

Fraioli also offers the reader helpful appendices with English translations of several key texts.

Fraioli's careful literary assessment of the early texts in the Johannic debate, examined in chronological order with particular attention paid to their relationship to one another, returns the reader to a part of the argument that is largely overlooked in modern criticism surrounding the saint and her accomplishments. As the author states in her conclusion, these texts affect "our understanding of Joan of Arc when she is approached, not biographically, but, as her contemporaries apparently viewed her, as an object of theological debate" (193). The use of the word "object" is ironic because it becomes evident, in the study of the progression of the texts, that Jehanne was used as a theological symbol of pro-French propaganda long before her capture, as much as she was symbolically vilified by the English, and whose mission climaxed with the Dauphin's crowning at Reims. Johannic scholars would do well to consider these texts to further their understanding of Jehanne's remarkable history, especially in regard to her reception by her contemporaries as a self-proclaimed agent of God's will on earth.

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**Bonnie Wheeler and John Carmi Parsons, eds., *Eleanor of Aquitaine, Lord and Lady*. (New Middle Ages.) New York and Houndmills, Eng.: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003. Pp. xxix, 506. \$65; £40.**

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A former colleague once remarked that "nobody has yet written a decent biography of Eleanor of Aquitaine." Eleanor has attracted many myths, both in medieval times and in subsequent centuries, which have clouded assessments of her to the present day. Of particular concern to feminists has been the tendency—not limited to disapproving medieval clerics—to ascribe to Eleanor the worst excesses associated with womankind. This is the Eleanor who sleeps with her uncle, parades naked on crusade, and murders her rivals. Other writers, seeking to rehabilitate Eleanor, have created a counter-mythology of Eleanor as a uniquely powerful, independent, and cultured woman, queen of the troubadours and the "courts of love." She is often defined in terms of her relations to men, particularly (after the title of one work),<sup>1</sup> the "Four Kings;" her husbands Louis VII of France and Henry II of England, and her sons Richard I and John.

Happily, this volume goes a long way toward dispelling the mythology. Wheeler, Parsons, and the contributors have produced a set of studies that explore Eleanor's life, career, and context in great depth. The nineteen chapters, bookended with an introduction by the authors and epilogue by Jane Martindale, explore the queen-duchess's political career and status, and her cultural legacy. Elizabeth A. R. Brown introduces us to the state of Eleanor scholarship, updating her own 1976 study of the queen.<sup>2</sup> Marie Hivergneaux and Ralph Turner look at Eleanor's role in the government of her duchy of Aquitaine and her authority during the reigns of her sons. These, alongside Brown's introduction, are fine examples of the approach to Eleanor's life,

based on the careful use of evidence rather than the pursuit of legends, that characterizes the volume as a whole. Articles by RaGena DeAragon, Lois Hunnicutt, and Heather Tanner place Eleanor's queenship in context, comparing her with contemporary noblewomen and with her predecessors as queen of England. Andrew Lewis applies some historical detective work to overturning the received birth date of Eleanor's youngest son, John. Miriam Shadis and Constance Berman take up the theme of Eleanor's progeny, tracing her female descendants through the royal lineages of Europe. The discussion of Eleanor's familial relations is rounded off with essays by James Brundage and Constance Bouchard on Eleanor's divorce from Louis VII. A series of articles then looks at Eleanor and her reputation in written sources. Evelyn Mullally examines Eleanor's brief but sympathetic portrayal in the *Histoire de Guillaume le Maréchal*, while Peggy McCracken addresses the more hostile assessments of contemporary chroniclers. John Carmi Parsons examines the intriguing parallels between Eleanor and Marie Antoinette, focussing on the accusations levelled against an adulterous "bad queen." Chapters by Tamara O'Callaghan, Fiona Tolhurst, and Margaret Aziza Pappano consider Eleanor in the contemporary literature of (respectively) Benoît de Sainte-Maure, Wace and Layamon, and Marie de France. Finally, a trio of essays links Eleanor with the visual arts. George Beech traces the history of the "Eleanor Vase" (a wedding gift from Eleanor to Louis VII) from Muslim Spain to the treasury of St-Denis, while Kathleen Nolan and Charles Wood contribute chapters on Eleanor and the tombs at Fontevraud, where she was buried alongside her second husband, third son, and daughter-in-law.

It is impossible to do justice to the themes of the book in one short review, but one pervades the whole, that of female authority. As the well-chosen title of this work suggests, one of the key sources of tension in Eleanor's career was between her role as a woman and her role as a ruler. She was a "lady" by virtue of her position as queen, but she was also a "lord," as duchess of Aquitaine by right of inheritance. The paradox of her position was that as "lord" she could be politically independent, but as "lady" during her marriages she was subject to male authority, demonstrated dramatically in her long imprisonment by Henry II. As mother of two kings and (as Shadis and Berman remind us) of two queens, she was also a key figure in European politics as a dynast. In addition, her role as queen was far from politically passive. Her two royal husbands may have taken the title "Duke of Aquitaine," but Eleanor did not surrender all power in her native duchy, acting as ruler there from 1168 until 1173, when she was incarcerated for supporting her son Henry's rebellion. During the reigns of her sons, Eleanor again enjoyed personal power: "she took precedent over their wives, enjoying a queen-regnant's perquisites" (Turner, p. 78). She regained her authority in Aquitaine, for which she performed homage to Philip II of France in 1199. Eleanor may not have exercised that literary authority once ascribed to her as Queen of the Troubadours, but her political authority was real enough.

However, Eleanor was not the only twelfth-century woman to enjoy a measure of power. Anglo-Norman queens had considerable material independence, receiving the payment known as "queen's gold" and lands that may have

formed a “queen’s demesne.” Eleanor’s mother-in-law Matilda the Empress (like Eleanor, a sole heiress) came close to securing personal rule over England in the civil war with Stephen of Blois. As a widow she (like Eleanor) was entrusted with the government of parts of Henry II’s “empire,” governing Normandy until her death in 1167. Henry I’s first queen, Matilda of Scotland, acted as regent in her husband’s absences, while Stephen’s queen Matilda of Boulogne defended his cause after he was captured by the Empress. Eleanor may have been a remarkable woman, but she was not unique.

The editors deserve great credit for the coherence of the volume. The contributors frequently make reference to other chapters, giving the book a cohesion that such works can sometimes lack. On the debit side, there is some inconsistency of nomenclature (Eleanor’s daughter appears as both Jeanne and Joanna), and some names appear incorrectly, such as “Rudolph” Glaber. These minor criticisms in no way detract from the work as a whole. For any scholar of Eleanor, and anyone with an interest in medieval queenship, this is an essential collection.

—M. R. Evans, *University of Reading*

<sup>1</sup> Amy Kelly, *Eleanor of Aquitaine and the Four Kings* (Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press, 1950).

<sup>2</sup> Elizabeth A. R. Brown, ‘Eleanor of Aquitaine: Parent, Queen, and Duchess’ in *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Patron and Politician*, ed. William W. Kibler (Austin TX, University of Texas Press, 1976).

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**Bonnie Effros, *Creating Community with Food and Drink in Merovingian Gaul*. (New Middle Ages.) New York and Houndmills, Eng.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002. Pp. xviii, 174.**

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This slim book is of surprisingly limited importance for the study of women and gender. A discussion of Merovingian foodways certainly could have included a substantial amount of gender analysis; yet for much of the book Effros sidesteps, rather than thematizes, both women and gender. The only chapter likely to be of real interest to readers of *MFF* is Chapter Three (“Gender and Authority: Feasting and Fasting in Early Medieval Monasteries for Women,” 39-54). Here, Effros contrasts the female monastic ideal, as legislated in Caesarius of Arles’ *Rule for Virgins*, with the female monastic reality, as represented at Radegund of Poitiers’ monastery. Unlike other rules for nuns (and like his successor Aurelian of Arles’ rule for monks), Caesarius’ rule prohibited the preparation of *convivia* either inside or outside the monastery; furthermore, Caesarius’ rule discouraged extreme food-related asceticism, such as daily fasting. Yet, Radegund—who personally selected Caesarius’ rule for her poitevin community—nevertheless contravened both food-related aspects of the rule through her “provision of feasts and remarkable feats of fasting [which] heightened her authority among the nuns as well as outside the walls of her foundation” (51). Effros concludes: “Radegund thus for a time triumphed in her resistance to restrictive legislation regulating women’s interaction with food and drink....Through a model of what might be called non-institutional forms of influence, early medieval noble women in monastic