Overall, the essays in this volume do not seem to present radically new methodologies, but rather follow trends that are evident in other disciplines that focus on the Middle Ages. Nonetheless, three essays in particular stand out. Annabelle Martin’s iconographical analysis of the St. John Portal at St. Stephen’s Cathedral, Sens, in relation to the cathedral’s history presents a picture of local practice that is not found in contemporary theological texts. For example, the scene of a catechumen’s baptism by John in the archivolt presents an early, if not the first, representation of baptism through the ritual of infusion only, thus expressing specific liturgical modifications—from immersion to infusion—of the baptismal rite. By acknowledging the significance of the portal as part of the church building, Martin demonstrates that the sculptural program relates liturgical practice with a specific ecclesiastical site, Sens Cathedral.

Amy Bloch’s essay focuses on the history of two fonts in the Florentine Baptistery (ca. 1200–1500). Through an analysis of the large, and frequently fragmentary, textual evidence (literary, contemporary correspondence, historical records and liturgical texts), Bloch reconstructs the first font (ca. 1200) and outlines the commissioning of the second font (dated to ca. 1370–1371). By exploring how the liturgical rite was practiced and how monetary donations were collected and distributed, Bloch presents us with a view of the privileged families whose children were baptized in the Florentine Baptistery. By relating the textual evidence to the fonts’ physical presence, Bloch considers the visual memory of the role of baptism and its performances in relation to civic and communal memory.

Jenni Kuuliala’s essay, “Baptism and the Interaction of Supernatural Creatures in Medieval Europe,” presents some new avenues in which to understand the baptismal rite. Kuuliala presents a sociological analysis of folklore, medicinal superstitions and belief in the supernatural in relation to baptized and unbaptized children in the Middle Ages. This approach not only expands our understanding of the sociological and medicinal superstitions associated with the spiritual power of baptism in the Middle Ages, it also may provide new ways to understand the history of medicine and science in the period.

Overall, the essays in this volume will appeal to a very specialized audience: the “fonters.” Nevertheless, collections such as this one remind scholars that we must think beyond the confines of our field and reach out to other disciplines in order to attempt to construct a more holistic view of the Middle Ages.

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From 20 September 2013 to 2 February 2014, the J. Paul Getty Museum hosted visitors from England that came to the United States for the first time: six of the large stained glass windows from the Ancestors of Christ series at Canterbury Cathedral. Accompanying the windows was another rare offering for the museum-going public—the Saint Alban’s Psalter unbound and laid out page by page. In honor of this exhibition, two catalogues were produced by Getty Publications involving essays from one of the exhibition’s co-curators and other
scholars invested in the topic; one features essays related to the stained glass
(The Ancestors of Christ Windows at Canterbury Cathedral), and the second
offers contributions on the Psalter and Romanesque manuscript painting (The
St. Alban’s Psalter: Painting and Prayer in Medieval England). Though the
glass and illuminations were united in the exhibition, titled Canterbury and St.
Alban’s: Treasures from Church and Cloister, the separation of the publica-
tions perhaps reflects the general sense of the show, which is that two diverse
treasures of twelfth-century painting, shone each in its own right within a
shared exhibition space. This review considers Jeffrey Weaver and Madeline H.
Caviness’s catalogue for the stained glass.

Weaver, associate curator of Sculpture and Decorative Arts at the Getty,
provides for the book an essay entitled “The Ancestors of Christ Windows:
Context, Program, Development,” as well as a section featuring more tradition-
al catalogue entries for some of the windows. Madeline H. Caviness, Professor
Emeritus at Tufts University and the leading expert on the Canterbury glass
program, contributes an essay titled “The Visual and Cognitive Impact of the
Ancestors of Christ in Canterbury Cathedral and Elsewhere” which might be
considered a sort of epilogue to the exhaustive treatment that Caviness gave to
the stained glass program of Canterbury throughout the 1970s and 1980s. This
corpus included, among a number of essays and articles, a monograph called
The Early Stained Glass of Canterbury Cathedral, Circa 1175–1220 (1977)
and The Windows of Christ Church Cathedral, Canterbury for the Corpus

Naturally, the predominant audience of this publication is the museum-going
public, which is well served by the text. Weaver’s essay gives a broad sweep of
the cathedral’s glass program with a focus on the Ancestors and provides a
useful summary of the literature on the glass for a general audience. That so
much of the material comes from Caviness’s early work comes as little surprise
given her expertise, but Weaver’s treatment makes the work accessible, and
proves to be a useful contribution to the catalogue. He is somewhat heavy-
handed with the assertion that the legacy of the Alexis Master’s paintings in the
St. Alban’s Psalter’s had a strong impact on the Methusaleh Master, the figure
thought to have produced a significant number of the windows in the beginning
and end of the cycle. This idea falls a bit short, since the idea of transmission
between the psalter and the windows is vague. One sees how painters in Eng-
land—regardless of medium—were influenced by the Psalter in the 1130s, and
can accept that aspects of its composition and use of space are identifiable in
later English works. In spite of this, it is a connection that would not necessitate
such an explicit argument except for the fact that the glass and manuscript were
joined together in the Getty show. The goal of this argument seems to be to
unite the two catalogues (and perhaps the exhibition as a whole), but instead it
seems to highlight the tenuous link between them, which is doubtless one of the
reasons why a two-volume catalogue was chosen in lieu of a comprehensive
one.

Madeline Caviness’s essay, “The Visual and Cognitive Impact of the Ances-
tors of Christ in Canterbury Cathedral and Elsewhere,” is an exploration of the
Ancestor windows; she analyzes their program and materiality and considers the impact of the windows on a variety of medieval viewing communities. Perhaps most interestingly, Caviness poses the question of how Jews might have related to and perceived the cathedral, and how the monks responded to them. According to Caviness, the local Jewish community had a positive relationship with the priory in the twelfth century; the Jewish synagogue was built on land rented from the cathedral, and money was lent by Jews for the rebuilding projects. Additionally, in 1189 the archbishop confined the monks within the priory precinct, and in his account of the cathedral’s building program, Gervase tells us that local Jews brought them food and offered prayers on their behalf. Caviness remarks upon the Jewish imagery in the pictorial program of the cathedral, which includes Jewish figures depicted as prophets, Moses with a saintly halo, and an elegant Synagogue whose lack of a blindfold marks her as an iconographical anomaly signaling Canterbury’s particular respect for the neighboring Jewish populous. Perhaps most compellingly, Caviness reminds readers that “the windows in the highest position recount a common past, differing only in the act of Christian faith that affirmed Jesus as the Messiah” (84). The relationship with local Jews seems to have been significant spiritually, economically, and socially, and Caviness’s evidence from a variety of sources gives the reader confidence that this story has been neglected in the literature in spite of its importance.

In addition to elucidating some matters of iconographical importance, Caviness is especially evocative in her study of reception. She enlivens the windows’ role in the liturgy, noting that the genealogies of Christ in Matthew and Luke were sung on Christmas and Epiphany respectively, but that their place in Christian history would be meaningful throughout the year. In particular, she examines the spatial relationships between the monks and the ancestor windows, projecting what they would have seen as they processed into the choir or entered the eastern transept, and establishes that Christ and the Virgin appear on the brighter south side, across from the Creator and Moses in the dimmer north. Further, Caviness reads contemporary events into the biblical scenes chosen for the windows of the cathedral, with Moses in the east window being likened to Thomas Becket.

Caviness’s recent thoughts on Canterbury, and her focused commentary on issues of genealogy and reception in the ancestor windows provide an insightful epilogue to her earlier work on the cathedral, last published in the 1980s. Overall, the book is a strong companion to the exhibition, and will provide an afterlife for the show long after the windows have been replaced at Canterbury.

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Originally presented as a symposium of the same title held at UCLA in 2009, Writing Down the Myths addresses the collection and literarization of myth—mythography, as opposed to mythology. Of the fifteen essays, all but one deal with Indo-European traditions, and the majority focus on the mythographies of Western Europe: Greek and Roman, Celtic/British, and Germanic. Interestingly, the essays on Hittite and Hindu mythologies find that mythography per se is