

1. Record Nr.	UNINA9910818545903321
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Titolo	Proving woman : female spirituality and inquisitional culture in the later Middle Ages // Dyan Elliott
Pubbl/distr/stampa	Princeton, NJ, : Princeton University Press, c2004
ISBN	9786612087202 1-282-08720-7 1-4008-2602-0
Edizione	[Course Book]
Descrizione fisica	1 online resource (366 p.)
Disciplina	270.5/082
Soggetti	Women - Religious life - History Church history - Middle Ages, 600-1500 Mysticism - History - Middle Ages, 600-1500 Women mystics - Europe Heresy - History - To 1500 Inquisition
Lingua di pubblicazione	Inglese
Formato	Materiale a stampa
Livello bibliografico	Monografia
Note generali	Description based upon print version of record.
Nota di bibliografia	Includes bibliographical references (p. [305]-331) and index.
Nota di contenuto	Front matter -- Contents -- Acknowledgments -- Abbreviations -- Introduction -- Chapter One. Sacramental Confession as Proof of Orthodoxy -- PART 1. Women as Proof of Orthodoxy -- Chapter Two. The Beguines: A Sponsored Emergence -- Chapter Three. Elisabeth of Hungary: Between Men -- PART 2. Inquisitions and Proof -- Chapter Four. Sanctity, Heresy, and Inquisition -- Chapter Five. Between Two Deaths: The Living Mystic -- PART 3. The Discernment of Spirits -- Chapter Six. Clerical Quibbles -- Chapter Seven. John Gerson and Joan of Arc -- Conclusion -- Bibliography -- Index
Sommario/riassunto	Around the year 1215, female mystics and their sacramental devotion were among orthodoxy's most sophisticated weapons in the fight against heresy. Holy women's claims to be in direct communication with God placed them in positions of unprecedented influence. Yet by the end of the Middle Ages female mystics were frequently mistrusted, derided, and in danger of their lives. The witch hunts were just around the corner. While studies of sanctity and heresy tend to be undertaken

separately, Proving Woman brings these two avenues of inquiry together by associating the downward trajectory of holy women with medieval society's progressive reliance on the inquisitional procedure. Inquisition was soon used for resolving most questions of proof. It was employed for distinguishing saints and heretics; it underwrote the new emphasis on confession in both sacramental and judicial spheres; and it heralded the reintroduction of torture as a mechanism for extracting proof through confession. As women were progressively subjected to this screening, they became ensnared in the interlocking web of proofs. No aspect of female spirituality remained untouched. Since inquisition determined the need for tangible proofs, it even may have fostered the kind of excruciating illnesses and extraordinary bodily changes associated with female spirituality. In turn, the physical suffering of holy women became tacit support for all kinds of earthly suffering, even validating temporal mechanisms of justice in their most aggressive forms. The widespread adoption of inquisitional mechanisms for assessing female spirituality eventuated in a growing confusion between the saintly and heretical and the ultimate criminalization of female religious expression.

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