

appreciation of the crucial role that bishops played in the social and political order of Castile, and indeed of all Latin Christendom, in the age of Alfonso VIII.

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A Female Apostle in Medieval Italy: The Life of Clare of Rimini.
 Edited by Jacques Dalarun, Sean L. Field, and Valerio Cappozzo.
 Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2023. 192 pp. \$99.95
 hardcover; \$29.95 paperback.

Both experts and students will find a wealth of value in this translation of and extended commentary upon *The Life of Clare of Rimini*. Jacques Dalarun, Sean L. Field, and Valerio Cappozzo bring needed attention to Clare of Rimini (d. c. 1324-1329), one of the many women in late medieval Italy who, inspired by the widely popular *vita apostolica* movement, garnered a community of devotees and saintly cult for her extraordinary religious life. But as the authors make clear, there is much about Clare and her *vita* to distinguish her from those other women. Clare's *vita* is not only likely the first saint's life to be written originally in Italian but also composed while Clare was still alive. Using an effective methodological structure, the authors divide each of the book's twelve chapters to correspond with the twelve chapters of the *vita*. Following each chapter of the translated *vita* is a brief essay discussing the historical, religious, and literary issues raised by that bit of the *vita*. This structure allows the authors to navigate brilliantly between introducing students to many aspects of late medieval religious history as well as to the challenges and rewards of close primary source analysis. But, at the same time, the contextual essays also provide more expert readers with a deep understanding of how Clare's life and *vita* stand as a complex navigation of apostolic ideals amid the growing institutional church and mendicant orders. This text is essential for those teaching and studying the rich historical moment.

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The Fruit of Her Hands: Jewish and Christian Women's Work in Medieval Catalan Cities. By Sarah Ifft Decker. Iberian Encounter and Exchange, 475–1755. University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2022. 233 pp. \$104.95 hardcover.

This excellent book by Sarah Ifft Decker provides original research and a renewed perspective on Jewish and Christian women's mostly fiscal household work in three Catalan cities, Barcelona, Girona, and Vic, from the late thirteenth to the early- to mid-

fourteenth century, a period that coincided with the Black Death. Decker's broadest argument is that religion, gender, and socioeconomic status combined to determine the kinds of work that were open to women's participation, which she explores through research into two different classes of legal materials: notarial documents that treated both groups of women, and rabbis' judgments and conclusions to queries in the Jewish *responsa* tradition. This two-pronged lens is highly effective in illuminating the conditions of women's lives and work, especially with regard to the norms established by rabbis to limit Jewish women's involvement mainly in financial- and property-related tasks that were more open to Christian women, such as credit and real estate. However, the lens inevitably limits the scope of Decker's analysis, since notarial documents largely reflect the lives and work of late medieval society's professionals and elites, and not its less affluent groups, a problem that applies, of course, to the historical record more generally. The key focus of Decker's book is women's work as it relates to the management of household resources, that is, the conjugal estate.

The book includes an introduction, conclusion, and seven chapters, which are divided into three parts—"Family Law," "Notarial Culture," and "Working Women in Medieval Catalan Cities"—with two chapters each forming Parts One and Two, and three comprising Part Three. The first two chapters explore the ways in which legal norms (the *halakhic* tradition in Jewish communities, and Catalan customary law and the *ius commune* for Christians), marriage contracts (*capítols matrimoniales*), and inheritance regulations shaped Christian and Jewish women's control over household assets differently, with Christian women being entrusted with such administration more often than Jewish women, albeit under certain conditions when their management would have contributed to the household's financial stability. In her separate treatment of Christian and Jewish women in Chapters One and Two, Decker both contrasts individual cases of inheritance and marriage, and addresses the disparity's larger societal meaning in Catalunya's Christian and Jewish communities. She argues that women's bodies served as a boundary with regard to how readily or not Jewish authorities assimilated or adapted to Christian legal norms.

Part Two examines the involvement of both communities in notarial culture, again with an emphasis on their contrast since Jews were uninclined to seek a notary nor were they legally bound to do so unless their business was conducted with Christians. Decker further underscores the fundamentally unequal gender dynamics that emerge from the notarial registers and convincingly shows how the development of notarial culture from the late thirteenth century on facilitated the growing consolidation of religious and administrative power over people's lives. In Chapter Four on Jews, Decker explains that the majority of cases in which Jews were present in documentation from all three cities entailed Jewish creditors and Christian debtors, a relationship that legally obligated Jews to register their loans with a notary. Decker demonstrates that Jews are overrepresented as moneylenders in the documents because of this legal requirement, leading to stereotypes about Jews as lenders that Decker challenges and debunks. She concludes that Jewish women were even less familiar with notarial culture than Christian women because they did not have to consent to their parents' business dealings, as did Christian girls, nor did they sign the *capítols matrimoniales* like Christian brides, since Hebrew-Aramaic contracts usually did not involve notaries.

Part Three is devoted to women's work, with a general overview in Chapter Five of the diverse professions that appear in the notarial documents, but with special attention to work in the credit market. Chapter Six takes up Jewish and Christian women's

participation in real estate, an area that Decker argues “provided opportunities” (154) to both groups. The final Chapter Seven discusses changes that occurred in the fourteenth century with regard to credit in Jewish communities and how they were reflected in the legal documentation. With the exception of Decker’s arguments about the detrimental effects of the Black Death, which she compellingly argued led to an uptick in widows’ management of their husbands’ estates after they died, it was difficult to know how Jewish women’s participation in the credit market differed from earlier times. In addition, Decker could have more overtly linked a number of repeated arguments in this chapter to materials and claims that were advanced earlier in the book.

Decker’s approach diverges from recent interpretations of Iberian women from different faiths as similar, a result of scholars’ sometimes naïve understanding of *convivencia*, the cohabitation between different communities. This is certainly borne out by the book’s evidence and engaging analysis. The book’s primary strength is its demonstration of household management (business transactions, including participation in the credit market and the buying and selling of real estate) as a crucial form of women’s work in this period—a focus that could have been better communicated with a revised book title. Decker’s study will persuasively complement scholarship on women’s work in medieval Catalunya, such as Montserrat Cabré i Pairet’s research on cosmetics and women healers, or Linda A. McMillin’s investigations of nuns’ management of economic assets at Sant Pere de les Puel·les. More broadly still, it will enhance research on women’s work in nonmodern Iberia that has been carried out since the 1980s by, for instance, Cristina Segura Graïño and Ángela Muñoz Fernández. And finally, the book affirms what are by now two commonplaces of women’s work in nonmodern places and times: the frequent familial nature of their labor, and their recurrent multiprofessionalism. On another note, a lingering doubt has to do with why Muslims and *moriscos* appeared only sporadically and did not receive more thorough attention in the book. This question aside, Decker’s study makes an important contribution to the study of women’s home life and work in nonmodern Catalunya and should be read widely.

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***Women, Dance and Parish Religion in England, 1300–1640: Negotiating the Steps of Faith.* By Lynne Miller Renberg. *Gender in the Middle Ages*, 19. Woodbridge, UK: The Boydell Press, 2022. xi + 254 pp. \$85.00 cloth.**

Historical scholarship on dance faces numerous obstacles, not least of which is the necessity of an interdisciplinary approach that accommodates the varied roles of this important cultural practice. In this volume, Professor Lynne Miller Renberg addresses the methodological need for interdisciplinarity by integrating dance studies, religious studies, gender studies, and parish studies, situating her examination of dance geographically within England and chronologically between the fourteenth and seventeenth centuries. What Renberg offers is a deep dive into sermon literature and preaching as an