Susan Mosher Stuard. *Considering Medieval Women and Gender.* Variorum Collected Studies Series; CS941 Farnham: Ashgate, 2010. Pp. xi + 318. ISBN: 9780754669135.

ON OCCASION A Variorum volume accomplishes two things: it brings together a scholar's articles in a coherent collection and offers an intellectual biography in the process. *Considering Medieval Women* does just this. Susan Mosher Stuard is first and foremost a social and economic historian. She was one of a host of now distinguished female medievalists first introduced to medieval history as an undergraduate at Smith College. She then pursued a PhD at Yale, working under Robert Lopez, where she immersed herself in documents of practice and in the archives of Ragusa (Dubrovnik), completing her dissertation, "Ragusa and the Silver Trade: Ragusan Trade with the Balkan Interiors, 1205-1358," in 1972. Stuard has since used the same archives to trace patterns of family life and gender roles that influenced networks of trade in the Adriatic. Over the course of her career, three major themes came to occupy her work: women and the family, women and slavery, and women and medieval historiography. What is most remarkable about Stuard's scholarship is that she has pursued these three themes continuously over the course of her scholarly career. In this volume we are treated to the rise and importance of women's history and feminism in shaping the discipline of history over a thirty-five year period (1975-2010). While some of this material has become slightly dated, her work nonetheless illuminates very clearly the trajectory of medieval feminist scholarship.

The collection opens with an autobiographical essay that traces Stuard's development as an historian and a feminist and would be particularly useful for students new to the history of women in the discipline. Stuard writes openly and affably about her family, her academic career, her mentors, and changing perspective over her years of training before teaching at Haverford College from 1983-2000. Part 2 of the volume, "Dowry, Marriage, and Consumption," is dedicated to the social and economic questions that guided Stuard's early work. In "Dowry Increase and Increments in Wealth in Medieval Ragusa," she used notarial records compiled in Ragusa from 1235 to 1460 to trace changing patterns in dotal gifts and management and shows how the noble merchant citizen class used dowries to redistribute personal fortunes broadly thus expanding familial wealth, which in turn promoted economic growth. In the essay that follows, she turns to the Venetian archives and considers the role of husbands as custodians of dowries and family income, arguing that the definition of a proper husband was reinforced through generational relationships among men rather

than through the spousal dynamic. Related to familial wealth were patterns of consumption, the topic of the next two essays. Here the author turns to sumptuary regulations in Ragusa and Venice to analyze how the merchant elite of these cities projected their own image of wealth and status through clothing and outward appearances. Stuard shows how men as much as women used luxury consumption and ostentatious clothing as a way to demarcate status in urban public life. Although women were reprimanded for their sumptuary excesses more frequently than men, men were as guilty as women of indulging in the social benefits of such displays. Through these articles Stuard turns long-held gender stereotypes on their heads in a refreshing way.

Part 3, "Medieval Women and Slavery," addresses the second major theme of the volume, the economic and social effects of slavery. The earliest article traces the phenomenon of domestic slavery in documents from medieval Ragusa to show that holding domestic slaves, particularly female slaves from the eastern Mediterranean and Dalmatian coast, was common among merchant and elite households along the Adriatic coast. Upper-class women often drove the commerce in female domestic slaves, buying and selling slaves themselves, bequeathing them in their testaments, or freeing them at the end of their lives. Yet, "by the early years of the fourteenth century slaves were all but replaced by contracts for labor arranged with the rural peasantry of Bosnia, the Herzegovania, and other nearby territories" (6, 166). In the article that follows, Stuard broadens her argument for the significance and social consequences of slave ownership in "Ancillary Evidence for the Decline of Medieval Slavery," originally published in *Past and Present* (1995). Here Stuard addresses the gendered nature of the persistence of medieval slavery in the eastern Mediterranean. She argues persuasively for separating the end of rural male slavery that characterized the labor of Roman estates from the continuation of female domestic slavery among noble, merchant, and wealthy urban households. In this context, female slavery was deliberately fostered in that slave status passed through the female line; thus the children of female slaves were born slaves, keeping this social institution rooted in place over generations. Moreover, the labor performed by female slaves had become an integral part of the domestic and commercial economy in many Italian city-states. In the last essay on this theme, Stuard takes up yet another side of this topic, the status of the *ancilla* as it was dealt with in medieval canon law.

Finally, part 4, "Historiography and Gender," collects some of Stuard's seminal articles on feminist history and the study of medieval women. These blend a keen eye for the methodology and careful, detail-oriented approach

that historians of medieval women have honed over the years with a narrative of the role of women as practitioners of history within the discipline. These articles reach across time from her 1981 publication, "The Annales School and Feminist History," to a more synthetic piece, first published here, "The Three-Decade Transformation: Medieval Women and the Course of History." The section closes with an article devoted to the life and career of Eleanor Shipley Duckett (1880-1976), which is a wonderful, detailed, personal evocation of the great Latinist and her time teaching at Smith College. All of these pieces are illuminating and could be assigned to students new to the study of medieval women, for—as Stuard makes clear—the role of feminist scholarship and female historians is intimately linked to the ways this subfield has evolved.

The volume ends with an interesting juxtaposition: Stuard's first publication (1975) on the female medical practitioner known as Trotula, followed by two focused biographical studies of Benci del Buono and his family and Maria of Venice (1379-1399), first published in this volume. These are interesting and informative microhistories, but they do not have the impact or scope of the earlier sections. If there is a downside to this collection it is that some of the articles are now out of date. Nevertheless, this will be a useful volume for many. In its biographical nature, evocative of the methodological developments in medieval women's history, from deep archival material, to legal history, to theory, it relates as much about our discipline as it does about one of its leading scholars.

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