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Virginia Reinburg, *Storied Places: Pilgrim Shrines, Natures, and History in Early Modern France*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2019. xii + 261 pp. Maps, figures, notes, bibliography, and index. \$99.99. U.S. (hb). ISBN 9781108483117.

Review by Susan E. Dinan, Adelphi University.

Virginia Reinburg is associate professor of history at Boston College specializing in religion and society in early modern France. She is the author of *French Books of Hours: Making an Archive of Prayer, c. 1400–1600* (Cambridge University Press, 2012). Both that monograph and the book under review are broad in scope. The first offers a full account of books of hours as books that different people used in distinctive ways. In it she employs the tools of social history and ethnography to understand books of hours as “archives of prayer.” *Storied Places* argues for the importance of local shrines as spaces Catholics used to reassert the authority of their faith in the wake of France’s religious wars. Again, she looks at the lives of common people to understand what the shrines signified to them, and she reads chronicles of the shrines to understand their layered meanings using the tool of ethnography. Reinburg argues that the shrines she studies were similar to those in Spain, Germany, Italy, the Low Countries, and New Spain, and that readers can draw from her conclusions to gain a better understanding of Catholic communities in religiously contested regions across Europe (p. 4).

The author states, “*Storied Places* explains how early modern women and men made, unmade, and remade their religious worlds over the course of the Reformation, the religious wars, and the postwar aftermath” (p. 12). Reinburg focuses on several shrines in areas where the Huguenot presence was strong and where Catholic communities felt the loss of their religious hegemony. Some shrines had existed and fallen into disrepair while others were new, but there was always an effort to connect newer shrines to a long-ago past. She examines most closely Sainte-Reine in Burgundy, Notre-Dame du Puy in Languedoc, and Notre-Dame de Garaison and Notre-Dame de Betharram in the central Pyrenees. She argues that Catholic communities rebuilt themselves and restored these shrines, which emboldened Catholics elsewhere and made the revival of other faith communities and shrines more likely. The reestablished shrines served as anchors for communities healing from devastating loss and reaffirmed their true faith.

Reinburg examines how personal and collective violence in the name of religion changed the French kingdom (p. 112). During the Wars of Religion, French Catholics and Huguenots terrorized and butchered one another. The author recounts the story of two men who returned to Le Puy in 1555 from a trial at the Parlement of Toulouse only to be executed by city officials for heresy. The authorities first burned their Genevan books, then cut out their tongues before

burning them alive (p. 135). There were ten executions for heresy in Le Puy in a twenty-seven-year period in the third quarter of the sixteenth century. Reinburg makes the point that while this demonstration of state violence was limited, it still sparked terror, but it did not destroy the Huguenot movement (p. 136). By 1562 Huguenots were worshipping in Le Puy, as they took control of once-Catholic churches and cleansed them of their images. The Catholic population was enraged by the presence and behavior of the Calvinists and responded by destroying their property and hanging some of them in effigy.

Iconoclasm (violence toward religious buildings, art, and relics) defined Protestant fighting in the eyes of Catholics who considered these properties and objects sacred. Reinburg explains that in the minds of Protestants, relics and images tempted the faithful to idolatry (p. 131). According to scripture, Christ is the only mediator between God and humans, and Huguenots believed Catholic authorities were leading their followers to eternal damnation by teaching them that humans could intercede for one another before God. Catholics wrote the sources upon which Reinburg relies for the information in her book, and it is through this lens that her readers are led to understand the consequences of the sixteenth-century civil wars in France. One wishes Reinburg had Huguenot sources as well to offer their perspective on the strength of their communities, the glory of their worship in local churches, and the price they paid when the Edict of Nantes reestablished Catholic rights to worship in regions they had come to dominate. The chronicles available to Reinburg thus focus solely on how Catholic communities rebounded in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.

The author helps her readers to understand the impact of the religious wars on Catholic survivors. Reinburg thoughtfully highlights the ordeal Catholic communities faced and their efforts to avoid confronting trauma in future generations by creating and recreating shrines. She convincingly asserts that the rebuilding of structures and communities was a way for Catholics to tell a story of their history that was coherent and could overlook the religious wars. Reinburg argues that the shrines were a tool for forgetting. She is in agreement with other scholars in arguing that the pacification edicts, especially the Edict of Nantes, imposed a policy of forgetting that eventually evolved into a culture of deliberate silence and erasure across the French Kingdom.[1]

Reinburg explains that after the Catholic League capitulated in 1596, all records of the League and the religious wars were to be destroyed, but the authors of three chronicles of the shrine at Notre-Dame du Puy did not put them to the flame. The authorities wanted all memories of the League and the fighting annihilated, but their preservation enables Reinburg to provide a unique perspective on the religious wars and the efforts Catholic communities took to recover from them (p. 117). She especially uses these accounts to shed light on the place of the Catholic League in Le Puy. The Duke of Guise founded the League in 1576 in opposition to the Edict of Beaulieu and Henry of Navarre, who became heir to the throne upon the death of François of Anjou. It was a powerful force until Henry IV's ascension to the throne. After its demise religious moderates returned from exile, reclaimed their titles and property, and opened the city's gates to foreigners. The city rallied and undertook repairs to roads, walls, and buildings so trade and pilgrimage would return to prewar levels (p. 148). Reinburg explains that ceremony had remained important throughout the wars, but while processions during the wars were penitential, begging for mercy and deliverance, after 1596, the weekly processions were more celebratory and more frequent. Catholics used processions to demonstrate the strength of their church and to revel in their renewed religious dominance (p. 150).

Reinburg delves into three chronicles penned by local artisans that provide a rich description of the evolution of the shrines at Le Puy from the perspective of common people who believed them invaluable markers of faith (p. 116). There is a literature about the involvement of elites at shrines, but Reinburg prioritizes sources that are less well known and provide her an alternative perspective of non-elites. She also studies the pilgrims who visited the shrine. Three-quarters of them were men, most between the ages of fifteen and twenty-nine, and many were artisans, peasants, or day laborers (p. 39).

Along with the chronicles, dozens of other shrine books were written in the seventeenth century. Reinburg discusses the nature of these works and whether they were works of history. She argues that, while these are not works of history per se, the historical craft was embedded in them because chroniclers used some of the same research methods historians did. She contends that while these documents were recognized as historical at the time, they actually represented a hybrid of myth, history, and archival research (p. 159). The sources upon which the chronicle's authors relied could be based on written accounts but also on oral accounts of "experts" who explained the origins of the sacred place. It seems unnecessary for Reinburg to have to persuade her readers that the sources are "historical" for them to be valuable. The shrines she studies are "storied" in part because of the legends that supported their existence.

What makes Reinburg's book so engaging is its multifaceted approach to telling the history of the shrines and the regions she studies. The author is interested in the environments surrounding the shrines, and she maps each shrine onto a terrain in reference to mountains, rivers, valleys, forests, fields, and roads. Reinburg asserts that "pilgrim shrines were beacons of healing, holiness, and truth in the landscape of early modern France" (p. 1). This is a bold assertion and one she defends well in her book.

NOTE

[1] Andrea Frisch, *Forgetting Differences: Tragedy, Historiography, and the French Wars of Religion*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015.

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