as death and decaying flesh was overshadowed. Similarly, Katherine Park's analysis of the "autopsy" of Clare of Montefalco, shows the body's organs as powerful and fertile. Shortly after her death in 1308, Clare's body was opened and her heart and viscera excised, revealing that the organs had produced relics of flesh. While it took over five hundred years for Clare to be canonized, her bodily relics, a crucifix and three little stones symbolizing the Trinity, are still preserved in the Church of St. Clare in Montefalco, the enduring material record of her sanctity.

If there is a weakness to the volume it is in what is not included. Northern Europe receives disproportionately less discussion and, in particular, there is no essay that illuminates the material context of gender in England. Temporally, as well, there is a sharp jump from the essays on antiquity and early Byzantium to the fourteenth century, leaving the eighth to fourteenth centuries basically neglected. Scholars of the early and high middle ages and those of northwestern Europe have also begun to use material culture to tease out hitherto elusive aspects of medieval sex and gender. Their absence leaves an otherwise fine volume unbalanced.

—Jacqueline Murray, University of Guelph

Mews, Constant, ed. *Listen, Daughter: The Speculum Virginum and the Formation of Religious Women in the Middle Ages.* New York: Palgrave, 2001. Pp. 306.

Jutta Seyfarth's critical edition of the *Speculum virginum*, published in the Corpus Christianorum series in 1990, bears rich fruit in this very useful collection of essays. An extended dialogue between a virgin of Christ, Theodora, and her spiritual advisor, Peregrinus, the *Speculum virginum* was most likely written in the first half of the twelfth century by a monk involved with the Benedictine reform movement centered around the German abbey of Hirsau. Thus, as Constant Mews points out in his introduction to *Listen, Daughter*, the *Speculum virginum* "was written in response to a quite new situation that was emerging within the monastic life, the recent foundation of large numbers of communities of religious women throughout Germany and France" (2). The relationship between religious men and women and the best way for male advisors to respond to the needs of the many women desirous of leading religious lives were central issues for the reformers of the twelfth century. As Heloise pointed out to Peter Abelard in her famous third letter (written sometime in the 1130s), there was no rule written specifically for women. The *Rule of Benedict*, which she and her nuns at the Paraclete followed "was clearly written for men alone" and, Heloise adds, "it can only be fully obeyed by men." Although Abelard challenged Heloise's claims about female weakness, he nevertheless provided her with a rule designed to meet the needs of her community.[1]

At just about the same time that Abelard wrote his rule for Heloise and her sisters, then, an anonymous German monk composed the *Speculum virginum*. In it, a religious woman and her male teacher discuss the nature of the

religious life, the value and true meaning of virginity, and the best ways to avoid the snares to which religious people are subject. The large number of surviving manuscripts of the *Speculum*, both in the original Latin and in vernacular translations, suggests its importance in defining women's religious lives and the *cura monialium* in the High and Late Middle Ages. Under the editorship of Constant Mews, the essays collected in *Listen, Daughter* provide a thorough introduction to the text and its significance for understanding medieval women's religious lives and the interactions between religious men and women. The essays cover a wide range of issues, among the most important of which are: 1) the still contested issue of the text's authorship (Mews, Julie Hotchin); 2) arguments about what shape early redactions of the text might have taken (Jutta Seyfarth and Morgan Powell); 3) the text's genre and use (Mews, Hotchin, Powell, Sabina Flanagan); 4) the extent to which the picture of virginity and the religious life provided by the *Speculum* is gendered (Mews, Janice M. Pinder, Elisabeth Bos); 5) the interrelationship between text and image within Latin versions of the manuscript (Powell); 6) the nature of the music that accompanies early versions of the manuscript (Catherine Jeffreys); 7) the text's innovative Marian theology (Kim E. Powers); and 7) the afterlife of the *Speculum* in the High and Later Middle Ages (Urban Küsters). An appendix includes English translations of select passages, beautifully done by Barbara Newman.

One of the most noteworthy and perhaps surprising facts about the *Speculum* is that every known Latin version of the text comes from male religious communities, leading to Mews' suggestion that the dialogue "may initially have been written for a monastic pastor to read aloud to religious women rather than to be read silently by women religious" (21). As a number of the essays in the volume under review attest, the *Speculum* was read in many other contexts and used in many different ways. For the sake of space, however, I will here concentrate on those essays that make important arguments about the twelfth-century context and use of the dialogue. Thus, as Mews goes on to argue, monks could benefit from the *Speculum* both through their identification with the virgins of Christ depicted within it and through their identification with Peregrinus, spiritual advisor and teacher to one such virgin. In other words, monks kept copies of the *Speculum* for their own spiritual edification and as a handbook for the teaching of religious women. As Morgan Powell argues, male teachers may in fact simply have read the text to their female charges, at the same time showing them the images that appear in the Latin manuscripts. In an important argument too complex to do justice to here, Powell argues that the *Speculum*, meant to be heard and viewed by a female religious, "undertakes to transform the lectio divina into an audio-visual performance, an instructor's manipulation of voice, physical presence, and visual perception that is to deliver a sensory experience of the Logos" (116).

Julie Hotchin's essay, "Female Religious Life and the *Cura Monialium* in Hirsau Monasticism, 1080 to 1150," nicely specifies the context in which the *Speculum* might have been written and used in this way. Following Urban Küsters, she argues that the reform movements of the twelfth century were particularly interested in bringing women into the monastic experience, not

in separate houses, but in close conjunction with male monasteries. Reformers at Hirsau and elsewhere throughout Germany believed that the apostolic life required men and women to live in common. Thus for houses reformed under the leadership of Hirsau, "the women's community either formed part of a double monastery with the monks or was established as a dependent priory under the direction, legal and spiritual, of the abbot. Independent houses for women, observing the Benedictine Rule and subject to the authority of a bishop instead of an abbot, had no place within this monastic revival" (65). As Hotchin goes on to show, these particular features of the Hirsau reform account for the *Speculum*'s emphasis on the need to protect against unseemly relations between religious men and women through proper behavior and the structuring of space and on the character of the men engaged in the *cura monialium*. At least in its first instantiation, then, the *Speculum virginum* dealt with male religious leadership of women as much as with women's religious life. For the Hirsau reformers, Hotchin shows, the two issues were indeed inseparable.

—Amy Hollywood, Dartmouth College

[1] For this exchange and the citation from Heloise's letter, see Barbara Newman, "Flaws in the Golden Bowl: Gender and Spiritual Formation in the Twelfth Century," in *From Virile Woman to WomanChrist: Studies in Medieval Religion and Literature* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1995), p. 19.

Salih, Sarah. *Versions of Virginity in Late Medieval England.* Cambridge, U.K.: D. S. Brewer, 2001. Pp. ix + 278.

This book, the latest entry in a sudden boom in studies of subjectivity and virginity, raises valuable questions and provides some valuable answers. The question at the heart of the work is this: Is virginity a "natural" or "constructed" quality? In discussing virginity as a potential category of gender instead of a subcategory of woman, as a performance rather than a physical attribute, Salih makes an important contribution to clarifying the intricacies of religious devotion and its reverberations throughout the rest of medieval society. And in acknowledging that perhaps categorizing virginity as a gender may be too overarching, she illustrates the reason for undertaking such scholarship—that is, to encourage open, informed discussion.

The body of the text is divided into three main sections or "portraits": the Katherine Group, monastic communities, and Margery Kempe. Salih describes this progression as moving from a more "perfect" virginity to a more "compromised" one. I find that distinction quite revealing, particularly since the discussion begins with openly acknowledged physical virgins (the martyrs) moving into the realm of "should-be" physical virgins (nuns) to a "reconstructed" virgin (Kempe). Does this mean, then, that earlier virginity was "better"? Salih obliquely addresses hierarchical issues, mostly in terms of societal perceptions. For instance, she devotes quite a large number of pages to discussing Kempe's difficulties with slander and reputation, whereas these areas are not as fully discussed in the other two sections. Nevertheless, it is thought provoking to examine the evolving idea of constructed virginity and to see a progression beyond the need for physical intactness. The topos of the virgin martyr hagiography is a thread that runs throughout the book.