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Judith Theben, *Die mystische Lyrik des 14. und 15. Jahrhunderts. Untersuchungen – Texte – Repertorium*, Kulturtopographie des alemannischen Raums, vol. 2 (Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 2010). xii + 586 pp. ISBN 978-3-484-89501-0. €139.95.

Judith Theben's Freiburg dissertation opens up new horizons for medievalists, because she offers the first extensive assessment of texts which she describes as 'mystical lyric'. The fact that in the initial publisher's blurb, this had transmuted into 'mysterious lyric' highlights that these are texts which had not hitherto been very visible to scholars. Theben offers brief delineations of both aspects contained in her title: she considers as lyric all texts which have song-like qualities, and as mystical those which focus on an aspect of *unio* – thus firmly situating herself within a German literary tradition in which mystical theology is understood as centred on an experience of 'unio', unlike the much broader Anglo-American sense according to which mystical texts express an immediate experience of the divine, or the philosophical discourse which disputes that central figures such as Eckhart or Seuse should be considered mystical writers.

Theben's decisions are brief and pragmatic; they may be open to quibbles, but they serve her purpose of assembling a repertory of texts which have all too often been ignored: by literary scholars, because they are generally anonymous and mostly transmitted in collective manuscripts; by musicologists, because there are no examples of notated melodies; by theologians, because they mostly represent literary adaptation and appropriations of mystical concepts in condensed form.

Where they have been noted at all, such texts have often been considered the spontaneous responses by uneducated nuns, and hence side-lined. Theben is able to demonstrate that while this is not impossible, it is not the norm: a significant number of songs collected in her repertorium are transmitted widely, albeit often in variant forms. Theben's introduction documents how frequently sister books or hagiographical accounts refer to nuns breaking into song, or of singing well-known Latin hymns and sequences in the vernacular. The practice was clearly widespread, and it is Theben's achievement to trace and produce a comprehensive collection of such examples.

The book consists of two parts: a critical study, which assesses the manuscripts, patterns, and types of transmission as well as of the textual variation of songs transmitted in more than one manuscript; finally, a discussion of main themes and a critical edition of hitherto unpublished songs. The second part consists of a repertorium of all known mystical songs which fit Theben's definition. This lists the songs alphabetically by their most common incipit, offers a brief survey of the transmission (discussed in more detail in the first part of the study) as well as a metrical analysis, cross-references to other songs and variants, and a conspectus of scholarly literature. It is this second part which will make the

book invaluable for future studies, because it makes visible for the first time how broad the transmission of these songs is, but also how varied the textual forms. While the first part is at times difficult to navigate as a result of the overlapping questions, the second is clear, comprehensive, and will be a treasure trove for anyone interested in devotional practices of the later Middle Ages. Some questions remain: neither the genre of 'song' and its relationship to the cultural practice of singing nor the division between Theben's 'mystical' songs and those of a more general religious nature are self-evident and would merit further investigation. Yet it is the achievement of Theben's study that it is now possible to explore such questions from a secure material basis.

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ALMUT SUERBAUM

Martine Veldhuizen, *De ongetemde tong. Opvattingen over zondige, onvertogen en misdadige woorden in het Middelnederlands 1300–1550*, *Middeleeuwse Studies en Bronnen* 147 (Hilversum: Verloren, 2014). 188 pp. ISBN 978-90-8704-410-7. €22.00.

Martine Veldhuizen, *Sins of the Tongue in the Medieval West: Sinful, Unethical, and Criminal Words in Middle Dutch (1300–1550)*, *Utrecht Studies in Medieval Literacy* 36 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2017). xiv + 208 pp. ISBN 978-2-503-56946-8. eISBN 978-2-503-56946-5. €70.00.

It is pleasing that Martine Veldhuizen's Utrecht dissertation is now available also in English translation, making her research available to a wider readership. As the starting point, she chooses a Dutch proverb: 'tong breekt been, al heeft ze er geen' (A tongue breaks bones even though itself it has none). Unlike the English proverbial saying that 'sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me', the Dutch counterpart considers words as actions – which is why medieval theology considers words alongside other forms of human action as forms of sinful behaviour. Veldhuizen therefore employs methods adapted from speech-act theory in order to assess medieval attitudes to sins of the tongue. Her corpus are Middle Dutch texts from the period 1300–1550 from three different fields: ecclesiastical, secular-ethical, and legal.

These three types of discourse reflect the distinction made between sinful, unethical, and – as Veldhuizen puts it – criminal words. The first and third of these categories are governed by explicit norms which decree whether certain acts are considered sinful in theological terms, or unlawful within the judicial domain. Ethics as the area in between is less obviously delimited; Veldhuizen therefore includes mirrors of princes which offer advice on what is, or is not,