



Medieval Feminist Forum

A Journal of Gender and Sexuality

VOLUME 57 • NUMBER 2 • WINTER 2022



University Press | Kalamazoo
MIEVEAL INSTITUTE PUBLICATIONS
WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

MEDIEVAL FEMINIST FORUM
A Journal of Gender and Sexuality

VOLUME 57 • NUMBER 2 • WINTER 2022

GENERAL AND MANAGING EDITOR

Jessica A. Boon

Religious Studies, University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill

EDITORIAL BOARD

Jessica Barr

*Comparative Literature,
University of Massachusetts
Amherst*

Jennifer C. Edwards

History, Manhattan College

Liz Herbert McAvoy

English, Swansea University

E. Ann Matter

*Religious Studies,
University of Pennsylvania*

BOOK REVIEW EDITOR

Melissa Ridley Elmes

English, Lindenwood University

DESIGN & TYPESETTING

Linda K. Judy

*Western Michigan University
Medieval Institute Publications*

SOCIETY FOR MEDIEVAL FEMINIST SCHOLARSHIP OFFICERS

President: Roberta Magnani (2022–2023)

English, Swansea University

Vice President: Nicole Lopez-Jantzen (2022–2023)

History, CUNY—Borough of Manhattan Community College

Treasurer & Membership Coordinator: Amy Vines (2018–2024)

English, UNC—Greensboro

ADVISORY BOARD

Michelle Armstrong-Partida (2021–2023), Lucy C. Barnhouse (2022–2024), Daisy Black (2022–2024), Jill Clements (2021–2023), Carissa Harris (2021–2024), Boyda Johnstone (2021–2024), Laura Kalas (2021–2024), Amy Livingstone (2022–2024), Kathryn Maude (2019–2021), Sara McDougall (2022–2024), Amanda McVitty (2021–2024), Dana Oswald (2021–2023), Alexandra Verini (2021–2023) Graduate Student Representatives: Kersti Francis (2020–2022), Thelma Trujillo (2021–2023), Christine James Zepeda (2022–2024)

Medieval Feminist Forum is indexed in the MLA International Bibliography, published by the Modern Language Association, 26 Broadway, 3rd floor; New York, NY 10004; <http://www.mla.org> and *Feminae: Medieval Women and Gender Index*, <http://www.haverford.edu/library/reference/mschaus/mfi/>

Medieval Feminist Forum, e-issn 2151-6073

<https://doi.org/10.32773/JQMZ7719>

Copyright © 2022 by the Board of Trustees of Western Michigan University

Medieval Institute Publications is a program of
The Medieval Institute, College of Arts and Sciences



WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY


CONTENTS

≈ ARTICLES

- CALKAS'S DAUGHTER: PATERNAL AUTHORITY
AND FEMININE VIRTUE IN TROILUS AND CRISEYDE
Jennifer Alberghini 7
- AFFECT AND THE TOMB IN ROBERT HENRYSON'S
THE TESTAMENT OF CRESSEID
Elizabeth Elliott 35
- MOTHERS, SPACE, AND POWER IN ATHELSTON
Kirsty Bolton 54
- A MIND OF HER OWN: WOMEN'S
INTERIORITY IN THE MIDDLE ENGLISH
AND OLDER SCOTS PASTOURELLES
Anne L. Klinck 79
- THE CUNNING LINGUIST OF AGBABI'S "THE KISS"
Elan Justice Pavlinich 110
- 2020 Society of Medieval Feminist Scholarship
Graduate Student Prize Essay* 141
- ALCHEMY, THE LIBER AUREUS
AND THE EROTICS OF KNOWLEDGE
Kersti Francis
- 2020 Gender & Medieval Studies
Graduate Student Prize Essay* 165
- JOHN CROPHILL: A TRUSTWORTHY MAN
IN FIFTEENTH-CENTURY RURAL ENGLAND
Rehan Shah

≈ RETROSPECTIVES

WHO DOES SHE THINK SHE IS? 185
Caroline Walker Bynum

WHEN FEMINISM ISN'T ENOUGH 191
Monica H. Green

≈ BOOK REVIEWS

Whose Middle Ages? Teachable Moments for an Ill-Used Past 198
Andrew Albin, Mary C. Erler, Thomas O'Donnell,
Nicholas L. Paul, and Nina Rowe, eds.
reviewed by Ana C. Núñez

The Lay Saint: Charity and Charismatic Authority in Medieval Italy 202
Mary Harvey Doyno
reviewed by Mary Anne Gonzales

Superior Women: Medieval Female Authority in Poitiers' Abbey of Sainte-Croix 205
Jennifer C. Edwards
reviewed by Alexandra Verini

Nuns' Priest's Tales: Men and Salvation in Medieval Women's Monastic Life 208
Fiona J. Griffiths
reviewed by Holle Canatella

This Is My Body: Eucharistic Theology and Anthropology in the Writings of Gertrude the Great of Helfta 212
Ella Johnson
reviewed by Jessica Barr

Margery Kempe's Spiritual Medicine: Suffering, Transformation, and the Life-Course 215
Laura Kalas
reviewed by Lucy C. Barnhouse

<i>The Letters of Margaret of Anjou</i> Helen Maurer and B. M. Cron, eds. <i>reviewed by Gabrielle Storey</i>	220
<i>The Mélusine Romance in Medieval Europe: Translation, Circulation, and Material Contexts</i> Lydia Zeldenrust <i>reviewed by Angela Jane Weisl</i>	223
∞ NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS	227

The Lay Saint: Charity and Charismatic Authority in Medieval Italy, 1150–1350, by Mary Harvey Doyno. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2019. Pp. vi + 318. ISBN: 9781501740206.

The study of the lay penitential movement has contributed much to our understanding of the complicated relationship between the laity and religious, particularly during a time of great spiritual diversity. Contributing to an extensive body of literature on this topic, Mary Harvey Doyno's *The Lay Saint* demonstrates that charity in the devotional practices of lay saints serves as a lens to explore the interactions of ecclesiastical authorities with lay spirituality. Doyno situates her study of sixteen civic cults from 1150 to 1350 in Italy's lay penitential movement. She has selected saints whose *vitae* were written within one to two generations after their death to examine the interests of civic authorities, the papacy, and the mendicant orders in defining lay piety (14–15). In addition to *vitae*, the study traces the rise and decline of lay saints' cults through civic documents related to the cults' promotion and material culture that reflected the attitudes of local urban communities toward these saintly figures.

Doyno's analysis revisits André Vauchez's assertion that lay sanctity disappeared in Italian communes in the fourteenth century due to a growing emphasis on mysticism (242).¹ For Doyno, the construction of lay piety according to mysticism was only a component of a larger process. She explains that mendicant friars reconstructed lay piety to emphasize visions and prophecy instead of the penitential life. Continuing in the same vein as the studies of Catherine Mooney and Alison More, Doyno's main argument considers the charisma of lay female penitents to have motivated papal regulations to control the lay penitential movement (243).² Mooney's and More's respective studies

1 André Vauchez, "A Twelfth-Century Novelty: The Lay Saints of Urban Italy," in *The Laity in the Middle Ages: Religious Beliefs and Devotional Practices*, ed. Daniel L. Bornstein, trans. Margery J. Schneider (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1993), 71–72.

2 Catherine Mooney, *Clare of Assisi and the Thirteenth-Century Church: Religious Women, Rules, and Resistance* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 55, 74–75; Alison More, *Fictive Orders and*

focus heavily on the attitudes of the papacy and the lay female penitents who refused to adopt regulations imposed on their religious way of life. Doyno's monograph complements these works by examining the same issues but through the relationship of local communities with lay penitents as their civic saints. In doing so, Doyno demonstrates that regulations directed at lay penitents also had a profound effect on expressions of lay sanctity. Ultimately, she argues that the papacy and the mendicant friars' efforts to regulate lay penitents led to their disappearance from Italy's civic religious culture.

The monograph consists of three sections that highlight charity as the intersection between piety, gender, civic life, and religious authority. The first part includes three chapters that consider lay penitents' charisma as dependent on a combination of their participation in civic issues and penitential acts through devotion to charity work, commitment to social justice, and commercial participation in cultivating artisanal skills (25, 31, 75, 82). Doyno recognizes these qualities were specific to the spirituality of lay male penitents.

Part 2 comprises two chapters that delve deeply into lay female saints' piety. This section is fundamental to the monograph's central premise as it is here that Doyno establishes lay female penitents' charisma as problematic because they challenged the authority of the ecclesiastical hierarchy and the power structures of patriarchal society (133). Foregrounding these discussions are references to regulations by the papacy, including *Supra montem* in 1298. Doyno argues that their mendicant guardians constructed the women's piety to focus less on charity and instead on prophecy and visionary experiences (144). Doyno sees this fashioning of laywomen's piety not as a diffusion of mendicant spirituality, but rather as an effort to regulate lay female penitents.

In part 3, Doyno considers the creation of the lay visionary saint based on the model of sanctity for lay female penitents (203). The lay visionary aligned with papal initiatives in creating the Third Order because it promoted piety that was focused on contemplation instead of the active life. Significant to her analysis is her representation of the lay

visionary and the Third Order as complementary of one another in solving the ambiguous religious affiliations of all lay penitents, but especially laywomen. Thus Doyno connects the disappearance of lay saints to ecclesiastical efforts to regulate the lay penitential movement.

The Lay Saint also provides an important contribution in understanding civic authorities' and local communities' roles in shaping lay sanctity according to civic obligations to a community. This is an important emphasis in the monograph that shows the ability of lay communities to influence the sanctity of their patron saints and neighbors, who, in turn, represented the values of local communities. However, there are two limitations in Doyno's application of this approach. First, her selection of sixteen cults excludes failed canonizations; their exclusion from the monograph suggests that the papacy considered these figures as less of a threat to ecclesiastical authority than those who were canonized. The canonization process, regardless of its outcome, was indicative of the papacy's recognition of the potential threat these lay saintly figures posed to the institutional church. Second, despite a community's failure to successfully canonize a saint, the cult that formed around them nevertheless reflected lay spirituality. Consequently, the cults of failed lay saints have the potential to contribute insights to Doyno's study. Lastly, she limits the laity's participation in defining the sanctity of civic saints to the *popolo* movements. In doing so, she implies that it was only under these political circumstances that the laity could define sanctity.

Doyno also over-emphasizes the concerns of the mendicants regarding the threat of lay charisma to their authority. Although there were clerics who were worried about the charisma of lay penitents, there were also others who were not. Indeed, Doyno points to this in her examination of *vitae*, which often express that spiritual confessors and counselors of female penitents were more concerned about the women's spiritual progress than their charismatic authority. However, Doyno's characterization of the papacy's interest in controlling the lay penitential movement and how this was shared by the mendicants places the two within a broad category defined by their ability to regulate lay sanctity as religious authorities. The problem with this representation is that it suggests a consistent view of the penitential movement among ecclesiastical authorities. While Doyno distinguishes between the interests of the mendicants and the papacy in the first two sections

of the monograph, her analysis in the final two chapters suggests that these interests merged after the mendicants became the spiritual guardians of lay penitents.

Readers interested in the lay penitential movement will find that Doyno's innovative examination of charity provides nuanced observations about the underpinnings of lay sanctity and its malleability in the hands of the ecclesiastical hierarchy and the laity. Doyno's work expands what we know about how the papacy contended with the influences of penitential ideals in lay piety. Far from being a simple undertaking, *The Lay Saint* sheds light on a complicated topic in the history of medieval Christianity.

Mary Anne Gonzales

University of Guelph

<https://doi.org/10.32773/VASU1809>

Superior Women: Medieval Female Authority in Poitiers' Abbey of Sainte-Croix, by Jennifer C. Edwards. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019. Pp. 336. ISBN: 9780198837923.

The question of how women cultivated authority in a world that sought to limit them has long been central to feminist medieval studies. Jennifer C. Edwards's *Superior Women: Medieval Female Authority in Poitiers' Abbey of Sainte-Croix* insightfully intervenes in this conversation by arguing that the medieval abbesses at Sainte-Croix in Poitiers relied on two strategies to exercise authority. First, they drew on a network of allies made up primarily of male officials, and, second, they mobilized cultural artifacts related to the abbey's foundress Saint Radegund to attract new supporters. In demonstrating the continued authority of the abbesses at Sainte-Croix, Edwards valuably nuances the notion of authority itself: authority, she argues, rests not so much in the power to compel obedience by force but in the ability to command respect. *Superior Women* skillfully illustrates how the abbesses of Sainte-Croix demanded such respect and so obtained support from secular and religious figures over the course of a millennium.