

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.

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

² 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).

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.

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

houses gained access to greater authority both as a result of their patronage of feasts and abstinence from food and drink" (53-54).

The "Introduction" (1-8) and the first chapter ("The Ritual Significance of Feasting in the Formation of Christian Communities," 9-24) occasionally allude to women and gender (most notably by relying on the seminal work of Jo Ann McNamara), but are primarily focussed on methodological questions. Here, Effros touts the virtues of what she calls the "under-utilized methodological tool" (4) of the analysis of "rituals" as a means for gaining insight into medieval political and social structures and medieval power relations. Unfortunately, in the wake of Philippe Buc's penetrating critique of what he considers the over-utilized methodological tool of the analysis of "ritual," much of which covered the same texts (such as the writings of Gregory of Tours)¹ on which Effros relies, these sections appear simplistic and naïve. Because the volume is so thin, and brings forward so little in the way of concrete evidence, the fact that Buc has raised questions about the validity of the very methodological assumptions which underlie, and give meaning to, Effros' few examples of "the ritual applications of feasting and fasting" (4), threatens to undermine the volume's claims to major significance. The few, scattered examples of (narratives concerning) Merovingian (male) clerics who sponsored feasts or offered glasses of wine to kings or refused to participate in royal festivals (the subject of Chapter Two, "Food, Drink, and the Expression of Clerical Identity," 25-37) cannot bear the weight Effros seeks to place on them if she is incorrect in her methodological assumption that "rather than functioning as a merely symbolic expression of generosity, gift-giving and the mutual consumption of food and drink helped members of the Merovingian nobility to ritualize and thereby regulate both personal and political ties" (25).

This is not to say that the book lacks value; it is just that some of the thematic chapters (Chapters Two, Three and Four) might have been better suited for publication as articles, while the final one (Chapter Five) would have benefited from more work before being presented for publication. And, as already noted, women and gender are only occasionally thematized as such. For instance, in terms of gender analysis, Chapter Two contains only the isolated suggestion that the "complex set of behaviors related to...food and drink... represented an alternative means of expressing masculinity in early medieval Gaul" (28). In this section, Effros relies on the innovative work of Conrad Leyser and his sometime collaborator Kate Cooper on early medieval masculinities.² The most elegant of the essays (Chapter Four, "Food as Source of Healing and Power," 55-67), barely mentions female healers and, despite its grand title, is a relatively narrow discussion of Anthimus' *De observatione ciborum*, written soon after 511 and sent as a gift from the Ostrogothic king Theoderic to the Frankish king Theuderic. Effros suggests, insightfully, that this letter about food should be seen, in a diplomatic context, as "a more theoretical rendition of a well-prepared banquet" (65), which enabled the Ostrogothic court to display its superior resources to the Franks, just as the sponsorship of an actual lavish meal would have done.

The most disappointing chapter for the historian of women and gender is Chapter Five ("Funerary Feasting in Early Medieval Gaul and Neighboring Regions," 69-91). Effros devotes most of the chapter to wrangling with Baily K. Young concerning the extent to which funerary feasting and the deposition of foodstuffs in graves even were current practices in Merovingian Gaul at all. She refers to (75), but does not explore the gendered dimensions of, the famous controversy between Ambrose of Milan and Augustine's mother Monica over the latter's desire to stage feasts in honor of the martyrs in Milanese cemeteries,³ and she notes in passing that, at Erstein, "the interred whose graves included foodstuffs were identified as predominantly female" (80). However, instead of actually providing here a solidly researched and argued discussion of the issues, Effros merely concludes, in "Future Directions for Research," that "an assessment of whether all or certain vessels appeared more frequently in men's or women's burials, or in adolescents' or adults' sepulchers, would prove very useful. These distinctions would suggest some of the possible connotations of feasting rites and whether they were directly linked to particular gender- or age-identities" (90).

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¹ Philippe Buc, *The Dangers of Ritual: Between Early Medieval Texts and Social Scientific Theory* (Princeton, 2001).

² See, most recently, Kate Cooper and Conrad Leyser, "The Gender of Grace: Impotence, Servitude and Manliness in the Fifth-Century West," *Gender and History* 12 (2000), 536 – 551.

³ I discuss this episode at length in Felice Lifshitz, "The Martyr, The Tomb and The Matron: Constructing the (Masculine) Past as Feminine Power Base" in *Medieval Concepts of the Past: Ritual, Memory, Historiography* eds. Gerd Althoff, Johannes Fried and Patrick J. Geary (Cambridge, 2002), 311 – 341.

Valeria Finucci, *The Manly Masquerade: Masculinity, Paternity, and Castration in the Italian Renaissance*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003. Pp 316. \$24.95.

Addressing the fraught process of becoming a man in Renaissance Italy, this book is an important study of the ways that cultural and literary texts work together to give gendered metaphors purchase on physical bodies, both male and female. Examining medical, theological, popular, and literary accounts of "engendering," Finucci explores fears surrounding paternity, particularly the potential of feminine bodies to disrupt fantasies of masculinity tied to reproduction. Because Finucci uses psychoanalytic insights concerning gender and sexuality to read the construction of manly identity in a historically specific moment, she shows that historicizing masculinity is a feminist critical project relevant to contemporary thinking about the ways that men procure and secure power in western cultures. As such, her book will be of interest to scholars in early modern, medieval, and gender studies.

By focusing on gender as masquerade, Finucci emphasizes the difficulties involved in becoming "manly" in Renaissance Italy, at once refusing to grant masculinity a presumption to universal stability, while at the same time