the turn towards theory in recent years, yet Shaw's monograph powerfully illustrates the continuing value of source-focused scholarship. As our field debates its future (often in arguments that produce more heat than light) a book that does its work well—as indeed Shaw's does—reminds us that scholarship intended merely to denigrate either the work or character of others, whether theoretical or traditional, serves little purpose except to damage feelings and inflame controversy. Rather, such a volume demonstrates that our aim should be instead to produce useful, significant, and rigorous work (something always easier to describe than accomplish). With this volume, however, Shaw has undoubtedly achieved that goal.

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ROBERT STEIN, *Magnanimous Dukes and Rising States: The Unification of the Burgundian Netherlands, 1380–1480*, trans. Marilyn Hedges. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2017. Pp. xiv, 315; many black-and-white figures, 3 maps, 4 genealogical tables, and many tables. \$130. ISBN: 978-0-19-875710-8.
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The presumed fifteenth-century creation of a Burgundian territorial complex (“state” or “power”) has fascinated historians since Pontus Heuterus in the sixteenth century. Henri Pirenne believed that Philip the Good was the true *conditor Belgii*, who consciously brought different preexisting principalities together into a Burgundian state, with the explicit ambition to make it a kingdom apart from France and Germany, as a prelude to the nineteenth-century kingdom of Belgium. Johan Huizinga contested the deliberate character of this unification process and interpreted it as the accidental result of marriages and inheritances. Paul Bonenfant and Graeme Small questioned whether the identity of the Burgundian dukes, a branch of the French royal family, was more akin to that of autonomous rulers or to French princes. Richard Vaughan claimed that the process of state formation had started already in 1384–1404 in the creation of central financial institutions. For Willem Blockmans and the current reviewer Burgundian state formation was not forged merely from above, but from the bottom up as well by ambitious urban elites.

Robert Stein, a student of Blockmans's in Leiden, some thirty years after the successive syntheses of his mentor has crafted an original view on this theme, full of new perspectives, first in Dutch (2014), now in English. The essential conclusion comes at 256: “The dukes of Burgundy did not actually create a modern state, but during their reign a process of state formation was set in motion.” Stein insists on the paradox that a lot of traditional political and socioeconomic mechanisms and tools survived in the former principalities (Flanders, Brabant, Holland, and so forth), but that simultaneously several ducal institutions, run by competent university-educated professionals, created solid ducal power in a developing central state. The uninterrupted opposition of the cities and the power cores of the regions forced the Burgundian superstructure to restrict itself to a “composite monarchy.”

Stein's road to this final statement on the state-formation process is a noteworthy intellectual adventure. He started, as we all are supposed to do today, to familiarize himself with sociological and anthropological concepts. He was probably delighted with Max Weber's thesis on bureaucracy as a prime mover for the rise of the modern state. He was also charmed by Charles Tilly's concept of centralization: the center where all state power is concentrated is the dominant starting point of the modern state; central legal and financial institutions acted as instruments of the prince to impose authority on the competing legal powers within his territory. Stein, however, was educated in the Leiden-Ghent tradition with its strong focus on the search for new and unexploited empirical material as the only way to check the validity of the big theories. He was involved for many years in exhaustive archival detective research on the central institutions of the Burgundian rulers and has a long experience with the pros-

opographical treatment of officeholders and the impact of socioprofessional groups on politics. And so he discovered that territories such as Holland and Zeeland, Luxemburg and Namur, were bankrupt at the time that they were annexed into the Burgundian ducal complex; linking themselves to the extraordinary wealth of the house of Burgundy was the logical, and in fact inevitable, alternative for the former provincial dynasties. These facts show that the political ambitions of the dukes were not the only decisive factor in the state-formation process. Stein insists on “the attraction of a union” for subjects of the state (chapter 4). For the urban merchants and noble elites in Holland and other newly annexed Burgundian territories, the takeover of power by the dukes was a solid guarantee of the economic and social stability that they needed and desired. Simultaneously the dukes’ financial power and international network “enabled them to exercise considerable influence on the internal politics of the provinces long before there was any formal assumption of power” (257). It remains difficult for Stein to decide if state creation was an explicit plan or not, but he is sure that the dukes did everything possible to create the highest possible degree of centralization in the financial system.

The revelation of this book is indeed the impact of a variety of administrative innovations in government on state formation, step by step, and not at one precise moment and one location. It is not a coincidence that four chapters, half the book, demonstrate these processes: “Towards a New Structure of Government,” “The Jurisdiction,” “The Financial Organisation,” and “The Taxes.” In other respects Stein does not truly innovate but rather confirms the theses of previous historians of the Burgundian period, as for example when he discusses the notion of the theater state, focusing on symbols and rituals, that was introduced by Blockmans, Peter Arnade, Andrew Brown, and the current reviewer.

At 257 Stein offers us two marvelous statements: “The Burgundian lands were not yet *de jure* but certainly *de facto* sovereign, . . . a monarchy worthy of a royal crown” and “The assumption of power was a process of negotiation, reflected in the resulting political structure: the dukes had power, but the States had influence.” Here, and in all the chapters of this excellent synthesis, Robert Stein shows a talent for crystal-clear definitions and demarcations of the political and juridical realities of the fifteenth century.

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WENDY R. TERRY and ROBERT STAUFFER, eds., *A Companion to Marguerite Porete and “The Mirror of Simple Souls”*. (Brill’s Companions to the Christian Tradition 77.) Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2017. Pp. viii, 383; 3 color and 1 black-and-white figures. \$253. ISBN: 978-90-04-22621-0.

Table of contents available online at <https://brill.com/view/title/21417>
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Scholars of Marguerite Porete and her *Mirror of Simple Souls* as well as researchers in more general cognate disciplines have been waiting for this book for a very long time. Reports that it was forthcoming have been circulating since at least 2012, so it was a great joy when it finally arrived in the autumn of 2017. The book is a welcome addition to the profusion of publications on Marguerite and her *Mirror*, if only because it provides such a broad panorama of the many different dimensions of Porete studies. The editors have wisely chosen an inclusive and interdisciplinary approach, ranging from historical to theological and literary to codicological perspectives.

In characteristically careful and precise fashion, Sean Field opens the volume with a survey of the historical Marguerite and twelve hitherto-unanswered questions to stimulate further research. Some of these are interpretative, for example (30), “(7) How should we interpret Marguerite’s own silence in the records of the Inquisition against her?” so one suspects that definitive answers will not always be forthcoming. The final question (36–37) is intriguing,

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