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Giovanni di Rupescissa: *Vade mecum in tribulatione* ed. by  
Eleana Tealdi (review)

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Giovanni di Rupescissa: *Vade mecum in tribulatione*. Edizione critica a cura di Eleana Tealdi. Introduzione storica a cura di Robert E. Lerner e Gian Luca Potestà. [Dies Nova: Fonti e studi per la storia del profetismo.] (Milan: Vita e Pensiero. 2015. Pp. 330. €30,00 paperback. ISBN 978-88-343-2998-6.)

This excellent addition to what one of the editors of this volume calls the “Rupescissa renaissance” is more than simply an edition of one of John of Rupescissa’s (ca. 1310–1366) shorter apocalyptic works. While manuscript survival alone is not necessarily an indicator of popularity, the forty-six manuscripts bearing all or some of the *Vade mecum* speak to widespread medieval interest in the Franciscan visionary-cum-chemist’s work, which only recently has been matched by scholars’.

The edition of the Latin text, edited by Eleana Tealdi, consists of just over fifty pages, and includes a medieval synopsis of the contents. Written shortly after the completion of a lengthy magisterial prophetic work, the *Liber ostensor* (which stretches to roughly 750 printed pages), the *Vade mecum* offers something closer to a synthesis of

Rupescissa's thought rather than any radical developments. Building on the work of late medieval Joachites such as Peter Olivi and Arnold of Villanova, Rupescissa's goals in the *Vade mecum* are to demonstrate the imminence of the apocalypse by cataloging the various signs of decline, make the case for John's special role as the herald of the coming tribulations, characterize enemies and champions of Christendom, and describe those who will endure, if not necessarily survive, the end times.

While Rupescissa's text is the heart of the volume, three introductory essays (one in English and two in Italian) by Robert Lerner, Gian Luca Potestà, and Tealdi precede the text. Lerner and Potestà, both long-standing experts on the history of medieval apocalypticism, offer contextual essays in a section devoted to historical introduction of the *Vade mecum*, while Tealdi focuses on the *Vade mecum* itself. Lerner's essay is a brief, but detailed biography of Rupescissa. While Rupescissa often has been described as a Franciscan Spiritual, Lerner rightly complicates this idea, pointing out Rupescissa's fidelity to Olivian views of poverty, but also his obedience to and acceptance of Pope John XXII's spiritual authority, which had been rejected by even erstwhile moderate Franciscans in the tow of Minister General Michael of Cesena. Potestà's essay focuses on thematic continuities and developments within Rupescissa's own works and those that appear to have had the most influence on his thought.

Tealdi's longer introduction focuses principally on the manuscript tradition and the *ratio editionis*, but she gives some attention to the content of the text itself. Much of the discussion of the content is summary, but it is a nuanced one. For instance, Tealdi skillfully recapitulates Rupescissa's painstaking mental gymnastics to avoid the title of prophet yet retain a kind of prophetic authority, and she does so without compromising the subtlety (or messiness) of the friar's argument.

If there is a fault in the edition, it may be the plurality of introductory essays. There are some redundancies among them and none of them engages recent secondary scholarship overmuch. A longer co-written introduction may have served the reader better, but it is difficult to quibble overmuch with the decision to include more material rather than less, and it may well be that shorter essays on discrete topics will be a boon to medievalists and early modernists whose interest in Rupescissa or medieval apocalyptic is tangential. This commendable edition of the *Vade mecum* is certainly brief enough to be accessible and is, in its own right, an important and very welcome contribution to the study of medieval apocalypticism.