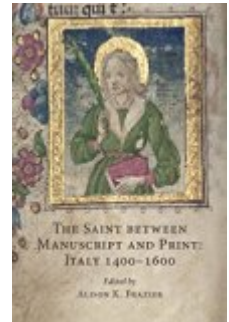


Alison Knowles Frazier, ed.. *The Saint between Manuscript and Print: Italy 1400-1600*. Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2015. 494 pp. \$49.95, paper, ISBN 978-0-7727-2181-5.



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Commissioned by Matt Vester (West Virginia University)

This volume is the result of Alison Frazier's conviction that the lives of saints reflect "human aspirations and anxieties of the most disparate sorts" that "generate an explosive variety of textual and artistic evidence in manuscript and print" (p. 15). Building on a seminar held at the American Academy in Rome in 2008, Frazier recruited some of the leading scholars in the field to produce this impressive collection of essays. The result even has the editor marveling "that the topic of the saints' cults and the topics of changing media have not been systematically drawn together before" (p. 15).

Three interpretative narratives unify the essays and demonstrate the potential of this new historiographical nexus: the increased importance of print; the persistence of manuscript; and the relationship between manuscript and print. The volume's introduction is a masterful survey and summary of the historiographical debates regarding print and manuscript culture. Frazier examines printed works and manuscripts as cultural artifacts and problematizes the assumptions of

a linear transition from manuscript to print. Frazier organizes the volume in two sections: the first contains essays on lay saints; the second, on saints of religious orders. The sections are bookended by two essays suggesting how little we still know about the dissemination of early prints and documenting how few early printed books have survived.

Roberto Cobianchi contributes the first essay, a study of the connections between sheet woodcuts and the cult of new saints between 1446 and 1523. Cobianchi makes a significant contribution to "a rather neglected area of research: the taste for perishable embellishment in Late Medieval Italy that included the use of single woodcuts in combination with floral adornments" (p. 86). Three essays constitute "Part I: Lay Sanctity between Manuscript and Print." Barbara Wisch traces the new iconography of St. Lucy introduced with the translation of her relics to Venice in the wake of the Fourth Crusade. Wisch argues that printed imagery trumped theological treatises in fixing Lucy's iconography. Pierre Bolle makes a

significant contribution to the contested history of the plague saint, Roch of Montpellier. After meticulous archival research, Bolle overturns the current historiography of St. Roch with the startling and persuasive conclusion that Roch was actually a hagiographic doublet of Racho, bishop of Merovingian Autun! His essay is also an important cautionary tale for scholars who commonly assume that manuscripts predate printed works. Simon of Trent, the first Jewish child murder incident “to receive extensive press coverage” (p. 183) is the subject of Stephen Bowd’s essay. Through his study of both vernacular and Latin texts, Bowd reminds us of the darker side of Renaissance humanist learning.

Giuseppe Antonio Guazzelli’s study of early printed martyrologies in Italy provides an “Intermezzo” between the two sections of the volume. Guazzelli examines a neglected subject: printed martyrologies before the *Martyrologium Romanum* was imposed on the universal church in 1584. Guazzelli’s essay contributes to our understanding of the transition from manuscript to the print and the dynamics of the print market.

Six essays in part 2 examine saints of the religious orders. Cécile Caby investigates a newly identified Latin history of St. Honoratus, fifth-century bishop of Arles and founder of Lérins, one of the most important monasteries of the Middle Ages. Caby examines this text “to reconstruct the production and manuscript diffusion of a hagiographic re-writing guided by rhetorical, linguistic, and historical sensibilities characteristic of fifteenth-century culture” (p. 257). Laura Ackerman Smoller studies the process of image formation of St. Vincent Ferrer, the Dominican saint famed for his preaching and attempts to heal the Great Schism. Smoller addresses the important question: “How did information about a new saint circulate in an age poised between manuscript and print culture” (p. 300)? In the process Smoller warns that “it is perhaps we moderns who are overawed by the power of print, and who are, I

fear, victims of its standardization” (p. 321). Stefano Dall’Aglio examines the legacy of Fra Girolamo Savonarola. Although condemned by church authorities, Savonarola gained a saintly reputation through written works, which reflected the popular veneration of Savonarola. Dall’Aglio’s essay provides an intriguing reconstruction of “a semi-clandestine manuscript circulation that suited the subversive representation of a heretic with a halo” (p. 345). Serena Spanò Martinelli and Irene Graziani trace the manuscript and print writings of the Observant Franciscan nun, Caterina Vigri of Bologna (1413-63), whose life bridges the written and printed worlds. John Gagné examines the lives of two holy women from the same convent in Milan. The Italian Wars and the French control of Milan provided the political framework in which the works of these living saints (*sante vive*) were constructed. Gagné takes the reader through the translating, editing, and publication process, arguing that editors could create completely new texts for publication: “Attending to fixity as a processual, rather than a mechanical, category reveals that to fix a text was to elucidate the desires of the text’s producer, to reveal an agenda. In other words, fixing was a means, not just an end” (p. 410). Gabriella Zarri documents the persistence of manuscript books in religious houses with a case study of the works of the mystic Lucia de’ Narni (1476-1544). Zarri’s essay reminds us that not all religious writing made it into print and that for many convents manuscript books were more economical than printed books. Kevin Stevens provides a “Coda” examining the production of cheap printed religious material in early modern Milan. His essay reveals an active business in single-sheet prints and images of saints fostered by the financial and ideological incentives of Tridentine reforms.

The range of subjects and the quality of the essays, all original contributions based on archival research, do make one marvel that scholars have not addressed this subject previously. The volume demonstrates that the traditional

scholarly focus on prohibited books and illicit heretical material has ignored the vast literary production of orthodox texts and images. We know more about what Italians could not read than what they actually chose to reproduce, buy, and publish. Challenging the existing historiographical paradigm, the book demonstrates how much more work remains to be done on the topic of religious devotion in the age of print. Fortunately, the contributions provide ample suggestions for further research. Not only do the essays demonstrate fruitful lines of inquiry, but the footnotes also contain endless references to topics suitable for dissertation topics and academic monographs. To give just one example, in her introduction Frazier notes that “no synthetic study of martyrdom in the early period of Ottoman expansion exists” (p. 23n29). This terse observation alone could keep scholars busy for decades. Frazier’s volume is a remarkable achievement: a collection of insightful and important essays that reassess the current scholarship and inspire new fields of interdisciplinary research.

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