

Pascale Bermon, Dominique Poirel (dir.), Regards masculins, regards féminins du Moyen Âge sur la femme, Paris (Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin) 2022, 374 p. (Publications de l'Institut d'études médiévales de l'Institut catholique de Paris), ISBN 978-2-7116-3078-3, EUR 28,00.

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This volume presents the outcomes of the 2019 annual conference organized by the Institut d'études médiévales de l'Institut catholique de Paris, which centered on the theme of women in the medieval period. Specifically, the volume seeks to scrutinize how men perceived women during this period, and to what extent women internalised the male gaze and/or acted as active agents in shaping their own narrative within medieval society. Despite the rich historiographical tradition on this subject, the editors argue for the continued relevance of investigating male-female relations in the medieval period. The editors rightly point out that there is no singular concept of »medieval women«, as experiences varied across time, social classes, regions and even within individual lifetimes. Furthermore, different disciplinary perspectives unveil diverse facets of female experiences in the medieval period. The editors, therefore, chose to present a diverse array of case studies, which contributes to a nuanced understanding of how women were represented in the male discourse, and how women either internalised or challenged these representations.

The volume is structured as a diptych, spanning the 11th through the 15th century. The first five chapters concentrate on the dominant male discourse, while the subsequent five chapters delve into the female voice. Various sources, including charters, letters, treatises, and material artifacts such as seals, are employed to uncover these discourses.

The initial chapter, written by Lorenzo Saraceno, focuses on Peter Damian, who is renowned for his misogyny. The subsequent chapter adds a contrasting figure, namely Hugh of Saint-Victor who has a more favourable image of women. Nevertheless, Dominique Poirel convincingly argues that this portrayal was not consistently unequivocal, thereby emphasizing the nuanced evolution in Hugh's representation of women. The following three chapters closely analyse theological works. Laure Solignac delves into theological discourses on Eve. The »Sentences« of Peter Lombard are explored and compared with other influential theological authors such as Augustine and Willem of Auxerre, among others. Lauret Mayali examines the juridical position of women, demonstrating how medieval jurists from the 12th century onward, influenced by Roman law, embedded the perceived »natural inequality« between men and women into a juridical



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structure. Subsequently, Julie Brumberg-Chaumont explores the representation of women in the philosophical and pedagogical works of Gilles of Rome. Gilles' portrayal of women in his texts is one-dimensional, as he depicts women as subject to men in the field of education and pedagogy. Theory does not always reflect reality as is shown by Pascale Bermon's detailed exploration of female presence in the late medieval university of Paris. Bermon convincingly demonstrates that women played diverse roles in medieval education as *magistrae* and students. Women were not only physically present but also symbolically represented as saintly patronesses and allegorical figures.

Bermon's chapter also initiates the second part of the volume, which concentrates on how women depicted themselves. The articles delve into well-known female figures, who have left abundant source material behind. Laurence Moulinier Brogi, for example, examines the œuvre of one of the most renowned female medieval authors, Hildegard of Bingen, highlighting Hildegard's authority as an author in contrast to dominant male perspectives. While Hildegard composed her own work in Latin, Agnes of Foligno, explored in the following chapter by Dominique Poirel, conveyed her theological teachings in the vernacular to a Franciscan monk who then translated them into Latin. Poirel's chapter aims to recover Agnes's own voice, framing her not as a mystic, as she is commonly described, but as a theologian and *doctrix* in her own right. Marie-Pascale Halary examines the reception of »Miroir des âmes simples« written by Marguerite Porete, who faced condemnation for heresy. After her violent death at the stake, her work circulated anonymously and was occasionally attributed to a male author. Halary raises the intriguing question of how presumed male or female authorship influenced the reception of the »Miroir« in different linguistic traditions, studying the impact of gender on the reception and interpretation of a text. The next chapter, written by Michelle Bubenicek, shifts the focus to worldly women exercising political power in a predominantly male context. By linking the regency of Yolande of Flanders, who ruled the county of Bar after the death of her husband, to Christine de Pizan's writings, Bubenicek reveals how tropes of female humility were combined with the advice to act manly. Catherine Guyon concludes the volume by studying Jeanne d'Arc. She elaborates on the concept of a »manly woman« or *virago*. Guyon contextualises Jeanne d'Arc and aligns her with other combatting women, showing that she is – although exceptional – not an isolated case.

The volume, rich in medieval source material, offers a mosaic of perspectives, encouraging further study of how men viewed and portrayed women, as well as how women independently portrayed themselves in medieval society. The book is specifically of interest to students, especially as authors richly quote from medieval source material. The result is an informative work that invites readers to further investigate male-female relations in the medieval period.



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