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Immagini dei predicatori e della predicazione in Italia alla fine del Medioevo by Roberto Rusconi (review)

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travel” accounts by European elites during the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries, noting that English (protestant) accounts frequently labeled the Catholic confessional practices of France and Italy as “deviant” against their own religion (179). Becker convincingly articulates the narrative strategies (where “difference” is neutral and “deviance” is a moral failure) as an attempt by the travelers to “relabel experience of foreignness and difference as forms of divergent behaviour” (181). This observation is particularly important to scholars of cultural identity and audience reception, as Becker demonstrates that the Early Modern book market allowed these accounts “of distinctiveness into deviance” to become “a means for the dynamic construction of the British identity” (200).

This edited collection deals very deftly with approaches to and definitions of deviance as a socially and legally fluid category, but would benefit from a wider lens. Many of the chapters offer very insightful details on the historical moment, but the implications of such claims for a wider historical or scholarly audience are missing. Nonetheless, these authors raise valuable questions about the ways religious, gendered, and social performance influence legal and political “customary” practices.

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Roberto Rusconi, *Immagini dei predicatori e della predicazione in Italia alla fine del Medioevo* (Spoleto: Fondazione centro italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo 2016) 516 pp., ill.

Roberto Rusconi's *Immagini dei predicatori e della predicazione in Italia alla fine del Medioevo* addresses the representations of preaching in late medieval Italy. The book begins with “Retractatio,” the piece which could be translated as “Reflections.” In the “Retractatio,” Rusconi briefly introduces the idea of the volume: to collect his previous articles on the representations of sermons and preachers in both literary and iconographical material. According to him, studying the representations of medieval preaching is closely connected to hagiographical studies, and it allows us to take a closer look to the margins of the medieval society. The essays are collected from the author's vast production from the years 1985–2008. Covering more than twenty years of Rusconi's active academic life, they also reveal interesting changes in his thinking and in the ways that he addresses phenomena connected to medieval preaching. The idea of personal growth is sustained by the “Retractatio,” the reflections, which include mostly the author's short biography in relation to the texts of the book. The approach is admittedly interesting, yet a deeper introduction discussing the principles for choosing the included articles would have facilitated the reader's task with such a large and comprehensive collection. This is especially true for several essays with considerable overlap in both descriptions and analysis, in which cases the common material would have called for the author's justification for why they all are included inside the covers of one book.

The first section includes three papers published between 1985 and 1995. This section is suitably entitled “In Principio”: the articles address mainly the beginning of the history of two mendicant orders, the Dominicans and

Franciscans, and the representation of their main figures, Saints Dominic, Francis, Peter Martyr, and Anthony. Interestingly, it seems that already the first section provides a picture of Rusconi's personal scholarly evolution: the first two articles, "'Forma apostolorum': l'immagine del predicatore nei movimenti religiosi francesi ed italiani dei secoli XII e XIII," written in 1985, and "Reportatio," written in 1989 are based on a great variety of textual sources, mostly hagiographical, whereas the third one, "'Trasse la storia per farne la tavola' immagini di predicatori degli ordini mendicanti nei secoli XIII e XIV" written in 1995 makes use of iconographical sources as well. The iconographical material becomes more central to the author's analyses together with the written evidence in the following sections.

The second section, "La rappresentazione delle prediche," contains three articles from the years 1989–2001. Here, the focus is moved from the beginning of mendicant orders, their founders, and the first preachers, to the preachers of the fifteenth century. Also, the author's focus seems to switch permanently from the texts to the images. The first article, "'Predico' in piazza": politica e predicazione nell'Umbria del '400," contextualizes preachers in the local political context of Umbria. Preachers received sympathy especially with their sermons for peace and reform in lay communities. The next article, "Le pouvoir de la parole. Représentation des prédicateurs dans l'art de la renaissance en Italie," discusses the image of the preacher and the image of the saint and their conflation. The article argues for the increasing focus on the representations of preachers in the art of Renaissance Italy. One key element of this development seems to have been that the preachers gained the fame of sanctity more often than before and that many were eventually canonized. Two images, that of the preacher and that of the saint, became one, the preacher-saint. The section "Immagini di predicatori e scene di predicazione nell'arte italiana all'epoca di fra' Girolamo da Ferrara" focuses on Girolamo da Ferrara (Savonarola) whose activity is analyzed in a wide context of mendicant culture. In this article, Rusconi discusses Savonarola's role in the sponsorship of art and commitment to support art in medieval Italy. The question is interesting and it is studied through a variety of examples. Rusconi finds several themes and ideas in Dominican art works which were possibly consequences of Savonarola's preaching. One major example is reform. A more profound conclusion would have helped the reader to understand the author's opinions, including which changes were possibly the effects of Savonarola's preaching and which were more general changes in the figurative art.

The third section is entitled "La santità dei predicatori." These articles were originally published in a wide time span: 1989–2005. The opening article "The Preacher Saint in late Medieval Italian Art" can be read as an introductory part as many of its themes and examples are treated in more detail in the following articles. Actually, this is one example of a case in which the reader would have appreciated a more profound introduction and justification for why these specific essays were selected for the book from the author's vast production and for why they are arranged as they are. At the moment, the above-mentioned article seems to contain a considerable amount of repetition compared to the rest of the book, but the reader may have better perceived the role of the article in the collection with an explanation for its inclusion in the book's introduction.

Naturally, without the context of this specific volume, that is, even without the previous and following texts on the same theme, the article “The Preacher Saint in late Medieval Italian Art” would be an enjoyable and revealing reading experience for the English-speaking audience. As a part of the book *Immagini dei predicatori e della predicazione in Italia alla fine del Medioevo* it reads as a synthesis of the author’s previous research. The following articles “Giovanni da Capestrano: iconografia di un predicatore nell’Europa del’400,” “Vicent Ferrer e Pedro de Luna: sull’iconografia di un predicatore fra due obbedienze,” “Declinazioni iconografiche della santità: la rappresentazioni di Vicent Ferrer nel corso del secolo XV” and “Le parole e le nuvole. San Pietro (martire) da Verona e l’iconografia di un prodigio” follow the approach already presented in the previous articles, now applied to the case studies of images of three different preachers. The analysis is deep and well contextualized in the religious and political situations in Italy.

The last section, entitled “Percorsi” discusses heretics, women as preachers, and propaganda/satire against heretics, women, and preachers. These articles, originally published between 1994 and 2004, include the following: “I ‘falsi credentes’ nell’iconografia della predicazione (secoli XIII–XV),” “La predicazione fra propaganda e satira alla fine del medio evo,” “Women’s Sermons at the end of the Middle Ages. Texts from the Blessed and Images of Saints,” and “Anti-Jewish Preaching in the Fifteenth Century and Images of Preachers in Italian Renaissance Art.” As the title already hints, the articles here are not as thematically consistent as in the previous sections, although all the themes covered are interesting as such. This part of the book meritoriously broadens the theme of images of preachers/preaching in the end of the Middle Ages. Unfortunately, the language of the texts published in English is not always clear and sometimes it is difficult to follow the author’s analysis. Naturally this is a loss to the value of the volume outside of an Italian-reading audience.

In its entirety, the collection of Roberto Rusconi’s articles is a treasure to anyone interested in the medieval preaching or preachers, mendicant orders or even medieval art in general in Italy. The republication is logical from the viewpoint of making these important articles more easily accessible: the old journals and conference proceedings where the papers were originally published are often difficult to find outside Italy. The book is thematically compact to the point of certain repetition (for example the paintings by Erri or his school on Dominican preachers in their church in Modena are discussed in very similar terms in several articles). The articles include a wide selection of images, basically all of which Rusconi refers to. This makes the reading experience comfortable. The book would have profited from a conclusion in which Rusconi gave a synthesis on the meanings of the representations of late-medieval preaching from his current expertise and profound learning.

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