KOWALESKI, Maryanne, and GOLDBERG, P. J. P. (eds.) — *Medieval Domesticity: Home, Housing and Household in Medieval England* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008. Pp. 317.

Medieval Domesticity emanates from Fordham University's twenty-fifth annual medieval conference, held in 2005, co-sponsored with the Centre for Medieval Studies at the University of York, UK, and York's Medieval Household Research Group. Usefully framed by Maryanne Kowaleski's and Jeremy Goldberg's introduction, the essays show the centrality of the domestic to all aspects of English medieval life — from social relations to material life, politics, religion, and the economy. Underpinning the research here, thanks largely to the nexus created by the York Medieval Household Research Group, is true interdisciplinarity.

One theme emerging from this essay collection is the cultural work performed by ideas about the household in later medieval English society and politics. Several essays explore the development between 1200 and 1500 of new household forms and ideologies connected particularly with the more substantial urban dwellers — a "bourgeois" domesticity distinctive from that governing the peasantry, the aristocracy, the clergy, or even the poorer inhabitants of the towns. Felicity Riddy's opening essay, "'Burgeis' Domesticity in Late-Medieval England," argues that the merchant ethic — marked by pride in civic status, considerable wealth and property, and ambition driven by industry, craftsmanship, and skill — dominated the urban centres and had become an important counterpoint to aristocratic wealth and power by the later fourteenth century. New ideologies, however, often generate cultural anxiety: in "On the Sadness of Not Being a Bird: Late-Medieval Marriage Ideologies and the Figure of Abraham in William Langland's *Piers Plowman*," Isabel Davis sees a moment in the late fourteenth century when the new bourgeois ideologies are under challenge. Examining the textual revisions between the B-text and C-text versions of *Piers Plowman* on the treatment of marriage, Davis sees an initially positive treatment of the new bourgeois ethic on marriage give way in the C-text revision to a more traditional clerical privileging of chastity and virginity. In "Weeping for the Virtuous Wife: Laymen, Affective Piety and Chaucer's 'Clerk's Tale'," Nicole Nolan Sidhu argues that the target audience of Chaucer's version of the immensely popular Griselda story was the same group of substantial bourgeois men whom Riddy describes, and their evident attraction to the tale lay not in the almost impossibly patient and passive Griselda as female role model, but in the cruel Walter as anti-model, who exemplified all that the late medieval Christian bourgeois should not be.

Other essays treat domestic ideologies in other aspects of late medieval English life, in each case complicating our understandings of the medieval household. Mary C. Erler's "Home Visits: Mary, Elizabeth, Margery Kempe and the Feast of the Visitation" examines the English manifestation of the new fifteenth-century feast of the Visitation, which celebrated Mary's visit to her cousin Elizabeth while both were pregnant. The integration of Christian devotional life

and the family visit provides a means of understanding the immanence of religious life in the domestic. Janet Loengard's essay, "'Which may be said to be her own': Widows and Goods in Late-Medieval England," considers the relationship between ideology and practice in the developing conceptualization of the marital economy. Loengard looks closely at the divergence between the stark letter of the common law on married women's ownership of chattels and the more nuanced reality that wives and widows were seen to be entitled to a range of personal goods (minimally clothes, girdles, bedclothes, and often much more). Nicola McDonald similarly problematizes the role of ideology in the unfolding of household relationships. In "Fragments of (*Have Your*) *Desire*: Brome Women at Play," McDonald examines the "Brome book," a commonplace book of the later fifteenth century, which includes amidst its devotional texts and do-it-yourself legal formulae a number of fragments of dicing games, puzzles, and short poems that reveal the gentle household as a venue for playful heterosexual interaction. McDonald argues that even overtly misogynistic word-puzzles must be seen as ludic rather than straight, as playful invitations to debate the role of women, opening up a space to question the stereotypes as much as to reproduce them.

A second thread in *Medieval Domesticity* seeks to draw connections between the material and the social, to demonstrate the imbrication of the physical and especially the built environment with social relations. Sara Rees Jones in "Building Domesticity in the City: English Urban Housing before the Black Death" traces the emergence of timber-frame construction in the early thirteenth century, which created flexible, adaptable, yet durable forms of domestic architecture. Together with the development of burgage tenure, which allowed for the holding of urban properties outside seigneurial tenure, the new house types helped to create new modes of living for the emerging merchant class. Jane Grenville's "Urban and Rural Houses and Households in the Late Middle Ages" picks up some of the same themes in the period following the Black Death, emphasizing the relationship between house and household forms and the growing authority of the bourgeoisie. Grenville argues that houses with halls — the more substantial houses of medieval York — were influenced by rural forms and preserved the social purposes of the rural hall (supervision of dependents, performance of social hierarchy). Jeremy Goldberg's essay, "The Fashioning of Bourgeois Domesticity in Later Medieval England: A Material Culture Perspective," uses evidence from probate inventories to show that wealthier urban households manifested a different material culture than their rural counterparts, one more focused on household furnishings such as bed linens, cushions, and silver spoons. He argues that this reflects the creation of a new bourgeois culture that allowed both for display for visitors (through items such as silver spoons), and for the creation of an intimate space for the master and mistress in the midst of an otherwise busy and sometimes crowded household that functioned as workplace as well as domestic space.

Other essays examine the built environment of aristocratic and religious households. Mark Gardiner's essay, "Buttery and Pantry and their Antecedents: Idea

and Architecture in the English Medieval House," connects the development of two service rooms in larger aristocratic houses with changes in social organization and particularly the role of food and food service in creating and maintaining social ties. Marilyn Oliva's "Nuns at Home: The Domesticity of Sacred Space" finds that to a great extent nuns created domestic interiors that were similar to the gentry households in which most of them had been born and raised. Again, the material both conveys and creates profound meaning; Oliva suggests that these domestic furnishings — similar as they may have been to the gentle households of their relatives who lived in the world — nonetheless formed part of the devotional world of the late medieval nun, imbued with spiritual and devotional significance.

Medieval Domesticity explores the manifold meanings of home and household in late medieval England, both literal and metaphorical. Historians of all eras and cultures interested in the "domestic" will find much to think about in this book.

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KRAMER, Alan — *Dynamic of Destruction: Culture and Mass Killing in the First World War*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007. Pp. 434.

Most people would agree that sport, religion, politics, even music can, in various degrees, grip and enthral societies. Alan Kramer (an associate professor of history at Trinity College, Dublin) reminds us here that the same scenario also applies to war.

Two themes summarize this interesting and informative monograph on World War I and its immediate aftermath: the mass killing of soldiers and civilians, and the destruction — incidental and deliberate — of cultural artifacts. How do we account for such a colossal disaster? The answer is an historic shift in the nature of war. Indeed, the industrialization of warfare, the organizational power of the state (and that includes its military arm) to mobilize all the resources of agriculture, industry, science, finance, and culture, the willingness of nations to be mobilized, and, finally, the firm conviction among all the protagonists that "[t]he enemy was not merely the enemy army, but the enemy nation and the culture through which it defined itself" (p. 31) explain the enormous losses suffered on all fronts in Europe and the Near East — an exercise in self-mutilation without precedent since the Thirty Years' War of 1618–1648. Not surprisingly, therefore, this dynamic of violence and destruction compelled all belligerents to adopt ever more radical war policies that often violated international law.

It all started with the burning of Louvain and its renowned university library in August 1914 in the wake of the German invasion of Belgium. Acts of vandalism continued relentlessly with the merciless exploitation of occupied territories