

of particular activity, but with spiritual conformity to Christ. So, for example, Francis, the *alter Christus*, “could enact an *imitatio Christi* without living in Jerusalem, without replicating to perfection Christ’s life because, although form and behaviour certainly mattered, spirit took precedence” (160). It is this ejection of the particularity of place from the fundamentals of medieval devotional endeavor that leads Lenzi to outline her concept of the “placelessness” of medieval Christian piety in part 4.

Part 4 begins with a consideration of the early stational liturgies in Jerusalem between the fourth and tenth centuries: activities in which we might find “the archetype for the ritual mutations that echo down the centuries” and to which we can look “for the fundament of the Stations ritual” (172–73). This is important material, which might more usefully have been introduced at an earlier point. Lenzi then leaps to the other end of the Middle Ages for a case study of a late fifteenth-century Savonarolan tractate on the Eucharist which, she says, “speaks well to the time-bending nature of late medieval pious practice” (178). A helpful edition and translation are included as an appendix. Various theories and theologies of place and space are then brought in to play in order briefly to develop her concept of “placelessness.” Having used them frequently throughout, she acknowledges only right at the end that ideas of private and public are complicated in the medieval context; as are the distinctions between liturgy and devotion. There are clearly some interesting ideas here and it is easy to see how Lenzi’s study of the Stations led her to explore them, but this short final section of the book does not really give her enough room to work them through to the depth they deserve.

In revising Thurston’s and Storme’s histories, Lenzi does a fine job and provides an overdue corrective. The vast range of the material she covers, however, means that concepts from different disciplines, or the works of thinkers writing centuries apart, are sometimes elided a little too easily; and the rationale for her particular selection of sources is not always clear. A broader discussion of recent scholarship in areas such as passion devotion or sacramental theology would have helped to refine some of her points, as well as to highlight those aspects of her argument that are genuinely revelatory. This remains, nevertheless, a useful and thought-provoking addition to scholarship. Its strength lies in its provision of a more nuanced (and more convincing) history of the practice of following the *via dolorosa* in Jerusalem than previously existed, and as such it is very welcome.

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CHRISTIAN D. LIDDY, *Contesting the City: The Politics of Citizenship in English Towns, 1250–1530*. (Oxford Studies in Medieval European History.) Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017. Pp. xvi, 254; 5 black-and-white figures and 5 maps. \$97.50. ISBN: 978-0-19-870520-8.
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Few interested in the history of English—and indeed, European—medieval towns will find Christian Liddy’s book anything but indispensable. Towards the end of this work he sets out that his “research has not been driven by a pathological need to find conflict” (206); he has, however, certainly found lots of it. The central argument to this book is that citizenship was both “the major fault line within urban society”—and therefore of significant value to those who held it—as well as a “fluid and contestable category of ideas and practices”—and thus a source of persistent tensions within English medieval towns (21, 1). Through chapters focusing on citizenship, space, elections, visual and oral communication (“silence was the sound of harmony,” 150), and written communication, Liddy successfully argues that these spheres were not just places or media in and through which conflict and disagreement happened; they were themselves objects of contestation in English medieval towns.

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Having chosen the four provincial capitals of England (Norwich in the east, Coventry in the Midlands, Bristol in the west and York in the north) along with London as the primary focus of this study, Liddy effectively employs an impressive range of source material. The towns in question produced copious records and Liddy uses these sources very well indeed. Repeatedly and throughout this book, Liddy digs deep into the language of his written sources to reveal their true meanings—for instance a forensic focus on the vocabulary employed in the records of conciliar meetings shows that the aims of such meetings were to establish at worst a consensus, and at best unanimity (142). This particular use of the written record is especially well contrasted with his subsequent analysis of the silences and ambiguities within the same sources, which hint at dissent and argument (145). Liddy is, though, equally adroit when it comes to the use of epitaphs, monumental brasses, houses, and even a lock on the exterior face of the door to the town hall in Mons (155–56) as evidence in support of his argument. One very welcome aspect of this work is the integration of a good deal of secondary literature on the towns of northern Europe (12–17), which provides a welcome context for developments within towns in England.

Especially worthwhile and valuable in this book are also Liddy's summary of the historiography on urban space (51–57), in which he quite rightly notes that disputes over space were far from just an urban phenomenon; his explanation of the development of the legal concept of *purprestres* and their importance in contemporary towns as flash points (57–60); his study of the nature and importance of urban public opinion (125–30); the analysis of the role played by the crafts in towns (138–42); and his interesting evaluation of urban bill casting, which bills, owing to their anonymity, “spoke for no one, yet everyone” (161–64).

In a generally well-written work, the references to “processes of privatization” and of “a public resource that belonged to the many not the few” are too current for some tastes (157). Occasionally, too, Liddy goes further than perhaps the evidence allows. In an otherwise excellent section on London's “constitution” of 1319, the association of the cult of Edward the Confessor with London (189) is surely too tenuous. London's own saints, Saint Thomas Becket and Saint Earconwald, were undoubtedly more important to the Londoners than the Confessor based at “distant” and sometimes apathetic Westminster; the Feast of Saints Simon and Jude (28 October), when the new mayor assumed office, was clearly of greater significance than the Feast of the Translation of Saint Edward (13 October), when he was elected. Can we be sure, too, that two references to popular revolt and the making of a “new Aldermanbury” (207–9), in 1513 and 1517, do represent the preservation of a centuries-old “social memory” among the Londoners, as Liddy speculates? There is little firm evidence for that. Certainly, John Stow, born in 1524/5 and famed for his social memory, knew of no such significance at this location. True, Stow recalled seeing the ruins of the old court, but it is hard to believe that the site of a thirteenth-century aldermanic house torn down by a mob would have remained undeveloped for 250 years. Indeed, Stow believed that “the courts of the Maior and Aldermen were continually holden there [at Aldermanbury], vntill the new Bery Court or Guildhall that now is was builded and finished”, that is to say, well into the 1430s (John Stow, *A Survey of London*, ed. C. L. Kingsford, vol. 1 [1908], 292). In this sense, taking Bury to mean “large house” or “court,” the references to the making of a “new Aldermanbury” would refer not to the destruction of an aldermanic residence 250 years previously, but to the establishment of a new, presumably popular, court of aldermen.

All the same, Liddy is to be congratulated for producing an excellent book of great value to urban historians.

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