

# Magistra



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Margareta of Hungary and Lukardis von Oberweimar, are included. There are also groups of women, including the Dominican Observant Movement in Italy, the Bridgettine Abbey of Vadstena, Diepenveen, the Visitandines of Brussels, and the *ospedali* of Venice, who were creating and claiming spiritual authority and renegotiating spiritual authority and its pervasiveness in broader society.

Women who could not access formal education at the universities found creative ways to meet that basic human need, usually through their friendships with theologians and preachers, and through well-chosen chaplain/secretaries. To express their spiritual authority publicly happened most commonly through their direct access to the spiritual realm and mediating God's word to their followers. Their fame grew and soon commanded the respect of theologians and clergy. Several of these essays reflect on the remarkable and creative ways women, and sometimes their communities, managed to express that authority.

This is a fine research resource on medieval women's spirituality as well as for those exploring particular texts. It contains color as well as black and white plates, footnotes, bibliographies and an index.

L.S.

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***Nuns' Literacies in Medieval Europe: The Kansas City Dialogue***, ed. Virginia Blanton, Veronica O'Mara and Patricia Stoop. Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2015. 413 pp., \$130, ISBN 978-2-503-54922-4.

This is the second in a three volume series based on international gatherings held in three locations (1. Hull, 2. Kansas City, and 3. Antwerp). The participants are exploring literacy among women religious who, across countries and in diverse languages, read, interpreted, copied, wrote, translated, edited, and served as patrons of intellectual and literate practice. Scholars worked with both Latin and vernacular texts – a technical pursuit of evidence that “nun literacy” was not a myth. This volume is technical, scholarly, thoughtful, and integrative. I

appreciated the commitment of these scholars to “building their case” with sheer depth of their data, and establishing that these were not unconventional cases, but rather more normative than traditional histories acknowledged.

Questions that framed all three conferences include: What level of access and understanding of Latin did nuns have and how did they use Latin in concert with vernacular texts? When and where did nuns use vernacular languages as a means of access to books? What are the differences in writing ability across the different vernaculars? How did nuns' use of language change over time and place and by religious order? Which surviving manuscripts show evidence of nuns as readers, patrons, or copyists? What books were nuns, writing, as opposed to reading, copying, or exchanging? Framing these and other questions has served this project well. Essays explore nuns' education, manuscript creation, visual arts, and textual interactions with broader culture.

Among some examples, Blanton and Scheck began their work on Leoba with Hild, establishing that Leoba had entered a culture of learning, which she brought with her to northern Europe. While the rich culture of Helfta is better known, Wiethaus explores collaborative literacy practices, pedagogy, and training of her teachers. The Augustinian canonesses of Brussels were a major center of book production, and Stoop reminds us that in order to become a canoness, a command of Latin and “things liturgical” was required. She demonstrates the breadth of their command of Latin as well as the extent that they were able to find local sources in the vernacular with which to work. Knox explores the vast educational mission of the Dominican nuns from Ireland to Spain that included construction of *bibliotecas* and *scriptoria*, in a context where these nuns brought their educational and literary traditions from Ireland to Spain.

Winston-Allen explores extensive evidence of nuns and manuscript illumination. Schlotheuber explores the extensive correspondence of nuns demonstrating their dense network of connections. Legal agency expressed through documents created by nuns is explored. My list of this impressive work could go on.

Scholars and graduate students seeking depth of information on any of these areas explored or who simply share an interest in medieval religious women will appreciate these volumes. They have beautiful color plates, as well as black and white illustrations, footnotes, bibliography, and indices of texts, convents, people and manuscripts.

L.S.

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*Sacrifice and Delight in the Mystical Theologies of Anna Maria van Schurman and Madame Jeanne Guyon*, by Bo Karen Lee. South Bend: University of Notre Dame Press, 2015. 264 pp., \$29, ISBN 978-0-268-03391-0.

Those of us of a "certain" feminist bent, especially those of us with Irish, Hispanic, or Italian grandmothers, might find ourselves deeply resistant to reading Lee's study. Fine scholarship liberates the genius of a tradition from its later distortions (perpetuated by some of our ancestors) while also acknowledging problems with that tradition. Lee's eyes were "wide open," retrieving the best and acknowledging the problems.

Anna Maria van Schurman [1607-1678] was born into a Dutch Calvinist family and was a renowned intellectual as an artist, musician and student of philosophy, but especially known for her linguistic genius. She gained access to the university, while required to hide behind a screen in the corner of the lecture hall. She would become known as a respected commentator on Scripture. Experiencing a dramatic religious "conversion," Schurman joined a Pietistic movement. Her subsequent struggles between intellectual ways of knowledge versus inner knowledge [*intima notitia* or knowledge gained through contemplation] were played out in her *Eukleria*.

Madame Jeanne Guyon [1648-1717] was a French Catholic woman whose thought and teaching would be associated with Quietism and fall under the suspicion of Church authorities. Despite the heightened atmosphere of the Protestant and Catholic Reformations, it was the Protestant world that embraced her

teachings, and that insured that a large body of her writings survived, thanks to the French Protestant publisher Pierre Poirer.

Essentially these two women taught that self-denial (van Schurman) and self-annihilation (Guyon) were the path and the means to "the desire for enjoyment of God." This enjoyment was the goal and came at a great cost. Lee remains focused on her understanding of these women's teachings. Another study might explore further the influences of the Reformations, Calvin, Jansenism, and Francis de Sales, but Lee stays with these women of themselves. This distinct but prominent thread of spirituality certainly had its challenges, even to their contemporaries. Lee effectively addresses these challenges.

Researchers in spirituality and historical theology as well as women's studies will find this a good source. Appendices include selections of a few letters of van Schurman in Latin with English translation, as well as a selection from van Schurman's *Eukleria* with translations, and there are also endnotes, bibliography and index.

L.S.

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*Christianity and Culture in the Middle Ages: Essays to Honor John Van Engen*, edited by David C. Mengel & Lisa Wolverton. South Bend, University of Notre Dame Press, 2015. 552 pp., \$68, ISBN 978-0-268-03533-4.

I would expect a majority of readers of *Magistra* are aware of the outstanding work of medievalist John van Engen with his distinguished career at the University of Notre Dame. These essays in his honor craft a thread from each contributor's work to the groundbreaking work of van Engen, who did not shy away from re-examining the history and understanding of women, acknowledging when women's history had been marginalized or misrepresented.

These essays are grouped around "Christianization," "Twelfth-Century Culture," "Jews and Christian Society," and "Late Medieval Religious Life," examining a broad spectrum of