

1. Record Nr.	UNINA9910962658103321
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Titolo	Everyday saints and the art of narrative in the South English legendary / / Anne B. Thompson
Pubbl/distr/stampa	London ; ; New York : , : Routledge, , 2016
ISBN	1-315-25578-2 1-351-93808-8
Edizione	[1st ed.]
Descrizione fisica	1 online resource (237 pages) : illustrations, tables
Disciplina	820.9/3823
Soggetti	Christian literature, English (Middle) - History and criticism English language - Middle English, 1100-1500 - Rhetoric Christian saints - Legends - History and criticism Christian hagiography - History - To 1500 Manners and customs in literature Narration (Rhetoric) - History - To 1500 Rhetoric, Medieval
Lingua di pubblicazione	Inglese
Formato	Materiale a stampa
Livello bibliografico	Monografia
Note generali	First published 2003 by Ashgate Publishing.
Nota di bibliografia	Includes bibliographical references and index.
Nota di contenuto	pt. 1. Introduction -- pt. 2. The art of narrative -- pt. 3. The influence of everyday life.
Sommario/riassunto	Anne Thompson here gives the fullest account and explanation to date of the diversity of the more than sixty manuscripts of the South English Legendary, a late thirteenth-century collection of lively verse lives of saints, in a southern English dialect. The importance of the SEL to hagiographic and cultural studies has been increasingly acknowledged in recent years. Without denying the legendaries' religious purpose, this book looks at the way SEL narratives reflect and address the complex, intertwined tapestry"political, social, religious"of Edward I's England, while retaining a strong emphasis on the craft of story-telling. Thompson shows the SEL to be a fresh and exciting early example of popular vernacular literature. Firmly grounded in rural and small town life of the 1270s to 1290s in the west of England, it is uniquely significant for any understanding of that culture.

