

*Women from the Golden Legend: Female Authority in a Medieval Castilian Sanctoral*, by Emma Gatland. Serie A: Monografías, 296. Tamesis, 2011. Pp. viii+257, Appendix. ISBN: 9781855662292.

Emma Gatland's study of the twenty-six female saints' lives contained in the Castilian sanctoral Escorial h-I-14 is a sensitive, carefully theorized analysis of the construction of female authority in late medieval hagiography. Gatland builds on previous work in Latin and vernacular hagiography as well as medieval and modern theory to explore how the female protagonists exercise agency and negotiate power. As she says, "The concern of this study is the way in which authority is constructed in the hagiographic texts along the threefold axes of vision (chapter 1), language (chapter 2), and performativity (chapter 3)." "By resituating authority in these contexts," she explains, "the chapters consider the female saints as they progress throughout their lives, processes that are inextricably linked with the social as it is understood here, as well as the pursuit of a sacred goal" (20). Gatland takes Escorial h-I-14 as her base text because it contains more female saints' lives than other extant Castilian sanctorals; it also deviates more from Voragine, omitting some passages and elaborating others, in ways that show the translator/compiler's interest in shaping a text to appeal to a lay listening audience. For example, its omission of Voragine's etymological discussions at the start of each life alters the function of naming, allowing both the audience and the female protagonist greater freedom to negotiate the significance of her name and identity. Chapter 3, which focuses on naming, pays the greatest attention to the particularities of Escorial h-I-14 in contrast with other Castilian sanctorals that retain Voragine's etymologies and thereby impose certain expectations on the reader and obligations on the protagonist. This compilation is additionally interesting because it was owned by Isabel of Castile. She inherited it as part of a family library, and she later commissioned another Castilian sanctoral, underlining the political utility of such texts, especially for a queen regent.

Since Gatland's base text had not been published in its entirety, she includes the twenty-two lives not previously available in an appendix. Access to these texts is necessary to enable a reader not already familiar with this manuscript or with the saints' lives under discussion to appreciate Gatland's careful, close reading of these texts. I would recommend reading the introduction and then the saints' lives, before turning to the three central chapters, in order to have a fresh memory of these texts. In her discussion, Gatland frequently refers to several comparable examples from various saints' lives to illustrate general

tendencies as well as deviations from these tendencies, which usually receive greater examination. This approach enables Gatland to contextualize each narrative and bring to bear multiple examples, recognizing that the female saint is both a type and an individual character, and exploring how different categories, like the harlot saint, the virgin martyr, and the transvestite saint, construct and negotiate authority.

In chapter 1, Gatland's analysis shows that vision in the saints' lives reflects medieval ocular theory, and she employs modern gaze theory to articulate the power and function of vision in the texts. She shows that female saints' movement is often dictated by male authorities, be they secular antagonists who expose virgin martyrs' bodies to torture and humiliation, or confessors who expose saints to exhibit their sanctity. Nonetheless, that power does not simply constitute male supremacy, as the female saints resist and often are able to control when they are exposed and how they are seen.

Chapter 2 focuses on language, using medieval and modern theories of speech, habitus, agency, and ritual liminal status to analyze saints' speech. Gatland contrasts the virgin martyrs' eloquent, authoritative, and irrepensible speech under torture with harlot saints' inability to speak at the moment of conversion due, Gatland argues, to their liminal state, between harlotry and sanctity, outside established orders which must be kept distinct.

Chapter 3 examines the function of naming in the saints' lives, as mentioned above. Gatland uses Judith Butler's theory that naming brings a subject into being in language and assigns an identity, making said subject vulnerable to re-naming, to explore whether naming rituals are constative, that is, if a name states what is already known to be so, or teleological/anticipatory, that is, if they aim to bring a self into being. Gatland focuses her analysis on Escorial h-I-14 texts in which naming functions multiply, as saints negotiate their name and identity.

In sum, this book contributes to hagiographical studies in its deft combination of medieval and modern theories, literary and cultural, and provides access to twenty-two previously unpublished hagiographic texts in Castilian. It also contributes to medieval gender studies, as Gatland points to the utility of these texts as models for female power and authority. The fact that these texts are in Castilian receives less attention, even as Gatland engages with other scholars of medieval Castilian hagiography. I would have liked to see more discussion of the target audience and of the social and political uses of these texts, topics touched on in the introduction and conclusion but not sufficiently explored in the chapters that analyze the texts in such complexity. I also would have liked to see a broader consideration of the source text. The relatively brief introduction

does not sufficiently contextualize this manuscript within the larger corpus of Castilian sanctorals, nor of other vernacular translations of Voragine. Gatland's choice to focus exclusively on the female saints' lives, in a text that also includes male saints' lives, prohibits a comparative analysis of the construction of female authority that could have enriched her discussion. Her focus on the agency exercised by these female saints strikes me as problematic, given the transmission of Voragine's text and the issues of authority, secular, ecclesiastical, and divine, raised by such a canonical collection of saints' lives. Gatland discusses changing medieval constructions of authority in the introduction, focusing on *auctoritas*, but she does not address female authority there; nor does she sufficiently acknowledge (for me) the status of these female saints as literary characters. Unfortunately, Gatland's narrow focus isolates her work from broader discussions of late medieval Castilian literature and culture.

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