and he discusses the persons associated with the sites Kempe visited, including the controversial John Jus and the celebrated holy women Catherine of Siena and Bridget of Sweden.

One of my favorite chapters, "Things," studies Kempe through the objects she handled, or might have handled, from spectacles to souvenirs to stockfish. Bale effectively conveys the materiality of medieval devotional culture through descriptions of Jesus dolls and chastity rings. Religious objects, he argues, "are not cheap substitutes for religious experience but, rather, a mode of having a religious experience" (133). Crucifixes and life-sized carvings of the infant Jesus and consecrated hosts are "enlivened things" that "represent intersections of life and death, miracles and mimesis, the extraordinary and the mundane" (133). Bale compares the writing of *The Book of Margery Kempe* to a set of eyeglasses. He intriguingly suggests that Kempe herself becomes a religious doll in the hands of admiring Roman matrons.

Having thoroughly explored Kempe's life, Bale fittingly concludes with her afterlife. The final chapter recounts the well-known story of William Butler-Bowdon's discovery of the only surviving manuscript of Kempe's *Book* among a "clutter" of old papers and books in his Derbyshire mansion before turning to Kempe's reincarnation in a variety of modern fictions, including Colin Curzon's "high-camp wartime thriller" *Love in a Barrage Balloon* (1942) (202) and Robert Glück's queer novel *Margery Kempe* (1995). For her impersonators and followers on Twitter, Margery Kempe remains a compelling example of "what it is to try repeatedly to change oneself, to seek words adequate to a difficult situation, and to maintain one's faith in the future in a profoundly imperfect world" (205).

The book's medley of approaches succeeds, to my mind, in achieving Bale's goal: a "highly personalized history of fifteenth-century England" through an investigation of "the identity and subjectivity of one of its most voluble and fascinating individuals" (10). Each chapter offers a different window on Kempe's life. Together, they offer a superb introduction to Margery Kempe and her world at a price that comports with student budgets. Bale unobtrusively defines terms like mixed life, *devotio moderna*, and Godhead for those new to the Middle Ages. The "Further Reading" cites monographs and essay collections on Kempe along with some broader studies of fifteenth-century devotional culture. Even as it targets a general audience, Bale's study offers much to delight medievalists through his mixed approach to a mixed life.

Karen A. Winstead
The Ohio State University
doi:10.1017/S0009640723000380

Spiritual Calculations: Number and Numeracy in Late Medieval English Sermons. By **Christine Cooper-Rompato**. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2021. 192 pp. $109.95 cloth.

For Cooper-Rompato, the contribution made by medieval sermons to lay numeracy has been underestimated. "Number makes the abstract graspable and understandable"

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0009640723000203 Published online by Cambridge University Press

(48), she remarks, revealing thereby that these sermons invoke the counting and rational numbers rather than the abstract numbers of more advanced mathematics (transcendental, imaginary, hyperbolic, etc.). True, many of such numbers had not yet been invented (or discovered), and true again, medieval numbers habitually stay "close to earth" (Jens Høyrup, "Hesitating Progress: The Slow Development toward Algebraic Symbolism in Abbacus-and Related Manuscripts, c. 1300–c. 1550," in *Philosophical Aspects of Symbolic Reasoning in Early Modern Mathematics*, ed. Albrecht Heefer and Maarten Van Dyck [College Publications, King's College, 2010], 3–56 (8)). Yet mathematical exploration did flourish—in the abstruse speculations of the Calculators and the calculation innovations of the trade schools. Number's immediacy and concreteness in these sermons do not tell not the whole story of medieval mathematics; nonetheless they contribute to what she calls a "hybrid numerate practice," which combines basic arithmetic with mystical interpretation of number. She traces this practice in mostly Middle English and some Latin religious literature: the sermon collections of Robert Rypon and of the author of Warminster, Longleat House MS 4, who wrote *Dives and Pauper*, also considered; the treatise *Jacob's Well*; and sundry individual sermons, along with the *Book of Margery Kempe*.

As explained in Chapter 1, number fundamentally inhabits medieval sermons through elaborate systems of division and subdivision that organize and amplify material. Christian numerology also prefers certain numbers: five (wounds of Christ), six (days of creation), seven (deadly sins), ten (commandments), twelve (apostles), and so on. In Chapter 2, the author of *Dives* and the Longleat manuscript brings God near at hand with numbers—notwithstanding the odd howler. In the parable of the lost sheep, numerological enthusiasm beguiles him into factoring 99 into 9 and 10 (instead of 11). And in noting that there is only one perfect number in each power of ten, the author is right only up to 10^4 (10,000)—which presumably is as far as he counted. There are occasional lost opportunities to further our historical insight into the mathematics, such as when Pauper observes how the number ten contains all single digits within it (44–45)—a comment that seems to presuppose place value. Cooper-Rompato contrasts the author's optimistic faith in number with the pessimism of *Jacob's Well* (Chapter 3), where any attempt to tally one's sins founders, because they are "wythoute noumbre" (78–79), even though God knows their exact sum.

This tension between number's ability to reveal God's operation in the universe and inability to fathom the depths of his love (or our depravity) is revisited in the conclusion, where Cooper-Rompato develops arguments about Margery Kempe made previously by Nicholas Watson ("The Making of *The Book of Margery Kempe*," in *Voices in Dialogue: Reading Women in the Middle Ages*, ed. Linda Olson and Kathryn Kerby-Fulton [University of Notre Dame Press, 2005], 395–434). Kempe's relentless enumeration (of sins, souls, pennies, and prayers, to name a few) ultimately exposes number's failure to encompass eternity. There is a philosophical distinction here, however, that calls for clarification. We can speak of the biggest number we can conceive (n) and even add one to it ($n + 1$). Framed thus, n can always be cashed in for a specific value. Dwelling on such ever-increasing numbers boggles Margery's imagination and inspires an awe akin to Kant's mathematical sublime. On the other hand, infinity (α), treated as a metaphysical totality, resists definition in language; it can be neither plotted on a graph nor included as a limit. A Latin sermon by Oxford theologian John Felton, discussed in Chapter 3, pertains here. Aiming to show how divinity surpasses Euclidean geometry, Felton notes that, whereas a small surface in traditional geometry always has a lesser area than a large surface, a morsel of the Eucharistic host contains the same quantity of grace as does the entire

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0009640723000203 Published online by Cambridge University Press

wafer (85). Here indeed is mystery. It would be several centuries before Georg Cantor showed how the infinite set of real numbers could be more numerous—"larger"—than the infinite set of counting numbers; yet, as Felton meditates upon the plenitude of Christ's consecrated body, which never diminishes though it endure endless division, he entertains the paradox that quantities "wythoute noumbre" can occur in different sizes. The point is not simply that God can count higher than we can, but that theology itself becomes the means of mathematical imagining.

Cooper-Rompato's appendix, which summarizes the main ways in which medieval people counted and calculated (by fingers, tally sticks, counters, and pen), complements Chapter 4, on the Latin sermons of Robert Rypon, who, among other things, promiscuously mixes his numeral systems. Using the Greek system to convert the letters of Jesus's name into numbers, Rypon adds them up, then eliminates the zeros—which exist only as Hindu-Arabic numerals—to produce a numerologically significant value. Throughout the sermons cited, one looks in vain for any formal method of marrying language and number. It seems rather that any arbitrary way to extract spiritual meaning from numbers is the right way. Cooper-Rompato correctly notes that the Hindu-Arabic numerals were not used consistently for a couple of centuries (106), but it could have been emphasized how, under-used as they were in daily practice, they may be invoked willy-nilly for the sake of a moralizing riff. Endless creativity characterizes these sermonists' abilities to find spiritual meaning in quantity. A seemingly inconspicuous number breaks open to reveal hidden truths: thus, the eighteen people crushed by the collapse of the tower of Siloam decomposes into ten commandments (of the old law) plus eight (of the new) (20). Such subdivisions are limited only by the extent of the imagination, and they implicitly invite the hearer to interpret their own experience in like fashion. In her conclusion, Cooper-Rompato notes how frequently Margery Kempe uses spiritually significant numbers to describe ordinary phenomena, suggesting that in her mind the numerological and empirical have converged. Is the numeric parallel between Christ's stigmata and her husband's five head wounds mere coincidence, or has Margery so internalized holy numbers that she now interprets all mundane experience in their terms? Cooper-Rompato's study reveals the importance of sermons in turning daily chores into acts of devotion and using number to transform the mixed life into an imitation of Christ.

Valerie Allen
John Jay College, The City University of New York
doi:10.1017/S0009640723000203

The Conversos and Moriscos in Late Medieval Spain and Beyond. Volume Four: Resistance and Reform. Edited by **Kevin Ingram**. Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2021. viii + 284 pp. $155.00 hardcover.

This volume is the fourth in a series edited by Kevin Ingram that provides a comparative approach to the history of Spanish converts from Judaism and Islam to Christianity known respectively as Conversos and Moriscos. It comes out of a 2017 conference that addressed the ways that Conversos and Moriscos confronted the constraints

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0009640723000203 Published online by Cambridge University Press