Âge (1198–1431)*—are still valuable to scholars, “it is time for scholarship to move on to new methods and insights, especially for the late Middle Ages” (6). In keeping with this, the primary purpose of the volume is “to offer practical tools for the methodological understanding of miracle narrations” (2) that are found in miracle collections and canonization processes. Of particular interest is why these miracle narratives were recorded and who recorded them, as well as a close examination of the collections as a whole and the wording of the individual stories.

Overall, the material convincingly reflects the stated aims. Chapters 1–5 provide a good overview of the source material (miracles in shrine collections and canonization inquests) that forms the backbone of the subsequent chapters in the volume. The inclusion of Roberto Paciocco’s work in translation (transl. Lauren Jennings) in Chapter 3 brings the excellent work of this scholar to a wider audience. One of the great strengths of this volume is the careful examination and discussion of the source material. This is particularly evident in Chapters 4, 7, 9, 10, and 12. Chapter 4, for example, unpicks the procedures involved in the canonization of saints, including how the witnesses were interrogated by the commissioners, how the miracles were recorded, and the implications of such practical issues for the modern scholar. The volume is also strong on discussions concerning methodology, as in, for example, in Chapters 9 and 14. Chapter 9 considers current disability theories and the use of terminology in relation to studies of medieval dis/ability. Chapter 14 explores how adopting a narratological approach and applying the method of morphology to a collection of miracle narratives—a series of accounts characterized by “repetitive and formulaic” (299) language—can help scholars discern “precious, true elements” (300) of what

actually happened. A further welcome feature of this volume is the geographical scope of the material discussed, which evidences a wide range of miracle collections from across Europe, including England, Scotland, France, Scandinavia, the Low Countries, and Hungary. This allows for comparisons of miracle collections from different countries in order to look at broad trends, as in Chapter 1. Conversely, Chapters 12 and 13, for example, focus on one country or region, thereby offering an in-depth analysis of the political context of the miracle narratives under discussion. In both cases, the authors remain sensitive to the advantages and disadvantages of broad versus focused approaches. For example, Iona McCleery's work in Chapter 12 concentrates on miracle collections from Portugal but ends by urging that "regional and national differences [of miracles/miracle collections] should be compared and discussed much more" (270). Additionally, there is a well-judged overlapping of themes and issues throughout the volume. Chapters 3–5, for example, discuss canonization processes, while Chapters 5–7 all include an examination of the shrine of Thomas Aquinas at Fossanova, Italy, and his canonization process. Such overlapping serves to consolidate the work of the volume as a whole and, at the same time, illustrates how new light can be shed on a topic by examining it from a range of viewpoints. Finally, the extensive footnotes that accompany each chapter, together with the selected bibliography, index and, in some instances, appendices (Chapters 4 and 12) combine to make this a really rich resource for students and scholars alike.

Minor editorial issues throughout detract at times from the overall quality of the volume. Chapter 6, for example, discusses Stephen of Bourbon's work in detail but at one point his name appears as Étienne de Bourbon (135). Later (143), meaning is affected by a typing error and odd phrasing ("one has to contend himself"). Other chapters have similar issues.

Chapters 6 and 7 discuss miracles as they appear in sermons and aspects of access to shrines. However, further discussion of the role of indulgences and some additional concentrated work on the interplay between miracle, shrine, relic or miracle-working image, the liturgy, and the devotee would have been welcome.

All in all, this volume constitutes an important resource, especially for students and scholars embarking on a study of medieval miracle collections. It would be of value in any university library.

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***The Politics of Sanctity: Figurative Sculpture at Selles-sur-Cher.* By Deborah Kahn. Vistas: New Scholarship on Sculpture 1250–1780. London/Turnhout, Belgium: Harvey Miller Publishers/Brepols, 2020. 271 pp. 40 b/w & 200 color illus., 5 maps. €125.00 cloth.**

In recent decades, scholars of Romanesque architecture and sculpture have suggested earlier dates for many monuments, in some remarkable cases by a matter of decades. In one way, we might situate Deborah Kahn's recent book on Selles-sur-Cher within that broader trend. Kahn makes a meticulous and compelling case that its sculpture, long regarded to be a monument from the mid-1100s of limited interest, dates, rather,