

of intercessory prayer on behalf of souls in Purgatory, their spiritual teachings, and visions from Abbess Hildegard.

The second article is John van Engen's "The Religious Women of Liège at the Turn of the Thirteenth Century," which seeks to "get at that earliest historical moment before a full 'beguine' identity and institution had begun to set in" (342). As with all the articles in this collection, van Engen sifts through mounds of data. He focuses on the thirteen *vitae* from the region of Liège: who might have crafted these? Who read them? What evidence might be gleaned of their socioeconomic backgrounds? How did or didn't the Cistercian reluctance to accept women into the order effect the emergence of the beguines (by their many names)? Van Engen concludes with a reminder to readers of the many pastoral roles fulfilled by these women: that both women as recognized Cistercians and as beguines were part of the same spiritual renewal sweeping across Europe.

The book includes notes, charts/illustrations, and a bibliography.

L.S.

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Meditations on the Life of Christ: The Short Italian Text. Sarah McNamer. University of Notre Dame Press, 2018. 444 pp., \$65.00, ISBN 978-0-268-10285-2.

Sarah McNamer has done scholars a great service here. For centuries, the most common version of the popular devotional text, *The Meditations on the Life of Christ*, was thought to have been written by an anonymous Franciscan friar. McNamer took a long look at a mostly overlooked shorter Italian version sitting in the Bodleian Library whose prose is much livelier, and whose stylistic and textual integrity convinced her that this is the original, written by an anonymous Poor Clare from Pisa. She contends that the later versions are embellishments added by the anonymous Franciscan friar.

McNamer crafts a critical edition of the Italian text and then provides an English translation with commentary. The translation is smooth. She builds her case for the manuscript's history, authorship, date and place of composition, and provides a linguistic analysis by Pär Larson, and the editorial principles she utilized. Not only has she made a significant contribution here to understanding medieval women's contributions to Christian spirituality, she continues to grow our scholarship on medieval devotional practices and the spread of spiritual literature, clearing up some misunderstandings.

The book includes notes, index, and bibliography.

L.S.

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Visions of Sainthood in Medieval Rome: The Lives of Margherita Colonna by Giovanni Colonna and Stefania.

Translated by Larry F. Field. Edited and Introduced by Lezlie S. Knox and Sean L. Field. University of Notre Dame Press, 2017, 236 pp., \$29 (paper), ISBN 978-0-268-10201-2.

This collaborative work is a fine new translation of two unusual hagiographic *Lives* of the thirteenth-century Roman noblewoman Margherita Colonna (d. 1280) along with a collection of associated texts, and extensive contextualization. Margherita Colonna, a lay woman, was an early follower of St. Francis; these *Lives* reveal a mystical lay piety in the midst of a culturally vibrant Rome. Raised in one of the great Roman families, Margherita embraced poverty, founded a religious community, experienced visions and died young.

The intriguing context is that one *Life* was written by a powerful brother and the other a woman named "Stefania" who was one of Margherita's followers. The volume was intentionally framed as a possible source for teaching upper undergraduate and graduate students. The juxtaposition of these two *Lives* allows students to explore important questions for the study of any medieval text: how did the gender or social status of each author influence their perspective on her life? How fluid

was the nature of Franciscan women's identity in the time when the papacy was creating the Order of St. Clare? What were the experiences and influences of women visionaries?

This is an excellent resource for teaching the history of Christianity, especially connected with the Franciscan movement. A companion website has been established (<http://livesofmargheritacolonna.weebly.com>) with images, videos, genealogical tree and other information on Margherita Colonna and her vitae to assist in teaching. The book includes footnotes, appendices, a bibliography and index.

L.S.

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Clare of Assisi and the Thirteenth-Century Church: Religious Women, Rules, and Resistance. Catherine M. Mooney. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016, 291 pp., \$65, ISBN 978-0-8122-4817-3.

Catherine Mooney has done us a great favor. While researching the beguines and other movements connected with the *vita apostolica*, I was disturbed by the glossing over of the reality that Clare was a *penitentia* (one of the regional names that corresponds to "beguine"), even in some Franciscan literature. Equally troubling to me was the amount of scholarly literature that declared *penitentiae*, *bizzoche*, *pinzochera* (other regional Italian names for "beguine") as "third-order Franciscans" long before those women might ever have chosen to formally associate with Franciscan men (and some chose to associate with the Dominicans). Clare did not seek a cloistered life; rather she had her own vision of an apostolic ministry in collaboration with her friend Francis and his followers.

With Mooney's careful reading of the sources, many of them not previously explored, and thankfully with a healthy "hermeneutic of suspicion," she challenges the received tradition around Clare. Mooney examines chronologically Clare's writings, hagiography, papal letters, and competing *rules* – some

written by Clare and her sisters and some written by those seeking to control these women's lives. She then looks at eyewitness testimony given during Clare's canonization process and the *vitae* written soon after her canonization, seeking to unpack the "agenda" of each and what that might tell us today. Mooney seeks to clarify "what is Clare," what is the collaborative work among Clare and her sisters, and their fight to defend their vision for their way of life from outside (powerful) influence, and what was the image crafted for political means, bringing us a more authentic Clare-vision.

Mooney notes that Pope Honorius, disliking the independence of the growing number of local religious movements of women, decided to establish its own order of religious women that would be strictly cloistered. As long as St. Francis lived, Clare prevailed in her struggles to resist papal enclosure. After Francis's death, the new Pope Gregory moved to bring her house and those emulating her into this new order, the papal Order of San Damiano. Mooney explores how this "papal entrapment" also affected other women's penitent houses. And the story of Clare and her sisters has been repeated throughout history: women cannot be their own authority and cannot be trusted with their own spiritual care.

Clare of Assisi and the Thirteenth-Century Church is a great gift to contemporary women religious, whether Franciscan or not. Too much of our actual history is smothered in the political wranglings of the clerical world and misrepresented by scholars who don't ask biting questions (when will we stop confusing enforced conformity with reform?) but perpetuate tired old stories about our foremothers. This is the kind of thoughtful research we need from scholars today. Graduate students and new Ph.D.s need to examine how she did what she did and apply this gleaning to the history of women and non-dominant cultures.

The book includes appendices, notes, bibliography, and index.

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