may study in depth, and indeed, the challenges inherent in the material are balanced by the generous array of descriptions. The book is particularly rich in direct quotations and translations of primary sources joined, in the latter chapters, by a generous allotment of musical examples to illustrate particular points. This is an expert's book in the best sense, providing enough detail for the liturgist or musicologist to have plenty of leads for future study while giving the generalist sufficient guidance to reward careful reading. Yardley's study will likely take its place alongside Anne Winston-Allen's *Convent Chronicles: Women Writing About Women and Reform in the Late Middle Ages* (2004), another book that looks at how monastic women create and support their own culture, as a foundational study for future research. Explorations of the differences between the cultures of women and men religious provide important insights about the spiritual, emotional, and musical life of our medieval ancestors.

Cynthia Cyrus
Vanderbilt University

Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski. *Poets, Saints, and Visionaries of the Great Schism, 1378-1417.* The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006. pp. x + 240.

Blumenfeld-Kosinski's new work is not an examination of the politics of the Great Schism, nor is it an exploration of the religious significance of the prophets and visionaries that fill its pages. Rather, as she states in her historical and methodological introduction, it treats the Great Schism "as a problem to illuminate medieval thought processes," (12) in order to analyze "the subjectivity of the people affected by the Great Schism as it manifests itself in texts and images, the only traces that remain of their thoughts" (14). In three sections focusing on visionaries, poets, and prophets, Blumenfeld-Kosinski seeks to paint the portrait of the "*imaginaire*" of the Great Schism (pp. 12-13). As she points out, the genres of texts she addresses had a large audience, and indeed "they are as much part of the historical reality as the military offensives, intrigues, and murders that punctuated the Schism years" (14). She sums up the questions these texts can speak to: "How did [the variety of people affected by the Schism] express their anguish and frustration? By which means did they try to intervene in the politics of their time? What kinds of solutions did they offer?" (12) Rather than implying

that the answers to these questions were simple or univocal, Blumenfeld-Kosinski brings a mix of both well-known and long-forgotten voices in these debates into the range of the historian's hearing.

In terms of a feminist methodology, her approach takes as its basis the point that the official (male-dominated) documentation is not sufficient for a full understanding of the impact of "one of the greatest crises the medieval church had ever experienced" (12). By focusing on genres usually left aside by historians, her foray into the mentality of the schismatic era is perforce far richer in the viewpoints of medieval women, who form about two-thirds of the poets, saints, prophets, and visionaries that Blumenfeld-Kosinski draws on. In addition, although the focus on texts (and pictures, in the "pope prophecies") leads her necessarily to consider only those with a high level of education or access to a scribe, she takes care to cast the net outside of the courts and convents to capture the view of well-educated laity. Interestingly, she does not explicitly analyze the implications for a feminist reading of the Great Schism of her evidence that both men and women turned to the same genres and provided a similar range of responses to the Schism. Rather, a major strength of the work is that she allows the parallels to stand on their own, a mute commentary on the fact that the frequent division of modern historical studies into research on women or men is a binary that prevents us from recognizing the full impact of events such as the Great Schism that affected all Europeans, regardless of gender, class, or country of origin. Blumenfeld-Kosinski begins her exploration with a foray into an earlier time for the purposes of comparison. She provides a brief overview of the schism of 1159-77 through the viewpoints of Hildegard of Bingen, Elisabeth of Schönau, and John of Salisbury (a papal functionary and reader of Hildegard). Her interest in this section is, on the one hand, to highlight the fact that visionaries and officials intersected in their interests and, on the other, to indicate the fact that this particular schism did not lead to the level of apocalyptic anxiety, depression, and prophetic visions that are the keynote to Blumenfeld-Kosinski's reconstruction of the schismatic *imaginaire*.

The rest of the book is structured to provide two chapters each on the fluid categories of visionaries, poets, and prophets (p. 14). In the first and third sections, Blumenfeld-Kosinski presents numerous voices, some with greater depth and some in ancillary fashion. In the middle section on allegorical poets, she provides extensive descriptions of two poets per chapter. The strength of this approach is to bring to light authors from a variety of countries (especially France and Italy), drawing on different kinds of authority (as nun, as saint, as local prophet, as ecclesiastic, etc.), and taking opposing stances as to which pope or solution to the schism they support. She is thus able to move easily from major texts of the era (by

Catherine of Siena, Vincent of Ferrar, Christine de Pizan, the anonymous "pope prophecies") to minor figures whose impact was regional at best. Her evidence demonstrates that the Schism was of such great concern to the educated public that individuals, who would otherwise feel they had no opportunity or leverage with which to intervene in continental politics, were moved to attempt the impossible through their written and oral texts. It is worth noting that the numerous examples in the first and third sections are so fascinating as to leave the reader wanting more information but produce a feeling of unbalance in comparison to the two chapters devoted to the four allegorical poets. Two aspects may well trouble the scholar of religion and the feminist scholar, respectively. First, Blumenfeld-Kosinski indicates in the introduction that various figures could fit into more than one of the categories in the title (p. 15). She then uses the term "visionary" to apply to more works than simply the ones deemed as visionary by modern scholars (including the allegorical poets as dream-visionaries in chapters 4 and 5, and visionary prophets in chapters 6 and 7). It would have been of great interest to this reader to see a more explicit analysis of the explosion of these categories, rather than a simple performance of it through the labeling of many diverse authors and their works as in part visionary. Second, an equal application of rigorous hermeneutical suspicion might have made the handling of the texts chosen slightly more convincing. For example, Blumenfeld-Kosinski looks only to the artwork surrounding Constance de Rabens to explain the source of her visions (p. 68), a choice that is in keeping with modern historical methodology, yet not so with Constance's claims to direct contact with the divine. Yet, in other portions of her study where she relies on hagiographical accounts written decades later than the Great Schism to give details about a specific saint alive during the events (pp. 77, 80, 88-9), Blumenfeld-Kosinski implicitly accepts that hagiographers intend to provide a truthful rendition of long-past occurrences rather than to write tales tailored to the needs of their present audiences. Without careful attention to an even handling of the notions of audience, reception, and claims to authority, the result is an undermining of the truth value of the (female) visionary's claims to divine intervention alongside a seemingly unqualified acceptance of the (male) hagiographers' versions of history.

In many ways, Blumenfeld-Kosinski's project functions admirably as a recovery of lost elements concerning the tensions placed on society by the Great Schism. I cannot think of another book that presents such a thorough crosscut of the religio-political concerns of a medieval era. As such, it is a welcome addition to the literature on the mentality of the late Middle Ages.

Jessica A. Boon
Southern Methodist University