

Agostino Paravicini Bagliani, *La papessa Giovanna e le sue leggende. Un percorso di ricerca tra codici e testi*. Florence: Sismel. Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2023, ix, 283 pp., 16 color images.

Myth-making was well in place already in the Middle Ages, whether we think of King Arthur, Emperor Charlemagne, or the mysterious Round Table. Many times, fear of sexual transgression permeated the discourse, which found its vivid expression in the motif of the Popess Joanna, Giovanna, Joan, Anna, Jutta, or the like. Numerous scholars have already dealt with this topic, and this until very recently, but no one has dove more deeply into it than Agostino Paravicini Bagliani. In 2021 he had published an edition of 109 relevant texts dealing with this mythical figure, and in the current book he offers an in-depth analysis of the historical development of this legendary account, investigating the rich manuscript and incunabula tradition, the many different responses to this myth in Latin and in a variety of vernaculars, taking us from the thirteenth to the early sixteenth century.

The author focuses on the literary manifestations and examines the contributions of major writers such as Jean de Mailly (Metz), Martino Polono, Stephen of Bourbon, Jans Enikel, Tolomeo da Varazze, Boccaccio, Hartmann Schedel, Robert d'Uzès, Adam of Usk, John Wycliffe, Jan Hus, Enea Silvio Piccolomini, Albrecht von Eyb, Dietrich Schernberg, and Johann Burchard. He provides some background information for each one of them, examines the manuscript condition, and discusses numerous aspects relevant for this mythical figure. Issues of greater interest are the male name of this famous female figure, the circulation of accounts about this popess, her role within the literary discourse, the specific elements of this legendary account, and the cultural-historical significance of this topic, especially in light of the Church tradition and the global gender discourse.

Paravicini Bagliani is particularly concerned with analyzing the various features of this curious figure as she appears in many different texts. It proves to be an amazing phenomenon that this motif occupied so many different male (!) writers who were obviously deeply concerned with the 'danger' of gender role reversals that could even threaten the papal tradition (the young female cleric as a cross-dresser!). Surprisingly, the author does not take this modern interest more into consideration, which would have taken us to a new level of interpretation. This does not mean at all that the author would not deserve our full recognition for his great erudition and extraordinary efforts to engage with so many manuscripts in so many different languages. I only want to point out that a feminist or gender approach to the topic of this book might have yielded more relevant insights. We learn much about the rich manuscript tradition, but there might be more material in this account to expose deeply seated fears among the various poets. Paravicini Bagliani argues that this literary tradition demonstrates "l'impossibilità per la donna di accedere agli ordini sacri" (35; almost verbatim again, 103 and 111). The continued response to the topic of Pope Joan might, however, signal the very opposite, the grave fear that patriarchal rule within the Church might be threatened when women would get access to higher education.

The true strength of this monograph rests in the impressive detail orientation concerning the many different textual witnesses that the author appears to have examined individually and in detail. This allows him to move easily from one manuscript version

to another, and thus to determine major and subtle differences between one narrative about this figure and another. An additional intriguing topic proves to be the effort ever since the rise of this mythical narrative to verify in reality the pope's masculine gender by means of a special seat that would allow a person to grope his groins, for which there is, until today, a unique chair in the Vatican.

In a way, both books by Paravicini Bagliani lay the foundation for new research moving beyond the basic manuscript and narrative studies. He steers us magisterially through the maze of medieval sources and discusses fully both texts and images. The next stage, however, really calls for more attention, that is, the question of why this topic even attracted so much interest, if not fear. The answer might be quite easy, male fear of female power, but we would have to study the various text versions carefully to gain solid insights. On the basis of what Paravicini Bagliani has accomplished, this will be much easier to do from now on.

The extensive apparatus offers much important aid for future research: an appendix with the names of authors and texts; a chronological list of authors and texts (1250–1500); a list of abbreviations; a select (why only select?) bibliography; the color plates (first rate quality); an index with names of persons and locations; and an index of manuscripts. This is, altogether, a well-structured, first-rate study that deserves our full respect.

Albrecht Classen

***Agrarian Archeology in Northwestern Iberia. Local Societies: The Off-Site Record*, ed. Juan Antonio Quirós Castillo. Historical Archeology Series. Summertown, Oxford: Archaeopress, 2023, 168 pages.**

Shards of pottery, ceramic or stoneware fragments of handmade kitchenware, pop up now and then in agricultural fields, far from the loci of their making and normal use. Archeologists, as a way of indicating that they have found these fragments detached from their supposed proper places, use the term “off-site.” The term has an odd, self-contradictory ring, similar to the concept of “non-places” coined by Marc Augé and later applied by Richard Hodges to archeological evidence of the economics and urbanization of medieval Europe. Why do pot shards appear off-site? A leading hypothesis is the “manure thesis,” by which the archeologist T. Spatium J. Wilkinson, the landscape historian Richard Jones, and others have supposed that peasants, carrying their own dung or that of their animals out to fields for deposit as a soil enhancer, inadvertently broke or otherwise discarded the carrying vessels. The present book, a collection of field reports and short analyses based on field studies, aims to augment the off-site record and to test the manure thesis. Results are interestingly complex.

The volume, in seven chapters, derives from a conference held in 2019 in Vitoria-Gasteiz, the capital city of the Province of Álava in the Basque country of northern Spain. It is published as an outcome of the research projects ‘Peasant agency and socio-political complexity in the northwest of the Iberian Peninsula in medieval times’ and ‘Archeology of local societies in Southern Europe: Identities and collec-