

JYX



This is a self-archived version of an original article. This version may differ from the original in pagination and typographic details.

Author(s): Karonen, Petri

Title: Dying Prepared in Medieval and Early Modern Northern Europe. Anu Lahtinen and Mia Korpiola, eds.

Year: 2019

Version: Published version

Copyright: © 2019 Cambridge University Press

Rights: In Copyright

Rights url: <http://rightsstatements.org/page/InC/1.0/?language=en>

Please cite the original version:

Karonen, P. (2019). Dying Prepared in Medieval and Early Modern Northern Europe. Anu Lahtinen and Mia Korpiola, eds.. *Renaissance Quarterly*, 72(3), 1095-1097.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/rqx.2019.321>

major art works and the patronage of printed books. Herein is revealed the impetus of Salvestrini's choice of title, which joins a Christian term denoting a special spiritual gift that the abbot had received for the service of the church and the humanist employment of an ancient Greek virtue in fulfillment of that charism. Salvestrini likens the patronage of Milanese to the actions of mercantile families for whom "riches were an indispensable condition of the exercise of active virtue, civic responsibility and charity" (261). The abbot practiced magnificence especially at the founding of the congregation of Vallombrosa (as an independent rival to that of Santa Giustina) between 1485 and 1490, and the recovery, from 1499 to 1515, of possessions formerly in the *commenda* of the Medici.

The *Memoriale*, in Salvestrini's estimation, is one of the most important sources of Renaissance-era Vallombrosan history. The edition provides a good codicological and paleographic report of this vernacular text and dates it to 1517–19. There are six extant manuscripts. The work is divided into three books. Book 1 concerns the healing of six schisms within the congregation. Book 2 treats the reform and enrichment of Vallombrosa. The last book recounts the expansion of the congregation and ends with the author's account of his deposition, torture, and exile by Pope Leo X. It is striking that the three principal actors in the *Memoriale* are Milanese, monastic chapters both general and local, and the founder, Saint John Gualbert, as a heavenly agent. Capitular actions are cited ninety-five times and the founder's fifty-one times. Milanese's love for his monastic brotherhood and filial devotion to the founder carry the action from start to finish. The present edition of this work is a boon for scholarship both as a cultural artifact of the time and as a richly detailed account of local history.

The eleven appendixes are editions of contemporary sources, the most significant of which are the Vallombrosan constitutions of 1504. It would have been useful to identify the eleven items briefly in the table of contents. Salvestrini has given us an exhaustive examination of his subject, yet at the end, Milanese remains a bit of a cipher. Abbot Biagio's writings are void of spiritual reflection. His religious sense was more institutional. In presenting this aspect of the person, our author does a lot with a little.

Charles Hilken, *Saint Mary's College of California*
doi:10.1017/rqx.2019.320

Dying Prepared in Medieval and Early Modern Northern Europe. Anu Lahtinen and Mia Korpiola, eds.

The Northern World 82: North Europe and the Baltic c. 400–1700 AD. Peoples, Economies and Cultures. Leiden: Brill, 2018. x + 212 pp. \$109.

This anthology addresses from many perspectives the problem of preparation for death and the memory of the deceased. The authors are historians and church historians who

are investigating the subject in a wide geographic area, and the time period covers more than half a millennium. The majority of the studies deal with the kingdom of Sweden (including Finland), Iceland, and, more generally, Scandinavia, Lesser Poland, and the diocese of Winchester, in England. The approaches and materials of the articles vary considerably but the focus of the studies is mainly on elite views on preparing a good death. Most commonly, authors approach the topic through a limited set of individuals (Kirsi Kanerva, Cindy Wood, Anu Lahtinen) or through urban materials (Dominika Burdzy and Mia Korpiola). Otfried Czaika's analysis is based on about seven hundred funeral sermons, from which he finds examples to study the Swedish situation in the second half of the seventeenth century. The examination extends also more generally to the memory of the deceased. Czaika also discusses how "Everyman and everywomen" were prepared for death (144). Riikka Miettinen's study of how those who committed suicide prepared themselves for death takes the process even closer to ordinary people. People often witnessed these cases. Witnesses usually represented subgroups of society, or even marginal groups.

The source materials used by the authors include Icelandic sagas, private letters, wills, legal and other normative texts, account documents, judicial sources, and the above-mentioned funeral sermons. In other words, the quality and quantity of source material vary greatly, which, of course, has also influenced researchers' approaches and methods. For example, Kirsi Kanerva examines the image of the "strong-willed people" through three saga cases. Miettinen's text is based on nearly three hundred court cases. Miettinen and Mia Korpiola show in their writings how Swedish (and indeed Nordic) culture was still largely oral for a long time during the early modern period. Contrary to, for example, religious, normative, or private material, the minutes of the courts did not mention "good death" at all but focused mainly on matters relevant to legal practices.

Korpiola's multidimensional text focuses primarily on deathbed confessions, with the help of the norms of King Magnus Eriksson's town law and legal practices in Swedish towns from the Middle Ages to the seventeenth century. Dominika Burdzy's review is based mainly on previous research literature and focuses on Lesser Poland's cities, especially Kraków, through wills and legal and religious documents. The long-term approach, widely varying themes, and wide geographic area allow comparative perspectives. An important finding is that the differences in preparing for death are not significant across Northern Europe and have varied in time across the research area.

The book shows how the people of the Middle Ages and the early modern period tried to prepare for death throughout their lives. Hopes for the future lay in the afterlife. This view becomes clear, for example, in the chapter by Cindy Wood on the bishop of Winchester, William Wykeham (1366–1404), and in Czaika's chapter. Finally, Anu Lahtinen has written, from a variety of source materials, an interesting study of situations in which some Swedish nobles in the Reformation era had to pay with their lives for the changes in the political atmosphere. This anthology is a valuable addition to the

study of its subject. As both editors notes in their introduction, and as Bertil Nilsson states in his concluding remarks, the findings also open up opportunities for further research.

Petri Karonen, *University of Jyväskylä*
doi:10.1017/rqx.2019.321

Reformations: The Early Modern World, 1450–1650. Carlos M. N. Eire.
New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2016. xx + 894 pp. \$40.

Now that the long march of quincentenary publications has passed and the dust is beginning to settle on the Reformation once again, it is becoming easier to step back and take stock of the results of so much historiographic industry. For at least two years, in the buildup to early 2017, and for a year thereafter as well, books on Luther and various aspects of the Reformation became staples in publishers' catalogues. Time, no doubt, will winnow the wheat from the chaff, but there were some books whose scope and significance were apparent as soon as they appeared. Carlos Eire's *Reformations: The Early Modern World* (2016) was one such book. In its ambition, range, and the quality of its prose and perspective, Eire's work belongs to the category of instant classics.

Reformations is written as a series of narratives, unapologetic in their depth and density, pitched at "beginners and non-specialists" aiming "to make the past come alive" and the reader "thirst for more" (xii). Despite this appeal to narrative and general readers, however, *Reformations* has a sophisticated historiographic argument at its core. Basing his work on "the latest findings of those who study this segment of the past, with an eye firmly fixed on present-day concerns," Eire sets out to pitch his own approach against the "traditional histories" by treating the movement as a series of "interlocking reformations" played out over a period reaching from 1450 to 1650. This span of two centuries, Eire suggests, was held together by an "intrinsic unity," which was in essence the role of religion as an axis of change (viii–xvi). *Reformations* is thus based on the related notions that, first, "there were multiple Reformations and that none of them can be fully understood in isolation" (xvii), and second, that these multiple reformations reached from the late medieval period to the age of the early Enlightenment and gave rise to no less than a "metaphysical and epistemic revolution," which in its different facets "changed the world more profoundly and irreversibly than any other paradigm shift brought about by scientists at that time" (746–47). This is what the pluralized title implies and the subtitle subsequently confirms: the Reformation in its many forms has to be understood as the prime mover of the early modern universe, and this necessarily requires a narrative that treats both origins and outcomes as an intrinsic whole.