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Review of Marriage in Premodern Europe: Italy and Beyond

Brian Maxson, *East Tennessee State University*



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of talented artists creating captivating new works in a variety of traditional and innovative forms. Students and scholars alike can experience some of this same excitement through Heale's accessible, enjoyable text.



Marriage in Premodern Europe: Italy and Beyond. Ed. Jacqueline Murray.

Toronto: CRRS, 2012. 393 pp. 11 plates. \$32.00. ISBN 978-0-7727-2122-8.

REVIEWED BY: Brian Jeffrey Maxson

East Tennessee State University

Jacqueline Murray's *Marriage in Premodern Europe* collects a wide-ranging series of essays on marriage covering nearly four hundred years and almost the entire European continent. Most of the articles focus on sixteenth-century Italy, but earlier and later periods, Britain, and other areas are not neglected. The book uses new case studies to cover some old ground—such as arguments for the agency of women—but it also pushes scholarship on marriages in new directions by nuancing old paradigms and offering some articles with strikingly original approaches. This book should enjoy broad readership and will be particularly useful to historians of gender, politics, and the social history of early modern Europe.

The book's introduction suggests its relevance as a historical topic in the midst of current debates over the definition of marriage. The book's editor, Jacqueline Murray, played an important role in defending the establishment of same-sex marriage in Canada at the turn of the twenty-first century by arguing that marriage was a historically mutable, rather than static, institution. From this background grew the impetus for a conference hosted by the Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies in Toronto in 2009 with the explicit aim of demonstrating the complex and fluid ways that marriage was understood, used, and practiced in premodern Europe. This book is the result of that conference. Beyond the high quality of the essays, the use of historical scholarship on premodern Europe to try to offer significant contributions to contemporary arguments about social justice is a rarity deserving praise in and of itself. The articles in this book convincingly demonstrate the astonishing and ever-changing range of ways people experienced marriage between 1350 and 1750.

The book is divided into two sections. The first and longer part, "Women, Men, and Marriage," looks at marriage primarily from the points of view of the agency of women and political utility. Contributions range from an overview of the marital strategies employed by rulers to the surprisingly powerful role of married women in Genoa, who often had to serve as heads of household while their husbands were away, an important factor when selecting spouses. Several articles in this section warrant particular praise, while space permits cursory statements on only a few. Jennifer DeSilva investigates how members of the papal Office of Ceremonies coped with the conflicting realities of the pope as celibate head of the church—a man who theoretically lacked familial ties—and the regular occurrence of marriages among members of his family. Katalin Prajda offers another fascinating, transnational glimpse into the lives of Florentine merchants in Hungary and how domestic ties in Florence impacted long-distance trading networks. P. Renée Baernstein looks at the ways in which elites from across Italy sought to enter into the Roman social and political world. She ends with tantalizing potential links between her own research and the later growth of the Italian elite group so pivotal to the success of the Risorgimento. Finally, Heather Parker convincingly argues that the Carnegie family in sixteenth-century Scotland focused their marriage alliances at the local level with the aim of consolidating a strong regional political base. She contrasts this strategy with the Campbell family, who sought to marry children

into powerful families across large distances. Both families were ultimately successful at achieving greater status, while the case study provides an intriguing glimpse into the different ways a family could use marriage as a successful political tool. Taken together, all the contributions to this section leave little doubt as to the range of ways that premodern men and women experienced and sought to use the institution of marriage.

The second, shorter section, "Image and Ideologies," looks at marriage through the cultural production of the period. Essays examining Italian and Latin literature as well as the visual arts are all included. Of particular note here are two contributions, one on Bologna and one on Naples. Erin Campbell argues that a sixteenth-century family portrait by Bartolommeo Passerotti shows the ideal—rarely realized—of the place and role of a matriarch in sixteenth-century Bolognese families. Matteo Soranzo's investigation of the Latin elegies of the fifteenth-century humanist Giovanni Pontano brilliantly uses the theoretical writings of Pierre Bourdieu and Dominick LaCapra to demarcate a potential reading of Pontano's *De Amore Coniugali*, a major audience for the work, and one plausible purpose behind Pontano's writing it.

The Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies deserves praise for publishing yet another interdisciplinary book featuring the highest quality scholarship at an affordable price. Indeed, the temporal, geographical, and methodological scope of this book will offer something for all scholars of premodern Europe. As with all edited collections, the essays vary in terms of the originality of their approach and their evidentiary basis. Some articles here maintain established paradigms about the flexibility and potential of experiences available to premodern women and the range of emotional experiences available for married men and women, while others break new ground. Taken together the book convincingly makes its case for the complexities inherent in premodern marriage and the mutability of that particular institution. It is, as the editor states, a timely argument. This book should enjoy as broad a readership as possible both inside and outside of the academy—scholars will enjoy its range and solid scholarship, while the general population will gain a new appreciation of the mutable history of a seemingly timeless institution.



The Chronicle of Le Murate. Giustina Niccolini. Ed. and trans. Sandra Lynn Weddle.

The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe: The Toronto Series 12. Toronto: ITER, 2011. xiv + 361 pp. \$32.00. ISBN 978-0-7727-2108-2.

REVIEWED BY: Christine Meek

Trinity College Dublin, Ireland

Chronicles of convents written by the nuns themselves are not common, and the present volume is particularly significant, since it comes from the large and influential convent of Le Murate in Florence. The author was Sister Giustina Niccolini, a member of a well-established Florentine family, who had entered the convent at about nine years of age in 1567. Her chronicle covers the entire history of the convent from 1390 until January 1598, making use of convent records, though these had suffered heavily in a series of floods, and her personal recollections and those of other nuns.

She traces the convent from its origins when two foundresses established themselves as recluses in a tiny house attached to a pier of Ponte Rubaconte, through its slow expansion with still only seven inmates in 1413 and thirteen in 1424. The chronicle makes it clear that patrons were important from the very beginning. The very first house was a gift, and when the foundresses enclosed themselves there without even bread for that night's supper,