book. The epilogue briefly takes up the commentaries of two Franciscans, Peter Olivi and the Hebraist Nicholas of Lyra, but again the takeaway is minimal, since, by LaVere's own admission, their works do not connect to the "themes" of earlier commentaries but instead attest to the "more specialized" nature of late medieval biblical exegesis (173).

While this compact book is not the cohesive and comprehensive monograph one might wish for, it does make a useful step forward in exposing the diversity of interpretations that could be given to the Song of Songs. LaVere's reattributions of some of the manuscript traditions will be particularly valuable to specialists in the field.

Alex J. Novikoff
Kenyon College

Susan R. Kramer. *Sin, Interiority, and Selfhood in the Twelfth-Century West*. (Studies and Texts, no. 200.) Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2015. Pp. xii, 171. $80.00.

Susan R. Kramer's *Sin, Interiority, and Selfhood in the Twelfth-Century West* follows the lead set out by Colin Morris with his influential thesis about the discovery of the individual in the twelfth century (*The Discovery of the Individual, 1050–1200* [1972]). That discovery was in Morris's eyes closely related to the emergence of individual confession, which was institutionalized in the famous decree *Omnis utriusque sexus*, promulgated at the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215, mandating that every Christian should confess his or her sins at least once a year to his or her own priest. Morris's thesis has been nuanced by other scholars, but many scholars still agree that a sea change took place in the long twelfth century, which saw important developments in the perception of self, in thinking about sin, as well as in the practice of confession. Kramer is one of these scholars, and her book is an interesting contribution to the debate. Her study complicates the discussion of whether the demand for confession should be seen as a disciplining—or civilizing—measure or as the result of experiments in self-reflection. Kramer also brings new insights into the question of interiority and its importance for the self.

Kramer employs two major innovative strategies to investigate her material. First, she looks at changing perspectives on specific topics by examining biblical commentary—for example, commentaries on three stories in which Jesus raises the dead: first the daughter of the synagogue leader, then the widow's son, and finally Lazarus. Augustine had already commented upon these stories and regarded the three persons being raised from the dead as different types of sinners being absolved of their sins. For Augustine, the first one exemplified the sinner who sins only in thoughts; the second, the widow's son, stood for the sinner who put his thoughts into action; and Lazarus represented the habitual sinner who delights in his actions. Kramer then examines the ways in which early medieval exegetes such as Bede expanded and adapted Augustine's thought, and then moves on to see how these biblical stories of Jesus raising the dead were interpreted in the twelfth century, with a particular emphasis on the texts reflecting the teachings at the school of Laon, especially that of Anselm of Laon. In such commentaries, Kramer observes an increasing stress on the necessity of priestly interference in cases of sins of thought. As a result it became ever more necessary for Christians to open up the secrets of their hearts in confession. In chapter 3 Kramer employs the same method in examining the question of original sin and of how this could be transmitted over generations if the soul is immaterial, although she focuses solely on the ways in which twelfth-century schoolmen interacted with Augustine's legacy on the matter.

The second strategy that is employed in this study consists of a broadening of perspectives by investigating the uses of significant terms in the scholarly discourse on penance and interiority in other contexts. In the second chapter, for example, where the author describes the debate about the question of whether tears can suffice to absolve sins, thus making an oral confession superfluous, she not only draws on theological debates, but also takes medical literature concerning tears into account. This method is even more prominent in chapter 4, which considers ideas of the assimilation of sin to disease and concurrent conceptions of contagiousness, including through an elaborate discussion of medieval medical ideas on the origins of illness.

This study provides fascinating insights into twelfth-century thought on the self, interiority, and sin, laying bare numerous disputes, contradictions, and inconsistencies. Furthermore, it deconstructs too-easy notions of the individual as an autonomous subject, adding new dimensions to the debate started by Morris. The discussion in this study is very much geared toward debates among intellectuals. As a result of this focus on scholarly debates, Augustine and the school of Laon loom large in this study. Such discussions did not take place in midair, however, but were grounded in a particular historical context, about which I would have liked to have read more. Kramer does regularly connect these intellectual debates to developments in penitential practice of the period, but while she is aware of studies in this field that have recently redrawn and questioned traditional views on the topic, she still clings to ideas of a major change in penitential practice resulting in the Fourth Lateran Council's enjoining annual confession. I am less convinced of such a change in practice, and tend, following an argument of Joe Goering, to see the discussions in the twelfth century more in terms of internally driven forms of scholastic discourse. Moreover, as an early medieval historian, I felt a growing unease with the way Kramer deals with the earlier period. She often jumps from Augustine to the twelfth century, and because of such a neglect of the period between the fifth and the twelfth centuries, she has a tendency to see the twelfth century as more innovative than it was. In monastic circles, confessing your thoughts was already a well-established practice in Late Antiquity, so revealing the secrets of the heart was not as innovative as is being claimed. In penitential books of the earlier period, sins of thought do occur, albeit not very frequently.

The seventh century Penitential of Cummean, for example, discusses the case of a man wishing to fornicate but unable to do so. Cummean's sentence on this topic was, moreover, frequently adopted in later texts. Interiority also plays a part in penitential books in discussions of motivations for sins. It is a pity that Kramer nowhere discusses such texts, because they might partly bridge the gap between Augustine and the twelfth century. Although I would have liked to see more attention being paid to historical continuities and to matters of social contexts, this certainly is a valuable and at times intriguing contribution to our knowledge of twelfth-century scholarly debates on conceptions of sins and of the means of absolving them, thus shedding light on twelfth-century ideas of the human, the soul, and salvation.

Rob Meens
Utrecht University

Bruce M. S. Campbell. *The Great Transition: Climate, Disease and Society in the Late-Medieval World*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016. Pp. xxv, 463. $34.99.

Bruce M. S. Campbell has undergone a fascinating transition over the course of his long career. Originally a specialist in the economic and agricultural history of Norfolk, England, he has now become, in his latest series of articles, an interdisciplinary, globe-trotting environmental historian, seeking to elucidate "nature as historical protagonist" in the manifold crises that beset the later Middle Ages. This book, which is based on the Ellen MacArthur Lectures that Campbell delivered at the University of Cambridge in 2013, represents the culmination of this transformation.

There is much to applaud and admire in *The Great Transition*. The figures alone (there are seventy-eight of them) testify to Campbell's thorough grounding in the scientific data and historical evidence that form the backbone of his argument. This is that climate shaped the trajectory of late medieval society's transition to a new demographic, economic, and social order by the end of the Middle Ages, but only in concert with other "core components" that included biology and microbes (chief among them being plague), as well as humans and their societies, and other ecosystems (22, Figure 1.2). This "dynamic socio-ecological system" renders irrelevant the traditional binary conception of "endogenous" factors (i.e., those internal to the human condition) contrasted with "exogenous," or external, agents chiefly having to do with the environment, such as disease or the weather.

Campbell takes us through the "Great Transition," which he defines as a pivotal period from about the 1340s through to the end of the fifteenth century, that marked a decisive shift "from one socio-ecological regime to another" (10). Basically, Europe was transitioning from the "efflorescence" and expansionary trends of the Medieval Climate Anomaly (otherwise known as the Medieval Warm Period, ca. 900–1300) to an extended period of demographic and economic contraction with the advent of the Little Ice Age (ca. 1300–1850). A "tipping point" came when a "perfect storm" of disasters—including war, famine, and, above all, plague—came together in the mid-fourteenth century to set the Great Transition in motion, augmented by a sudden downturn in the climate. The result, by the end of the Middle Ages, was a society and economy, having been freed from the "Malthusian deadlock" between population and resources, prepared to take off into a new, expansionary phase, thus opening up a Great Divergence between Europe and Asia. Although Campbell does focus much of his attention on England by way of necessity of its having the richest survival of sources—particularly in terms of price and wage data—he does not neglect other countries in Europe, nor, indeed, other continents around the world, especially Asia.

Campbell's thesis, however, is not immune to caveats. Although he wants to say that no one factor or agency was paramount in the Great Transition, I would argue that the Black Death played a leading role. One can hardly deny this to an event so often described as the greatest natural disaster in the history of humankind; Campbell himself asserts that "without the ecologically triggered eruption of the Black Death the trajectory of socio-ecological trends would undoubtedly have followed a different course" (393). I also feel that Campbell is forcing the issue by having plague switch from a rat-flea to a human-insect vector, thus enabling a direct, person-to-person transmission, in order to explain the Black Death's famously fast rate of spread and its transition from zoonotic to pandemic. Campbell is right to point out that paleomicrobiology has now proven that the Black Death really was plague, but a human-mediated disease would have made its far and fast spread across the globe far less likely, not more. Humans rarely produce the high levels of bacteremia required to infect new flea vectors, and human cargos traveling by ship would have been more conspicuous than the rats and fleas stowing away on grain shipments plying the trade routes all across Europe. Above all, the close contact required to spread infection among humans would have been largely precluded by the abundant precautions taken in many towns against suspected persons, since medieval medicine strongly endorsed contagion theory (understood in miasmatic rather than pathogenic terms), and doctors advised patients to above all flee from anyone thought to be harboring the disease. Moreover, the rat-flea nexus of bubonic plague best explains the haphazard "metastatic leaps" by which plague spread, the seasonal quality to plague outbreaks, and the very interactions between plague and climate that Campbell champions in his socio-ecological system (324). In addition, Campbell plays down the initial mortality of the Black Death, reckoning it at no greater than 40 percent, when most recent indicators are that this was at least 50 percent or more. Although mortalities among some privileged sectors of the population, such as English tenants-in-chief, were low, one can argue that their circumstances made them far less susceptible to plague and that they made up almost negligible fractions of the population. The poor, on the other hand, who were susceptible to a "super mortal-