



Visions and Longings: Medieval Women Mystics

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The women mystics of medieval Europe represent the very first feminine voices heard in a world where women were nearly silent. As such, they are striking and unusual, strange, powerful and urgent. Monica Furlong uses key selections from among these women's own writings and writings about them by their contemporaries, along with her own assessment of them, to open up their contributions to a wide popular audience. The eleven women represented in this anthology were housewives, visionaries, abbesses, beguines, recluses, and nuns who wrote between the eleventh and fourteenth centuries. They include:

- Héloïse, the scholar and abbess, whose letters to Abelard are treasure of medieval literature
- Hildegard of Bingen, the visionary Rhineland nun
- Clare of Assisi, the close friend of Saint Francis and founder of the Poor Clares
- Catherine of Siena, an influential spiritual counselor whose book, *Dialogue*, consists of a debate between herself and God
- Julian of Norwich, the English hermitess who spent the greater part of her life meditating on and coming to understand the striking visions she received as a young woman
- and many others

Visions and Longings: Medieval Women Mystics Details

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LuAnn says

Good overview of various female Medieval mystics and portions of their writings. I especially enjoyed Julian of Norwich's short text of Showings included in its entirety and the balance and wisdom of Claire of Assisi's rule for her community which belies our view of medieval religious orders being harsh and rigid.

Alexandra says

This book completely captured my imagination.

Octavia Cade says

This is essentially an anthology, with an introductory essay and potted biographies of the various mystics before their own writings are introduced. As with all anthologies and collections, some of the writings were more interesting than others. I found the stand-out here to be the poetry of Hildegard of Bingen, but some of the others were pretty repetitive and, dare I say, even a little dull.

I did enjoy the introduction and mini-biographies of these women - frankly they were more readable, and more interesting, than the edited material/primary sources. It makes me wonder if Furlong has written a more substantial history on the same subject - I'd be interested in reading that, as long as I didn't have to wade through Julian of Norwich again.

Liaken says

Furlong present these women as the strange extremists they were. However, despite her good scholarship and writing, I have a hard time connecting with the women mystics she presents.

l. says

A slight book - a kind of 101 to select female medieval mystics.

Spring Holbrook says

I borrowed this from my library on a whim. I'd read some of Monica's fiction books and thought the subject matter sounded interesting.

On the whole though this book is pretty dry, which I was expecting. The summaries of the women mystics' lives was more interesting to me than their writing. I'm willing to admit that I'm not Christian or spiritual though, and I think that has a lot to do with my boredom with this volume. Also, I don't have a medieval mindset, so that's a sort of barrier to entry.

I'm still glad I read it though. It's interesting to see what these women mystics were writing alongside their male contemporaries.

Jillian says

boring
