

other material usually regarded as unreliable to a more important position. He dismisses Sanders's admittedly late story of Anne's miscarriage of 'a shapeless mass of flesh' as 'too vague' (p. 127), while accepting the accounts of the imperial ambassador, Eustace Chapuys, whose reliability is usually questioned. He puts considerable weight on the account in Lancelot de Carles's French poem *Epistre contenant la process criminal faict contra Anna Boullant d'Angleterre* although he does not discuss the variants in the manuscripts of the poem, the literary conventions it employs, or the audience for which it was written.

This is mainly because, in Bernard's view, Henry was the one in control of developments at this and every other time. It was not Anne who resisted his sexual advances for so long but Henry who restrained himself because of his anxiety to have a legitimate heir. Bernard's evaluation of events seems in some cases to be influenced by his own underlying concepts of human behaviour. If his overall argument is convincing it will require historians interested in the position and power of women in the period to reassess their understanding of their ability to act independently at the highest levels of society.

Paradoxically perhaps, Bernard also argues that Anne's behaviour with other men at court at the least went 'far beyond the formal conventions' (p. 162) and seeks to demonstrate 'his hunch' (p. 192) that she was probably guilty of the crimes of which she was convicted. His approach is to invite the reader to 'imagine Anne ... enjoying relationships with her courtier servants that went far beyond the contemporary conventions of courtly love, the platonic gallant courtship of married women' (p. 187).

In the plethora of studies of Anne Boleyn it is useful to have one that challenges the canonical interpretation but Bernard's rereading of the sources, ambiguous as they are, does not in the end produce a clinching argument.

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Davis, Carmel Bendon, *Mysticism and Space: Space and Spatiality in the Works of Richard Rolle, The Cloud of Unknowing Author, and Julian of Norwich*, Washington, Catholic University of America Press, 2008; cloth; pp. xiii, 271; R.R.P. US\$74.95; ISBN 9780813215228.

Mysticism and Space is a treatise on the role of space, of the physical and spiritual kinds, in the mystical teachings of three major Middle English writers. Beginning with general discussions of physical space, social space, and the intersections of space and text, it concludes with separate discussions of Richard Rolle's works, *The Cloud of Unknowing*, and Julian's *Revelation of Love*.

Much of the merit of this book lies in its close reading of the three authors, with attention to their deployment of space as a metaphor and their descriptions of physical and mystical space. This includes an exploration of the detailed descriptions of physical objects and experiences, and their role in the crossover into mystical experience. Detailed consideration is given to the use of physical spatial indicators to describe spiritual experiences. Davis's teasing out of the varied and sometimes apparently contradictory spatial terms, such as up and down or empty and full, provokes a thoughtful realignment of our readings, providing an added dimension and richness.

The groundwork for this close reading is laid in the opening chapters, where there is some heavy-duty theory: but this forms a solid basis from which to reappraise the texts. Davis makes much of the 'mise-en-abîme', the visual illusion where a picture contains a smaller version of itself, which contains another, yet smaller, version, repeated infinitely: this is an apt spatial metaphor for the infiniteness of God's love, but she perhaps overstates its presence in the texts.

Although many threads are teased out in the book, Davis seems to find one key theme in each author. For Rolle, this is the tripartite nature of the mystical experience, as in the Trinity, the relationship between Christ, the reader, and Rolle as mediator, his experience of *canor*, *calor*, and *dulcor*, and his afterlife division of those who have loved God much, more, and most.

For the *Cloud* author, the theme is enclosure. The contemplative is enclosed between the clouds of forgetting and unknowing, echoing the physical enclosure of contemplatives in their earthly lives. Davis discusses the *Cloud* author's presentation of the contemplative as both enclosing contemplation and being enclosed by it.

The theme that Davis finds in Julian is translocation and liminality. She draws out the way in which the entirety of Julian's revelation takes place while she is confined, unmoving and deeply ill, to a bed in a room adorned by a crucifix, and this physical reality is never quite left behind in her account of the revelation. It juxtaposes with the 'world in a walnut' image to constantly remind the reader of the presence of space in the mystical experience. This intelligent and sensitive book has something to offer anyone with an interest in Middle English texts, mysticism, or spirituality.

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