

## BOOK REVIEW

**Il canone agiografico di san Bernardino (post 1460).** By Daniele Solvi. Quaderni di 'Hagiografica', 14. Le vite quattrocentesche di S. Bernardino da Siena, 3. Pp. xvi + 412. Florence: Sismel – Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2018. ISBN 978-88-8450-857-7

The book edited by Daniele Solvi is the second volume of 'Le Vite quattrocentesche di S. Bernardino da Siena' to be published. The editorial project, coordinated by Daniele Solvi and Alessandra Bartolomei Romagnoli, intends to cover the fifteenth-century hagiographical corpus of *vitae* of St Bernardino of Siena in four volumes. This will help scholars re-evaluate the complex construction of the hagiographical profile(s) of this canonized preacher. In 2014, the book containing the texts produced between 1450 and 1460, immediately after Bernardino's canonization (see the review in *Medieval Sermon Studies*, 59 [2015], 88–90), was published. While the first volume of the series, which will focus on the *vitae* written during the process of canonization (i.e. 1444–50), is still missing, the present book provides scholars with seven texts (two of them with a double version) that span over one century, from the 1460s to the 1570s, thus covering the period of the sedimentation and crystallization of the official memory of the new saint.

The table of contents immediately shows the richness of the volume as well as the considerable differences in terms of authorship, length, and function of each text:

- 1) Nicolò Malerbi, the brief entry on Bernardino in his *Leggendario delle vite de' santi*, a vernacular version of the *Legenda aurea* first published in 1475 (pp. 3–6);
- 2) the ample section devoted to the new saint in Iacopo Oddi's *Spechio de l'Ordine Minore*, also known as *La Franceschina* (pp. 7–63);
- 3) the readings for the liturgical office composed by Pietro Ridolfi da Vigevano, with the office of the so-called Anonimo Aversano, which was the source of its first part, as appendix (pp. 65–96);
- 4) Ludovico da Vicenza's *Vita sancti Bernardini* (pp. 97–209);
- 5) an anonymous supplement to the Latin *Legenda aurea* (pp. 211–19);
- 6) Mariano da Firenze's *Vita*, composed in the vernacular (pp. 221–92);
- 7) the life of Bernardino taken from Laurentius Surius *De probatis sanctorum historiis* (pp. 293–412).

Each section is introduced by a very brief note on the author, the text, the source of the edition, and some bibliography. For the Latin texts, there is also a useful Italian translation (in the case of Ludovico da Vicenza, Solvi uses the early sixteenth-century version). The indication of the fifth text is problematic since, rather than a text added to the *Legenda aurea*, it is taken from the addition to the printed edition of Petrus de Natalibus, *Catalogus sanctorum* (Vicenza, 1493). Solvi states that this brief life of Bernardino was included 'in many printed editions of the *Legenda aurea* between the fifteenth and the seventeenth centuries' (p. 212), yet without giving further details. In the bibliography, he mentions the existence of manuscripts of the *Legenda aurea* that contain (this version of?) the life of Bernardino; it would have been useful to clarify this point and to include the list of manuscripts. Also, one has to recall that – instead of this life – many editions of the *Legenda aurea* published Leonardo Benvoglianti's text (which will be published in the first volume).


As the editors explained in the previous volume, the project does not aim to provide a critical edition. This seems a lost opportunity, especially as the accuracy of the texts is uneven, since it largely reflects the different levels of the previous scholarship. Still, two of the main texts of the present volume receive a peculiar attention, namely those written by Mariano da Firenze and Ludovico da Vicenza.

Mariano's text is the first edition of a *Vita* composed in the 1510s as part of the author's project of a Franciscan hagiographical collection in the vernacular, a project never finished. The work is based on the only two existing manuscripts known. As far as the contents are concerned, the interest is

limited since Mariano largely followed Oddi's text (indeed, as the editor notes, chapters 21–93 are simply a copy of the *Franceschina*). A linguistic study by Antonella Dejure enriches the edition (pp. 227–38). Still, it seems somewhat peculiar in a volume that otherwise provides very little information about the texts. Perhaps, one would expect this type of essay in the final volume of the project, which plans to give the readers more instruments to navigate the *vitae*. While Mariano's work is still written in the shadow of fifteenth-century production and debates (chiefly, those connected with the process that brought about the division of the Franciscan order), the present volume also offers an interesting 'intrusion' in modern hagiographical production by publishing the two versions of the text written by the German Carthusian Laurentius Surius in the Counter-Reformation period. Surius not only adopted a new hagiographical style but was still able to collect episodes that are not attested by other known written sources, as Solvi points out. It proves that the hagiographical construction of Bernardino continued, sometime as an underground river, well into the sixteenth century. For this reason, this is surely one of the *vitae* that will deserve further investigation.

Moving to the text composed by Ludovico da Vicenza, it has a particular relevance in the history of the cult of Bernardino, since it was commissioned by the 1481 Cismontane Observant chapter to one of the leading members of the Italian Observance – Ludovico had been General Vicar in 1461–64 – and it was approved as liturgical *legenda* for the friars in 1484. Hence, the text encapsulates what became the official portrait of St Bernardino for the *fratres de familia*. By being used every year in the liturgical office of the Order, it had an influential role as a narrative of self-understanding for the friars. The critical edition – an improvement in comparison with the text in the *Acta Sanctorum* – is mainly conducted on the 1482 *editio princeps*. Moreover, the Italian version Solvi rightly chose to use was the vernacular edition published in Venice in 1513, which is a token of the circulation of this life beyond the literate readership. Still, strangely enough, Solvi indicates the 1482 edition as the only ancient Latin edition, while Ludovico's *vita* occurs also in some printed editions of the *Breviarium Romanum* (I consulted the 1494 edition, published in Venice by Andrea Torresano; GW 5168), which greatly multiplied the impact of this *Vita* on the construction of the memory of Bernardino. Surely, a systematic investigation of the early printed breviaries is still to be done (Solvi recalls, in another section, the presence of the Anonimo Aversano's text in a breviary published in 1474). Similarly, also other texts in early volumes concerning Bernardino would deserve consideration. For instance, Bernardino's Marian sermons published in 1493 in Nuremberg by Friedrich Creussner (GW 3888) contains in its introduction an anonymous life that includes selected episodes – probably on the basis of the text composed by Giovanni da Capestrano, who is explicitly mentioned – that better highlight Bernardino's devotion to the Virgin.

Perhaps, some thoughts on this type of text will find space in the last volume of the project. It promises to offer 'the reading tools for the hagiographic corpus on Bernardino' and will, therefore, be crucial for the success of the entire endeavour. For instance, to allow a fruitful use of the texts published it will be vital to have detailed indexes of names, places, episodes, and virtues. In the current volume, in fact, the introductions are in general too brief to provide an exact perception of the contents, while the relationships between the different texts are only sketched. Therefore, the judgment of the present volume will partially depend on the characteristics of the final one. Still, already in its present form, the volume offers rich material for scholars interested in late medieval preaching, hagiography, and religious culture. In using these materials, they will follow in the footsteps of Ludovico da Vicenza, who states in his dedicatory letter to Cardinal Gabriele Rangoni that while he reluctantly (*invitum*) accepted the task to compose an accountable narrative on Bernardino, the painstaking work – during which he had 'to grind and smell (*olfacere*) all the actions of the saint' – turned into a fruitful advantage for himself (p. 110).

Pietro Delcorno  
Radboud University, Nijmegen, Netherlands  
 [pietrodelcorno@libero.it](mailto:pietrodelcorno@libero.it)

© 2019 Pietro Delcorno  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13660691.2019.1662569>

