

REVIEWS

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ZANOBONI, Maria Paola, 2016. *Donne al lavoro nell'Italia e nell'Europa medievali (secoli XIII-XV)*, Milano, Jouvence.

A new reality about women's work in the Middle Ages emerges from reading the interesting volume *Donne e lavoro nell'Italia e nell'Europa medievali (secoli XIII-XV)*, published in the *Historica* series by Jouvence. Following in the footsteps of fundamental works for the area of Italy such as those of Gabriella Piccinni or Maria Giuseppina Muzzarelli,¹ able to steer new research paths aimed at investigating above all the economic role of women in the Middle Ages, the author brings together in this volume quite a few essays, some of which have already been published, that increase the broad range of gender history and, at the same time, attempt to fill historiographical gaps in relation to certain areas of Italy.

Two sections can be identified in the seven chapters of the text. In the first (introduction, chapters 1, 3 and 5), the author dwells on the state of research in Europe and Italy, offering an 'overview' of the sources, in some realities much richer than in Italy, but also on the diversified historiographic production of the last thirty years that finally allows for comparative readings. In fact, the existence of women's corporative statutes in several French and German cities allowed both the study of professional associations directed and coordinated in some cases by women alone and a detailed analysis of the organisation of work. Thus, we learn that in England, out of five hundred professional associations, women were excluded from only five. And we also learn that in London women, until the end of the 15th century, managed to maintain a monopoly of all stages of silk processing; and it can even be said that the textile industry was completely dominated by female elements as was the case in Zurich at the same moment. In France, on the other hand, even more diversified realities emerge, as in the case of Marseilles, where women's skills were also in demand in all those trades linked to a maritime economy, thus being found active in shipyards and fishing. For the Iberian Peninsula, municipal ordinances and the abundance of notarial sources have revealed a varied world of complex realities in which women's work lasted from childhood to old age. We learn, especially from the essays of M. Del Carmen Garcia Herrero, how in the Aragonese region, at certain junctures, women were granted official recognition to exercise all health activities, from medical to pharmaceutical. At the University of Salamanca, in the second half of the 15th century, we find the first female university students, such as Betarice Galindo, a humanist scholar of theology and medicine and later tutor to Isabel of Castile, or Lucia de Medrano, who taught at the same university. From the exhaustive work of Teresa Vinyoles, we learn that women in Barcelona were able to join some male guilds such as the coral and linen working guilds, and were active as instructors for female apprentices. Despite the fact that there

¹ M.G. Muzzarelli, *Introduzione alla storiografia*, in *Donne e lavoro nell'Italia medievale*, Torino, 1991, pp.13-27

was a great deal of employment everywhere in medieval Italy, an in-depth study of the world of women's work in Italian cities in the Middle Ages has unfortunately not always been possible due to the scarcity of sources. However, the author gives an overview of how, for example, in Bergamo women in the 13th century were labourers in the wool sector and entrepreneurs in the linen sector. In Genoa, the same female weavers who made luxury textiles were at the same time promoting their products on the international market through commendation contracts. We learn how the arrival of German weavers in mid-15th century Florence almost completely disrupted women's involvement in wool weaving. The author does not fail to emphasise how even in the Mezzogiorno and the islands, despite the paucity of studies published so far, we find almost all the characteristics that have emerged in other European realities: women's work was widespread in every sector and at all levels at least from the 13th century onwards; labour and economic autonomy with respect to male subjects; women were active in commerce and inclined to self-finance themselves by selling precious objects and the absence of women in public and corporate documentation with few exceptions. In the almost total silence of Lucanian and Calabrian women workers, however, some Sicilian women emerge strongly, recovered from the research of two excellent Sicilian scholars who succeeded in bringing to light not insignificant examples of women entrepreneurs. Of great interest are the pages devoted to the topics of apprenticeships and guilds, which are developed in two very substantial chapters. From the very first lines of the second chapter we enter into the heart of the historiographical debate by demolishing a series of stereotypes: from the absence of female apprenticeships to the denial of a clear-cut contrast between corporate and non-corporate work. In fact, apprenticeships existed not only in families, but were also formalised before the notary in at least two very specific circumstances: when the teaching concerned particularly valuable raw materials and when it concerned the training of a teacher. In some European realities, although there were no true women's guilds, some trades had an informal organisation aimed at regulating training above all, as was the case with the *costureras* of late medieval Barcelona. The scholar then points out the differences between male and female apprenticeships, in most contracts for the training of schoolmistresses there was no compensation for the disciple because she had a 'single duty right to learn'. Work training in some cities was regulated and provided for in the statutes themselves, this was the case in Rouen where, moreover, there were both women's guilds and mixed trade associations. An examination of the dynamics of informal learning emerges in environments where practical and theoretical knowledge was transmitted mainly within the family.

Recent studies have finally argued that the exclusion of women from most guilds did not correspond to their exclusion from the world of work, but rather allowed them to exploit all spheres of action including illicit ones. And so in pre-modern societies, informal relationships and networks are the very essence of women's work. Being part of certain guilds allowed the public authority a control that women tried to avoid but which was obligatory for those activities that were of primary importance to society. In Florence, where the guilds were more active than elsewhere on

the Peninsula, a certain number of women are found enrolled in the *Arte dei Medici e Speciali* and the *Arte dei Fornai*. Another interesting aspect of the volume is that devoted to women's attitudes towards the world of work. It is often the judicial sources that offer the opportunity to perceive the true conduct of many women who preferred so-called 'moonlighting'. In Basel towards the end of the 15th century, women weavers of veils openly opposed membership of the weavers' guild and were allowed to continue working, thus competing unfairly with their colleagues. It is evident that behind this victory lay the interests of many entrepreneurs who made use of outside workshops made up of women working outside all regulations, (as unfortunately is still the case today).

Zanoboni's analysis also includes the areas of diffusion, social mobility and female entrepreneurs. Some exclusively female work sectors characterised by autonomous organisational skills emerge: the preliminary stages of silk spinning, gold spinning and the manufacture of veils and bonnets. The production of all these items required a specialised workforce with a distinctly female taste, so that in almost all of Europe the management of the entire production and organisational cycle was the sole responsibility of women. It is therefore no coincidence that the most famous female entrepreneurs can be found in these areas, from Florence to Venice via Milan to Cologne and other German cities. In 1420, the Venetian Senate issued a series of measures to protect the art of beating and the work of women in this specific manufacture in which many women from all walks of life had invested their capital. Some of these Venetian women went so far as to produce with their own workshop brand, as Luca Molà's research on women in the silk industry and Zanoboni's research on the Milanese production structures of veils have shown. Female entrepreneurs can also be found in other areas that hitherto seemed to be of exclusive interest to men, such as the construction industry, which also saw a high presence of female workers throughout Europe.

The second section of the book is more concerned with economic aspects, starting with an examination of wage levels. Taking it for granted that the remuneration in medieval times for both genders was very personalised and modulated to the experience and abilities of the individuals, the author points out the differences and cases in which women received significantly higher remuneration: this is the case of the women of Avignon who covered armour with fabric. An entire chapter deals with work in the monastic sphere, whose space, charged above all with religious values, was also organised and exploited in a very modern way, for example for the production of lace and silk processing. In some communities, especially of Benedictine and Dominican nuns, real workshops devoted to painting and miniatures were set up. This volume certainly constitutes an important synthesis in the study of the organisational ability of women to embed themselves into the economic, social and political life, to create networks of formal and informal relations in different areas of labor, and also to investigate the transmission of knowledge.

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MERCADAL I FERNÁNDEZ, Oriol; SUBIRANAS I FÀBREGAS, Carme, 2018. *La comunitat jueva de Puigcerdà (c. 1250-1493). Documentació i arqueologia de la vila nova i del call*, Barcelona, Trialba Edicions.

Despite its small format, the work by Oriol Mercadal and Carme Subiranas aims to analyse the different aspects of the life of the medieval Jewish community of Puigcerdà. From a double perspective, historical and above all archaeological, the authors want to fit –in just seventy pages– a broad thematic and chronological arc. The content covers a chronology that embraces the 13th-15th centuries, with origins that are certainly poorly defined, and deals with aspects as diverse as the study of local urbanism (location of the street, existence of synagogue, amoina or hospital) or more social and everyday life (community, rituals, customs, family, eating habits...), although certainly some subjects receive more attention than others.

Even if only for seeking to produce an analysis based on the arrangement and comparison of the archaeological and documentary remains, they deserve our full attention. This interaction of sources, from an interdisciplinary perspective, is today absolutely necessary for research and historical knowledge, and aims to be the guiding thread of the present work. Mercadal and Subiranas focus, in particular, on the archaeological side of the problem, thus contributing very interesting data from previous excavations, particularly relevant during the 1990s. Certainly, these studies have made it possible to draw with a certain precision –which, perhaps, the written documents do not offer– the extent of the *Call* and some of its most significant structural elements (water channels, remnants of streets, plant of some homes and workshops, construction materials...). The comparative study of the sources makes it possible, for example, to relate in a very interesting way the existence of the multiple finds of canals and water wells –an essential element in Jewish culture– with the documented royal concession of drinking water in the second half of the 14th century. It is also relevant, for the sake of understanding the daily life of the community, the photographic collection of different material objects, especially ceramics for everyday use, but also luxurious glass, and some ritual items.

However, the authors devote little attention to documentary sources. Indeed, the initial desire to approach Jewish life in Puigcerdan through documents and archaeology - by wanting to gain access to the medieval houses, as the authors suggest - fails, in our opinion, to pay attention to the archival part. It is true, as the authors argue, that there is a significant lack of specifically Hebrew sources, with the exception of some biblical fragments and a *Liber iudeorum* from the end of the 13th century, documents which, not being referenced with their archival signature, are difficult to find for other researchers (we could also mention the lack of some bibliographical citations within the text, which prevent us from knowing where the information has been extracted from). But it is also true, as they themselves later point out, that other types of sources (such as the Books

of Councils and those of the Consolat) would provide more information. However, in an archive as rich as that of La Cerdanya, the study of more documentation, such as a notarial collection, would allow for a much more varied and extensive analysis of the local Jewish community. Such a dynamic and active group that not only came to represent 10% of the population of Puigcerdà, but also managed to insert itself, as a result of its economic activities, among the main municipal elites, achieving a surprisingly peaceful coexistence, according to Oriol Mercadal and Carme Subiranas, with their Christian neighbors, until the rise of anti-Semitism in the second half of the 14th century and their final expulsion.

JORDI SAURA I NADAL

COMELLES, Josep M., CONEJO, Antoni, BARCELÓ-PRAT, Josep (coords.), 2018. *Imago civitatis. Hospitales y manicomios en Occidente*, Tarragona, Barcelona, (Col·lecció Antropologia Mèdica, 27) Publicacions de la Universitat Rovira i Virgili, Edicions de la Universitat de Barcelona. DOI: 10.17345/9788484246718

In recent decades, the history of hospitals has been attracting increasing interest. A good example of this is the international scientific meeting “Els Abrils del Hospital”, organised by the Institute for Research in Medieval Cultures (IRCVM) and held annually and uninterruptedly since 2012. 2018 saw the publication of the first monographic volume resulting from *Els Abrils*, which brings together the contributions of the fifth edition, held in Tarragona and Reus in 2016, entitled “Hospital History and Ethnography”. As indicated in the introduction, the interest in care institutions is due to the importance they have had, and still have, in the configuration of the urban, social, economic and political space of our society, and because they clearly evoke the ideas of “community” and “city”. They are, therefore, an *imago civitatis*.

The book begins with a detailed introduction, and is structured in two distinct parts: the first entitled “El hospital como espacio de producción simbólica”, and the second “Los espacios de la locura”. The introduction –by the coordinators of the monograph, Josep M. Comelles, Antoni Conejo and Josep Barceló-Prats– is not a mere prologue, but an interdisciplinary text that links the history of hospitals and ethnography, which were the main topics of the fifth edition of *Els Abrils*. At the same time, it reflects on attention and care as cultural practices, with special emphasis on the case of Spain. This introductory text closes with a presentation of the different studies that the reader will find throughout the work.

The first part, devoted to the hospital as a space of symbolic production, encompasses the papers given at the Rovira i Virgili University, which, in general terms, are closer to the study of hospitals –in contrast to those in the second part, which are more focused on the analysis of asylums. There

are six chapters, three of which could form a subgroup devoted to rural hospitals, while the other three deal with particular topics. In relation to rural establishments, we find the chapter signed by Frederic Aparisi and Carmel Ferragud, «Hospitals rurals a la València baixmedieval: el cas de l'hospital de Santa Llúcia d'Alzira», which studies the hospital in the capital of Ribera Alta during the 14th and 15th centuries. The authors highlight the difficulties of analysing the care institutions of the “small” towns due to the lack of sources. Along the same lines, the chapter by Marta Sancho i Planas, «Hospitals de muntanya en època medieval: espais de cura espiritual i física al Pirineu», links the Pyrenean orography with communication routes, Marian sanctuaries and hospitals, configuring a network of shelters for anyone crossing the mountain range. To finish this section, we have the contribution of Coral Cuadrada, «Beneficència, pluralisme assistencial i hospitals al món rural tarragoní (fins el segle XIX)», whose aim was to carry out a long-term study of the rural hospitals of the archbishopric of Tarragona. However, the scarcity of documents means that “only” information from the 18th and 19th centuries can be analysed.

In the context of leproseria, an interesting article by Clara Jáuregui stands out, «La red de leproserías catalana y la movilidad de sus enfermos. El caso de estudio de Barcelona (s. XIV)», which takes us to the Sant Llätzer hospital in Barcelona, one of the best documented hospitals in the principality. Jáuregui talks about the disease of leprosy, demystifying the stigma of the medieval leper and the mobility of the sick. The chapter by Pol Bridgewater Mateu, «Els administradors de l'hospital de la Santa Creu de Barcelona en el marc dels conflictes urbans del segle XV», focuses on the administration of Barcelona's general hospital in the context of the conflicts between the Biga and the Busca. Bridgewater emphasises the weight that this institution had in the municipal panorama of Barcelona and the influences it wielded. Finally, Laura Daví Carbonell signs «L'hospital de clergues pobres de Sant Sever i el retaule de Pere Nunyes», which studies this foundation from an architectural and artistic point of view, placing at its epicentre the magnificent altarpiece of Sant Sever, created by the Portuguese painters Pere Nunyes and Enric Fernandes.

The second part, devoted to the spaces of madness, includes the papers given at the Institut Pere Mata in Reus. There are seven chapters on different subjects, except for two that can be related, as they deal with the situation of the mentally ill in the Italian judicial system. In this regard, we have the chapters by Ciro Tarantino, «Nota sulla ri-forma dell'ospedale psichiatrico giudiziario in Italia» and Ciro Pizzo, «Note sulle logiche istituzionali per il governo dell'“in-cura sui”». Both complement each other, as they study the figure of contemporary Italian judicial psychiatric hospitals, an institution developed during the 19th century, which has remained stagnant until today, when it is being dismantled. On the other hand, Cecilia Tasca and Mariangela Rapetti are the authors of «La stanza dei “pazzi”. Folli ed emarginati nell'hospital del gloriós Sant Antoni di Cagliari tra Medioevo ed Età Moderna». This chapter deals with the hospital of Sant Antoni de Càller, founded by Peter the Ceremonious and which became the main asylum on the island

of Sardinia during the modern age. It is a long-term study that goes up to the 19th century. The choral chapter by Iván Sánchez-Moreno, Alicia Fernández, Christina Schubert and Alba Vilardell, «Las fronteras del paisaje de la locura. Fundamentos médicoarquitectónicos del Manicomio de la Santa Creu de Barcelona», analyses the approach taken by Dr. Emili Pi i Molist to the Mental Institute of Santa Cruz in the mid-19th century, mentioning everything that influenced the Catalan alienist to design this institution, which became a model for other state institutions. Another chapter of great interest is that of Elisa Alegre-Agís, «La des-institucionalización “negada”: lógicas manicomiales en la hospitalización doméstica», which revolves around the phenomenon of the domestic confinement of the mentally ill following the closure of traditional asylums, an institution that is undergoing a process of deinstitutionalisation. Ilaria Cover is the author of «Un luogo che toglie il fiato. Raccontare il manicomio», a field study carried out in a women’s psychiatric hospital in Alexandria, making an interesting ethnographic study, for which she uses poetic and metaphorical language, since, according to the author, the experience of the asylum cannot be captured in analytical or rational words. Finally, the book closes with the chapter by Esther Diana, «I manicomi della Toscana tra storia, ricerca, tutela e valorizzazione», which was the opening lecture of the symposium. Diana is an architect specializing in the historical study of Florence’s hospitals, but in this case, she focuses her efforts on the important mental institutions, of urban and architectural interest, founded between the 18th and 19th centuries both in Florence and in other Tuscan localities: Lucca, Pistoia, Siena, Volterra and Arezzo. Diana denounces the lamentable state of abandonment in which they are today, despite their rich past and the abundant documentation at our disposal; for this reason the author calls for respect for the memory of these buildings through the possibility of giving them alternative uses.

At the end of each chapter there is a list of the bibliographical and archival references, and, in addition, at the end of the monograph there is a section devoted to the different authors, with a brief bio.

In short, this work resulting from the fifth edition of *Els Abrils del Hospital* provides new studies on pre-modern hospitals in the western Mediterranean context. The work also reflects the importance of long-term studies in the field of pre-modern hospital history, as well as the useful value of interdisciplinary studies, both highlighted by the organizing institution of the meeting, the Institut de Recerca en Culturas Medievales (IRCVM).

ALBERTO-JESÚS MARTÍNEZ BEDMAR

DE COURCELLES, Dominique (ed), 2018. *Les formes laïques de la philosophie. Raymond Lulle dans l'histoire de la philosophie médiévale*, Turnhout, (Svbsidia Lulliana 6), Brepols

13th-century Europe underwent a profound spiritual, theological and philosophical renewal that would mark the last medieval centuries and the beginning of modern times. Among the many aspects that characterized this change was the irruption into Western thought of voices outside the Latin and clerical tradition that had prevailed until then. This novelty is translated in diverse manifestations and in intertwined and choral forms. Some of them are, for example, the emergence of the so-called “new mysticism”, which in the thirteenth century was mainly led by women, nuns or beguines; the emergence of new institutional places of knowledge; or the development of forms of thought and spiritual life led by the laity. And it is precisely in this context that it is possible to undertake the analysis of the emergence in the West of a lay philosophy or, more properly, of lay forms of philosophy. This is the main purpose of the book coordinated by Dominique de Courcelles, which focuses on the figure and work of one of the first and main representatives of this renewal, Ramon Llull.

Situated at the crossroads between spirituality, preaching, theology and philosophy, Ramon Llull is undoubtedly one of the most obvious examples of the emergence of new forms of thought in Europe. A layman, self-taught, mystic, philosopher and poet, Llull is the author of an extensive work in Catalan, Latin and Arabic that transcends, fuses and multiplies literary genres, forms and audiences with the aim of proposing a dynamic and systematic thought of a universal nature: his Art. The studies gathered in this book are an important contribution to the knowledge and analysis of the context, characteristics and impact of Lullian’s work. The book addresses, from different perspectives, diverse and little-studied facets of both the person and the work, and its subsequent reception. As a whole, the book seeks to restore the figure of Ramón Llull to his rightful place in the history of medieval philosophy.

The book opens with an introduction followed by three major thematic blocks that bring together different approaches to the Mallorcan thinker. They are three axes of analysis that allow us to specify complementary features of his work and to inscribe it fully, beyond its evident originality, in the society and trends of his time. The first of these three blocks is entitled: *I.-Les nouvelles formes mystiques et politiques*. In it, several contributions approach in an innovative way the analysis of Lullian thought. D. de Courcelles in “L’Art lullien, la dernière révélation divine?” develops, through an attentive reading of the autobiographical narrative of Randa’s illumination in the *Vita coetánea* (1311), all the symbolic power of the revealed character of the Art. The author maintains that with this narrative Ramon Llull deliberately places himself in the line of the revelations given by God to the prophets and apostles, while at the same time emulating the model of Francis: while the stigmatized saint of Assisi receives in his body the Son, the Son, who

is Word, descends and becomes incarnate in the Lullian Art. Finally, that book, descended from heaven and dictated in Randa, is also presented as the last of the divine revelations that singularly cancels the Koranic one, and is proposed as an instrument of renewal and construction of a perfect society. In fact, this prophetic character of the revealed Art brings us echoes of other works of feminine mysticism prior to and contemporary with Llull, from the *Liber Divinorum Operum* by Hildegard von Bingen, to the *The Flowing Light of Divinity* by Mechtild von Magdeburg to mention just a few examples. In many of these cases, we find ourselves before a revealed book written in a plurality of interwoven literary genres and expressed, from 1200 onwards, frequently in the vernacular. These characteristic features of the new mysticism are what have led Bernard McGinn to describe four of the great female authors of the thirteenth century as “new evangelists” or “female evangelists”. The following chapter, “La signification artistique de la mystique lullienne”, by A. Vega, is also devoted to mysticism. The author analyses a little-known booklet by the Mallorcan writer, *De Raptu*, in order to understand the ecstatic states in Llull’s work. From there, a dialogue is established with the work in search of a hermeneutic of ecstasy and contemplation that allows us to place the figure of Ramon Llull in the context of the European mystical tradition. It is precisely from this tradition that, finally, the impact of Llull’s work on twentieth-century art is analyzed in its turn towards the postulates of the mystical tradition in some contemporary artists, especially Salvador Dalí. This first thematic block on Lullian thought closes with “Notas sobre Raimundo Lulio y la política” by Fernando Domínguez Reboiras, who, in a profusely documented chapter, uncovers the Lullian conception of the *homo politicus* and reflects on the categories that shape it. A man of his time, Ramon Llull articulated the discourse of good government around the social community that is defined in the *polis*; it is the city, and not the state, that allows him to define behaviors, values and parameters and, based on them, to think about the political function that must be based on Art. Llull never wrote a treatise on politics, but all his work is permeated by a will to action that is constantly translated into governmental action.

The second thematic block: *II.-Raymond Lulle à Paris entre philosophie et théologie*, takes us to the Paris of university knowledge, that which, for a secular and self-taught Llull, paradoxically constituted a goal and a constant point of reference, and that which, nevertheless, he had to confront at different times with unequal fortune. The first of Ramon Llull’s stays in Paris took place between 1287-1289, and this is the context for the contribution that opens this section. J.E.Rubio states in “La présentation de l’Art lullien en milieu universitaire: Paris 1289” Llull’s desire to establish from the outset a critical dialogue with the Parisian representatives of scholasticism, showing that Art was capable of a “common language” that would function as an optimal translator of the propositions and arguments proper to the university method. Through the analysis of the *Introductoria Artis Demonstrativa*, Rubio examines the construction of the arguments with which Llull tries to convince the Parisian scholars of the validity of an “other-language” and uses elements of academic discourse. Rubio highlights as especially relevant the

use of an example taken from the *Summa contra Gentiles* by Tomas de Aquino. But, if in this first contact between Llull and the University of Paris his Art was not received as he had hoped, to the point that failure led him to reconsider, adapt and revise his method in 1289, the analysis of J. Verger “L’interet des maîtres parisiens du XIIIe siècle pour les textes non universitaires” focuses, from a Parisian perspective, on the university reception of the novelties of the time, including Llull’s contribution during his triple stay in the city (1287-89, 1297-99 and 1309-1311). For Verger, the Mallorcan thinker was confronted with academic circles that were moderately open to the novelties and trends of his time, and he does not hesitate to affirm that, in this elite environment, protected by privileges and governed by closed teaching programs, there was, nevertheless, a certain presence of and interest in Latin or vernacular texts of other origins, including the teachings of the Lullian corpus. This also explains in part his later reception and the debate surrounding his work in Paris in the 14th and 15th centuries. It is precisely in the analysis of this debate that the last contribution of this thematic block is included: Ruedi Imbach’s “Notule su Jean Gerson, critique de Raymond Lulle” is set in the context of the later impact of Llull’s work, and demonstrates how the Parisian reception of Llull and the Gershonian response, already in the fifteenth century, reveals the project of reforming university theological studies in a reactive and doctrinal key. Imbach’s argument can be extended to the general context of the reception of the new mysticism of the preceding centuries, in which the polemic against Llull would perhaps share characteristics with, for example, Gerson’s radical opposition to the *Mirror of Simple Souls* that circulated anonymously or semi-anonymously in his time.

The third and last thematic block: *III.-Contrepoints et développements lulliens d’une philosophie des laïcs* brings the figure of Llull to the lands of the Crown of Aragon and confronts him with his contemporary and later reception. Once again, it is D. de Corcelles who establishes the counterpoint between Llull and the other great Catalan lay theologian of his time, “Anau de Vilanova, *magister medicinae*, théologien, laïc et prophete”. The author argues that, although the objectives and methods of both authors are different, they share the same space and time, as well as the essential features of the new beguinal spirituality and the universalist ambitions of renewal. It is surely no coincidence that the Mediterranean philomendicant monarchies of the various kingdoms that fell within the sphere of influence of the Crown of Aragon showed great affinity for both authors and that both found in Frederick III of Sicily a bulwark of their reform programs. The two final contributions focus respectively on the reception of Lullian works in Mallorca and Valencia in the 14th-16th centuries. In the first one, “La persistencia del lulismo en Mallorca”, G. Ensenyat-Pujol outlines two different landscapes on the island: while in the fourteenth century, persecution made the presence of Lullianism invisible or veiled, in the fifteenth century the island opened up to new currents that can be defined with much greater precision and which are the predecessors of the humanist Lullianism of the sixteenth century. In a similar way A.Ferrando’s “La presencia de Llull en la Valencia de los siglos XIV-XV” looks for the presence of Llull’s

works in Lullist circles, linked to Valencian beguine circles, which flourished in the 15th century, especially after the open support of King Ferdinand the Catholic, and consolidated in the 16th century, as evidenced, among other things, by the printed publication of the *Blanquerna* in 1521.

Les formes laïques de la philosophie eis, in short, a timely and welcome work. Studies on Lull and Lullianism have a long and wide tradition in research. But this book brings a new perspective because of its markedly interdisciplinary character, and because it strives to root the singular figure of Ramon Llull, and his original work, in the historical context of his time and in the flow of innovative currents that were to lead spirituality, theology and thought in Western Europe towards new horizons in the last centuries of the Middle Ages.

BLANCA GARÍ

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SHIPPEY, Tom, 2018. *Laughing Shall I Die: Lives and Deaths of the Great Vikings*, Londres: Reaktion Books, Limited

The figure of the Viking warriors enjoys a preeminent place in our cultural imagination as pirates and plunderers who ravaged the coasts of Europe during the High Middle Ages. One of the main characteristics of this figure is their way of facing death with disdain and total absence of fear, as if among the fierce Scandinavian warriors there was a kind of “death cult”. This particularity has given rise to the creation of an image of the Viking warrior as an individual who avidly seeks death in combat in order to be able to ascend to the halls of Valhalla, where he awaits the end of time with Odin. The intention of this book is to delve into this idea because, although this image has been a later creation fully exploited and mediatized by the epic cinema (thus consolidating it in our imagination), we can see how there was a “heroic” conception coated with certain ethics, which permeated the mentality of the Scandinavian peoples throughout the Viking period and even before.

The Norse imaginary has often been labeled as fatalistic, seeing in the myth of Ragnarök the death and defeat of their own gods against their enemies. This image should help us to understand that the Vikings did not live negatively the concept of defeat because they understood that it was part of life; on the contrary, they assumed that it is in the last moments where the real courage and integrity is demonstrated, defining the Norse hero more by his defeat than by his victories. This is

going to be the central approach of this work, which in turn constitutes the central idea on which the construction of the mythical image of the hero in the Nordic mentality is based.

The author points out that another fundamental characteristic that is part of the Nordic mentality is humor. It is a cruel humor, and in many cases somewhat macabre or “black”, which allows to face unfavorable situations with a certain cynicism, since the ultimate goal is to prevent the adversary from winning (or obtaining a favorable situation), despite the sacrifice itself. In the author’s own words: “humor accompanies the cult of death”, something we can gather from the Scandinavian legends themselves, as well as from the Icelandic sagas, the stories written about the Vikings and their descendants.

All these theories are based on the analysis of a wide literary corpus composed of sagas, poetry and even sources that are not of Norse origin, among which Anglo-Saxon, Irish, Byzantine, and Arabic chronicles or poems stand out. It is very interesting that in order to unravel the Viking psyche the author relies on sources such as the sagas, since it is well known that these texts were produced several centuries after the Viking Age and were born in the heart of an already Christianized Icelandic society. In this context, Tom Shippey points out that, although it is true that these sources should be approached with care, we should not fall into the error of thinking that they do not reflect the beliefs and ideas of an era and constitute a clear imaginary, which was echoed by the direct descendants of the Vikings.

The book is divided into twelve chapters, in which different characters of the Nordic folklore and their stories are analyzed in search of these features that define the Viking mentality. It begins at the dawn of a pre-Viking era where the first seeds of this imaginary, such as the Volsungen or the Danish king Hrolf are described. Then the book moves on to a stage of Viking consolidation where characters such as Ragnar Loðbrók or Egil Skallagrímsson are the protagonists, to end at the zenith of an era with Olaf Trygvason and Harald Harðráði among others. A whole block is also devoted to explore the Scandinavian presence in the different areas of Viking expansion and how, through foreign stories, this image of Viking warriors is also consolidated.

The author highlights the role of women in this heroic mythical world in which they appear as committed or more so than the male characters, with their peculiar ethics, and playing active roles in situations where self-sacrifice is accepted as a sign of audacity and fearlessness; or even as characters that encourage others in this same sense. In this way, women appear as figures charged with respect whose contempt could mean the worst of misfortunes.

In short, this is a work of impeccable craftsmanship that tries to present in a rigorous and entertaining way a subject rarely studied, and in certain occasions reviled, as it is that of

mentalities, even more so if we refer to the Nordic culture, where the dominant image is loaded with clichés and false histories. This is why we should be grateful for a work like this one, which looks at the sources through a new lens, and allows us to better understand what the fearsome men of the north were like.

ALBERTO ROBLES DELGADO

MÄGI, Marika, 2018. *In Austrvegr: The Role of the Eastern Baltic in Viking Age Communication Across the Baltic Sea*, Leiden: Brill

How much do we know about Viking-Age Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia and Finland? Surprisingly little, as Marika Mägi has shown in this book. Marika Mägi is a historian and archaeologist at Tallin University. Here, she provides an overview of the exchanges and communication networks in place between the Eastern Baltic region and its Western neighbours during the Viking Age. She successfully argues that far from being a marginalised land stuck between Scandinavian and Eastern powers, this region may have served as a buffer zone where different cultures, trade routes and political interests met.

A cornerstone of this book is the author's detailed study of the region's ethnical makeup, notably through examples of specific cultural expression. It represents a fair correction of the politically motivated oversimplification of this aspect of Baltic history. It provides a solid foundation drawn from different types of sources and perspectives, both from within and outside academia, often translated from Russian, German and Estonian thus opening up this area of research to a more English-focussed audience. Mägi offers a crucial and impressive work of historiography which sheds a light on how deeply biased research can be, especially when politically-charged topics such as ethnicity are at stake. This volume exposes how decades of dictatorship, curbed freedom of thought and botched excavations led such a complex region to being ignored for so long by examining past theories and research methods, and offering new interpretations of outdated ideas. In particular, it meticulously criticises medieval writings in the light of archaeological evidence – an effort which represents the most exhaustive study of the depiction of the Eastern Baltic in Norse and Russian medieval sources published in recent years. The author's analysis of the use and evolution of toponyms is particularly insightful, as are the various examples of archaeological experiments conducted in order to probe theories and disprove misconceptions. The book also carefully looks at the organisation and repartition of Viking-Age settlements – based notably on the topography of their environment –, in order to reconstruct a realistic picture of their possible functions. Rather than studying the region as a homogeneous block – which would have yielded flawed conclusions –, the author singles out specific areas during specific time periods to reveal their unique dynamics.

However, there is too little about the role that religion played in this context. Shifting beliefs are used to explain changes in burial customs, while a recurring idea is that of shared warrior culture as evidenced by identical artefacts found all over the Baltic region, and the shared values they illustrate. But although the role of common myths is regularly cited as a possible explanation for these common characteristics, it is never made clear what bridges existed between Norse and Eastern Baltic religions. Admittedly, this was not the main focus of the book, but considering the important role of religion in medieval culture and politics, addressing the issue in a sub-chapter would have been useful. Furthermore, there is nearly no mention of the Swedish Baltic island of Öland. While it does not strictly belong to the Eastern Baltic region, it is still east of Sweden and thus could have served as an interesting parallel for many of the topics covered throughout the book. Indeed, the island is known for its numerous Iron-Age hillforts. The book covers Eastern hillforts at length but does not study Öland in connection to them. It may be a missed opportunity considering the many similar aspects of hillfort culture which are currently being investigated both in the Baltics and on Öland: the (re)use of these hillforts as shelters and political or trade centres during the Viking Age and later; the similarly puzzling finds of foreign coins – which, in the case of Öland, have tentatively been interpreted as proof of a past mercenary culture; the religious connotations behind the design and location of these forts. While not directly related to the theme of this volume, such comparisons would have provided a complementary angle to some of the discussions offered concerning the Eastern settlements. Lastly, the book focuses on eastbound trips by Scandinavians and rarely the other way around, despite the author acknowledging raids committed by Eastern Vikings over Sweden. The role of Öland as a buffer zone between Sweden and the East – a role it shared with Gotland – could have been emphasised in this respect. These omissions, however, do not weaken the author's main argument.

In conclusion, this book is an excellent overview of the past and current research in this field of study. While it reviews large amounts of archaeological and historical theories, Marika Mägi's own archaeological investigations are referenced as well and provide relevant and specialised complements to the broad wealth of information she otherwise offers. In addition to her remarkable study of the material evidence, she also analyses an impressive number of medieval written sources, which makes this volume the most up-to-date work concerning the prehistory and early history of the Eastern Baltic countries. It is a must-read for any scholar studying medieval Scandinavian and Slavonic studies, not only because of the great insight it gives into trade and communication networks across this region, but also for its treatment of the political dynamics influencing their study, both in ancient and modern times.

CAROLINE WILHELMSSON
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BORYSLAWSKI, Rafał y MORAWIEC, Jakub (eds.), 2018. *Aspects of Royal Power in Medieval Scandinavia*. Katowice: Uniwersytet Śląski.

The recent volume edited by two Polish specialists, Jakub Morawiec and Rafał Boryslawski, brings together a series of articles by scholars of different nationalities and disciplines, linked by the theme of monarchical power in the Nordic Middle Ages. These contributions are the result of a seminar organized in Katowice in 2016 on the subject, and they are also a tribute to the renowned Icelandic medievalist Ásdís Egilsdóttir.

After an introduction by the editors, the first paper in the volume, by Norwegian scholar Anne Irene Riisøy, considers the relationship between the expansion of power of the early Christian monarchs in Norway (from the 10th and 11th centuries) and regional assemblies (*þing*) based mainly on the compilation of the sagas *Heimskringla*. His first case study, that of King Haakon the Good, shows a Christian king who must still pay attention to pagan customs in order to gain the adherence of his local subjects. Reasonably, Riisøy concludes that this was mainly because the king lacked the means to impose Christianity and had to maintain a situation of tolerance of pagans, or even syncretism. Óláfr Tryggvason's strategy took a sharp turn, including threats and violence towards those who refused to convert. His namesake, Óláfr the saint, would repeat that strategy two decades later. However, the basic similarity highlighted by Riisøy is that all three kings operated in the same way: they sought the support of local chiefs in assemblies and then tried to get them to receive baptism, not so much as a gesture of change of belief, but as a trait of political submission. In this sense, the use of the assemblies, central spaces of communal but also legal life (and also where the religious rite was considered part of that normativity) was key: the conversion had to be at the same time a change of laws, which logically motivated the kings to use them in this sense.

The following essay, written by the historian Jakub Morawiec, focuses on the figure of Sweyn Forkbeard, particularly in the recurring story of his capture by Slavic (or perhaps Nordic) rivals. Morawiec compares a considerable number of vernacular sources (such as the *Jómsvíkinga saga* and the *Búadrápa*) and Latin sources (from the *Brevis Historia* by Sven Aggesen to the episcopal chronicle of Thietmar of Merseburg), and traces the evolution of the episode as a literary theme, leaving aside the irresolvable question of the reality of the event. He analyzes instead its analogies with similar narrative motifs focused on the humiliation of a king as part of discrediting strategies by his opponents and successors.

In the next chapter, Łukasz Neubauer deals with the attributes of regal power in the poem *Liðsmannaflakkr*, devoted to King Cnut the Great. After a thorough analysis of the text and its historical and literary context, Neubauer concludes that the poem, beyond its aesthetic quality,

surely fulfilled its main purpose: to extol the monarch as a valiant warrior but also as an effective ruler. The next piece, by Norwegian specialist Bjørn Bandlien, looks at the representations of King Olaf II Haraldsson (1015-1028), later known as Saint Olaf, on coins issued during his reign. Bandlien focuses on two pieces (of the eleven preserved of those minted under the saintly king) that follow the motif called *Facing Bird*, and are assumed to be imitative of the Anglo-Saxon coinage issued by Æthelred II in the early eleventh century. Although the author does not reject this interpretation, he points out parallels with several nearby texts and pictorial representations, to conclude that the coins suggest a crucial ideological change in the Norwegian kingdom: the emergence of the idea of a monarch opposed to paganism who acts as mediator between his subjects and the divine will.

The analysis of skaldic poems continues with the work of Erin Goeres, who analyzes the *Kálfsflokkur* (devoted to the Norwegian chieftain, Kálfr Árnason) and the *Vestrifararvísur*, composed Saint Olaf, but which also focuses part of its attention on his Danish rival, the aforementioned Cnut the Great. In both, Goeres focuses on the motif of aristocratic generosity. In an exhaustive analysis, her work revisits a well-known function of lordly largesse (that of rewarding followers) but shows how the poems also allude to its less honorable flipside, its use as a means of appeasing and “buying off” its enemies.

The following essay moves the focus to the Anglo-Saxon world. One of the editors, Rafał Boryślawski, considers the relationship between power and gender in the *Encomium Emmae Reginae*. The study finds that the depiction of Queen Emma shows her as the epitome of the Anglo-Saxon female aristocratic figure (the *hlæfdige*, “she who kneads bread,” the etymological ancestor of the modern English voice *lady*) but at the same time assigns her attributes of her male equivalent, the *hlaford* (“bread keeper,” itself an ancestor of *lord*), elevating her to a position not at all usual for a queen.

Marion Poilvez’s work takes up the relationship between kings and outlaws in the Icelandic sagas. The author remarks that, contrary to what might be expected of figures who are at opposite poles of the relationship before the law, there is between them a relationship sometimes of closeness and similarity, rather than antagonism. Analyzing scenes from a number of sagas, especially those of Egill and Grettir, kings and outlaws are regularly represented in similar terms. This is not unexpected, since Icelandic society, which for centuries lacked monarchical figures, sometimes considered in similar terms those who believed themselves above the (human) law as those who had been placed outside of it.

In the penultimate piece of the volume, Arngrímur Vídalín addresses the question of the ideal of the Christian king in three texts that circulated in the Nordic medieval space: the *Elucidarius*,

Konungs skuggsiá and the *Eiríks saga víðfórla*. Three texts disparate in origin and audience, but which, as the Icelandic author shows, agree in describing knowledge (especially geographical) of the world as crucial for a Christian king, for knowledge about creation would give proof of understanding about the creator. The contribution that closes the volume, by Leszek Ślupecki, compares the sovereign titles and attributions of monarchs in Poland and Scandinavia in the 10th and 11th centuries. The Polish historian notes that the ritual differences between the Nordic and West Slavic worlds result in the fact that the logics of legitimacy building in the former were rooted mainly in local secular traditions, while in the latter they revolved around incorporating a rituality of Carolingian imperial origin.

The diversity of topics reflected in the volume shows the fruits of the dynamic activity in this field of study that has been carried out at the University of Silesia. In this sense, it constitutes an interesting model to be taken into account for Ibero-American specialists in the medieval Nordic world, mainly due to the constant willingness to work with the best established centers of production in studies on the Nordic Middle Ages and the rapid development of an interesting local and comparative perspective. All this, added to the high quality of the contributions and the welcome decision to combine works by recognized specialists with promising young scholars, results in a volume of high quality (despite its affordable price) and makes it a must-read for the specialized public.

SANTIAGO BARREIRO
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BARREIRO, Santiago, CORDO RUSSO, Luciana (eds.), 2019. *Shapeshifters in Medieval North Atlantic Literature*, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

This volume brings together different works that explore in detail the phenomenon of metamorphosis and shape-shifting in medieval North Atlantic literature. The work approaches these issues from various disciplines, such as philology, history and anthropology, focusing especially on sources from Icelandic, Welsh, Irish, Anglo-Saxon and Latin contexts. The introduction refers to some medieval views on monstrosity, as well as to specific academic texts that have approached this same subject.

Be that as it may, the variety and quality of the various chapters make this volume a valuable foothold for those interested in North Atlantic cultures. Rafał Borysławski's text is probably the most original in its approach to shapeshifting. He focuses not so much on shapeshifting literary characters, but on how Anglo-Saxon enigmas have as their compositional principle mutation

itself. Thus, the author establishes an analogy between the transformation and the enigmas of the *Exeter Book*. Several of the points that link both phenomena are the fascination for the unknown and the mysterious, and the acquisition of a deeper knowledge about what is to be represented.

Ármann Jakobsson's chapter, with a special focus on the *Vatnsdæla saga*, analyzes the role of some cats of demonic nature. However, the change of nature that the cats undergo in this narrative is not referred to in any particular detail. It is this absence in the description that links the felines of this saga with the figure of the *troll*, a generic term that includes a wide variety of paranormal entities that have undergone a process of conversion. In a suggestive way, Ármann Jakobsson tries to show that it is precisely ambiguity and an ominous character that defines these supernatural characters.

Santiago Barreiro focuses his analysis on Fáfñir, a central character in Norse literature who will be characterized by his involuntary transformation into a dragon. Although the author establishes a difference between three different conceptions of the dragon in medieval Icelandic texts (as a huge serpent, as an incarnation of greed, and as a representation of evil), the great value of this article lies in the use of anthropological theory that helps to understand in depth the significance of this creature and its relationship with wealth. Santiago Barreiro will conclude that it is the treasure that makes the dragon, its inhumanity being the result of an antisocial greed that eliminates the possibility of putting into circulation the fortune it so jealously guards.

Rebecca Merkelbach analyzes the figure of the *berserkr* and argues that their relationship with the phenomenon of transformation is not so much due to a change in external form but, on the contrary, to an internal change. In such a way the author successfully demonstrates that it is precisely the antisocial behavior of these characters, and not their appearance, that turns them into monsters. Although some theoretical background might be lacking, this section shines for its empirical richness and is essential for understanding the image of the *berserkr* in the *Íslendingasögur*.

When compared to the rest of the chapters in this volume, Camilla With Pedersen's contribution might be the weakest. Nevertheless, it is still a correct essay that offers a comparison between the representation of mutation processes in Norse literature and in the early Irish Middle Ages. With Pedersen tries to show that several tropes are common to both literary contexts, and that they are closely linked to Christian literature and to philosophical ideas about metamorphosis.

Santiago Disalvo focuses in particular on Celtic hagiography and on the *Navigatio Sancti Brendani Abbatis*, probably originally written by an Irish monk in the 10th century. Throughout his analysis, Disalvo describes, continually supported by written evidence that leaves little room

for speculation, various forms of representation of birds in the *Navigatio* and other medieval texts, among which we can find the role of messenger, destroyer, rational animal or intermediary between this world and the Other, a moment in which his song can play a central role.

Finally, the value of Luciana Cordo Russo's chapter lies not only in filling a gap in the scholarly tradition (which has so far paid little attention to the phenomenon of shapeshifting in the Welsh context), but in her ambition and meticulousness in surveying all instances of shapeshifting in Welsh literature. Within this corpus, which includes Middle Welsh and Latin sources, we find examples in which shapeshifting is deliberately performed, although the vast majority of them are involuntary and will usually (not exclusively) be the result of divine or human punishments. The author accompanies all this data with suggestive reflections on the phenomena of identity, social order and the boundaries between the animal and human worlds.

The reader will easily see that this collection presents carefully crafted articles with stimulating ideas supported by a solid and rigorous empirical base. It is thus a valuable tool of great use to any specialist who intends to address the phenomenon of metamorphosis in the medieval North Atlantic world.

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