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Dalarun, Jacques, Sean L. Field, and Valerio Cappozzo, eds. *A Female Apostle in Medieval Italy: The Life of Clare of Rimini*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2022. Pp. 192. ISBN 9781512823042. \$29.95 (paperback and eBook), \$99.95 (hardcover).

In this new book, Jacques Dalarun, Sean L. Field, and Valerio Cappozzo have, for the first time ever, translated the medieval hagiography of Clare of Rimini into English. This alone is a remarkable service to the field of medieval Italian hagiographic literature, though their way of doing so deserves additional praise. The fact that few scholars (let alone students) know much, if anything, about this holy woman is a central motor for the development of this edition of the text. This is a volume aimed at increasing accessibility, not only to the life of this remarkable medieval woman, but to the study of the middle ages more broadly. In addition to presenting the *vita* in a lucid translation, the scholars have used an innovative organizational principle that lends itself well to classroom use. After each of the twelve brief chapters from the *Life*, the authors have included an analysis and contextualization that focuses on a particular theme. As opposed to extensive footnotes or a long introductory essay, this organizational scheme makes clear to the reader that the primary source and its commentary are to be read side-by-side. For example, the chapter in which Clare moves into a cell in the walls of Rimini is cleverly titled “A Room of One’s Own” and explores the roles of female monastic communities in the urban landscapes of medieval cities. By intercalating their commentary and contextualization into the hagiography itself, Dalarun, Field, and Cappozzo have provided teachers and their students with a valuable entry point into the world of the middle ages. From penitential practices and the challenges of leading a spiritual community of women to the perennial fear of heresy and the visual culture of the middle ages, the authors read the chapters of the life of Clare not only for their literal meaning, but for what they can tell us about the world in which she lived.

The translation itself is coherent and accessible. The combined linguistic and historical knowledge of the three contributors shines through the short chapters of the *Life of Clare of Rimini*, in particular when the double entendres or historical connotations of particular Italian words and phrases are explained in English. For example, the implication of heterodoxy in the words “bono homo” becomes the catalyst for an extended discussion of heresy in the central Chapter 6, a linchpin in the narrative arc of Clare’s life.

Beyond offering a contextualized close reading of each chapter of the *vita*, *A Female Apostle in Medieval Italy* reflects on the material legacy of the manuscript, and the historical contingencies that would make Clare far less of a household name than some of the other figures that have come to form a “canon” of medieval holy women. The original text of Clare’s life bears the long title *La vita della beata Chiara da Rimino la quale fo exemplo a tucte le donne vane* and is preserved in a single manuscript (Rimini, Biblioteca del Seminario Vescovile, MS 144). The Epilogue of *A Female Apostle* analyzes an addition to the manuscript to trace the rocky path that the legend of Clare of Rimini has traveled since the 14th century. Methodologically, this is extremely compelling, and quite innovative compared to other translations of primary sources. The authors have insisted on providing the necessary context to understand not only Clare’s life against the multiple overlapping political, economic, and religious contexts of her time, but also her *Life* as a material text that is vulnerable to the whims of men and history.

The clarity with which the authors have identified a target audience is one of the major successes of this volume. Every part of the work at hand seems to be intended to give undergraduate students a kaleidoscopic view of medieval Italy that will at once pull them in and destabilize their preconceptions. *A Female Apostle* is well-suited for interdisciplinary courses in medieval studies, especially those that focus on medieval women, hagiography, manuscript culture, or early Italian prose

in translation. Students who are vaguely interested in the middle ages will find this text to be a gateway into a wealth of social and historical intertexts, and the rich bibliography will be quite helpful to those who wish to go deeper in their research. This does not mean, however, that scholars will not find the text useful. On the contrary, because of the relative dearth of scholarship on Clare of Rimini, I expect that this text will be the first point of contact for many professional medievalists, and its bibliography will likewise lead curious scholars to more detailed research on the topic (including a wealth of scholarship by Jacques Dalarun, the world's foremost scholar of Clare of Rimini). Throughout the volume, the authors make comparisons to notable figures of late medieval Italy. Perhaps the most pertinent of these is the perennial reference point for any medieval holy person: Francis of Assisi, and in this case also Clare of Assisi—who shares not only a name, but a commitment to humility and a life of service. Moreover, the book argues that the anonymous hagiographer who penned the *vita* was a Franciscan. As such, scholars of Franciscanism and Franciscan writing will find *A Female Apostle* interesting on many levels.

The shortcomings of this investigation are few and far between. The reader is left wishing that the illustrations, in particular those that are paired with the eleventh chapter of the *Life* which focuses on visual culture, had been reproduced in color rather than in black and white. By contrast, the vivid cover image (a detail of the image reproduced in Figure 6, p. 120) fully captures the dazzling artwork in question. This is, of course, understandable as the desire of authors and publishers alike to make the paperback version accessible to undergraduate students likely limited the ability to print in color.

I hope that Dalarun, Field, and Cappelozzo's success with this volume will prompt other scholars to undertake similar projects, and that the intercalated structure of primary source and analysis will become more common in our framing of premodern texts.

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