

BOOK REVIEWS



Conduct Becoming: Good Wives and Husbands in the Later Middle Ages, by Glenn D. Burger. The Middle Ages Series. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018. Pp. 262. ISBN 9780812249606.

Glenn D. Burger's *Conduct Becoming: Good Wives and Husbands in the Later Middle Ages* is an examination of a variety of different texts, written or compiled between 1200 and 1400, that all fall under the umbrella category of conduct literature intended for laywomen. Over the course of the first three chapters, he traces the development of secular female conduct literature from *Journées Chretiennes*, devotional guides for laywomen; guides intended for noble women that mix devotional and practical advice, such as the *Livre du Chevalier de la Tour Landry*; to texts representing a more bourgeois background, most notably *Le Menagier de Paris*. In the final body chapter, he focuses on the story of Griselda as it existed across numerous diverse texts in the late 1300s. Through these texts, he explores the changing social view of married women following the confirmation of marriage as a sacrament in the early 1200s.

Taken together, Burger argues, late medieval married women were increasingly seen as a category on par with nuns or widows rather than as their moral or social inferiors. Married women—even those occupied with running a household—could engage in a program of devotions and improvement through the use of these very texts. At the same time, women as wives were not measured only by their religious devotions or sexual purity, as nuns were, by their position as objects of affection, as women in courtly literature were, or through their ability to produce children to carry on the line, as noble women had been. They were valued through their work in their marriages and their households. This extended not just to noble women but increasingly to bourgeois women as well.

For both noble and bourgeois women, Burger emphasizes the growing role of marital affection, which he defines as both an emotional bond and a sense of duty, carefully cultivated, binding individuals in an uneven but mutually

beneficial relationship. Just as women needed to work to improve themselves and their households, they needed to work to build this marital affection and, through that, strong marriages, families, and households. Marital affection was important in the discourse on marriage as the marital family was increasingly viewed as the cornerstone of society. In the early modern period, the concept became even more pervasive as the well-ordered state was understood as analogous to a well-ordered household, founded on the work and devotion of unequal yet equally integral parties.

In order to make these arguments, Burger weaves together medieval conduct texts with works of gender and cultural theory and an extensive bibliography of secondary scholarship on the texts. While his reliance on quoted material from these secondary texts seems heavy at times, pulling the scholarship together and drawing it into a single argument relevant to historians and literary scholars, those focused on gender and culture and on religion and devotional practices, is a real achievement. His argument shapes readers' understandings of the texts, of medieval women, and of the broader medieval understanding of the role of women in society.

The real contribution of this study is in bringing together and putting into conversation so many different and diverse conduct texts and the scholarship on those texts. These texts span place, social stratum, genre, and languages; Griselda narratives, alone, appeared in Tuscan, Latin, French, and English. Many of these texts, such as the *Menagier*, have been relatively little studied, especially in light of the copious and detailed scholarship on lay women in the later Middle Ages. And in the excellent scholarship that does exist, the texts have been examined largely in isolation from one another, in the context of the manuscript or time they appear in, rather than reaching across time and place, as Burger does.

This skillful combining of sources is perhaps most clear and appreciated in his fourth chapter, that focusing on the tale of Griselda. Modern readers who encounter this tale of a wife's silent endurance cannot help but be deeply unsettled by the apparent message of ceaseless devotion in the face of abuse so severe that even the medieval narrators of the framing texts remark on it. Nor can they miss the tension between the messages of the text and of the frames surrounding it. Further, this text was adapted by some of the most famous and well-studied authors of the Middle Ages, including Boccaccio, Petrarch, and Chaucer, among others. Nonetheless, it has received scant scholarly attention relative to its popularity—Burger's detailed and multilingual bibliography

includes only a dozen references dealing with the Griselda tale in any version—and the scholarship that exists tends to focus on one or another of the texts.

By contrast, Burger pursues the question of why the Griselda tale is so popular while also tracing the changes in the text and its meaning. Extensively examining four versions, and mentioning several others that draw on one of those four, he traces the tale's journey from an awkward fabliau in Boccaccio to Petrarch's Latin version, which fits Griselda into a mold used for ancient female models of virtue while also presenting her unswerving devotion to her husband in the face of suffering as a model of what his (male, Latinate) readers should aspire to in their relationship with God. From there, he traces the retranslation into the vernacular, this time in French, and the shift to a more feminine audience, with Philippe de Mézière's *Le Miroir des dames mariées*, which pairs the Griselda story with that of the Virgin Mary, suggesting that Griselda is a similarly unachievable ideal. He ends with Chaucer's "Clerk's Tale" in *The Canterbury Tales*, which is the most outrightly critical of Walter and his treatment of Griselda. While each of these tales is interesting in and of itself, brought to light by Burger's juxtapositions of these texts the arc of these various versions is fascinating.

This book makes numerous important contributions to studies of the evolution of marriage, the position of women in society, and women as readers in late medieval society. It also provides something much more unique by bringing these texts together and building towards a greater scholarship on conduct literature.

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Imperial Ladies of the Ottonian Dynasty: Women and Rule in Tenth-Century Germany, by Phyllis G. Jestice. Queenship and Power. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018. Pp. xi, 300. ISBN 9783319773056; E-ISBN 9783319773063.

In *Imperial Ladies of the Ottonian Dynasty*, Phyllis G. Jestice argues that Ottonian women acquired positions of great authority in the Holy Roman Empire, both because kinship ensured their loyalty and because their male relatives deliberately gave them the public status and personal wealth to become powerful figures in the *Reich*. Although the book focuses on two women—Adelheid of Burgundy, the wife of Otto I, and Theophanu, wife of Otto II—the sisters and daughters of the Ottonian emperors occasionally come into focus as well. Drawing from diplomas, letters, narratives, and hagiography, Jestice seeks to explain how Adelheid and Theophanu acquired power—specifically, the power to fend off an adult male challenger, Henry the Quarrelsome, in his bid to become regent for the child-king Otto III.

The first chapter is an overview of the book's structure and arguments. The second lays out the status of women generally, and of elite women in particular, in tenth-century Germany. In the third, Jestice argues that one of the central factors in Adelheid's and Theophanu's success was that they were foreign brides, brought into the Ottonian dynasty in "prestige marriages" that bolstered the dynasty's status both within and outside the empire. Chapter 4 makes the case for one of Jestice's fundamental arguments: that Ottonian women's extensive wealth was conferred upon them in order to enhance their authority. To make this case, she reads royal diplomas carefully to demonstrate that empresses and other imperial women could, for example, alienate property, including property received as dowry.

The fifth chapter explores the anointing of empresses and the sacral status it conferred. Importantly, Jestice argues that although anointing itself depended on marriage (women not married to emperors were not anointed), it created a relationship between God and the empress that was independent of her status as wife. Jestice also notes that membership in the imperial dynasty itself conferred an elevated status, so that the emperor's sisters and daughters could be considered "imperial ladies" just as his wife was.

Chapter 6 addresses piety as a source of power. Noting the Ottonian dynasty's emphasis on founding and endowing houses of canonesses—rather than nunneries, or even male monasteries or cathedral chapters—Jestice argues for a link between imperial female piety and the preservation of dynastic memory.

Chapter 7 argues that imperial women used both their own resources and their closeness to the reigning monarch to assist not only their relatives, but also their friends and supporters. These patronage networks can also be traced through interventions, a diplomatic formulation in which the king or emperor made a grant “by the intervention of” a female relative. Jestice rightly relates this to the familiar queenly trope of intercession.

In chapter 8, Jestice argues that *consortium regni*—the queen or empress’s “sharing” in her husband’s or son’s rule—is not an empty formulation but an accurate depiction of Ottonian women’s role. Chapter 9 focuses on the contest over the regency of the boy-king Otto III, a contest in which his mother and grandmother ultimately emerged victorious over a male rival, Henry the Quarrelsome. Finally, the tenth chapter addresses the regencies themselves, assessing what kind of authority Adelheid and Theophanu wielded and how their contemporaries viewed that authority.

The book makes thoughtful use of documentary evidence and offers an important contribution to the history of the Ottonian Empire by foregrounding, and analyzing, the roles of imperial women. It comes at a time of significant advances in the study of early medieval queens—most relevantly, Penelope Nash’s *Empress Adelheid and Countess Matilda* (Palgrave, 2017) and Simon MacLean’s *Ottonian Queenship* (Oxford, 2017). Jestice cites these books, but only in passing, as might be expected given that they were published so shortly before hers. It is harder to explain why she does not cite Nash’s or MacLean’s earlier work. In general, there is little suggestion of familiarity with the historiography on queenship over the last ten years, though this has been an extraordinarily productive period in the field. As a result, even secondary sources that could have bolstered Jestice’s arguments (on co-rule, for example, or on whether rights and titles accorded to women in diplomas indicate genuine authority) are neglected. Meanwhile, the book repeats old tropes that have been undermined by recent scholarship, such as the idea that women experienced a precipitous decline in status during the twelfth century. Theresa Earenfight’s 2013 overview of the field, *Queenship in Medieval Europe* (Macmillan), could have served to correct such deficiencies, but it is cited only in passing.

Readers of *MFF* may be surprised, as I was, that in the epilogue Jestice disavows any intention to write “conventional women’s history” and rejects the label of women’s history entirely except inasmuch as “[the book’s] main characters are women.” Rather, she writes, this is a study of “the nature of Ottonian rule itself” (269), which happened to include substantial roles for women. These distinctions are difficult to parse. Jestice’s effort to distance her work from

“conventional women’s history” seems to speak to an enduring anxiety among historians that studies of women will be dismissed as something other than “real” history. But it is precisely such antiquated and artificial distinctions that books like this one help to remove.

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Fragments for a History of Vanishing Humanism, edited by Myra Seaman and Eileen Joy. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2016. Pp. 281. ISBN 9780814213049.

Aimed at critics focused on modernity as well as premodernity, in posthumanism and in medieval studies, the essays in *Fragments for a History of Vanishing Humanism*, edited by Myra Seaman and Eileen Joy, cover an extensive temporal range, from the paleolithic to the contemporary. The collection strives to fill the need for “a theoretically rigorous *longer* historical perspective” in posthumanism (9). In “Introduction: The Work, or the Agency, of the Nonhuman in Premodern Art,” Anna Kłosowska and Eileen Joy emphasize that it is past time for a critical posthumanism that explores concerns including the significance of historical and other forms of human expression embedded in specific ecologies, the importance of art and literature to defining the human, the importance of history in “defining and re-memembering the human,” and “the constructive *and* destructive relations (aesthetic, historical, and philosophical) of the human to the nonhuman” (14-15).

The first half of the volume is organized around “Singularities, Species, Inter/faces,” addressing critical issues of human being, human becoming, and the undoing of the human. These essays also focus on the historical and critical challenges of delineating the human in ways that introduce the conceptual challenges which posthumanism explores.

In “Paleolithic Representations of Human Being at Chauvet and Rouffignac,” Jefferey Skoblow considers cave images in France and notes that most portraits offer “no apparent figuratively human dimension,” while for those that have been identified as offering a human dimension, identification remains uncertain. This indeterminacy raises the question: how do we understand the human? Skoblow notes that the human is “marked by gender and/or sexual identity, and by relations to animal being that are at once a matter of blurred boundaries and sharp distinctions” (37), but, as he also suggests, the key point is that these images raise this question, provoking a “radical conceptual instability [that] remains with us” (50).

Eileen Joy’s “Eros, Event, and Non-Faciality in Malory’s ‘The Tale of Balyn and Balan’” also relies on time to evaluate the human. Joy argues that notions of time and temporality insufficiently allow for grasping time’s “continual and dissonant ‘forking’” (55) and posits literary narratives as ideal sites for the exploration of time. She shows how the overlap of chivalric “adventure” with Claude Romano’s concept of humans as an “advenant” questions expectations

for human identity constituted through interiority. Balyn invites us to think of the human as an advenant who desires not domination nor projection, but rather “seeks opportunities to well up” in events, an engagement with the world in process. This, Joy suggests, invites us to think about living within both romance and history (64).

In chapter 3, “The Book of Hours and iPods, Passionate Lyrics, and Prayers: Technologies of the Devotional Self,” Tim Spence juxtaposes books of hours and iPods to examine how both function as technologies enabling users to access their passions. Spence adduces other parallels to conclude that these devices “habituate an individual into a mode of being that links human emotions to a corporate identity that is both omnipresent and invisible, and not at all human” (94). Spence’s essay vividly illustrates what emerges when using medieval to “think with” the modern posthuman.

Chapter 4, “What *Does* Language Speak? Feeling the Human with Samuel Beckett and Chrétien de Troyes” by Daniel C. Remein and Anna Kłosowska presents a “diachronic comparative mode” of analysis that considers two temporally disparate texts through approaches involving new materialism, post-humanism, queerness, feminism, phenomenology, and metaphysics to think through how language speaks (97). Deftly moving from approach to approach, the path Remein and Kłosowska trace engages repeatedly with Heidegger’s assertion that “Language speaks us” to refract that claim through the human and humanism revealed in moments of proximity between Beckett’s *Molloy* and Chrétien’s *Perceval*. They conclude that Language works through fragments of language, not its totality, and these fragments “fleetingly operate in erotic complicity with the allure of accidents” (124).

The second half of *Fragments* concentrates on issues related to “Human, Inhuman, Spectacle” that center around human/inhuman relations and the oft-indistinguishability of the dividing line between the two. In addressing both the separation and merging of human and inhuman, these essays raise ethical and cultural dilemmas for readers’ consideration.

“Aninormality,” contributed by Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, centers around several questions about aesthetics and art, including: “Can art be something more than a human perception?” (133). Cohen draws on Roger Caillois’s proposal of *aninormality* as an aesthetic trigger “that propels us into a lively realm where human and nonhuman counterinfect” (140) to explore medieval aninormality in Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *History of the Kings of Britain* and Marie de France’s *Yonec*. For Cohen, these works include representations of nonhuman art, Stonehenge, and an underground chamber, which provoke disorientation via displacement of the human.

In chapter 6, “Humanist Waste,” Michael A. Johnson addresses the “conception of the medieval as a persistent ‘material trace’” to introduce the metaphor of the trace as excrement. Johnson moves from the history of waste disposal, to troubadour lyrics’ treatment of waste, then to avant-garde engagements with waste. These approaches craft an invitation “to see all things, and especially art, as shit,” thus introducing the questions: “how is this shit contextualized, [and] what ideologies determine the way I experience this shit?” (174). Johnson posits that the ambivalence of waste offers a way to “thinking our way out of the crisis in sublimation” (174).

Chapter 7, “How Delicious We Must Be / Folcuin’s Horse and the Dog’s Gowther, Beyond Care,” begins with Karl Steel’s evaluation of medieval descriptions of the superior taste of human flesh to highlight how “the human subject comports itself as if it were desirable, as if it especially mattered” (184). For Steel, this opens a moment to consider, instead, what happens when humans take instruction from animals. Drawing on Donna Haraway, among others, Steel argues that, “We must suspend ourselves between two impossibilities: the unjustifiable need to defend ourselves from the appetite of others” and taking care of others “even if what we protect takes no notice of us at all” (192).

In chapter 8, “Excusing Laius: Freud’s Oedipus, Sophocles’ *Oedipus Rex*, and Lydgate’s Edippus,” Daniel T. Kline reorients our understanding of the Oedipus narrative by rereading the contrasting depictions by Freud and Lydgate, the latter as framed through Levinas. Attending to the different influences that shape Oedipus, Kline argues that Lydgate counters Freud’s Oedipus-as-Everyman with a representation of Oedipus that is not universal, but singular, exceptional, adaptive, culturally embedded, and “firmly wedded to the warp and woof of history” (222). Lydgate’s Edippus offers the possibility of freedom and a nonteleological future.

The volume concludes with a coda by Craig Dionne, “The Trick of Singularity: *Twelfth Night*, Stewards of the Posthuman, and the Problem of Aesthetics.” Dionne traces instances of misreading the Other illustrated by Feste and Orsino to warn readers that “we can potentially shut our ear to alterity in our very efforts to hear it” (243). Dionne cautions that efforts to rethink otherness may nevertheless fail to rethink the anthropocene.

Fragments offers a multifaceted, engaging approach to posthumanism and its invitations to critical inquiry. It resists closing the conversation by developing as many questions as its provocative essays answer.

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Her Father's Daughter: Gender, Power, and Religion in the Early Spanish Kingdoms, by Lucy K. Pick. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2017. ISBN 9781501714320.

Given the extensive historiography on queens and female lordship, it has become clear that medieval women wielding political power were not simply occasional exceptions who rose above their gendered circumstances. Yet methodologies by which to produce analyses of female power beyond exceptionalism have been harder to come by. In her groundbreaking work, *Her Father's Daughter: Gender, Power, and Religion in the Early Spanish Kingdoms*, Lucy Pick proposes that medieval political power was not rooted in a single person such as a king or queen (11), but rather in networks of power exerted through royal and aristocratic dynasties, with particular roles available to daughters and sisters of kings (as well as lords and counts) in relation to ecclesial property and authority.

In her study of the kingdoms of León and Castilla beginning in 711 (the Muslim conquest) and ending just before the first queen's accession to throne (Queen Urraca, 1109), Pick examines the "consecrated" royal daughters (18) and their role in the kingdom's politics. The Spanish institution of the *infantazgo* (termed so in the twelfth century but existing *de facto* since the ninth, according to Pick) referred to a number of "ecclesial properties . . . held and passed down to royal daughters and sisters who lived unmarried" (15). She argues that previous work by Teofilo Ruiz identifying royal authority in this kingdom as "unsacred monarchy" (16) overlooks its reliance on these religious institutions to cement power relations. Pick's attention to religious patronage builds on the many studies demonstrating that medieval women often gained some type of agency through religious vocations but redirects attention both to the legal authority exerted through the donation of monastic property and to the ways that royal "gift-giving" through donations of monastic property to daughters who controlled the convents served to cement a royal network of authority.

Pick begins with a chapter on the specifics of Visigothic and medieval Spanish inheritance patterns that she considers central to the formation of dynastic networks rather than patriarchal power passed through male inheritance. In Visigothic Spain, children rather than spouses inherited, and daughters inherited equally with sons, i.e., "cognatic lineage" (33-34). In northern Spain after the Muslim Conquest, scholars have argued that matrilineal and patrilineal systems were in dispute, and Pick contributes the point that analysis of commemorative inscriptions on funerary *stellae* throughout the North indicate that men in public power were linked through women in their family (wives, sisters,

mothers) rather than directly to each other. It is from the successions and dynasties of León-Castilla, however, that Pick starts to develop her two main themes. She identifies the fact that kings of León would marry “women of lower status” (56) but refused to marry their daughters to men of lower status as a change in the nature of medieval gift-giving, in which fear of potential dynastic struggles marshaled by the husband of a royal daughter led kings in León-Castilla to retain their female kin as part of their own family and to channel their virginal daughters’ authority towards monastic properties.

In chapter 2, Pick examines the royal daughters’ control of monastic properties not just as economic capital—that is, as properties that provided funds and authority to the daughters who inherited them—but as “spiritual capital” by which the daughters supported their family network through prayer, intercession, and memorializing the dead. For example, Elvira Ramírez was daughter to King Ramiro II and sister to Sancho I (among other family connections) and ruled her nephew Ramiro III’s kingdom for nine years. She appears in the records as *deo voto* from early on, and in her later association with the palace-monastery of San Salvador she is designated its *domina* (female lord) rather than its abbess (70). A *domina* could act as abbess, but also could be in charge of multiple properties, whether economically or spiritually, and this religious role seems to have been a primary justification for Elvira’s role of ruler for her nephew (71-72). Pick then turns to the politics of virginity, examining late antique theological writings and hagiographies available in manuscript in medieval Spain. She identifies various themes within the gender politics of virginity that may have influenced the authority of virginal royal daughters, such as virgins avoiding female sinfulness (85), the pattern of *viragos* transcending their gender (96), or the importance of a local male saint honored for resisting the sexual advances of kings as a rationale for royal daughters being consecrated rather than being given in intermarriage with Muslim kings (92-94).

Chapters 3 and 4 apply two distinct methods to further establish the contours of power available to royal daughters in León-Castilla. In chapter 3, Pick argues that charters from the tenth and eleventh centuries are “snapshot[s] of a network . . . often around particular properties or religious institutions” (105). Drawing on recent historiography that reads charters as performances of power, Pick suggests that they are in fact liturgical dramas by which women performed “both royalness and femaleness” (106). Her close reading of a charter by Urraca Fernández (daughter of King Fernando and Queen Sancha that reestablished the bishopric of Túy in 1071) includes careful attention to Urraca’s use of the first person in rhythmic phrases that echo liturgy, while also emphasizing the

multiple members of the royal family in relation to whom Urraca is claiming a certain authority. This and a number of other readings lead Pick to redefine the *infantazgo* not as a set of properties inherited by specific women, but rather as a set of women with particular kinds of dynastic roles “to which property accrued” (147).

In chapter 4, Pick continues to focus on Urraca Fernández, proposing that careful study of Spanish dynastic networks can usefully engage anthropological discussions of gift-giving or studies of medieval mnemonics or political memory (by Carruthers and Geary, among others). Pick suggests that kings endowed their virgin daughters with authority over monastic institutions as a way to provide the kings with effective intercession in the afterlife through gifts of prayers that memorialized them, thus drawing their daughters into their attempts to use power to ensure salvation (180). Pick rounds out her discussion by turning to material culture, examining the extensive set of reliquaries gifted by Urraca and the manuscripts commissioned by Queen Sancha and annotated by Urraca. These material objects were shaped by the gender of their commissioners, and Pick carefully mines the images and choice of texts for how they reveal Urraca and Sancha’s concern for—and authority to directly address—the salvation of their male relatives.

Although a study of León-Castilla in particular, Pick’s methodology concerning dynastic networks wielding holy power is intended to replace the outdated division often used in studies of medieval queenship between public (male, political) spheres of power and private (female, familial) ones (9). In her conclusion, she examines several parallel kingdoms, particularly Ottonian Germany, where her innovative method could serve to remap medieval authority as we know it.

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The Witchcraft Sourcebook, edited by Brian P. Levack. 2nd ed. New York: Routledge, 2015. Pp. xviii+389; 13 b/w ill. ISBN 9781138774971; E-ISBN 9781315715292.

The second edition of Brian P. Levack's primary source reader, *The Witchcraft Sourcebook*, reflects the editor's extensive experience with and expertise in early modern English and Scottish legal history and the study of witchcraft. The text also includes numerous selections from Continental sources and colonial documents from the Salem witch trials. The excerpts primarily come from legal records or treatises about witchcraft, including both Protestant and Catholic theological writings, literary tracts, and some descriptive accounts. Levack highlights cases pertaining to individuals from varying social strata as well as communities large and small. His organization is primarily thematic with some apparent chronological considerations. Through this well-organized, cohesive, and balanced book, Levack provides his audience with a full and nuanced understanding of the causes of the early modern witch trials, the methods of operation, consequences for the accused and their communities, and reasons for their decline.

The book includes eight parts, each comprised of excerpts that run between approximately 750 to 3500 words. The length of the selections allows for the volume to successfully convey both breadth and depth of knowledge without overwhelming the intended undergraduate audience. Part 1 is a selection of ancient material, both classical and biblical. High and late medieval documents comprise part 2. The third part includes selections from sixteenth- and seventeenth-century texts on demonology while part 4 focuses on trial methods and punishment up to the conclusion of the witch trials. Parts 5 and 6 contain records of specific, early modern cases. Part 7 comprises source material linking possession and witchcraft, and the final part includes skeptical treatises. Contemporary illustrations that depict concepts mentioned in the sources are interspersed throughout, including, for example, Hans Baldung Grien's *The Bewitched Stable Groom*, a woodcut showing the pact with the Devil, and engravings of the Witches' Sabbath.

New to this edition are recommended reading lists and eleven documents. Levack removed excerpts from early modern dramas portraying witchcraft that concluded the first edition of the sourcebook to provide space for the new selections concerning trial proceedings. In the first edition of the book these selected dramatizations felt like an afterthought tacked on to the end of the text whereas the revised second edition draws to a logical conclusion with the

skeptical tradition. The elimination of these readings is not a significant loss. The editor has also reorganized the book to include a new section 6, which is exclusively comprised of documents related to trials in England, Scotland, and the North American colonies. This useful organization both establishes distinctions between the operations of Continental and British trials and highlights differences among trial proceedings in the British world. Section 5 is now confined to Continental texts and includes new material from Norway, Germany, and Poland.

Reading lists of five to ten monographs that appear in each part are balanced in terms of time and space and reference classics in the history of ancient, medieval, and early modern European magic and witchcraft, including works by Jeffrey Burton Russell, Richard Kieckhefer, Carlo Ginzburg, Keith Thomas, James Sharpe, and Malcolm Gaskill. Undergraduates new to the study of European witchcraft and who are looking to do further research will find these lists particularly helpful. Nevertheless, absent from these recommendations are some of the significant historiographical contributions that specifically examine beliefs about witchcraft through the lens of gender, like Marianne Hester's *Lewd Women and Wicked Witches: A Study in the Dynamics of Male Domination*, Deborah Willis's *Malevolent Nurture: Witch-Hunting and Maternal Power in Early Modern England*, or Heidi Breuer's *Crafting the Witch: Gendering Magic in Medieval and Early Modern England*.

Strengths of the volume include Levack's succinct introduction, background material provided at each section's beginning, and commentary that introduces individual excerpts. The author avoids advancing a singular explanation for the causes of accusations. Indeed, Levack's choice of documents points to a variety of intertwined causes for the trials, although he does note that the witch hunts had an obviously gendered dimension. He additionally and helpfully provides his audience with a precise definition of witchcraft as the practice of "maleficent magical power by virtue of having made a pact with the Devil" (2). His overviews are effective scaffolding as they connect ancient and medieval writings about magic with the early modern texts included in the reader. Excerpts from Horace's *Epodes*, for instance, shaped dramatic representations of witches into the early modern age while the biblical story of the Israelite king, Saul, and the witch of Endor provided a basis for later theological commentaries linking magic to diabolism. Levack centers the high and late medieval theological foundations for accusations of witchcraft and texts that shaped the early modern, stereotypical witch as a diabolical, heretical practitioner of black magic. For example, he has chosen for inclusion Thomas Aquinas's comments on demonic magic, the

articles issued by the faculty from the University of Paris in 1398 denouncing magical practices, and a selection from the inquisitorial handbook, the *Malleus Maleficarum*. Furthermore, Levack astutely avoids summarizing the documents in their entirety for the reader. Instead, he briefly introduces the authors (and/or subjects), explains the conditions under which the texts were written, and highlights the impact and historical significance of these publications.

The Witchcraft Sourcebook provides the reader with a proportionate use of text and image, selections that offer a refined reading of beliefs about witchcraft from a diversity of perspectives, and linkages between ancient, medieval, and early modern notions of magic and witchcraft that illuminate the evolution of witch beliefs over the centuries. It is most appropriate for an undergraduate survey course on the early modern witch trials, or a seminar. This sourcebook could be used in conjunction with a textbook (like Levack's companion text) or, given the clarity of Levack's introductory material, can easily function as a stand-alone text. The range of selected texts will facilitate comparative analyses and fruitful discussion of and debate over causes of the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century witch trials including socioeconomic concerns, psychological issues, religious and political matters, and misogyny. The editor has obviously thought carefully about undergraduate needs and heeded the recommendations of instructors who worked with the first incarnation of the book to design an extremely useful and balanced second edition.

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The French of Medieval England: Essays in Honour of Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, edited by Thelma Fenster and Carolyn P. Collette. Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer, 2017. Pp. xvii + 340; 6 b/w illustrations. ISBN: 9781843844594.

This festschrift volume, in honor of so well-known a scholar as Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, brings together a remarkably insightful collection of essays from a variety of disciplines. Furthermore, as these articles illuminate the current state of affairs concerning the studies of the French of England (also known as Anglo-Norman) from literary, historical, and political points of view, they provide sufficient overview of past scholarship to orientate even a newcomer to the field. Scattered throughout are fond memories of the contributors, attesting to Wogan-Browne's personal as well as academic importance in bridging disciplines as she essentially established studies of the French of England over the course of her career.

In the interest of space, I will provide a brief overview of the essays before concentrating on those which explicitly address questions of women and gender. The first five articles, by Thomas O'Donnell, Emma Campbell, Monika Otter, Fiona Somerset, and Andrew Taylor, study the various implications of bi- and trilingual manuscripts within their societal context, concluding that far from previous conceptions of either English or French being the dominant language and acts of translation reflective of that power imbalance, many of the Anglo-Norman writers in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries took advantage of their bilingual capabilities shifting between languages essentially at will, depending on the ideas they wished to express, expecting that their audience would be able to follow in either (or both) languages. Serge Lusignan goes somewhat farther afield in considering French in Scotland, as preserved by communications from the Anglo-Scottish wars at the turn of the fourteenth century, while Richard Ingham looks to religious texts as evidence of the spread of, and preference for, French terms for a series of related abstract concepts. While Nicholas Watson considers Langland as a reader of and respondent to the continental French literary tradition, R. F. Yeager offers a close reading of a poem from Gower's own Anglo-Norman oeuvre. Christopher Baswell treats disability in several female saints' lives gathered in the Campsey Manuscript, followed by Thelma Fenster's article addressing the treatment of Jews in manuscripts meant for women educating their children. The eleventh through the fourteenth articles, by W. Mark Ormrod, Maryanne Kowaleski, Paul Cohen, and Delbert Russell, consider language's functions in defining statehood and national identity in the fourteenth through the nineteenth centuries. The final

essay is a lightly edited conference presentation by the late Robert M. Stein, in which Stein examines *cansos* by troubadours Bertran de Born and Bernard de Ventadorn for their evocations of the Young King Henry's Englishness.

Campbell's article, "The Scandals of Medieval Translation: Thinking Difference in Francophone Texts and Manuscripts" (38–54), offers in its last section an unexpected reading of Marie de France's translation claims in the prologue to her *lai* "Bisclavret." Rather than accept the interpretation of Marie's choice to translate the *lais* from Breton to Anglo-Norman, that is, from one vernacular to another, as "a less hierarchical form of translation which . . . carves out a space for a female writer in a discourse dominated by male clerics," Campbell proposes instead to understand it "as a gesture of political and ideological appropriation that incorporates these stories into the francophone Angevin *imperium*" (50). In her exploration of the signifying possibilities of the various terms for "werewolf" and Marie's preference for the Breton term throughout her *lai*, Campbell positions Marie as a politically savvy courtier, delivering a collection of tales designed to appeal to its royal readers on multiple levels.

Baswell's "Disability Networks in the Campsey Manuscript" (157–74) proposes an intriguing reading of female saints' curing and dispensation of disability as another network linking several of the *Lives* in London, British Library, MA Additional 70513, which also seems to have connections to Isabella, Countess of Arundel. Baswell's analysis of Osith's hagiography is particularly compelling, as he concludes that Osith uses disability to protect the saint's female community. This interpretation occasionally stretches the metaphor a bit far. For instance, in Osith's martyrdom, she carries her own head into the church that she had previously founded, depositing the head at the altar and, with her hands, leaving bloody trails on the pillars framing the way to it, thereby establishing it as a particularly feminine space, which Baswell reads as "an architecturalized hymen" (165) and Osith, "virago-like possessor of the church" (167), claiming the building by the blood of that "hymen." Nonetheless, Baswell's evocation of similar cures and distributions of disability in various forms by Osith, Modwenna, and Audrey provides an eminently useful example of the fruitful possibilities for research at the intersection of disability, feminist, and hagiographical studies.

Fenster's article, "English Women and their French Books: Teaching about the Jews in Medieval England" (175–89), offers a fascinating glimpse into the role of thirteenth- and fourteenth-century mothers in inculcating anti-Semitic sentiment in their children. In her analysis, which centers on the *Proverbes de Salomon*, the *Enfaunces de Jesu Christ*, and the Neville of Hornby Hours, Fenster aptly demonstrates that "teaching children to fear the Jews as their enemies

and the enemies of Christendom was . . . an integral part of maternal nurturing” (177). She does so through a combination of close reading and analysis of the illuminations accompanying the latter two works. Those in the *Enfaunces* are simplistic but function nevertheless “as a pictorial gloss” (184) eventually replicated elsewhere, including in wall tiles; in the Hornby Hours, the elaborate miniature of the Jewish children transformed into pigs is appropriately “read” by the horrified young girl in the margin of the folio. Fenster also reminds us that such texts, even when explicitly aimed at children, would have been read by older people as well—like their mothers. Finally, she offers a thematic tie to Baswell’s article in her mention of the Virgin Mary’s significance in another work, Adgar’s *Le Gracial*, where Mary embodies “a duality of salvation and menace” much like that of Osith.

Bookending the collection are Felicity Riddy’s forward, Carolyn Collette and Fenster’s introduction, and Robert W. Hanning’s afterword, all of which serve to highlight yet again the breadth of Wogan-Browne’s contributions to studies of the French of medieval England in terms of her written production and the network of colleagues, students, and friends that she has inspired during the course of her career. In short, this volume is a collection of essays worthy of the woman who inspired it, and of great interest to scholars of literature, history, language, and culture—on both sides of the Channel.

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Imagined Communities. Constructing Collective Identities in Medieval Europe, edited by Andrzej Pleszczyński, Joanna Aleksandra Sobiesiak, Michał Tomaszek, and Przemysław Tyszka. Explorations in Medieval Culture 8. Leiden: Brill, 2018. Pp. x + 395. 3 c. ill., 1 b/w map.
ISBN 978-90-04-36379-3.

The editors of this book explain that their work was motivated by the necessity to produce studies analyzing how “the existence of selected communities was ideologically justified, and how the members of these groups distinguished themselves from others” (1-2). This book relies, then, heavily on two famous cultural theories: that of imagined communities, developed by Benedict Anderson, and of emotional communities, coined by Barbara Rosenwein. However crucial these notions are, they are only mentioned in the introduction of the book and do not seem to be a cornerstone of the volume. The editors have compiled an impressive, generous, and wide-ranging collection of essays on the subject, which they have divided into five parts: “Dynasty and Power”; “Spirituality”; “Social Condition and Gender”; “Region”; and “We and the Other.”

In part 1, Daniel Bagi focuses on genealogical fictions in eleventh- and thirteenth-century hagiographies in Central Europe. He argues that these works were crucial to imposing successful narratives on a ruler and his successors in a manner that made them stick for a long time. Zbigniew Dalewski’s paper examines how dynastic identities were built in Poland, Hungary, and Bohemia. Rulers in these kingdoms tried to change the traditional rules of succession to create the ruler as a God-anointed entity, thus eliminating those who would not fit this mold. Georg Jostkleigrewe focuses his paper on a new interpretation of the *Rex imperator in regno* in France. He argues that this treaty of exemption from imperial rule evolved into, and that it should be seen as, a tool used to reinforce the power of the French kings as it was not known or observed outside of specialist fields such as the judiciary.

The first essay of part 2, Tomasz Tarczynski’s study, lies at the intersection of royal power, national identity, and spirituality in England, and examines how the use of religion in the definition of royal power was a tool not only to shape and justify royalty but also to create England as a saintly adorned kingdom. Michał Tomaszek, in the best essay of this collection, examines the emotional relation between monks as subjects and the objects in their environment, and how these objects are as important as people in the creation of monastic communities. In part 3, Bartosz Klusek focuses on medieval social identity and the role of law in community-building. Through the analysis of chronicles of England and Scotland, he explains how law became one of the most important facets of the

process of building well-organized groups. The family of the count of Anjou is at the center of Karol Szejgiec's paper, notably their organization through a dynastic legend. He explains that the authors of chronicles had to not only keep in mind the interest of the readers, but also the demands of the royals in their writing. Wojciech Michalski studies how epic poems from Scotland might have been used to build and reinforce the identity of noble families through a study of the heroics depicted in them. Tatiana Vilkul examines the use of social terms and tries to explain how they operate semantically in old Russian chronicles. She uses her finding to explain how the very writing of these texts was as important as their content. Andrej Pleszczyński's paper addresses the identity of guilds and communes in the Middle Ages. He focuses on their representation in official papers and how their identity as communities influenced or was influenced by their identity as self-governed groups. Przemysław Tyszka focuses on the definition of masculinity and femininity in books of penance from the early Middle Ages and how sexual practices are of prime importance in this task.

Part 4 starts with a paper by Euryon Rhys Roberts who analyzes Welsh identity through regional Welsh and British paradigms and explains how these different notions are not mutually exclusive, but rather complementary. Przemysław Wiszeszki's paper examines how, in Moravia and Poland, regionalism appears as a social construct, principally how the notion of regional consciousness was present and employed. Stanisław Rosik's paper focusing on the issue of regional identity in eleventh- and twelfth-century Pomerania concludes part 4. Finally, part 5 begins with a paper by Mariusz Bartnicki in which he analyzes the distinction between Ruthenians and non-Ruthenians in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Joanna Sobiesak focuses on the German-Czech relationship as described in Czech chronicles from the twelfth and fourteenth centuries. She particularly explains how Germans are often ill-portrayed in these, even though the Czech relationship with the German aristocracy was generally courteous otherwise. Martin Nodl examines the issues of corporative interests and nationalism at Prague University in the sixteenth century. Finally, Paweł Kras examines the creation of the image of heretics as an imagined community.

This volume presents a wide range of different subjects, and they are well combined as a collection. The various subjects treated are, however, extremely specific, and a non-specialist may have problems perfectly understanding the specifics of each article. In spite of this, this volume is very well assembled and presents fascinating subjects.

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“Le Bone Florence of Rome”: A Critical Edition and Facing Translation of a Middle English Romance Analogous to Chaucer’s “Man of Law’s Tale,” edited and translated with introduction and notes by Jonathan Stavsky. New Century Chaucer. Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2017. Pp. 304. ISBN 9781786830623; E-ISBN 9781786830647.

Jonathan Stavsky’s welcome new book presents an edition and translation of a neglected romance, *Le Bone Florence of Rome*, an important analogue to Chaucer’s *Man of Law’s Tale*. The edition is published as part of a series, the New Century Chaucer, which aims to provide “editions, with translations, of Chaucerian and related texts alongside focused studies which bring new theories and approaches into view.” The relationship with Chaucer’s text provides a crucial justification for the appearance of this new edition, but Stavsky is keen to emphasize that this lively and engaging romance deserves to be studied in its own right.

Le Bone Florence belongs to a large body of narratives of accused queens, and in its broad points the story may seem familiar even to those who have not read it. Florence, the daughter of a Roman Emperor (Otes) comes to the attention of Garcy, the aged Emperor of Constantinople, who demands she be sent to him (with startling directness, the emissaries make it clear he wishes to first bed her before he considers making her his wife). When Garcy declares war on Rome, two disinherited Hungarian princes, Mylys and Emere, come to fight for Otes; Emere falls in love with Florence, but the lovers are betrayed repeatedly by Mylys, who ultimately abducts Florence. A series of misadventures befall the heroine: she is subjected to attempted rape and to physical assault; not long after being rescued, she is forced to fend off further sexual assaults as well as a false accusation of murder. She rescues a thief from the gallows, only for him to sell her to a sea captain who attempts to rape her; God answers her prayers by sending a storm to wreck the ship. She arrives at a convent, where she becomes a nun and demonstrates a miraculous gift of healing; in the final movement, she is sought out by her tormentors, each of whom has been struck down with a terrible illness, as well as Emere who has been wounded in battle. The tormentors publicly confess their crimes and are cured (though executed nonetheless); Florence and Emere return to Rome to be married, produce an heir, and live happily ever after.

While the ending wraps up the threads in a way that seems simplistic, the tale contains much of value for students interested in medieval romance and gender studies. As a heroine, Florence arguably displays more character and agency

than her counterpart Custance, while she also experiences more supportive and positive relationships with other women: at one point, a female friend saves her from her male tormentors, and she finds refuge and respect with the abbess and her community of women (in the Florence tradition, unlike the Constance stories, the villains are all men). The tale also provides interesting insights into romance constructions of masculinity: positive examples of chivalric prowess and courtesy are juxtaposed with the cowardice and unchecked aggression of Florence's tormentors. In one vivid moment, Florence's father Otes encounters Garcy, the Emperor of Constantinople, on the battlefield. The poet creates a surprisingly affecting depiction of two elderly men testing their fading skills as warriors, but this moment is soon shattered by Garcy's coarse boast that he intends to do "schame and vlyenye" (689) to Florence. In a classroom setting, the tale could work well as a focal point for discussions about medieval representations of gendered violence. Florence survives physical and sexual assault as well as being sold into sexual slavery, and the narrative explores with some complexity not only her survival strategies (including, at one point, smashing out the teeth of her assailant), but also the motivations of the men who pursue and oppress her. While at times it seems that the narrative represents sexual assault as no more than misdirected sexual passion or a perversion of chivalric aggression, at times it provides an even darker and more complex view of violence and gender relations, for example in the shocking moment when Mylys finds himself impotent and unable to impose himself on Florence, only to explode in a torrent of physical violence.

Stavsky's fine edition is the first since that of Carol Falvo Heffernan in 1976, which is now quite hard to come by. It is accompanied by a facing-page translation, which is written in prose but set out as verse. Initially I found this idiosyncratic, but quickly adapted to it and found it not only unobtrusive but actually helpful when comparing original and translation. The translation is fluid and accurate, and while one might quibble about some choices, the annotations marshal solid evidence from the MED and previous editions for Stavsky's decisions. The text itself is based on the sole manuscript, Cambridge, University Library MS Ff.2.38; Stavsky's introduction provides a useful account of the contents of the manuscript, other versions of the Florence story, and useful parallels with other medieval romances. The endnotes are mostly well tailored to the needs of a student audience; but, while I was grateful that Stavsky chose to allow *Le Bone Florence* to stand on its own merits as much as possible, it might have been helpful (especially for the student audience) to provide more thoroughgoing comparison with Chaucer's *Man of Law's Tale*, while scholars

might appreciate a more extensive analysis of the place of the text within the tradition of accused queen narratives (the important work of Nancy Black is only briefly mentioned). The appendices are not uniformly useful: there is a helpful list of names and places, but in place of a glossary we are directed to a brief list of “Middle English Words and Idioms Discussed in the Explanatory Notes,” which is not particularly helpful as presumably most readers will look directly to the notes in the first place. In the electronic version I was provided to review (which seems to have been a proof copy) there was no index, and I spotted a couple of small copyediting errors. I also noted that the list of names and places included an entry for “Gayne *adv.*, or *prep.*,” a word presumably meant to appear in the list of Middle English words. In spite of these minor issues, this is a very good edition and translation, which will hopefully ensure a wider readership for this engaging and under-valued text.

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Peace and Penance in Late Medieval Italy, by Katherine Ludwig Jansen. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018. 280 pp. 6 × 9¼. 34 half-tones. ISBN 978-0691177748.

Katherine Jansen's *Peace and Penance in Late Medieval Italy* adds to a growing collection of recent articles and monographs addressing peacemaking in the medieval Mediterranean, particularly Glenn Kumhera's 2016 monograph and shorter pieces by Yvonne Friedman and James A. Palmer. It also engages with scholarship on the conjunction of religion and politics in Italy recently explored by Roisin Cossar and Neslihan Şenocak. The rising interest in peacemaking in the Italian peninsula is a result of a revisionist historical trend that seeks to problematize the narrative of the vendetta during the late medieval Guelph-Ghibelline context by looking at the varied ways in which peacemaking was promoted, conducted, and viewed both institutionally and symbolically. The sources on this topic, which include notarial records of Italian towns, hagiography, and sermons, provide a rich corpus that is only beginning to be mined.

Peace and Penance in Late Medieval Italy offers a sweeping overview of conflict resolution in Italy, weaving together sources from all of these categories. Jansen's aim is to examine the theoretical and symbolic ideas about peacemaking rather than provide a close tracing of the specifics of the peacemaking process. As a result, Jansen's book uses the contemporary religious framework to deliver a nuanced view of what peacemaking meant rather than just how peacemaking occurred or who engaged in it. This goal alone makes it a valuable addition to current scholarship on the subject. Since so many of the textual sources are from male friars and preachers intended for a male literate audience, while the notarial documents outline men engaging in peace practices (since women had no legal standing), her book is less directly relevant for those interested in feminist theory or concepts of masculinity or femininity in the Middle Ages. The work does provide some evidence that would allow for expanded discussions of the role of women in peacemaking. Thus, I will briefly provide an overview of the book and then address this aspect that is of most interest to the readership of *Medieval Feminist Forum*.

The religious lens through which Jansen looks at peacemaking is stated clearly in the introduction, in which she argues for a close association between peace and penance. Both are a form of reconciliation "predicated on internal tranquility" (3). This approach informs the structure of the five main chapters. Chapter 1 delves into the religious context of peace as penance, tracing it back to the early thirteenth century and the development of the mendicant orders and

the internecine violence of Guelph-Ghibelline factionalism. Jansen examines St. Francis's ideology and subsequent legends about him, as well as the history of lay penitential movements in Italy, through hagiographical and chronicle sources. She directly connects both to the growing development of the desire for political peace in conjunction with personal spiritual peace, ending with analyses of sermons from the fifteenth-century preachers Bernardino of Siena and James of the March. Chapter 2 explores the idea of *concordia* through sources that, she argues, tried "to formulate a civic ethic of peace" (64). The treatises chosen are the civic official's manual called the *Oculus pastoralis*, Brunetto Latini's *Tresor*, and the sermons and treatises of the preacher Remigio dei Girolami. While these sources are diverse in terms of type and chronology, they set the stage for the third chapter that focuses on *pactum*. It is in this chapter that Jansen's argument is most clearly delineated: that there was a parallel between the process of penance that leads to inner peace and thus concord with God and the process of the civic peace agreement that leads to concord and thus to the maintenance of the social order (92). Chapter 3, looking at personal motives for ending discord (*e.g.*, theft, marital discord, etc.), and chapter 4, which examines the larger theoretical motives for peacemaking (the end of the feud, vendetta, and exile) utilize primarily notarial sources from Florence, 1257-1343. The final chapter provides a real contribution to the scholarship by examining artistic depictions of the ritual peacemaking process, sources that to date may be said to be underutilized. The discussion relies heavily on Paul Connerton's ideas of embodied and inscribed ritual rather than the many scholars who have worked on medieval rituals, however, and could perhaps benefit from some of these more specific studies.

Chapter 1's discussion of penitents contains the largest section in which women appear. Jansen references Catherine of Siena's, Suor Sara's, and Margaret of Cortona's efforts at peacemaking. These examples are downplayed in comparison to her male penitents, Alberto of Mantua and Raimondo Palmario (the latter variously spelled in the scholarship). Jansen claims that Margaret, for instance, "seems to have stayed behind the scenes" (36) even when God called her his *clamatrice pacis*. In fact, her hagiographer, Giunta Bevignati, describes her in his *vita* as quite aggressive in her peacemaking role. She reconciled the town of Cortona with the bishop of Arezzo, mediated between the same bishop and the rector of S. Basilio, between the same rector and the Franciscans, between the citizens of Cortona and the Rossi family, within branches of the Reccabeni family, and even between the French and the people of Forlì through her prayers to Pope Nicholas III. There is a missed opportunity to examine deeper female

intercessors like Margaret, or perhaps Rose of Viterbo (who would also work as an example within the theme of exile) in this section.

There are a few other places in the book where discussions of women appear: as victims of assault in chapter 2; as a symbolic wife-negotiator for peace in a treatise in chapter 4; and as iconic Game of Thrones-esque “peacemakers” through marriage alliances, with their children serving as “living memorials” of peace (187). Jansen notes the latter occurred for families of varying social status and not just the nobility, an interesting point that could be expanded. All of these discussions are short and could use some more analysis on the basis of gender. Particularly when examining late medieval Italy, the varied and complex evidence Jansen marshals could be examined in terms of the concept of masculinity in the religious and political spheres and how that concept impacted women’s legal rights (or lack of them) and both the symbolism of marriage and marriage practices in that place and time. Considering the scope of the work, however, one could say that Jansen’s monograph provides the foundation of sources for other scholars to further investigate these topics.

Overall, *Peace and Penance in Late Medieval Italy* is a deeply researched history of peacemaking in late medieval Italy. It will be a welcome addition to the libraries of many scholars working on cultural history, religious history, and Italian history. For those working on gender history and theory or sexuality, the volume offers less that could be applied to other places and times and the sections that discuss women in particular may be the least persuasive in a well-conceived and thorough examination of a wide range of sources.

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The Sight of Semiramis: Medieval and Early Modern Narratives of the Babylonian Queen, by Alison L. Beringer. Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies. Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2016. Pp. xiv+248. ISBN 9780866985420.

Semiramis has appeared in literary, material, and visual culture (not to mention music, opera, and drama) since antiquity. As such, her legend is comprised of a multitude of overlapping yet frequently disparate narratives, which signal an enduring fascination with the queen of Babylon. In *The Sight of Semiramis*, Alison Beringer provides a study of medieval and early modern treatments of the queen that foregrounds the complexity and multiplicity of this figure and illuminates the broad narrative potential of her legend. Beringer draws on a diverse range of premodern material, including a Byzantine romance and medieval and early modern German songs (the *Meisterlieder*), which she approaches thematically according to a “typology of visuality” (16). More specifically, Beringer reads visual communication and “acts of seeing and of being seen” (15) as the nexus between the various interpretations of Semiramis over time.

Chapter 1 serves as an introduction to this methodology. The impossibility of pinning Semiramis down—one of the overarching arguments of the book—is established here with an overview of the literature and existing criticism. While this is not a chronologically ordered study that aims to chart the development of Semiramis’s representation across history, Irene Samuel’s identification of a general shift in attitude towards the queen in the time of Jerome and the Church fathers is noted. At this point, admiration for Semiramis’s masonic and engineering skills was swapped for disdain for her pagan overstepping of gendered boundaries, excessive female sexuality, and abuse of authority. She is even associated with the invention of castration, “the ultimate threat to masculine power” (9).

Chapter 2 is also foundational for the subsequent arguments and analysis in the book. Here, Beringer sets down some of the main components of Semiramis’s legend, using the account of her life in Diodorus Siculus’s first-century *Library of History*. Beringer is careful not to position Diodorus as a source for later authors, identifying in his account instead “narrative openings” (a term borrowed from Ann Marie Rasmussen), that is, key sites of exploration that other authors might “open” or choose to emphasize. Indeed, chapter 2 is focused on the narrative opening of the manipulation of what people see, which turns on the relationship between public image and private identity, located in Diodorus’s description of Semiramis dressing herself in androgynous clothing.

Later antique and medieval authors would dwell on her cross-dressing when she succeeded her second husband, Ninus, to the Assyrian throne, to reconcile the position of a woman in a typically “male” leadership role. Beringer also explores narratives, which span the centuries, that conversely draw attention to Semiramis’s femininity, particularly through the depiction of her hair as half-braided and half-loose when she runs to defend her city during a rebellion; an act immortalized by the construction of a statue in certain accounts.

In the rather lengthy fourth chapter (it is a pedestrian point, but I would have found subheadings useful throughout the book), Beringer presents material that “bears witness to the diversity and breadth of the narratives created around the figure of Semiramis” (99). The focus of this chapter is on accounts of individual men viewing the body of Semiramis, dead and alive. Derived from various literary traditions, these accounts can all be read in terms of “the tension between the verbal and the visual modes of communication” (99), a fitting theme for a figure associated with the Tower of Babel. It is here that the fourteenth- or early fifteenth-century Greek Byzantine romance, mentioned above, is analyzed: what looks to be a fascinating text in which Alexander the Great is Semiramis’s suitor, solving numerous linguistic riddles and finally posing a riddle that she cannot solve (the answer is Alexander, himself) to become her husband. Beringer makes some interesting comparisons with a late twelfth-century Persian poem, *Haft Paikar* (Seven Beauties) by Nizami, offering an insight into romance and riddling in Persian tradition and demonstrating the range of material she has brought to her readings of narratives on Semiramis. Indeed, Beringer also identifies parallels between the Byzantine romance and the Greek legend of Medusa (without suggesting the latter as an influence; see 125n102). Semiramis’s perilous beauty in the romance is compared with the Gorgon’s fatal gaze, and Alexander’s linguistic and interpretive skill is argued to be equivalent to Perseus’s mirror/ shield, in saving the respective male protagonist and overcoming the dangerous potential of the respective female protagonist. I was not wholly convinced by this analysis as I found the idea of figurative mirrors and reflection a little overstretched. In both narratives, however, female power is undoubtedly defused by men.

The final chapter considers the themes of idolatry, which Ninus is sometimes said to have founded, and incest, which Semiramis commits with her son in many of the versions of her legend. Beringer argues that both acts amount to visual substitution—an image of a dead father in the case of the former, and the exchange of a dead husband for his son in the case of the latter—and demonstrate that seeing leads to destruction (Semiramis is killed by her son, Ninias). The text referred to here is a thirteenth-century South German Christian world

history in rhyming couplets, the *Weltchronik of Rudolf von Elms*. Beringer offers detailed readings of the images that accompany the Semiramis material in three of the extant manuscript witnesses; incidentally, she is pursuing a separate project on iconography and the queen of Babylon. Her inclusion of the *Weltchronik*, of which there is only one scholarly edition and no complete English translation, highlights one of the significant strengths of this study: little-studied, -translated, and -edited texts are favored over well-known narratives such as Orosius's *History against the Pagans*. The *Meisterlieder* that are drawn upon extensively, especially in chapters 3 and 4, are currently only available in their manuscript contexts. There are drawbacks with this approach also: the accessibility of the material discussed is one, although Beringer has helpfully provided diplomatic transcriptions of several of the songs in an appendix. The book is slightly more orientated towards German scholars: medievalists who do not work with German would benefit from some more background on the *Meisterlieder* tradition, which Beringer proves to be a rich area of study, worthy of further investigation. Overall, the wealth of material from different languages, traditions, genres, and centuries in this book is testament to the gravitational pull of a figure like Semiramis, who can be both hailed and condemned. Studying women such as her can bring together scholars across disciplines and periods who find her just as fascinating and conflicting as premodern authors did.

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Royal and Elite Households in Medieval and Early Modern Europe: More than Just a Castle, edited by Theresa Earenfight. Leiden: Brill, 2018. Pp. 416. ISBN 9789004314320.

This excellent collection grew out of the Kings & Queens 3 conference which was held at the University of Winchester in 2014; the theme of “Entourage” provided an inspiration for the papers which Theresa Earenfight has ably brought together in this volume. The sixteen case studies range from the tenth to sixteenth centuries and span Western Europe, bringing together examinations of the households of kings, queens, and princes as well as those of nobles and even elite (female) prisoners. Despite their diversity in terms of the geographical, gendered, and temporal setting of their studies, these chapters consistently demonstrate the interconnectedness and interdependent nature of royal and elite households. They show that personnel frequently moved between households, bringing their experience and loyalties with them, and most importantly, perhaps, they demonstrate that households formed the center of wide networks connecting royal and elite families across the realm and beyond. In the introduction, Earenfight rightly argues that the foundation of monarchy itself rested on these networks formed in and radiating out from the royal household. Several chapters note that the formation and composition of the royal household formed the basis of the government, both as a model for the administrative framework and as many courtiers held both household posts and governmental offices. Given the importance and centrality of royal and elite households to the workings of monarchy and the administration of the realm, these case studies provide a very useful opportunity not only to deepen our understanding of individual households but also to gain a better understanding of how they operated as a key mechanism of power, authority, and influence in their respective realms and across medieval Europe.

The two key strengths of this collection are the high standard of scholarship across all of the case studies and the connections that run across the various chapters. The editor clearly encouraged the authors to read each other’s papers as they developed their own studies and this has resulted in clear and effective links being drawn across all of the chapters, which highlight both connections and key themes across the volume. Another kudo to the editor is the organization of the volume, which works exceptionally well. It is roughly chronological, which demonstrates a sense of progression or development over the period, but the well thought-out grouping of the papers aids the flow and again deepens the connections across the volume.

The first three papers are roughly grouped around the tenth century; while Penelope Nash's paper looks at the Holy Roman Empire and David McDermott examines the households of early English *aethelings*, Megan Welton's study neatly bridges the two by comparing the households of royal women on both sides of the Channel. All three papers unpack documentary sources, including surviving charters and diplomas, to try to understand the membership and functioning of these early medieval households.

Next, we have a grouping of four chapters which look at royal and quasi-royal female households in medieval England, from Linda E. Mitchell's detailed study of Joan de Valence's household management through to Caroline Dunn's prosopographical examination of the queenly household of Isabella of France. Sandwiched between these are two interesting examinations of the impact of imprisonment on the household of two royal women: Eleanor, the erstwhile heiress of Brittany who was held captive by King John and Henry III, and another Eleanor, the disgraced wife of Humphrey of Gloucester who was charged with witchcraft. While Eileen Kim questions whether the personnel who served Eleanor of Brittany during her confinement can truly be deemed a household, Sally Fisher examines the depiction of the destruction of Eleanor Cobham's household following her arrest and imprisonment.

The next two studies offer a comparison of how royal households could serve as a basis for jockeying for power. Alexander Brondarbit demonstrates how serving in the royal household and accruing royal favor and access could enable courtiers to become important power brokers whose influence could be felt across fifteenth-century England. In contrast, Alana Lord demonstrates almost the reverse in her study of fourteenth-century Aragon, showing the concern that courtiers could have a negative influence on the royal figure that they served and that a king expected to be able to influence the household of his heir, as much as the prince might try to fight that parental/regal control.

From Alana Lord's paper onwards, the remaining papers (bar one) are all either based in or connected to Iberia, reflecting the editor's own area of expertise. The following two chapters offer an interesting comparison of two Portuguese courts, with Isabel de Pina Baleiras's examination of the unstable court of King Fernando and his scandalous wife Leonor Teles, and Manuela Santos Silva's discussion of how Leonor's successor Philippa of Lancaster's household was carefully developed as the first queen of the new Avis dynasty. The next chapter by Gamero Igea also considers the challenges in forming a household for a new dynasty in a consideration of the retinue of Ferdinand of Aragon as king consort of Castile. While both Philippa and Ferdinand were

foreign consorts, Ferdinand's situation was complicated by being a male consort and the reigning king of Aragon—his household had to reflect both of his roles, yet still recognize that the household of his wife Isabel was the primary royal household in Castile.

The following two chapters offer an excellent examination of networks, relationships, and influence in female households. Zita Rohr unpicks Anne de France's *Enseignements* for her daughter Suzanne on how to form and manage her household. Rohr counters arguments that this text emphasizes submissive behavior for royal women and courtiers, arguing instead that this manual can be seen in a more subversive light, comparing it to Machiavelli's *Il Principe*. Theresa Earenfight's study of the household of Catherine of Aragon demonstrates the deep bonds of service and friendship that the queen made with members of her household, both Castilian and English. These loyalties endured through Catherine's precarious widowhood and final years even when her title and queenly household were stripped from her.

The final chapters give intensive and detailed studies of sixteenth-century households. Audrey Thorstad digs into the records of the Duke of Buckingham's travelling household, offering a fascinating window into the functioning of an elite household as it wended its way back and forth between Buckingham's own base in the West Country and the capital. Hélder Carvalhal's study is similarly detailed but instead compares the households of the various *infantes* or royal offspring of Manuel I of Portugal. Carvalhal charts the development of their households, noting the difficulty that some *infantes* had in gaining autonomy so that they could cultivate their household as a basis for their own authority and influence.

In sum, this collection is an excellent addition to scholarship on royal, court, and queenship studies as well as gender and political history. It is a must for institutional libraries to support both modules on medieval studies and scholars working in the period.

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