

elite, it is suggested by Professor Castellanos that a much wider audience was influenced through the medium of sermons. This seems an appealing idea, but it runs into the problem of the total absence of evidence of anything of the sort actually having occurred. Apart from one delivered by Isidore's brother to the Third Council of Toledo, no sermon texts survive at all from the time of the kingdom, and no such documents exist more generally from the early Middle Ages that promote the kind of ideological programme here suggested. As for Isidore's historical compositions, the apparent ignorance of his *De origine Gothorum* on the part of Ildefonsus of Toledo (657–67), as well as its manuscript tradition, suggests the work was not as widely read as this argument implies.

A wider difficulty with such an approach is the anachronistic nature of its underlying assumptions. While its various elements of consciously self-interested co-operation and manipulation of the historical record might easily make sense to a modern readership, they would be incomprehensible to the individuals and in the society said to have created them. To suggest, for example, that John of Biclarum and Isidore wilfully distorted or suppressed the role of Hermenegild, presented as a martyr for the Catholic cause by both Gregory of Tours and Pope Gregory the Great, is to assume their view of him was essentially correct, while the Spanish writers were deliberately falsifying the past in the interest of what they hoped was a better future.

This is not the only area in which a desire to answer a self-set question, albeit one of obvious interest, can obscure the absence of reliable evidence. Thus, in the third chapter on 'Structures of Power', Professor Castellanos presumes the existence of a free peasantry on the basis of some important archaeological explorations of settlement sites that—whatever else they achieve—cannot establish the legal standing of their inhabitants. Similarly, in an interesting discussion of the meaning of the term *servi*, while indicating that it must include more than the categories of slave envisaged in earlier Roman legal texts, the author states that it must now have extended to 'unfree tenants', but without providing evidence of their existence or a definition of what he means by the term. As ever, the limited nature of the evidential basis for the study of the Visigothic period imposes absolute restrictions on the kind of questions that can safely be asked of it and on the degree of certitude with which any answers should be presented. Valuable as is much of what is offered in this book, some of its conclusions need to be seen as useful hypotheses, to help the modern reader make better sense of a society whose own self-perceptions and practical realities will continue to remain largely veiled from sight.

ROGER COLLINS

University of Edinburgh.



Vida de San Eligio: versión castellana tardomedieval. Edición y estudio de Miguel Carabias Orgaz. Madrid: Iberoamericana/Frankfurt am Main: Vervuert. 2020. 182 pp.

The discovery of a previously unpublished hagiographic narrative is a rare and exciting event. In this diligent and scholarly edition of the *Vida de San Eligio*, Miguel Carabias Orgaz offers a compelling insight into the life and miracles of Saint Eligius (d. 660), known also as Eloy or Loye. The book begins with an eight-part introductory study focusing on late-medieval and early-Renaissance hagiography, the historical and social context of the *Vida*, its literary context, the sources of the *Vida* and the process of translation and reworking, the question

of authorship, the relationship between the *Vida* and other versions of Eligius' life, the language of the text and the editorial procedures adopted in the subsequent critical edition (77–104).

The *Vida* itself is a fascinating example of early-Renaissance hagiography. Divided into eight short chapters, it begins with a description of the saint's origin and birth, including a traditionally prophetic dream of his future greatness, before progressing to an account of his youthful apprenticeship and his journey to France and appointment as silversmith to King Clotaire II (given in the *Vida* as 'rey Lothario'). Of particular note is the tale of the production of the golden chair in which the saint miraculously doubles the volume of gold at his disposal.

The fourth chapter offers a summary of Eligius' miracles and treatment of the poor, while the fifth focuses on the greatest of his achievements—his election as Bishop of Noyon-Tournai. These sections are followed by an account of the saint's death, in which he predictably gathers his fellows around him in order to pass on his insights and admonish them over their future conduct. Chapter 7 discusses the translation of the saint's relics, while the final section offers a list of posthumous miracles. A curious feature, as the editor rightly recognizes, concerns how the narrator of the legend oscillates between caution (advising readers that it would be unnecessary to offer additional examples of the miracles) and exuberance (apologetically asserting that it would be impossible to resist hearing about yet another engaging tale).

The point that perhaps most clearly stands out from a reading of the *Vida* is a certain ambivalence towards the supernatural that seems inevitably to locate the text in the febrile context of the Reformation and the Protestant claim that hagiography is not so much a collection of saints' lives, but of saints' lies. The book in this sense is highly thought-provoking, and since the editor's approach throughout is as meticulous as it is precise, this is not just a publication to be welcomed, but one that sheds light on a pivotal moment in the development of cultural attitudes towards the saints and their achievements.

The volume is completed by a photographic facsimile reproduction of the unique extant manuscript (115–80) as well as a palaeographic transcription of the text (53–76). Since the former is of extremely high quality and is eminently readable, one could legitimately question whether it was necessary to include the latter rather than devote space instead to a more detailed discussion of the manipulation of hagiographic *topoi*, many of which appear to have been borrowed from elsewhere. This minor issue aside, the editor is to be commended for producing such a conscientious and exceedingly informative contribution to scholarship. The book in this sense is likely to become an essential point of reference for the elaboration of future work in this area.

ANDREW M. BERESFORD

Durham University.



Ámbitos artísticos y literarios de sociabilidad en los Siglos de Oro. Edición de Elena Martínez Carro y Alejandra Ulla Lorenzo. Kassel: Edition Reichenberger. 2020. vi + 380 pp.

Were people in Golden-Age Spain conscious of the general structures shaping society and culture? The book under review addresses this question from the various perspectives of poets, playwrights, scholars, musicians, painters and printers. The editors of this volume believe that 'cultural manifestations [that took place during] these centuries [i.e., those