

The Trial of Jeanne Catherine: Infanticide in Early Modern Geneva. Sara Beam, ed. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2021. xii + 154 pp. \$65.

In 1686 Jeanne Catherine Thomasset was accused of having poisoned two children—her own two-year-old illegitimate daughter and the son of her wet nurse—in a village outside of Geneva. Sara Beam encountered this case in the Genevan archives and resolved to translate and publish the trial records in their entirety. The result is a slim volume (ninety-seven pages of translated primary sources preceded by a thirty-nine-page introduction that includes a list of persons involved in the case and a short glossary of key terms): a rare example of a complete early modern criminal trial, easily accessible to students and scholars. Undergraduates seeking a primary source on which to base a research paper will enjoy this text, as will instructors teaching the history of crime, family history, or women's history.

This criminal case is comprised of sixty-one folios. In it, eyewitnesses tell a tragic story that raises questions in the reader's mind about a whole range of topics, many of which are discussed briefly in the introduction: court officials and criminal procedures in Geneva; the complexity of early modern jurisdictional arrangements; exchanges between cities and their rural hinterlands; torture, evidence, and testimony; apothecaries; autopsies; motherhood and wet nursing; the social position of unmarried mothers; and poisoning and infanticide. The trial record also gives us glimpses of everyday life in villages and cities and depicts villagers who are legally savvy and unafraid to defend their rights and honor. The testimony included in the record, while occasionally and understandably repetitive, is nevertheless suspenseful, keeping the reader engaged throughout.

One of the topics raised in the introduction is Jeanne Catherine's social position as a member of the regional nobility in the *pays de Vaud*, the region north of Geneva that was administered as a subject territory by the canton of Berne. She came from Agiez, in the district of Orbe, and had extended family throughout the area. We learn that the Thomasset had risen from the notarial profession to the lesser nobility, having purchased fiefs and intermarried with other families (the Roch, attorneys in Orbe; the Régis in Geneva; the La Fléchère in Nyon; etc.). We find that the father of Catherine's child was probably one of her so-called cousins, whose degree of consanguinity remains unclear. A key question here is: how was incest defined by religious and secular authorities in Vaud and Geneva? Or was Jeanne Catherine's real problem the fact that (as Beam suggests) her father could not afford to dower her appropriately? Valuable insights are undoubtedly to be found in the Thomasset family papers (*Archives cantonales vaudoises*, PP 733).

How does this fascinating case relate to the broader social and political context in which Jeanne Catherine and her family lived? How did Bernese and Genevan authorities manage relations with the Vaudois nobility, especially during the instability provoked by Louis XIV's wars and the flood of refugees following the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes? Niklaus Steiger, the Bernese bailiff of Nyon, warned Jeanne

Catherine's judges to tread carefully, "given the present situation and considering how important it would be not to alienate the spirits of almost all of the officers in the country, who are very much interested in this event" (127). Did this case threaten the political equilibrium within a Geneva whose identity as a unified sacred community was being challenged by demands for more effective popular sovereignty? The sudden death of two children raised questions of honor for both the Thomasset family and the city of Geneva. Assessing how requires a better understanding of the political ecosystem within which both the family and the city operated. Beam deserves our thanks for pointing us toward a heartrending story that enables us to ask new questions about early modern Genevan society.

Unfortunately, the absence of the original French transcriptions from the volume will limit its attractiveness to students of French language and literature and perhaps also its ability to reflect the conceptual and imaginative world of those caught up in Geneva's judicial machinery. Maps revised to include all of the places mentioned in the text, footnotes for the introductory essay, and a family tree depicting the Thomasset and their relations would also have been useful.

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The Verge: Reformation, Renaissance, and Forty Years that Shook the World.

Patrick Wyman.

New York: Grand Central Publishing, 2021. 488 pp. \$30.

Patrick Wyman, who received a PhD in history from the University of Southern California, is the host of the popular history podcast *The Tides of History*, which examines, for the most part, premodern societies and how their influences have echoed down to the modern period. Wyman has spent much of his career as a public historian making the premodern past relevant and accessible to popular audiences. His new book, *The Verge*, emanates from that same impulse: to write highly readable and engaging biographies that hook readers with compelling stories about historical figures whose lives demonstrate his central thesis. Here, Wyman argues that the forty-year period between 1490 and 1530 was a pivotal turning point in world history marked by the rise of nation states, global colonization, banking technologies, and the spread of ideas via the printing press. The chapters within serve as biographical microhistories that allow us to see how these developments began to reshape society dramatically. At its core, however, *The Verge* is a history of the origins of capitalism. In this respect, it shows the deep relevance of the Renaissance period to capitalism, which, as a set of relationships between capital, commodity, and corporations, is typically traced, at least among the lay public, to the time of the industrial revolution.