

# Booklist

Advanced Review – Uncorrected Proof

Issue: November 15, 2017

## **Holy Jester!: The Saint Francis Fables.**

Fo, Dario (Author). Translated by Mario Pirovano.

Dec 2017. 160 p. Opus, hardcover, \$38.95. (9781623160821). 271.302.

Nobel Prize winner for literature Fo contends that the meek-and-mild St. Francis that we know today was a construct of the successor in his order, who wanted to mold Francis' image, making him more "pure" than "provocative." Francis, Fo argues, was actually wild, a force of nature, and certainly a mover and shaker. It is this image that he uses in these original fables. Some of the stories are based on familiar tales—Francis and the wolf, for example, or his visit with a sultan in the Holy Land—but all are highly original riffs that capture the revolutionary elements of Francis as he exposed greed and corruption in his world. Fo provides his own illustrations, and they range from wild, explosive, full-page art to sketchlike drawings to bits of collage. The whole package is beautifully presented, the pages are thick and creamy, and the design leads readers effectively from one irreverent story to the next. Fo, a theater director, *commedia* clown, and artist, demonstrates in abundance all the skills needed for this unexpected introduction to a St. Francis who claimed himself to be "God's jester."

— *Ilene Cooper*