

*Paleography, Manuscript Illumination and Humanism in Renaissance Italy: Studies in Memory of A. C. de la Mare.* Robert Black, Jill Kraye, and Laura Nuvoloni, eds.

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This collection of twenty-two essays is the product of a conference held at King's College and the Warburg Institute in 2011 in honor of Albinia de la Mare (1932–2001), according to the volume's editors "one of the last century's outstanding palaeographers and the world's leading authority on Italian Renaissance manuscripts" (xiii). The substantial volume, with articles in both Italian and English, is divided into six sections that touch on salient aspects of the scholar's career and reflect her various research interests.

In the opening essay "L'umanesimo di Albinia C. de la Mare," Vincenzo Fera briefly outlines the unusual trajectory of the scholar's career. Over the course of eleven years (!) of doctoral research predominantly focused on cultural history ("Vespasiano da Bisticci, Historian and Bookseller," PhD diss. [1965]), de la Mare acquired impeccable paleographic skills, not a standard component of British university curricula at the time, as Fera explains in rather an understatement. The truly extraordinary talent she possessed for paleography is revealed by Concetta Bianca in "Albinia C. de la Mare (biblioteche senza inventario)," citing an autobiographical piece of de la Mare's, from which we learn that she was gifted with a kind of photographic memory of individual scribal hands (A. C. de la Mare "A Paleographer's Odyssey," in *Sight and Insight: Essays on Art and Culture in Honour of E. H. Gombrich at 85*, ed. J. Onians [1994]: 87–107). As the biographical section is the shortest one in the collection, this reviewer would have appreciated a reprint of "A Paleographer's Odyssey" to round out the portrait of the scholar.

As one would expect in a tribute such as this, there are significant articles on paleography and codicology by Teresa de Robertis, Irene Ceccherini, Stefano Zamponi, Gabriella Pomaro, and Giliola Barbero. Although de la Mare's focus was on script rather than illuminations, there is a short section on illuminators as well. Jonathan J. G. Alexander's "Scribes and Illuminators in Italian Renaissance Illuminated Manuscripts: Cooperation and Overlaps" documents several unusual cases of crossover between the two specializations. All the articles are superbly edited with charts, appendixes, and, most

importantly, dozens of black and white manuscript facsimiles, as well as sixteen color plates.

Paleography, however, was never an end in itself for Albinia de la Mare; it was a tool for revealing the careers and copying practices of fifteenth-century humanist scribes (“New Research on Humanist Scribes in Florence,” in *Miniatura fiorentina del Rinascimento 1440–1525* [1985]). Her research uncovered a wealth of material about social and cultural practices in Renaissance Florence. Notably, in the process of studying the scribal activities in the workshop of bookseller Vespasiano da Bisticci (1421–98), de la Mare provided a detailed study of the Florentine manuscript industry that remains unsurpassed. Hence, beyond those articles dealing strictly with paleography, there are a number that reflect de la Mare’s own broader approach to cultural history. There are, for instance, several case studies of men whose copying activities intersected in fascinating ways with their contemporary social and political world. In “Matteo Contugi of Volterra (d. 1493): Scribe and Secret Agent,” David S. Chambers reconstructs the somewhat checkered career path of a Tuscan copyist with connections at the courts of Mantua and Urbino, and in “The *Ricordanze* of Lorenzo di Francesco Guidetti: Manuscript Production and Circulation,” Lorenz Böniger demonstrates how “copying manuscripts was for Guidetti both a—relatively lucrative—pastime in the years preceding his professional career and his marriage (in 1472) and a means of preparing and promoting this career by bringing him to the attention of the ‘reggimento,’ Florence’s leading families” (209).

What emerges most strongly from the fine scholarship gathered here is not only these scholars’ indebtedness to de la Mare’s contributions to the field, but to the warm and generous spirit of the woman herself. James Hankins sums up the sentiments of many of the contributors to this volume, when he writes of being “invigorated, like so many others, by the joy she took in learning” (377).

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