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*Early Modern Women : An Interdisciplinary Journal*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (Fall 2020): 165-168. [DOI](http://dx.doi.org/10.1353/emw.2020.0016). This article is © University of Chicago Press and permission has been granted for this version to appear in [e-Publications@Marquette](http://epublications.marquette.edu/). University of Chicago Press does not grant permission for this article to be further copied/distributed or hosted elsewhere without express permission from University of Chicago Press.

Book review of *Fruit of the Orchard: Reading Catherine of Siena in Late Medieval and Early Modern England*. Jennifer N. Brown. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2019. 274 pp. $75. ISBN 978-1-4875-0407-6.

Lezlie Knox

Marquette University

At a recent conference a presenter expressed surprise over Caterina Vigri's professed devotion to Thomas of Canterbury, noting that the appeal of a martyred twelfth-century English archbishop to a fifteenth-century Italian nun seemed incongruous both temporally and geographically. Some readers might have a similar first response to Jennifer N. Brown's examination of Catherine of Siena's reception in late medieval and early modern England, with a shared skepticism ofthe Italian mystic and papal advisor's significance. Indeed, her English presence could be elusive as Brown admits. Catherine's writings often circulated anonymously in spiritual miscellanies. Only two devotional paintings, rood screens where her image has been effaced, survived the Reformation. Wynken de Worde's early sixteenth-century woodcuts presented her generically as the recipient of a divine vision and as an enclosed nun surrounded by her community (which she was not). Yet if the saintly woman could be obscured, Brown's compelling study demonstrates the varied ways audiences read her writings and created meaning from her spiritual experiences. This study's attention to the relationships between Catherinian works and other devotional texts thus demonstrates changes in English devotional culture across the medieval and early modern eras. The result is a fascinating study of English piety that clearly will interest specialists in women's visionary culture. Her close readings of specific texts add to our understanding of their creation, transmission, and reception. Scholars investigating connections between gender and spiritual authority, as well as the discourse between Latin and vernacular texts in an era of increasing literacy and print culture, will come away with new questions to pursue.

The first three chapters establish Catherine's reception in England and in English translation. This textual tradition was notably distinct from the Continental one, developing from only four works. They consist of a letter by her follower and scribe (and later Carthusian prior general) Stephen Maconi; the *Orcherd of Syon* (a translation of *Il Dialogo*, an account of her visions that Catherine dictated to her followers); the "Cleannesse of Sowle" (a translation of William Flete's own witness of one of Catherine's visions, the *Documento Spirituale*); and excerpts from Raymond of Capua's *Legenda Maior*. Two helpful appendices present a genealogy of the relationships among the Catherinian texts and identify their English manuscripts and print representations (204–208). It is striking that neither Catherine's prayers nor her letters circulated in England, nor did Tommaso Caffarini's *Legenda Minor*, which was intended to promote her cult. Instead, these Catherinian translations tempered her mysticism in order to present her to English readers as a more orthodox model of pious contemplation. They also removed her from their original context not only by language but also in function as they no longer promoted her orthodoxy or sanctity.

Chapter 1 examines how a devotional miscellany including Maconi's letter, the lives of Elizabeth Spalbeek, Christina Mirabilis, and Marie d'Oignies, as well as a translation of Henry Suso's *Horologium Sapientie*, reflected the domesticationof Catherine's spirituality by presenting her as a passive recipient of divine visions. Chapters 2 and 3 both consider "Cleannesse of Sowle," first showing how English readers often paired Catherine's visionary text with Fleet's own devotional writing for use in personal contemplation. Even as that work offered "Catherine's spiritual beliefs in a nutshell" (93), Brown shows how the choices of what sections to excerpt and include in spiritual miscellanies—sometimes the section on discernment of spirits and other times on mystical marriage—served various purposes for different readers. Even as Catherine was anonymized, these writings offered guidance for visionaries, who were nonetheless not encouraged to be mystics.

The final three chapters consider what Catherinian texts reveal about the significance of devotional reading in the English context. Chapter 4 focuses on *The Orcherd of Syon*. The Brigettine nuns of Syon Abbey were its first audience. Both the prestige of their convent and the association with Bridget of Sweden helped promote Catherine's saintly reputation even as the text subdued her potentially subversive spirituality. The translator—working from a Latin version of the original Italian (120)—broke up the long descriptions of Catherine's visions of Christ in order to encourage readers to pause and reflect on the text. The Middle English introduction and conclusion further emphasized that it was better to read descriptions of visions than have them. While three surviving manuscripts suggest fairly healthy circulation (Brown establishes that some manuscripts identified as *Orcherd* were actually passages from "Cleanness of Sowle"), Wynken de Worde's 1519 print edition created a much larger reading audience for the Continental tradition of female mysticism. Chapter 5 also focuses on the expanding print market for devotional texts, considering the Middle English *Lyf* based on Raymond of Capua, which similarly sanitized Catherine's political role in favor of her prayer and ascetism. It was the Reformation that repoliticized her, even as the type of devotional practice she represented was falling out of favor. The final chapter considers how new translations of Catherinian texts could symbolize spiritual purity and the importance of the Roman Church for Catholics, while Protestant volumes such as Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* appropriated Catherine's own calls for papal reform as confirmation.

As a nonspecialist in English devotional culture, I was especially interested in Brown's emphasis on how limited female visionary culture was in England compared with the European continent. The frequent appearance of Julian of Norwich and Margery Kempe in textbooks and anthologies perhaps has masked how exceptional those two women were. But Brown's attention to Catherine'sEnglish audience allows her to raise questions as to whether these readers were experiencing their own visions and needed to know how to evaluate them (105–108). She intriguingly suggests that Margery Kempe may have been one of those readers and found authority for her own experiences in reading Catherine (127–28 and 157–58). This claim seems plausible, although to some extent readers may wonder if the anonymized, divided, and sanitized texts were really associated with Catherine of Siena. But Brown has stressed from her introduction that this is not a study of the historical woman: "The text and the woman are made and remade to serve the reader, the time, and the place, revealing how translators, editors, and readers work together to create meaning and adapt the text to their devotional moment and context" (28). By paying attention to manuscripts, books, and their textual relationships, Brown's study convincingly demonstrates the Italian mystic's adaptability in England between 1380 and 1610. It seems there was a Catherine of Siena for everyone.

**Lezlie Knox** is Associate Professor of History at Marquette University, where she teaches medieval and Renaissance history. Her research focuses on the Franciscan Order in later medieval Italy. She has published on Clare of Assisi, a study and translation of the lives of Margherita Colonna (with Larry Field and Sean L. Field) and is currently working on a book about Fra Mariano of Florence (d. 1523), a prolific chronicler of the Observant Reform movement.