

The structure of chapters is at times puzzling, and typos abound, particularly through the first chapter. While most of these will cause little more than annoyance for most readers, some of the typos may actually mislead. The famed Anglo-Saxon scholar Aldhelm, for example, is consistently called "Aldheim" throughout the first chapter. Only one citation in the notes names him correctly. A general reader interested in learning more about "Aldheim," however, may give up in frustration when no hits appear in a library or internet search. Other typos are obvious and innocuous, but too frequent.

Ranft's arguments, often overstated and sweeping without sufficient explanation and justification, pose a more serious concern for scholarly and general readers alike. These generalizations, inaccuracies, or specious arguments are obvious to specialists; however, the general reader may be swayed all too easily by Ranft's air of authority. Argumentation is compromised when sweeping generalizations are made occasionally through oversimplification. Presenting the religious and political frictions prevalent in the time of Catherine of Siena, for example, Ranft states that Dante, Marsilio of Padua, and William of Ockham challenged "the validity of the concept of Western Christendom" (163). This surprising observation seems to be based on Colish's characterization of the late Middle Ages as a time "when the concept of the pan-European Christian commonwealth, with spiritual and secular governance guided by single rulers in church and state...was growing daily more untenable" (Colish, *Medieval Foundations*, 340). The complexity of Colish's argument is lost and, I think, misconstrued.

Ranft also overreaches at times. Her connection of Julian of Norwich to the humanists, for example, relating to their respective readings of the *imago Dei* tradition, remains unconvincing. Ranft's discussion of Julian's thought on the whole is plausible and suits her argument well, but she would have been better advised to conclude her discussion with Julian's revision of the *imago Dei* tradition rather than pursue a link between Julian and the humanists.

Despite its weaknesses, the book succeeds in its ostensible purpose, which is simply "to gather in one place the many ways women did participate in the intellectual community" (xi). One wonders, however, if this book serves any one audience particularly well. Nevertheless, Ranft's book prompts further scholarly inquiry into this area of women's intellectual history that she has so painstakingly mapped out.

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Julia Bolton Holloway (ed. and trans.), *Julian of Norwich: A Showing of Love.* London: Darton, Longman and Todd Ltd. Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 2003.

Julia Bolton Holloway's new translation of Julian of Norwich's *A Showing of Love* is an aesthetically pleasing and carefully produced volume by an experienced scholar who has been working on the extant manuscripts of Julian's writing for many years. Neatly compiled and including two evocative photographs taken by Holloway herself, the volume promises much. It is self-

confessedly aimed both at the Julian specialist and the non-specialist, offering detailed information on manuscript provenance and history as well as the intricacies of Julian's complex contemplative theology. To this end, Holloway uses symbols and color extensively in her translation, which is, on the whole, a sensitive and accurate representation in modern English of Julian's original text. The translation is rendered all the more accessible by being "color coded" to reflect the colored script and symbols which appear in the Sloane manuscript which is Holloway's core version. The words of God and Christ to Julian, for example, appear in red. Similarly, the original paragraph breaks are identified, as are variant readings from the Westminster, Paris, and Amherst manuscripts, using a separate in-text initial for each. Probable scribal additions are indicated by grey print, and what threatens at first to be a code of some complexity, surprises the reader in its creation of what Holloway hopes will be a "displaying of palimpsested layers" which offer the reader the "rich and variant readings" of Julian's texts. A thoughtful, albeit basic, index allows the reader to negotiate the translation much more easily than would otherwise be the case and follow, for example, the pattern of Julian's treatment of blood, or debt, or her concept of "oneing." On the whole, therefore, the volume has been compiled to facilitate fully both the pleasure and understanding of the reader.

That said, however, Holloway's own preface presents the reader with a different scenario which is altogether more problematic. Containing discrete sections dealing with the author, her contemplative theology, and the various extant manuscripts, sadly the only way to describe this preface is that it is widely misleading from start to finish. While there is little doubt as to the level of research and scholarship which has gone into its construction, Holloway builds upon supposition after supposition without anything in the way of definitive evidence in her attempt to create a known and knowable Julian and give her a firmly fixed history within an East Anglian socio-religious context. From a somewhat hyperbolic opening assertion that Julian and Margery Kempe "knew each other" (we can only be certain that they met once), Holloway moves on to suggest a close connection between Julian and the local figure of Adam Easton, a Benedictine monk in Norwich who became Cardinal of England at Rome during Julian's lifetime. This, in itself, is not beyond the bounds of possibility, of course, but Holloway swiftly pushes it into the realms of the quasi-fantastical with her suggestion (which soon becomes assertion) that Julian may well have been Easton's sister and that both figures were descended from the expelled Norwich "jewry" [*sic*]. Similarly, Holloway asserts that there is "evidence" of Julian's familiarity with the Hebrew Scriptures —taught to her, of course, by Easton himself—and even suggests that she "may have" travelled to Rome and visited the holy vernicle there, staying at Easton's bolt-hole attached to the church of Santa Cecilia in Travastere. Even more bizarrely, Holloway reads Julian's own remarks about a youthful desire for illness as "severe depression," something which she then substantiates by drawing on an allusion in Easton's own writings to a woman he knows who is "wanting of will." From this somewhat spurious link, we find Holloway rendering Julian as a "brilliant crippled [*sic*] woman in medieval Norwich" who was "unable for health and social reasons to become fully

a choir nun at Carrow (and who) earned her keep by teaching, both before and after her illness." In spite of recent scholarship (particularly the meticulous work of Nicholas Watson), Julian of Norwich is here being concertedly reconstructed on the back of very little evidence as the "pre-woman's liberation" [*sic*] holy woman who is also "spiritual healer," both of self and of others, and whose text ultimately provides "therapy for trauma abuse syndrome." And such assertions go on and on ...

The section offering an illumination of Julian's engagement with contemplative theology, however, is initially a little more enlightening. Here Holloway guides the reader through the convolutions and complexities of Julian's insights in a way which certainly makes them accessible for the reader new to Julian and also helpfully offers a wide range of comparisons and analogues to the more familiar reader. Similarly, the section dealing with the extant manuscripts is exceptionally detailed and exhaustive. The emphasis Holloway places here upon the debt owed to Benedictine Recusant nuns for the preservation of Julian's work over the centuries is valid. More worrying, however, is the fact that Holloway presents as accepted her own opinions on the dates and provenance of these manuscripts—views which continue to contradict the opinions of almost every other scholar who has worked on this material (particularly Nicholas Watson's now almost universally accepted re-dating of both Short and Long Texts over a decade ago). Holloway has elsewhere provided ample scholarly evidence to support her hypothesis, but the lack of an allusion to that evidence and to those more widely accepted viewpoints here offers us the image of a Julian of Norwich and her *Showings* that adheres more to the ideals and world-image of her translator than to the writer we get to glimpse fleetingly through her treatises. Holloway's intimate acquaintance with and passion for Julian's writing is beyond doubt. Much of her work to date on the writer has been rigorous and valuable. Sadly, however, Julian emerges from the pages of this preface as the translator's reconstructed solace for those who, like her, seem to regard the six hundred years or so since Julian's death as a period increasingly "barbarized, mechanized and violated," and therefore increasingly "worse" than the time when Julian was writing. No number of qualifiers such as "most likely," "perhaps," "may have," and "might" can alter the fact that much of this information is misleading, some of it mistaken, and all of it probably wishful thinking.

And yet, having said all this, provided that the student and serious scholar does not look to this volume to provide the "definitive" Julian and seeks to balance its views with a wider range of scholarship on the subject, the translation itself does indeed succeed in functioning, as Holloway hopes, "as a platform from which it becomes possible to see the whole, while showing the layering of texts throughout the many years of Julian's lifework," even if the chronology and author of that lifework is misrepresented.

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