

ALESSANDRA BARTOLOMEI ROMAGNOLI, EMORE PAOLI, and PIERANTONIO PIATTI, eds., *Angeliche visioni. Veronica da Binasco nella Milano del Rinascimento*. (La mistica cristiana tra Oriente e Occidente 26.) Florence: SISMEL Edizioni del Galluzzo for the Fondazione Ezio Franceschini, 2016. Pp. xxxiii, 574; 24 color and black-and-white figures. €77. ISBN: 978-88-8450-710-5.

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*Angeliche Visioni* collects most of the papers delivered at the international conference “Veronica da Binasco. Santità femminile e Osservanza eremitana a Milano nel Quattrocento,” which took place in Milan and Binasco in 2010, and is part of the book series *La mistica cristiana tra Oriente e Occidente*, which includes studies on unknown or rarely studied mystical traditions and texts (in Latin, Greek, or vernacular). The volume aims to reconsider the experience of Veronica of Binasco (1445–97), a poor woman who, after being refused by a Benedictine monastery, was taken to the Augustinian monastery of Santa Marta, where she served as a humble *conversa*. Thanks to her ecstatic visions—at first hidden from the other sisters but then revealed by tears flowing profusely from her eyes—Veronica became a model of female sanctity, as evident from both the mystic diaries written in Lombard by the nun Benedetta of Vimercate and the official *Vita* composed by the Dominican friar Isidoro Isolani (1518) to promote her posthumous cult. However, the memory of Veronica, who was never canonized, was kept alive strictly within the boundaries of a local devotion, eclipsed elsewhere by other models of Augustinian female sanctity such as Rita of Cascia and Clare of Montefalco. Thanks to the studies on the monastery of Santa Marta in the 1970s and to Gabriella Zarri’s research on the “sante vive,” Veronica was finally included among those mystic women and prophetesses who had a very significant impact on the religious and cultural life in Italy between the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

This book falls within the scholarly tradition on the history of medieval mysticism, with particular attention to mystic women and their writing, while also exploring the influence of monastic spiritual culture on their religious and visionary imagery. The volume is divided into four parts: the first two depict the historical and cultural background necessary to understand Veronica, to which the last two sections are devoted.

Part 1 explores the key elements of late medieval mysticism. Francesco Santi identifies in the thirteenth century the watershed period in which there was a shift from the idea of a unitive and spousal mystic, proper to the monastic tradition from Bernard of Clairvaux onward, to a self-hagiographical mystic modeled on Margaret of Cortona. This new mystical paradigm was intended as an original expression of human freedom, released from the cultural power of reason as well as from any spiritual subjection, and corresponds to the development of a new model of female sanctity, which, as Anna Benvenuti remarks, was the consequence of the increasing religious capacity of the laity, influenced by the preaching of the mendicant orders. As demonstrated by Bernard McGinn, the late Middle Ages also saw the development of a proper mystical language, which had its acme in the German vernacular, rich in new metaphors and terminology, created by Meister Eckhart and his followers to express the ineffable dynamic nature of God and his relationships with human beings.

The second part of the volume is devoted to religious and cultural life in Lombardy. Maria Pia Alberzoni investigates the widely disseminated forms of women’s religious life *sine regula* in this area between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries, focusing in particular on the relationship between *religiosae mulieres* and monastic orders (especially Humiliati, Augustinians, Dominicans, and Franciscans). The paper by Mario Sensi, published here as a posthumous essay, examines how the Augustinian Observance evolved from a secluded hermitical experience, progressively opened to the external world, underlining how the women’s movement was a singular and different case. Federico Gallo analyzes the library of the convent of

Santa Maria Incoronata, a rich collection created in the middle of the fifteenth century, and Antonella Mazzon investigates the presence of Isolani's *Vita* of the blessed Veronica in monastic libraries at the end of the sixteenth century. By analyzing the diachronic stratification of the Ambrosian Sanctorale, above all during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Giordano Monzio Compagnoni shows how the liturgy and worship of saints were conservative and not influenced by the novelties of Humanism and the Renaissance.

The third part of the volume deals with the biography and cult of Veronica da Binasco. Alessandra Bartolomei Romagnoli analyzes the mystic diaries compiled by Benedetta of Vimerate, comparing it with Isolani's *Vita*, an official document written in Latin. Benedetta's *fabula mistica* is also examined by Pierantonio Piatti, who places it in the context of the recently founded congregation of the "Annunziate di Lombardia," emphasizing the symbolic value of Veronica as a quattrocento prophetess and holy patron of the model of "open" monasteries. Adriana Valerio deals with Veronica's experience of God and highlights the performative aspect of her visions, which are a kind of *sacra rappresentazione* that allows participation in concrete terms in the life of Jesus. Veronica's mystical experience, characterized by an affective *Christiformitas*, is also explored by Isabella Gagliardi, who indicates its main source in the writings of Augustinian Simon of Cascia. To the relationships between Veronica and the Franciscan order, instead, is devoted the paper of Alberto M. Cuomo, whereas Elena M. Gagliardi provides some interesting information about the experience of Santa Marta through the analysis of the unpublished manuscripts of Giovanni Pietro Puricelli.

The final part of the book is about traditions of iconography related to Veronica, read in the context of both mystic iconography and the art produced at Santa Marta between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries. Martine Boiteux focuses on the figurative language of mystic reports, comparing it to the iconography of various female saints and to the political strategy of power in the modern age. Urte Krass provides an overview of the pictorial representations of Veronica, comparing them to the representation of other female saints. Elisabetta Mochetti analyzes the theological iconology of the fresco *Mystic Wine Press* ("Il torchio mistico") in the church of Santa Marta, whereas Cristina Quattrini reconstructs the history of art and patronage in the monastery under Abess Arcangela Panigarola (1468–1525).

As Zarri points out in her conclusions, this volume provides valuable insight on Veronica of Binasco by placing her experience in the context of the spiritual flowering of Santa Marta, an independent monastery that only in the modern era developed a close relation with Augustinian Observance. This line of inquiry offers a methodological model for future research, because it allows to place a humble visionary from Binasco at the heart of many historiographical topics crucial to current scholarship: the resulting portrait is that of an intriguing woman hitherto underestimated and largely unknown. *Angeliche visioni* is a very rich and interdisciplinary collection of essays, accompanied by iconographical tables and completed by a very useful apparatus of manuscript indexes.

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JANE BEAL, *The Signifying Power of "Pearl": Medieval Literary and Cultural Contexts for the Transformation of Genre*. (Routledge Studies in Medieval Literature and Culture 5.) New York and London: Routledge, 2017. Pp. xxvi, 179; 4 black-and-white figures. \$140. ISBN: 978-1-138-67807-1. doi:10.1086/701892

This monograph offers a range of readings of the northwest Midlands dream-vision *Pearl*. It interrogates this complex and beautiful poem from many angles, providing a series of in-