

Ravishment: Rape and Rapture in *The Faerie Queen*” argues that, “As opposed to figuring poetry as genital rape, a tool for single-minded exposure, penetration, and comprehension of a feminized scene, *The Faerie Queen* also, if only intermittently, hints at poetry as a vehicle for rapture, a suffusion of delight that suspends the quest and admits a multiplicity of both erotic and epistemological pleasures” (382). The pairing of Frye’s and Eggert’s accounts of *The Fairie Queen* is one of the most provocative of the anthology and offers fruitful pedagogical possibilities.

Christopher Cannon’s Afterword brings *Representing Rape* to a satisfying conclusion while at the same time incisively questioning the efficacy of retrospectivity itself. Cannon’s answer is that analyzing the event of rape in its discursive expressions and often subterranean social and literary connections after the fact necessarily returns us to the prior, even founding, cultural moments of gender inequity in West. The essays in *Representing Rape* indeed demonstrate that feminist historicist analysis is itself a political practice that intervenes in the structures of representation that have otherwise hidden, dispersed, and excused the violence against women that is rape. *Representing Rape in Medieval and Early Modern Literature* is essential reading both for specialists in medieval and Early Modern literature and for those concerned with feminism and the question of violence.

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Constance H. Berman, *Women and Monasticism in Medieval Europe: Sisters and Patrons of the Cistercian Reform.* (TEAMS Documents of Practice Series.) Kalamazoo, Michigan: Medieval Institute Publications, 2002. Pp.134 (ISBN 1 58044 036 3).

This collection of primary source material on women and monasticism is a part of a series from TEAMS that presents sources on a single topic or theme for classroom use. It brings together primary sources in order to show how women were involved in the Cistercian reform movement and that these women were often more visible and active than we may have imagined.

Berman presents primary source material from convents all over Europe documenting women’s activities both as Cistercian nuns and as patrons of female religious houses. More importantly for the study of female monasticism is that this the first collection of documents in one volume that addresses Cistercian women and their place not only in the Cistercian order but also within the study of female religious in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries as a whole.

Berman’s introduction points out that the history of monastic women’s role in the great reform movements of the High Middle Ages is only beginning to be written (2). Many scholars have neglected religious women’s history for this period usually claiming that the surviving evidence does not provide enough information to gain any insight into the lives of these women. However, over the past few decades a number of scholars have drawn attention to these women and their active participation in the reformed orders. Most have re-

jected previous assumptions that women were passive actors in the movement or that the houses were not large enough to deserve attention. What Berman is able to provide for us in this collection of primary sources is proof that “there is a great deal more documentation that survives from female communities than is realized” (2).

Berman presents a series of case studies and examples that highlight women’s presence in the Cistercian order. She uses documents of practice that are familiar to most who study monasticism such as charters and account rolls, which prove to be fruitful in understanding the communities of these women. Berman draws extensively on charters in this collection since numbers of them have survived, and they sometimes are the only remaining pieces of evidence for these communities of women (3). Although charters may be dull and formulaic, they still provide a great deal of information for those students who wish to understand medieval life, religious practice, and the role of religious women in their communities.

These documents provide only a sample of what is still waiting to be uncovered about religious women, and Berman has chosen the ones that she feels are the most interesting (7).

Her text is divided into four parts, and her selection ranges from convents across Europe from Spain to Cyprus, which provides a glimpse of regional differences in convent life, practice, and patronage. For those who are not familiar with the history of the Cistercian order and their female religious, Berman’s introduction gives us a good synopsis.

In Part One, Berman provides us with examples of foundation charters ranging from the convent of Las Huelgas in Spain, Port-Royal in France to Rifredo in northern Italy. She also gives us sources showing subsequent endowments made to convents such as Saint-Antoine des Champs in Paris. Each of these documents shows the external relationships that these houses had with their surrounding communities and patrons as well as how nuns managed their property and rents. The last section in part one is dedicated to Queen Blanche of Castile and Isabelle of Chartres, who were descendants of Eleanor of Aquitaine. These noble ladies were well known in their respective regions and supported Cistercian female houses, such as Le Lyes and Eau Lez Chartres, regardless of the fact that the order did not recognize them.

In Part Two, the three female houses of Coyroux/Obazine, July, and le Tart are used to show the difficulty some communities had in being associated with the Cistercian order itself. These three were all founded “before the Order created by the Cistercians had really coalesced into what it would become in the thirteenth century” (77). Berman also gives us examples of how important families could be in the formation of a monastic community, most especially that of Coyroux/Obazine. For le Tart and July, she is able to illustrate that even though Cistercian narratives ignored these communities, both houses were indeed connected to Cîteaux in the twelfth century.

In Part Three Berman uses statistical sources such as rent rolls or account books from the wealthiest Cistercian women's houses in France. These examples help dispel the myth that nuns and their communities were too poor and small for any complete study of female religious houses. The information also tells us about the governance of houses with details of their economic standing in the community, the nuns' management of property, and their success as administrators.

The last part of the collection focuses on narrative and normative sources. These sources present a contrast to what we have been given in previous parts of the collection. The descriptions of nuns here provide the reader with an idea of what the attitudes of ecclesiastical men may have been towards Cistercian women. Berman highlights instances in the General Chapter of Cîteaux where houses of nuns are mentioned, usually in complaints made against the abbess by a particular abbot (121-124) including one of the more famous cases, the Bishop of Lincoln's visitation of the convent of Nun Coton and his report of abuses he found there (119-121). Berman warns us that some of the descriptions of nuns and "snippets of evidence [are often] taken out of context" and can often lead to misinterpretation of the reality of the situation (115).

Constance Berman's previous works have contributed a great deal to the study of the Cistercian order as well as Cistercian religious women. What Berman has given students and teachers here is a glimpse into the lives of these women in a time where the primary historiographies of the Cistercian order do not. She has also provided students with a first-hand look at the problems and difficulties that faced medieval women religious from associating themselves with an order that initially rejected them.

More importantly for those who teach monasticism, she has provided students with a text that is straightforward while at the same time providing a wealth of primary source material at their fingertips. This collection has given students who want to study religious women in the Middle Ages a window into a world that may seem foreign and often alien to them.

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Patrizia Caraffi, *Figure femminili del sapere (XII-XV secolo)*. (Biblioteca Medievale: Saggi; 12.) Roma: Carocci, 2003. 138 pp. €15.60.

Patrizia Caraffi, a Romance philologist and medievalist at the Università degli Studi of Bologna, has written a welcome addition to the Italian-language feminist criticism of medieval literature. This pleasant and readable book comprises four chapters of previously published material (revised and expanded), a fifth of new material, and a brief introduction. Its focus is the figure of the learned woman in selected medieval texts from the twelfth to the fifteenth centuries in the major Romance languages.

The book ranges widely across time, space, and language traditions. Chapter 1 examines those *lais* of Marie de France which posit alliances among women