

Routledge Studies in Medieval Literature and Culture

SANCTITY AND FEMALE AUTHORSHIP

BIRGITTA OF SWEDEN & CATHERINE OF SIENA

Edited by
Maria H. Oen and Unn Falkeid



Sanctity and Female Authorship

Birgitta of Sweden (Birgitta Birgersdotter, 1302/03–1373) and her younger contemporary Catherine of Siena (Caterina Benincasa, 1347–1380) form the most powerful and influential female duo in European history. Both enjoyed saintly reputations in life while acting as the charismatic leaders of a considerable group of followers consisting of clergy as well as mighty secular men and women. They are also among the very few women of the Trecento to leave a substantial body of written work, which was widely disseminated in their original languages and in translations. Copies of Birgitta's *Liber celestis revelacionum* (The Heavenly Book of Revelations) and compilations of Catherine's letters (*Le lettere*) and prayers (*Le orazioni*) and her theological work *Il Dialogo della Divina Provvidenza* (The Dialogue) found their way into monastic, royal, and humanist libraries all over Europe. After their deaths, Birgitta's and Catherine's respective groups of supporters sought to have them formally canonized. In both cases, however, their political and theological outspokenness, orally and in text, and their public authority represented obstacles.

In this comparative study, leading scholars from different disciplinary backgrounds offer, for the very first time, a comprehensive exploration of the lives and activities of Birgitta and Catherine in tandem. Particular attention is given to their literary works and the complex process of negotiating their sanctity and authorial roles. Above all, what the chapters reveal is the many points of connections between two of the most influential women of the Trecento and how they were related to one another by their peers and successors.

Maria H. Oen is Associate Professor of Art History and Deputy Director of the Swedish Institute of Classical Studies in Rome. She is also the editor of *A Companion to Birgitta of Sweden and Her Legacy in the Later Middle Ages* (Brill, 2019).

Unn Falkeid is Professor of the History of Ideas at the University of Oslo. She is the author of *The Avignon Papacy Contested: An Intellectual History from Dante to Catherine of Siena* (Harvard University Press, 2017) and co-editor, with Albert Russel Ascoli, of *The Cambridge Companion to Petrarch* (Cambridge University Press, 2015) and, with Aileen A. Feng, of *Rethinking Gaspara Stampa in the Canon of Renaissance Poetry* (Ashgate, 2015).

Routledge Studies in Medieval Literature and Culture

Toleration and Tolerance in Medieval European Literature

Albrecht Classen

Beowulf's Popular Afterlife in Literature, Comic Books, and Film

Kathleen Forni

Disability and Knighthood in Malory's Morte Darthur

Tory V. Pearman

From Medievalism to Early-Modernism

Adapting the English Past

Edited by Marina Gerzic and Aidan Norrie

Avid Ears

Medieval Gossips and the Art of Listening

Christine M. Neufeld

Zöopedagogies

Creatures as Teachers in Middle English Romance

Bonnie J. Erwin

Before Emotion

The Language of Feeling, 400–1800

Juanita Feros Ruys

Forging Boethius in Medieval Intellectual Fantasies

Brooke Hunter

Sanctity and Female Authorship

Birgitta of Sweden & Catherine of Siena

Edited by Maria H. Oen and Unn Falkeid

For more information about this series, please visit: <https://www.routledge.com>

Sanctity and Female Authorship

Birgitta of Sweden &
Catherine of Siena

Edited by
Maria H. Oen and Unn Falkeid



Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

NEW YORK AND LONDON

First published 2020
by Routledge
52 Vanderbilt Avenue, New York, NY 10017

and by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon, OX14 4RN

*Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an
informa business*

© 2020 Taylor & Francis

The right of Maria H. Oen and Unn Falkeid to be identified
as the authors of the editorial material, and of the authors for
their individual chapters, has been asserted in accordance with
sections 77 and 78 of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act
1988.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted
or reproduced or utilised in any form or by any electronic,
mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented,
including photocopying and recording, or in any information
storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from
the publishers.

Trademark notice: Product or corporate names may be
trademarks or registered trademarks, and are used only for
identification and explanation without intent to infringe.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
A catalog record for this title has been requested

ISBN: 978-0-367-36855-5 (hbk)
ISBN: 978-0-429-35177-8 (ebk)

Typeset in Sabon
by codeMantra

Contents

<i>List of Illustrations</i>	vii
<i>List of Abbreviations</i>	ix
<i>Notes on Editions and Translations</i>	xi
<i>List of Contributors</i>	xiii
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xvii
Introduction	1
MARIA H. OEN AND UNN FALKEID	
1 Birgitta and Catherine and Their Textual Communities	14
F. THOMAS LUONGO	
2 “Su dunque, peregrino!”: Pilgrimage and Female Spirituality in the Writings of Birgitta and Catherine	35
JANE TYLUS	
3 Constructing Female Authority: Birgitta of Sweden, Catherine of Siena, and the Two Marys	54
UNN FALKEID	
4 Saint Birgitta’s and Saint Catherine’s Visions of Crusading	74
RENATE BLUMENFELD-KOSINSKI	
5 The Transmission of Birgittine and Catherinian Works within the Mystical Tradition: Exchanges, Cross-Readings, Connections	93
SILVIA NOCENTINI	
6 Ambivalent Images of Authorship	113
MARIA H. OEN	

vi *Contents*

7	Saints Catherine and Birgitta as Received by Preachers	138
	ROGER ANDERSSON	
8	The Mystical Pregnancy of Birgitta and the Invisible Stigmata of Catherine: Bodily Signs of Supernatural Communication in the Lives of Two Mystics	159
	GÁBOR KLANICZAY	
9	The Crossing Paths of Birgitta of Sweden, Catherine of Siena, and Alfonso of Jaén	179
	CAMILLE ROUXPETEL	
	<i>Epilogue</i>	201
	ANDRÉ VAUCHEZ	
	<i>Bibliography</i>	215
	<i>Index</i>	239

Illustrations

- 1.1 Birgitta of Sweden receiving a vision (Frontispiece to the *Liber celestis revelacionum*). New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, MS M.498, fol. 4v. Date: Last quarter of 14th century. Photo: The Pierpont Morgan Library & Museum. MS M.498, fol. 4v. Purchased by J. Pierpont Morgan (1837–1913) in 1912 16
- 1.2 Birgitta of Sweden writing down her Revelations and Alfonso of Jaén communicating these to their royal addressees (historiated initial opening *Epistola solitarii ad reges*). New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, MS M.498, fol. 328r. Date: Last quarter of 14th century. Photo: The Pierpont Morgan Library & Museum. MS M.498, fol. 4v. Purchased by J. Pierpont Morgan (1837–1913) in 1912 17
- 1.3 Birgitta of Sweden receiving the heavenly emperor's book to kings from Christ (Frontispiece to *Liber celestis imperatoris ad regem*). New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, MS M.498, fol. 343v. Date: Last quarter of fourteenth century. Photo: The Pierpont Morgan Library & Museum. MS M.498, fol. 343v. Purchased by J. Pierpont Morgan (1837–1913) in 1912 18
- 6.1 Author portrait of Birgitta of Sweden writing down her revelations. Siena, Biblioteca comunale degli Intronati, I.V.25, fol. 11v. Date: 1399. Photo: Biblioteca comunale degli Intronati 121
- 6.2 Catherine of Siena (historiated initial opening Raymond of Capua's prologue to *Liber divine doctrine*). Siena, Biblioteca comunale degli Intronati, T.II.4, fol. 5v. Date: first quarter of fifteenth century. Photo: Biblioteca comunale degli Intronati 124
- 6.3 Catherine of Siena dictating to scribes (historiated initial opening *Liber divine doctrine*). Siena, Biblioteca

	comunale degli Intronati, T.II.4, fol. 6v. Date: first quarter of fifteenth century. Photo: Biblioteca comunale degli Intronati	125
6.4	Catherine of Siena offering her letters to cardinals. Siena, Biblioteca comunale degli Intronati, T.II.2, fol. 25v. Date: First quarter of fifteenth century. Photo: Biblioteca comunale degli Intronati	128

Abbreviations

AASS	<i>Acta sanctorum</i> , eds. Johannes Bollandus, Godefridus Henschenius, et al., 68 vols (Antwerp: 1643–1940)
AP	<i>Acta et processus canonizacionis b. Birgitte</i> , ed. Isak Collijn. SFSS, Ser. 2, Latinska skrifter 1 (Uppsala: 1924–31)
ES	Alfonso of Jaén, <i>Epistola solitarii ad reges</i> , ed. Arne Jönsson, in Birgitta of Sweden, <i>Revelaciones Book VIII</i> , ed. Hans Aili (Stockholm: 2002), 47–81
Extrav.	Birgitta of Sweden, <i>Reuelaciones Extrauagantes</i> , ed. Lennart Hollmann. SFSS, Ser. 2, Latinska skrifter 5 (Uppsala: 1956)
KVHAA	Kungliga Vitterhets Historie och Antikvitets Akademien. The Royal Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities
LM	Raymond of Capua, <i>Legenda maior sive Legenda admirabilis virginis Catherine de Senis</i> , ed. Silvia Nocentini (Florence: 2013)
PC	Marie-Hyacinthe Laurent (ed.), <i>Il Processo Castellano. Con appendice di documenti sul culto e la canonizzazione di S. Caterina</i> . Fontes Vitae S. Catharinae Senensis Historici 9 (Milan: 1942)
Prol. M.	<i>Prologus Magistri Mathie</i> , in Birgitta of Sweden, <i>Reuelaciones Book I</i> , ed. Carl-Gustaf Undhagen (Stockholm: 1977), 229–40
Rev. I–VIII	Birgitta of Sweden, <i>Reuelaciones Books I–VIII</i> , eds. Hans Aili, Birger Bergh, Ann-Mari Jönsson, and Carl-Gustaf Undhagen, 8 vols (Stockholm: 1967–2002)
RS	Birgitta of Sweden, <i>Opera minora I: Regula salvatoris</i> , ed. Sten Eklund (Stockholm: 1975)
SA	Birgitta of Sweden, <i>Opera minora 2: Sermo angelicus</i> , ed. Sten Eklund (Uppsala: 1972)
SFSS	Samlingar utgivna av Svenska fornskrift-sällskapet. Swedish Medieval Texts Society



Taylor & Francis

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

Notes on Editions and Translations

All references to Birgitta of Sweden's *Revelations* are to the critical edition (Rev. I–VIII; ES; Extrav.; RS; SA) published by Kungliga Vitterhets Historie och Antikvitets Akademien (KVHAA), together with *Samlingar utgivna av Svenska fornskrift-sällskapet* (SFSS). The complete critical edition of the *Revelations* is available as downloadable pdf files on <https://riksarkivet.se/digital-resources>. English translations have been taken from *The Revelations of St. Birgitta of Sweden*, trans. Denis Searby, with Introductions and Notes by Bridget Morris, 4 vols (Oxford University Press, 2006–15), unless otherwise indicated. The English translations of the individual books in the corpus correspond to the Oxford translation.

References to Catherine of Siena's *Letters* give the numbering from the Tommaseo edition, with quotations taken from Antonio Volpato's edition (same numbering) unless otherwise stated in the notes. English translations of this work are by Suzanne Noffke in Catherine of Siena, *The Letters of Catherine of Siena*, ed. Suzanne Noffke, 4 vols [Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2000–08]), unless otherwise noted. Volpato's edition of Catherine of Siena's *Lettere*, together with Giuliana Cavallini's editions of *Il Dialogo della Divina Provvidenza* and *Le Orazioni*, are available as downloadable pdf files on the website of Centro Internazionale di Studi Cateriniani: <http://www.centrostudicateriniani.it/it/santa-caterina-da-siena/scritti>



Taylor & Francis

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

Contributors

Roger Andersson is Professor of Scandinavian Languages and a researcher at the Centre for Medieval Studies at Stockholm University. His interests include medieval Swedish literature, philology and manuscript studies, medieval sermons, and preaching. Andersson previously served as the editor of medieval charters at the *Diplomatarium Suecanum* (Swedish National Archives) and has worked and published extensively on the preserved sermons from Vadstena Abbey. He is currently the main editor of a new critical edition of the Old Swedish version of the *Revelations* of Birgitta of Sweden (*Heliga Birgittas texter på fornsvenska*), four volumes of which have been published to date (Runica et Mediævalia, 2014–).

Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski is Distinguished Professor of French at the University of Pittsburgh. She is the author of numerous books and articles, including *Poets, Saints, and Visionaries of the Great Schism, 1378–1417* (Penn State University Press, 2006) and *The Strange Case of Ermine de Reims: A Medieval Woman between Demons and Saints* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015). She has also translated and co-edited many volumes, including three collections on Philippe de Mézières, co-edited with Kiril Petkov and Joël Blanchard. She is currently working on a translation of the *Vies de Sainte Colette de Corbie* and a monograph on Philippe de Mézières.

Unn Falkeid is Professor of the History of Ideas at the University of Oslo. She has published extensively on late medieval and early modern Italian literature and history. Her publications include *The Avignon Papacy Contested: An Intellectual History from Dante to Catherine of Siena* (Harvard University Press, 2017), for which she was awarded the Helen and Howard R. Marraro Prize in Italian History; *The Cambridge Companion to Petrarch* (Cambridge University Press, 2015), co-edited with Albert Russell Ascoli; and *Rethinking Gaspara Stampa in the Canon of Renaissance Poetry* (Ashgate, 2015), co-edited with Aileen A- Feng. Falkeid is currently the Principal Investigator of the interdisciplinary research project *The Legacy of Birgitta of Sweden: Women, Politics and Reform in Renaissance Italy*, funded by the Research Council of Norway (2018–21).

Gábor Klaniczay is Professor at Central European University, Budapest. His principal field of expertise is the historical anthropology of Christianity (sainthood, miracle beliefs, stigmata, visions, healing, magic, and witchcraft). His books include *The Uses of Supernatural Power* (Princeton University Press, 1990); *Holy Rulers and Blessed Princesses* (Cambridge University Press, 2002); *Manufacturing the Middle Ages*, co-edited with Patrick Geary (Brill, 2013); *Discorsi sulle stimmate dal Medioevo all'età contemporanea – Discours sur les stigmates du Moyen Âge à l'époque contemporaine*; the monographic issue of *Archivio italiano per la storia della pietà* 26 (2013) (ed.); and *Witchcraft and Demonology in Hungary and Transylvania*, co-edited with Éva Pócs (Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).

F. Thomas Luongo is Associate Professor of History at Tulane University in New Orleans, Louisiana. He received his graduate education at the Centre for Medieval Studies of the University of Toronto and at the Medieval Institute of the University of Notre Dame, from which he received his PhD in 1998. His publications include *The Saintly Politics of Catherine of Siena* (Cornell University Press, 2006) and “Inspiration and Imagination: Visionary Authorship in the Early Manuscripts of the Revelations of Birgitta of Sweden,” *Speculum* 93 (2018): 1102–50.

Silvia Nocentini (PhD, 2000) is Assistant Professor (tenure track) in Latin Medieval and Humanistic literature at the University of Rome “Tor Vergata” (Roma 2). A philologist of medieval Latin hagiography, she has published several articles on Dominican literary production and women’s mystic literature. She is the editor of the Latin *Life* of Catherine of Siena, written by Raymond of Capua (*Legenda maior*, SISMEL, Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2013). Recent publications include the edition of the complete medieval Latin hagiographical *corpus* on St. Minias (SISMEL, Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2018) and a study on Birgitta of Sweden’s earliest Latin *Lives* (in *Hagiographica* 2019).

Maria H. Oen (PhD, University of Oslo, 2015) is Associate Professor of Art History and Deputy Director of the Swedish Institute of Classical Studies in Rome. She has been a Marie Curie Fellow at the Centre for Medieval Studies, Stockholm University, and a Postdoctoral Fellow at the Department of Linguistics and Scandinavian Studies, University of Oslo. Oen’s research focuses on late medieval and early modern visual culture. She has published extensively on Birgitta of Sweden: most recently, *A Companion to Birgitta of Sweden and Her Legacy in the Later Middle Ages* (Brill, 2019).

Camille Rouxpetel (PhD, Paris-Sorbonne University, 2012) is a historian specializing in the transcultural and interreligious relationships

between the Latin, Greek, and Eastern Christian communities in the Mediterranean. She has held a postdoctoral fellowship at the École Française de Rome (2014–2017), and she has been a Florence Gould Fellow at the Villa I Tatti, the Harvard University Center for Italian Renaissance Studies (2017–2018). Rouxpetel is currently Associate Professor at the University of Angers. Her publications include *L'Occident au miroir de l'Orient chrétien. Cilicie, Syrie, Palestine, Égypte (xii^e-xiv^e siècle)* (Rome, BEFAR 369, 2015).

Jane Tylus is Andrew Downey Orrick Professor of Italian and Professor of Comparative Literature at Yale University, where she also has a teaching appointment in the Divinity School. Recent books include *Siena, City of Secrets* (2015); the co-edited *Cultures of Early Modern Translation* (with Karen Newman, 2015); *The Poetics of Masculinity in Early Modern Italy and Spain* (with Gerry Mulligan, 2011); a translation and edition of the complete poetry of Gaspara Stampa (2010); and *Reclaiming Catherine of Siena: Literature, Literacy, and the Signs of Others* (2009), which received the Howard Marraro Prize for Outstanding Work in Italian Studies from the Modern Language Association. She has been General Editor for the journal *I Tatti Studies in the Italian Renaissance* since 2013. Tylus is currently at work on a monograph, “Saying Good-bye in the Renaissance: Meditations on Leave-taking,” and a collection of essays on music and translation. She is a socio corrispondente (honorary member) of the Accademia degli Intronati, Siena.

André Vauchez is Professor Emeritus of Medieval History at the University of Paris-Ouest-Nanterre and former Director of École Française de Rome (1995–2003). His specialized areas of research include Western medieval history, history of Christianity, medieval conceptions of holiness and sacralization of space and time, Francis of Assisi and Franciscan history, and dissent and orthodoxy in the West (10th to the 15th centuries). Vauchez is a member of Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres, Institut de France (Paris), and in 2013, he was awarded the Balzan price for Medieval History. His numerous publications include *Catherine de Sienne. Vie et passions* (Cerf, 2015, trans. *Catherine of Siena: A Life of Passion and Purpose*, Paulist Press, 2018); *François d'Assisi. Entre histoire et mémoire* (Fayard, 2009, trans. *Francis of Assisi: The Life and Afterlife of a Medieval Saint*, Yale University Press, 2012); *Saints, prophètes et visionnaires. Le pouvoir surnaturel au Moyen Age* (Albin Michel, 1999); and *La Sainteté en occident aux derniers siècles du Moyen Age, d'après les procès de canonisation et les documents hagiographiques* (École française de Rome, 1981, trans. *Sainthood in the later Middle Ages*, Cambridge University Press, 1997).



Taylor & Francis

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

Acknowledgements

The inspiration for this volume lies with two workshops held at the Norwegian Institute in Rome in 2015 and in the former monastery of the *Ordo Sanctissimi Salvatoris* in Vadstena, Sweden, in 2017, where scholars from various disciplinary and geographical backgrounds met to discuss the connections between the two trecento authors, Birgitta of Sweden and Catherine of Siena. The meetings, which resulted in this collection of essays, were made possible thanks to generous financial support from Riksbankens Jubileumsfond (The Swedish Foundation for Humanities and Social Sciences); the Norwegian Institute in Rome; and the Department of Philosophy, Classics, History of Art and Ideas, University of Oslo. The administrative staff of the Norwegian Institute in Rome and of the Department of Culture and Aesthetics, Stockholm University, provided invaluable assistance with the organization of the two workshops. We are deeply grateful to all of the participants in our fruitful and inspiring meetings in Rome and Vadstena, and to the contributors to this volume.

With regard to the use of images, we would like to thank Biblioteca comunale degli Intronati, Siena, and The Pierpont Morgan Library, New York.

Maria H. Oen's work on this volume was made possible through grants from the Sven och Dagmar Saléns Stiftelse, Stiftelsen Torsten och Ingrid Gihls fond, the Research Council of Norway, and the European Research Council (European Union's Seventh Framework Programme for research, technological development, and demonstration under Marie Curie grant agreement no. 608695). For their invaluable assistance, she is particularly grateful to the staff of The Swedish Institute of Classical Studies in Rome; Biblioteca comunale degli Intronati in Siena, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Biblioteca Riccardiana in Florence, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, and The Warburg Institute Library; and Manuela Michelloni at the Norwegian Institute in Rome. Oen also wishes to extend her personal thanks to her friend, colleague, and great source of inspiration Unn Falkeid (with whom it is always a great pleasure to work, discuss, and laugh!). She is also thankful to Kurt Villads Jensen, Gustav Zamore, and Roger

Andersson at the Centre for Medieval Studies, Stockholm University; Halfdan Martin Baadsvik at the Department of Philosophy, Classics, History of Art and Ideas, University of Oslo; and Kathryn Boyer for her careful proofreading of the Editors' Introduction and Chapter 6. Above all, she is grateful to Stefano Fogelberg Rota, whose love, support, and friendship mean everything.

Unn Falkeid expresses her gratitude to the Royal Swedish Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities in Stockholm and to the Research Council of Norway for generous fellowships. The work on this book started when she was still a fellow at the Royal Academy of Letters, and it continued after she received funding from the Research Council of Norway for the international research project *The Legacy of Birgitta of Sweden: Women, Politics, and Reform in Renaissance Italy* (2018–21), of which she is the Principal Investigator. Falkeid is most grateful to her colleagues at the Department of Philosophy, Classics, History of Art and Ideas, University of Oslo. She especially wishes to thank the core group of the research project: the PhD student Francesca Canepuccia, the postdoctoral fellow Eleonora Cappuccilli, the research assistant Victor Frans, and the dear friend and co-manager Anna Wainwright. Finally, Falkeid wishes to extend her heartfelt thanks to Maria H. Oen for the friendship and joyful collaboration, both on this present book and on several other projects, including those belonging to the future!

Introduction

Maria H. Oen and Unn Falkeid

When Tommaso di Antonio da Siena (d. c.1434), known in scholarly literature as Caffarini, instigated a hearing in Venice in 1411 as a part of his efforts to see Catherine of Siena (1347–80) canonized, one of his principal strategies for promoting her holiness involved connecting Catherine's saintly image to that of her contemporary Birgitta of Sweden (1302/03–73).¹ Birgitta, a noblewoman who had left her native country for Rome in 1349, had been solemnly proclaimed a saint in 1391. The many comparisons between the two women found in Caffarini's own deposition was highly pertinent.² Birgitta, like Catherine, was a laywoman who had become known in her lifetime for her particular relationship with God, who she claimed spoke to her—or, rather, through her—about redemption for the Church and for humankind. And Birgitta, again like her younger contemporary, had been the charismatic leader of a group of followers comprising both women and men. By the time Caffarini's testimony was recorded in Venice, Birgitta's name embellished a broadly circulating literary corpus known as the *Liber celestis revelacionum* ("The Heavenly Book of Revelations"), which contained the accounts of more than 700 visions, including a rule for a new monastic order.³ The contents of these revelations frequently touch directly on pressing political issues of the time. Some of the principal causes that Birgitta worked for, and which Catherine would take up shortly after Birgitta's death, included the papacy's return from Avignon to Rome as well as ecclesiastical and spiritual reform.⁴

There are several parallels between Birgitta's and Catherine's strategies to promote their common causes. At a time when women were strongly dissuaded from taking on public roles, not least when it came to instructing men in spiritual and political matters, the two stand out precisely because of their public personas. Both traveled extensively as a part of their political interventions, and each was responsible for a substantial literary corpus containing explicit instructions for reform, addressing an audience consisting of popes, bishops, cardinals, royalties, monastics of all orders, and laypeople of all social strata.

Ever since Caffarini sought to link Catherine to Birgitta in his testimony from the canonization hearing in Venice, the two women have

frequently been mentioned in conjunction with each other, historically and in more recent scholarship. Nonetheless, and with the exception of a few pioneering articles, there exist no attempts in modern research to investigate the two women and their literary legacies together in a comprehensive manner.⁵ This collection of essays offers a set of comparative studies, from different disciplinary perspectives, of Birgitta's and Catherine's writings and their reception, as well as of the construction of their saintly images, which, as the proceedings from their canonization processes reveal, were inextricably tied to their literary works.

The Prophetic Widow from Sweden

Although these two trecento authors were united in their political battles in adult life, their social backgrounds differed significantly. Birgitta Birgersdotter was born into the rural aristocracy of Sweden and was married to a nobleman at the age of 13.⁶ During her life with her husband, Ulf Gudmarsson, Birgitta gave birth to eight children while also having an active role at the Swedish court; for instance, she was appointed *magistra* to the queen, Blanche of Namur, consort of King Magnus Eriksson.⁷ In the 1340s, however, a series of events led to a complete transformation of Birgitta's life. Early in the decade, she and her husband went on a pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela. After their return, the couple took a vow of chastity and decided to convert to a religious life, but shortly afterwards, Ulf died (1344 or 1346),⁸ and Birgitta was left a widow. She did not remarry or enter a monastery (though, for a period, she kept close contact with the Cistercian house of Alvastra, and she may have lived in a house on the property of the monastery). Instead, Birgitta assumed a public role and engaged herself in the current political debate, both in Sweden and abroad. Claiming that she was a visionary, instructed directly by God to be his medium on earth, Birgitta became the center of a group of followers that included theologians and religious men. Some of these men acted as her envoys, bringing her prophetic messages to the pope in Avignon and to the warring kings of France and England.⁹ Among Birgitta's loyal supporters were Hemming, bishop of Åbo; Master Mathias, canon of Linköping and prominent theologian; and the sub prior and later prior of the Cistercian house of Alvastra, Peter Olofsson.

During the latter half of the 1340s, Birgitta began working on what would subsequently be collected and disseminated under the title *Liber celestis revelacionum* (hereafter, *Revelations*) in collaboration with Peter and probably also Master Mathias. Although it is difficult to give exact dates for the composition of the various texts in the corpus, it seems that many of the chapters that concern the Avignon Papacy, the Baltic crusades, and a plan for a peace treaty between France and England date from this period.¹⁰ Furthermore, the many revelations criticizing the

Swedish clergy and nobility most likely also stem from the late 1340s, as well as Birgitta's monastic rule, *Regula sanctissimi Salvatoris*.¹¹

In 1349, Birgitta, who was now a wealthy and independent widow, moved permanently to Rome, where she quickly found influential friends among the noble families. She was soon followed by her daughter Katarina and the prior of Alvastra monastery, Peter, who left his post to join her group. The three of them, together with another Swedish *magister*, also known as Peter Olofsson, stayed in the palace of Cardinal Hugues Roger de Beaufort, close to the church of San Lorenzo in Damaso (Campo de' Fiori), and in due course moved into a house offered to Birgitta by her new friend, the noblewoman Francesca Papazzura, on today's Piazza Farnese. The visionary and her Swedish entourage continued to work for the same causes as earlier: advocating the papacy's return to Rome, promoting spiritual reform, and seeking to establish a new religious order that would follow Birgitta's rule. Together with her collaborators, Birgitta also traveled widely: she visited virtually all of the major shrines in Italy as well as the Holy Land, where she went on a pilgrimage in the last year of her life.

In the late 1360s, Birgitta's group added one more prominent member—Alfonso Pecha—the former bishop of Jaén. Alfonso had left his position in Spain to live as a hermit in Italy, where he was engaged in the Observant Reform movement and in the struggle against the so-called “Avignon Captivity.”¹² Alfonso and Birgitta traveled together to Montefiascone in 1370, where they met with Pope Urban V and sought to persuade him to permanently return to Rome. Later, upon Birgitta's death, on 23 July 1373, the collection of her recorded revelations were given to Alfonso as per her request, and he was charged with the task of editing the texts and publishing them. Alfonso organized the revelations into books and chapters, a structure that the corpus still retains in succeeding printings as well as in the modern critical edition, and he ordered numerous copies from a scriptorium in Naples.¹³ His final edition consists of seven books of revelations, introduced by an apologia defending the authenticity of Birgitta's visions, written in the late 1340s by Master Mathias of Linköping. It also includes an eighth book of Alfonso's own collection of Birgitta's revelations that concern secular politics, compiled in a separate book under the title *Liber celestis imperatoris ad reges* (“The Heavenly Emperor's Book to Kings.” Book VIII in the critical edition). This collection is preceded by a prologue Alfonso wrote, *Epistola solitarii ad reges* (“The Hermit's Letter to Kings”), which takes the form of an apologetic treatise on Birgitta's visions. Within a few years, other visionary texts were added to the corpus as it was disseminated in manuscripts, including *Sermo angelicus* (“The Angel's Sermon”), *Quattuor oraciones* (“The Four Prayers”), the *Regula Sanctissimi Salvatoris* (Birgitta's rule, “The Rule of the Most Holy Savior”), and *Revelaciones extravagantes* (also dubbed “Extravagant Revelations” in the modern translation). The last is a collection of

revelations that Alfonso initially excluded from the corpus but which Prior Peter Olofsson later introduced into the manuscripts.

Alfonso of Jaén came to play a key role in the promotion of Birgitta's cult and canonization process, which was initiated immediately after her death. The diffusion of illuminated deluxe copies of the *Revelations* to prominent addressees, including the pope and many royalties, was a part of his strategy to ensure the proclamation of Birgitta's sanctity. At the end of her life and after overcoming much opposition, Birgitta succeeded in establishing a monastic order. The first house was founded in Vadstena, Sweden (establishment approved by the pope in 1370), but the order soon spread all over Europe, beginning with Santa Maria del Paradiso outside of Florence (1394).¹⁴ And in 1391, the visionary was canonized by an Italian pope (Boniface IX), again in the face of significant opposition, in the middle of the Great Schism.¹⁵

Intertwined Lives and Networks

At the time Birgitta was establishing a prophetic career for herself in Sweden, Caterina Benincasa was born in Siena, in 1347.¹⁶ Although not of noble birth, she came from a prosperous family characteristic of the urban society in which she grew up: her father was a wool dyer, and among her relatives were other masters, notaries, and merchants, including a poet.¹⁷ According to Catherine's principal *vita*, the *Legenda maior* by her confessor Raymond of Capua (d. 1399), she converted to a religious life already as a child living in her parents' home. At the age of seven, her hagiographer claims, she made a vow of chastity to Christ, and by the time she was a young adult, she was living an ascetic life in her home, practicing rigorous fasting and self-mortification.¹⁸

In the latter half of the 1360s, Catherine became connected to the *mantellate*, a group of laywomen, most of whom were financially independent widows like Birgitta. The *mantellate* in Siena were affiliated with the local Dominicans and did charity work in the city. Around 1370, Catherine formally joined the group, thus taking her religious life into the public realm.¹⁹ Her spiritual reputation spread quickly, and she soon attracted a group of followers that included laypeople of both sexes, as well as monastics and priests. Several of her supporters and disciples—the group that she referred to as her *famiglia*—were connected to the Dominican Order, among them Catherine's first confessor, Tommaso della Fonte, Tommaso Caffarini, and Raymond of Capua (Catherine's confessor from 1374).

By 1373, when Birgitta died, Catherine already had a reputation that reached beyond the walls of Siena, and she had begun articulating in letters her desire for spiritual reform. Not long after, in 1374, Catherine's political and literary career took a new turn. As she describes in a letter dated to March that year (T127), Catherine had been contacted by

Alfonso of Jaén.²⁰ The letter implies that Alfonso was acting on behalf of Pope Gregory XI, who sought to persuade the young Siennese woman to campaign for the Church in a manner similar to that of Birgitta.²¹ Later, in the same year, Catherine attended the general chapter of the Dominicans in Florence. While many scholars have assumed that she appeared there as a result of accusations of heresy, F. Thomas Luongo has suggested that, on the contrary, Catherine was summoned to Florence “to be vetted for a role that had already been conceived for her, as a political visionary—a second Birgitta.”²² It was also here that, he proposes, Raymond of Capua was assigned as her new confessor; by then a prominent Dominican, he would assume the role of Master General of the order (Italian obedience), following her death.²³

After the events of 1374, Catherine became an active figure on the political scene beyond Siena, benefiting from the introduction into a larger network via the aegis of Alfonso and Raymond. She traveled in Tuscany as a peace negotiator, representing the papacy in the clash between the pope and the coalition of Italian city states of the area, known as the “War of Eight Saints.”²⁴ In 1376, she went to Avignon, where she was received by Pope Gregory XI. During this period, Catherine also became an even more ardent letter writer, addressing both church and civic leaders.²⁵ Her epistles became Catherine’s principal weapon in the struggle for peace and reform.

Birgitta’s and Catherine’s political networks on the Italian peninsula are connected by another key figure beyond Alfonso of Jaén: Queen Johanna I of Naples and Sicily (Giovanna d’Angiò, d. 1382). Birgitta and the Anjou queen became acquainted during the period 1365–67, when the Swedish visionary stayed in Naples.²⁶ According to Elizabeth Casteen, the queen was eager to befriend Birgitta, who already then had a saintly reputation, as part of her attempt to restore her own *fama*, tainted after the assassination of her husband, Andrew of Hungary, of which she had been accused.²⁷ Birgitta probably resided with Johanna again in the last year of her life, when she visited Naples on her way to and from the Holy Land in 1372/73. After the visionary’s death, the queen took part in the campaign advocating Birgitta’s sanctity. She petitioned the pope, and possibly also provided Alfonso with an artist and a scriptorium.²⁸ The first panel paintings, which show Birgitta made to promote her cult, were executed by the Florentine artist Niccolò di Tommaso, then in the service of Johanna, and the three oldest extant manuscripts containing the *Revelations* all stem from the same Neapolitan scriptorium that was responsible for several sumptuous codices connected to the House of Anjou.²⁹

A few years after Birgitta’s death, in late June and in early July 1375, Catherine wrote to Johanna, urging her to support the crusade being promulgated by Pope Gregory XI in a bull on 1 July.³⁰ Catherine addressed the queen warmly as a sister and a mother, and, as is evident

from another letter to Johanna on 4 August, Catherine, “jubilantly happy,” had received a positive answer to her advice.³¹ The contact between the two women changed three years later, immediately after the outbreak of the Schism, when Johanna declared her support for the French pope, Clement VII, elected in opposition to the Roman pope, Urban VI, in the months following the death of Gregory XI in Rome. In a series of letters, Catherine sought to persuade the queen to return to Roman obedience.³² She referred to Johanna as an innocent who has been misguided and deceived by others: “Open, open your mind’s eye, and sleep no longer in such blindness! You shouldn’t be so ignorant or so cut off from the true light that you don’t know about the villainous lives of these men who have led you into such heresy.”³³ According to Suzanne Noffke, this particular letter was written in the aftermath of a failed plan to send Catherine and Katarina, Birgitta’s daughter, who knew Johanna personally, to the queen in an attempt to change her mind.³⁴ Proposed by Urban VI, the plan was canceled owing to worries that Katarina and Raymond of Capua had for their safety.³⁵

In 1377, Catherine had embarked on a project to write a book, which would later be known as *Libro della divina dottrina* or *Dialogo della divina provvidenza* (hereafter, the *Dialogue*).³⁶ In the work, she lays out her spiritual and political views in the form of a dialogue between the Creator and the soul (Catherine). As has already been suggested by scholars, it is possible that the inspiration for Catherine to compose a work of her own came from Birgitta’s *Revelations*, which had just started to circulate in manuscripts commissioned by Alfonso.³⁷ Indeed, three years earlier, when Catherine had met with Alfonso, he was probably in the middle of his editing, gathering the revelations into a book.

Catherine of Siena died in Rome on 29 April 1380, seven years after Birgitta’s passing in the same city. She was 33 years old then, whereas Birgitta had died at the age of 70. Just as the supporters of so many other holy women, including Birgitta of Sweden, the *famiglia* of the Sienese author immediately began to campaign for her canonization. Both Raymond of Capua and Tommaso Caffarini composed hagiographical texts; however, they offered quite different images of Catherine, particularly in terms of her writing.³⁸

Significantly, as in the case of Birgitta, the promotion of Catherine’s sanctity included the dissemination of her writings. Although several of Catherine’s followers cum scribes had collected her texts, Caffarini took on the task of establishing a scriptorium from which numerous illuminated manuscripts were publicized, emulating in many ways Alfonso’s efforts to widely promote Birgitta’s *Revelations*. Catherine’s canonization, however, took much longer than Birgitta’s and was not proclaimed until 1461.

Birgitta’s and Catherine’s writings spread swiftly across Italy and Europe, and were soon translated into other languages. The *Revelations*,

which originally circulated in Latin, were immediately rendered into Swedish and shortly thereafter into Italian and other central European vernaculars. One of Catherine's followers translated her *Libro* (the *Dialogue*) into Latin, a version that was also disseminated by Caffarini's workshop in Venice. As several chapters in the present book demonstrate, when it came to the diffusion and translation of the two women's writings, those working with the manuscripts crossed paths frequently: followers of Birgitta read, copied, and translated Catherine's works and vice versa. The texts of the two authors quickly found their ways into very different contexts, from private humanist libraries to monastic libraries; they were anthologized and placed side by side, sometimes with classical and contemporary political authors, and other times with devotional or theological texts. The *Revelations*, the *Letters*, and the *Dialogue* also appeared in illustrated incunables shortly after the printing press came into use, and they have continuously been in print since.

Presentation of the Chapters

The inspiration for this current volume stems from the absence of a broad comparative study of two of the pre-modern era's most towering and fascinating women. To a certain degree, Birgitta and Catherine may be regarded as fountainheads for the extraordinary increase in both the number and status of female writers in early modern Europe; and the many commonalities between them invite investigations into the parallels. The range of scholars represented in this anthology offers an examination and comparison of the lives, networks, authorship, and the reception of these two women and their works. Case studies from the fields of history, literature, philology, and art history provide the readers with critical and nuanced approaches to the issues of how Birgitta and Catherine, either alone or through the help of powerful people, established their authority and sanctity in the fourteenth century and beyond.

For the production of their texts, both Birgitta and Catherine depended on their confessors and followers, who acted as their scribes and editors. Furthermore, in both cases, the saintly authors and their collaborators who were responsible for writing their *vitae* emphasized the passivity of the two women before God—presented as the true author of their words—thereby reducing Birgitta and Catherine to (mere) conduits of divine inspiration. The volume opens with a chapter by F. Thomas Luongo, in which he explores the question of what it means to think of Birgitta and Catherine as authors. Through an examination of the saints' respective textual communities, Luongo challenges certain received notions of the authorial agency of female religious writers in the later Middle Ages.

In Chapter 2, Jane Tylus focuses on pilgrimage, a major theme in the writings of both Birgitta and Catherine. At first glance, it seems that the

two embraced radically opposed views on that hallmark of medieval spirituality, the pilgrim's journey. Birgitta appears as the paragon, the over-achiever of the late medieval *pellegrina*. Catherine, on the other hand, often violently advocated against embarking on pilgrimages, viewing them as a distraction from the lives people should be leading. At the same time, even if pilgrimage as practice is strikingly absent in Catherine's works, pilgrimage as metaphor fills her prose. How, then, might these two concepts of pilgrimage be both recognized and addressed? Perhaps they are in conflict yet related, with one arguably dependent on the other. Tylus tackles this question by examining the vital role of pilgrimages—as lived experiences and as symbolic registers—for both Birgitta and Catherine.

In Chapter 3, Unn Falkeid explores the roles of two of the biblical Marys as models for Birgitta and Catherine in the construction of their images as powerful public agents. Using intertextual and comparative analyses, Falkeid demonstrates the manner in which Birgitta and Catherine contested the contemporary politics of the Avignon papacy, grounding their authority in the Virgin Mary and Mary Magdalene, respectively. Scholars have long acknowledged the central role of the Virgin in Birgitta's self-promotion as a holy woman. The Virgin Mary offered Birgitta, and other medieval religious women, a role model as both mother and bride of Christ. But Birgitta adopted the persona of the Virgin in a particular manner: in several of her revelations, Birgitta casts Mary as the foundation of her own *auctoritas*, in political as well as in religious matters. In the case of Catherine of Siena, another Mary assumes a pivotal role, namely, Mary Magdalene, Christ's notable female disciple. In Catherine's *Letters*, Magdalene's status as the repentant prostitute is significantly downplayed; instead, she is presented as the woman who dared to raise her voice and challenge the authorities of her time.

Crusading, a principal theme in the writings of both Birgitta and Catherine, is the subject of Chapter 4, by Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski. While Birgitta engaged in the specific Swedish case of King Magnus Eriksson's military campaign against Novgorod (1348–51) and the conversion of the Baltic pagans as well as the Orthodox Christians, Catherine, like many of her contemporary theorists, was concerned with a pan-European crusade to the Holy Land. Proceeding from an exploration of the theoretical and political contexts in which the two women wrote, Blumenfeld-Kosinski carefully analyzes their respective ideas, aims, and concrete strategies regarding the topic of holy war.

In Chapter 5, Silvia Nocentini turns to the reception of Birgitta's and Catherine's writings and demonstrates to what extent their works and the transmission of these were intertwined in the late fourteenth century and throughout the fifteenth. Nocentini argues that in the context of late medieval mystical spirituality, the broad transmission of Birgitta's