

narratives of clerical authority” (34) and comes back repeatedly to the disciplinary mechanism of discernment that remained the privilege of the institution’s authorized experts: after all, it was axiomatic that Satan could (and when assailing holy men—and, especially, women—often did) transform himself into an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:14).

The book pursues its argument through a succession of “cultural spaces of orthodox authority” (139), including preaching, confession, the eucharist, and “spiritual perfection,” while simultaneously moving forward from the eleventh through to the fifteenth century. The reader looking for English anchoritism—and in particular for Middle English anchoritic literature—will need a certain amount of patience. Although Wulfric of Haselbury is mentioned in the Introduction, Chapter One has only a single sentence near the end on *Ancrene Wisse* (46). Thereafter, however, a spine of English texts runs through the book: from Aelred’s *De Institutione Inclusarum* and Wulfric again in Chapter Two; moving forward to the to the *Regula Recluserum* sometimes known as *Walter’s Rule* and probably of the thirteenth century (Chapter Three); to the fourteenth century and Rolle’s *Form of Living* (Chapter Four) and Hilton’s *Scale of Perfection* (Five); and finally the fifteenth-century *Speculum Inclusorum* in Chapter Six. It is no weakness that, alongside these texts of English origin, Easterling’s instinctive frame of reference includes so many continental examples—including Athalisa, anchoress in the diocese of Le Mans, Flora of Beaulieu, Herluca of Epfach, Jutta of Disibodenberg, Liutberga of Wendeshausen, Wilbirg of St Florian—as well as better-known figures such as Angela of Foligno, Clare of Montefalco, Birgitta of Sweden, Heloise, Mechtild of Magdeburg, and Marguerite Porete, whom Easterling defines as “para-anchoritic” (18–20); nor that the chapters include extended discussions of Dorothea of Montau, Elisabeth of Schönau, Ermine de Reims, Aude Fauré, Ida of Louvain, Margaret the Lame, Yvette of Huy, and the Welsh anchorite Wechelen. At the same time—and especially, perhaps, in the later chapters, as we get further away from the coherence of the material centred on the Gregorian reform, and the intellectual and socioreligious contexts of the texts discussed expand and differentiate—the frequent shifts of focus can be a little dizzying. This, coupled with a somewhat intense style of writing, makes *Angels and Anchoritic Culture* a demanding read, but it is a rewarding one.

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***Convents, Clausura and Cloister: Religious Women in Late Medieval Rome and Latium.* By Angelica Federici. Rome: Vielle s.r.l, 2022. 217 pp. \$42.80 paper.**

The past few decades have seen an abundance of scholarship describing the roles of women in medieval Christianity. Much of this work focuses on literary texts of women mystics, visionaries, and religious leaders. For example, Gabriella Zarri has opened a field for the study of Christian women in late medieval and early modern Italy by women who were

famed as prophets in the ducal courts of northern Italy. Most of these women were members of mendicant orders, especially the movement known as Dominican Penitent Women, and all of them were sponsored by the noble families who controlled the patchwork of independent states that made up central and northern Italy. Further south, in the Papal States and the territories controlled by the Bourbons, there were fewer female monastic establishments, and many fewer famous women religious, leaving open a variety of questions about the history of female monastic life in these areas.

Angelica Federici begins this interesting book by noting that Rome and Latium have been largely ignored in the history of medieval religious women. She begins with fundamental research on the number and size of female religious establishments. By focusing on conventual art and architecture, she begins to fill the gap with thirteen case studies, “which provide insight of the importance of female patronage pre- and post-Avignon. . . . and a resource for fellow researchers interested in convents in Rome and Latium in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries” (7).

Although these thirteen case studies are the heart of the book, an appendix (177–190) provides basic information (name, size, location, date of foundation, and bibliography) for many more communities. Federici’s book thus gives scholars crucial data about seventy-one communities of religious women (forty-nine Benedictine, twenty-one Clarissan, and one Dominican) that flourished in Rome and Latium between 1200 and 1400. Her work is a good example of “the material turn” in medieval studies. By describing, often in great detail, the layout of each monastery she studies, including the relationship between cloistered space and space open to the laity, and the position of the altar in each church, Federici can recreate the daily lives of the women enclosed in these communities. There are fifty-seven black and white photographs of extant buildings and works of art (between pp. 92–93) to illustrate many of the buildings otherwise described from archival materials. In cases where very little of the medieval construction remains, she makes use of AutoCAD to discern the original foundations and shape of the buildings in each monastic enclosure.

“Enclosure” is an important word in Federici’s book because most of the communities she studies survived to be impacted by the decretal “Pericoloso,” promulgated by Pope Boniface VIII in 1298, requiring the strict claustration of religious women. This requirement, of course, changed the daily habits of women in religious life, especially as subsequent decrees by Catholic popes and councils, up to the final session of the Council of Trent in 1563, continued to impose ever stricter rules for the cloistering of nuns. The growth of women’s monastic establishments in Rome and Latium, therefore, is presented against the seemingly contradictory background of increasing restrictions on the mobility of religious women that were imposed after 1298.

The book is divided into four chapters: “Major Themes,” a study of how gender and politics reframes monastic space; “Roman Nunneries,” an analysis of the confluence of the patronage of important families and changes in monastic life in late medieval Rome; “The Benedictines in Latium,” a study highlighting religious women’s patronage of sacred art in the region; and “The Mendicants in Latium,” an account of how the Franciscan ideal of the Clarissan nuns became dominant in the region by the end of the thirteenth century.

For most of the later middle ages—although Latium remained under the control of the Papacy, even when the Papacy was formally housed in Avignon—important Roman families, especially the Annibaldi, the Colonna, the Orsini, the Savelli, and the Caetani, nevertheless loom large as founders and benefactors of these communities. Obviously, these actions provided a career path for daughters of great houses, but they also opened

the possibility for women's patronage of the arts, a topic never far from Federici's purview. Thus, although we have little evidence of the visionary bravura of religious women of both Benedictine and Mendicant orders documented elsewhere in Italy and in other parts of Europe in this period (for example, the nuns of Helfta, Clare of Assisi, Catherine of Siena) in late medieval Rome and Latium, this book does show how the patronage of powerful families shaped religious roles for some of their daughters, and how some pious and intelligent women became in a more immediate way patrons of the arts and the leaders of religious reforms in central Italy. Although it is no great surprise to learn that the Clarissans gradually took over from Benedictine nuns in Latium, the story of the Clarissan house of Borgo San Pietro, founded by Saint Filippa Mareri (d. 1236), a disciple of Saint Clare of Assisi and the daughter of the powerful landowner Filippo Mareri, provides an interesting account of a devoted follower of Saint Francis (Filippa is said to have been converted to religious life by meeting Frances at the home of her parents) whose monastic community was so well-endowed by her male relatives that she renounced the *privilegium paupertas* that is fundamental to the Franciscan ideal. Federici describes this family move as "a precise strategy to transform the monastic complex into a familial reality and ultimately exercise veritable control over the dioceses of Rieti" (160). Such insights suggest that Federici's book will give other scholars not only basic information that has never before been gathered together but also some interpretations of the relationship between religious and secular power in late medieval Italy that can add to our understanding of the roles of medieval women in the history of Christianity.

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***Wisdom's Journey. Continental Mysticism and Popular Devotion in Medieval England, 1350–1650.* By Steven Rozenski. Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2022. xii + 330 pp.**

The study of Late Medieval English devotional and mystical literature is not only alive and well but may be said to have reached a new stage in Steven Rozenski's *Wisdom's Journey*. Building on a wide range of detailed studies of the relation between the mystical literature of Continental Europe and of England in the period ca. 1350–1650, Rozenski's book, which he describes as "social history of religious literature" (209), shows how much the large body of devotional texts produced in England during this period illustrates not only the vitality of the interactions between England and the Continent, but also how English works—often translations of Continental texts from both the vernacular and Latin—cannot be dismissed as derivative and second-rate; rather, they are often of considerable importance for the history of Christian mysticism and our understanding of literature in the broad sense.

Translations, particularly the selective versions made in the Late Middle Ages, have often been dismissed as worthy of only philological interest. A major aspect of Rozenski's argument is to insist that "these texts contribute to an understanding of the crucial role of translation in shaping the theological discourse in English across