

a moral tract, an Irish canon-law collection, an exegetical treatise, and two penitentials, and lead the author to the same conclusion: that by the mid- and late ninth century, when these texts were copied in continental script, St. Gall monks probably did not realize their centuries-old Irish origins, either out of ignorance or disinterest (88). The affiliations these St. Gall texts have with other manuscript witnesses elsewhere suggest that the monastery's library owed its copies to communities in nearby Reichenau, northeastern France, and south and central Germany and not directly to Ireland. But this should not surprise. By the mid-ninth century, the texts had been circulating for many generations on the continent. Here, the author makes an important point: deep into the Carolingian experiment, Hiberno-Latin texts had become mainstream European. One could make the same observation of Isidore of Seville's works or of those of the North African Augustine of Hippo. And here, too, is the central weakness of the book. It seems to tilt at century-old straw men as exemplified by the quaint Waddell quotation and the charge to demystify "the position of Irish scholarship on the continent." Who now believes that ninth-century St. Gall served a "gateway function" between Ireland and the monastery or that "a singular connection" linked the monastery to the island (109)? St. Gall monks may not have known or acknowledged the Irish paternity of the ancient Irish texts they copied and read in the ninth century, but they certainly knew and fondly recalled Marcus and Marcellus. And then there are the twenty-nine titles of works written in Irish script. These books were not listed in the library's main catalogue but were entered sometime afterward on a single page that was subsequently attached to the general catalogue. The author suggests that these writings were the kinds of works pilgrims would pack in their luggage and that they "washed up at St. Gall following their ride on the waves of insular pilgrimage" (62). Do we know what pilgrims chose to read on their journeys? Would they have likely packed books on poetic meter, a bulky Virgil, and Boethius's arithmetic alongside biblical and other religious writings? A more plausible scenario would counter that the books were not in the general collection when the inventory was compiled between 850 and 860 but instead belonged to Marcus and Marcellus when they decided sometime between 849 and 872 to break their journey home from Rome and to remain at St. Gall, keeping their personal collection of books with them. When they were no longer around to use their books in the service of the community, the books' script may have made them seem "outlandish, hard to read and, ultimately, of little use" (55), but while Marcus and Marcellus lived and taught, their books undoubtedly contributed to scholarship at St. Gall. Can traces of the learning and scholarship contained in this impressive lot of books be found in other

St. Gall manuscripts or in the work of scholars such as Notker? This is the important question the book fails to address. When Notker ebulliently praised Irish scholarship and Theodulf of Orleans mordantly condemned it, they were responding to scholarship that was alive and palpable in their culture and, during the time of Marcus and Marcellus, present at St. Gall.

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SPARKY BOOKER. *Cultural Exchange and Identity in Late Medieval Ireland: The English and Irish of the Four Obedient Shires*. (Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought, no. 109.) New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018. Pp. xvi, 298. Cloth \$99.99.

*Cultural Exchange and Identity in Late Medieval Ireland: The English and Irish of the Four Obedient Shires* is the 109th volume in the esteemed Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought series, which was inaugurated in 1921. Sparky Booker's much-anticipated contribution to this remarkable run of scholarly monographs is a very welcome and worthy addition.

The "four obedient shires" were the counties geographically closest to Dublin city in the later Middle Ages (Kildare, Louth, Meath, and Dublin). They were roughly coterminous with the "English Pale," the part of eastern Ireland that remained most Anglophile while much of the rest of the island witnessed increasing Gaelic resurgence in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. To the uninitiated (and, indeed, to many others), it may appear that the inhabitants of the four shires were either Irish or English, and that the two communities—the "two nations"—went about their daily lives in splendid isolation from each other. In fact, little could be further from the truth. Despite their different backgrounds and varying political affiliations and aspirations, many of these people and their ancestors had lived cheek by jowl with one another in Ireland for over three hundred years (in some cases since about 1170, or as many as fifteen generations). Intricate webs of marriage, coalition, and shared experience as well as economic, social, and religious interaction ensured that the demography of the four shires was multifaceted and complex. The laws—and the government—as well as many modern commentators may have operated on the assumption there *was* a simple binary Irish/English population split in later medieval Ireland, but the reality on the ground was not that straightforward.

In Italy, Sicily, England, and elsewhere, the Normans were renowned for their adaptability and chameleonlike assimilation, and the Anglo-Normans in Ireland were little different. Here, they retained and developed their own idiosyncrasies, identity, and ethnicity. At the same time, they were partly Gaelicized while some of the Irish were Anglicized in return. The limi-

nal space between the Irish and the English is what is so fascinating and yet so little known. It is better understood now, thanks to this volume.

Booker sets herself a daunting tripartite challenge: to demonstrate that the lines between “Irish” and “English” were blurred, to explain how and in what ways they had become so, and to outline the consequences. Her approach is refreshingly logical, rational, and pragmatic. Her treatment of the primary documentary sources—which are sometimes meager and often enigmatic—is thorough, balanced, and subtle; she neither extracts nor extrapolates too much, yet she still manages to elucidate the nebulous interactions between the inhabitants of the four shires in a compelling and convincing way. Booker is patently adept with the secondary materials too, summoning, building upon, or dismissing them as and when appropriate, and always in a highly competent and eloquent manner. The book builds especially on the work of Art Cosgrove, Seán Duffy, Steven Ellis, Robin Frame, Colm Lennon, James Lydon, Kenneth Nicholls, Annette Jocelyn Otway-Ruthven, Katharine Simms, Brendan Smith, and John Watts.

The six core chapters are neatly buffered between a scene-setting introduction and a brief conclusion. Key themes are the church, intermarriage, fosterage, gossip and godparenthood, onomastics, language, and customs such as clothing, hairstyles, and legal status (including the intriguing option for some Irish people to “purchase” English law). Booker focuses on the intersections of Irish and English culture in eastern Ireland in the century or so before the Reformation. She skillfully reveals the perhaps unexpected level of alliance, cooperation, and mimicry at these junctures. Her analysis of naming patterns and traditions is particularly informative, while it becomes clear that language was not the key marker of ethnicity that one might have anticipated it to be. Booker explains some of the strategies that certain parties employed to negotiate their way through life in the four shires, sometimes in order to succeed and sometimes purely to survive. Despite the range and depth of “cultural exchange,” Booker documents a deep-rooted anti-Irish paranoia among the colonial community, while the endemic nature of the discrimination is reflected in the oft-repeated phrase that so-and-so was “accused of being Irish.” In terms of the broader context, Booker alludes to the situation in continental Europe and in Britain, especially Wales and the marches between the English and the Welsh.

The sole disappointment with this book is at an editorial level. There isn’t one major problem, more a virtually full repertoire of minor anomalies. This includes grammatical gaffes, typos, and a lack of consistency in capitalization, date format, hyphenation, italicization, orthography, punctuation, spacing, treatment of numerals, typography, use of abbreviations and Latin-

isms, and use of p./pp. in references. Among the spelling mistakes are: “Acquitaine,” “annullment,” “cheiftain,” “eral,” “Houndsmills,” “Laudabilitier,” “soliders,” “Úi,” and “villain” (for “villein”). Perhaps more careless are the many misspelled colleagues’ and authors’ names, including misspellings of David Beresford (as “Bereford”), Llinos and J. Beverley Smith (as “Beverly”), Barbara Hanawalt (as “Hanawault”), R. H. Helmholtz (as “Helmholtz” or “Helmhotz”), Mary Ann Lyons (as “Mary Anne”), Gearóid Mac Niocaill (as “MacNiocall”), Katharine Simms (as “Katherine”), and Freya Verstraten Veach (as “Verstaten Veach”). When scholars are named, some are referred to by their last name only, while others are accorded their first name too. The text uses miles but the maps are in kilometers. It’s not the magnitude of the mistakes—in fact, each one is quite trivial—it’s the sheer number (this reviewer stopped counting after two hundred).

Despite the many minor infelicities, I would recommend this book. It is engaging, informative, and helps to unravel and explain some of the more complex relationships between the English and the Irish in the four counties at the heart of the English colony in later medieval Ireland. It makes a significant contribution to the scholarship, and encourages us to rethink our assumptions about ethnicity in the Middle Ages. In this regard (and leaving the last word to Sparky Booker), “a settler from the four shires could speak Irish, wear a moustache and an Irish mantle, ride without a saddle, perhaps in the company of his Irish wife and his bardic poet, and still be considered ‘English’” (254).

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STEVEN VANDERPUTTEN. *Dark Age Nunneries: The Ambiguous Identity of Female Monasticism, 800–1050*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2018. Pp. xiii, 309. Cloth \$95.00, paper \$32.95.

Steven Vanderputten’s *Dark Age Nunneries: The Ambiguous Identity of Female Monasticism, 800–1050* promises a fresh look at the state of women’s religious communities in Lotharingia from the ninth to the early eleventh century. Central to the book is Vanderputten’s recurring claim that he is taking on a historical narrative, spun and repeated by earlier scholars, that paints this long period in women’s monastic history as one of “disempowerment and descent into social and spiritual redundancy” (37). Turning to a variety of (mainly written) sources from forty female communities, Vanderputten seeks to go beyond the argument that he and others have made elsewhere: that uncritical and excessive reliance on the voices that emerge from normative texts, and particularly from periods of “reform,” have “distorted our view of the social and cultural role played by female monasteries from that period” (155). He takes particular aim at the notion that nonbinary in-