

doi:10.1017/S000964071500102X

***Monastic Women and Religious Orders in Late Medieval Bologna.***

By **Sherri Franks Johnson**. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014. xi + 262 pp. \$95.00 cloth.

The fortunes and opportunities of women religious in medieval Europe have recently been the subject of debate. The long prevailing view that clerical centralisation during the thirteenth century closed down paths of religious life previously open to women has been qualified. Looking in the gaps between the major institutions of the church, historians have been finding evidence of experimentation and local diversity in female religious communities extending to the end of the medieval period. Sherri Franks Johnson's study of holy women in Bologna adds significantly to this discussion. Of thirty-five female houses existing in the area by 1300, only half were closely linked to the major religious orders. The upheavals and warfare of the fourteenth century caused several groups of holy women to transfer within the city walls, precipitating amalgamation with other communities and occasional conflict. However, alongside some evidence of laxity in the fifteenth century Johnson emphasises continuing initiatives and "the range of choices nuns could exercise" (239). Because of the institutional character of the available sources, it is not easy to assess the degree of choice open to an individual woman entering one of these communities, nor the quality of their religious experience. Nonetheless the case for diversity and fluidity in the evolution of communities of religious women is well made. The creative energy of an individual such as Diana, the friend of St Dominic and founder of a community of men and women religious in the early thirteenth century, was evidently inspirational. At the end of the period no less an impact is recorded of the arrival in Bologna of the Observant Clares, whose monastery of Corpus Domini became one of the most prestigious houses in the city.

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doi:10.1017/S0009640715001031

***St. Anne in Renaissance Music: Devotion and Politics.*** By **Michael**

**Alan Anderson**. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014. xvii + 345 pp. \$99.00 cloth.

In this monograph, Anderson has provided a collection of case studies, many evolved from the author's doctoral dissertation, designed to outline the