

in the mid to late sixteenth century in England. Katherine Willoughby's part in this network took her sometimes dangerously close to destruction, but she survived and continued to promote her evangelicalism even through the first decades of Elizabeth I's reign.

Melissa Harkrider has taken full advantage of the quantity of information available about one elite woman, Katherine Willoughby, and her patronage network in sixteenth-century England. Harkrider's work makes an important contribution to the concerns of both Gender and Reformation Studies with the nature of the reform that occurred in England, as distinguished from the Continental movements, in regard to women's activity in a society which resisted women as active agents of pandemic cultural change.

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**Rebecca Lynn Winer.** *Women, Wealth, and Community in Perpignan, c. 1250–1300: Christians, Jews, and Enslaved Muslims in a Medieval Mediterranean Town.* Ashgate, 2006. Pp. xiii + 258, maps.

WINER EXAMINES ISSUES of gender and religious difference in the medieval city of Perpignan using the contents of seventeen surviving early notarial registers dating from 1261–1279. These registers, the survivals of more than a thousand for the century, are supplemented by other narrative evidence to analyze parallels and differences in the lives of women under the three religions. Winer incorporates the insights of feminist medievalists that women's status and authority change with life situation, arguing further that women's access to property or power occurs as part of a family or household group and is tied to its inheritance and testamentary practices (including those regarding manumissions of the enslaved). She compares Christian and Jewish women's control of property on behalf of minor children, discovering that Christian widows tended to act on their own or with their birth families while Jewish widows more often worked within a group of guardians, because guardianship of Jewish children was viewed as a responsibility for the leaders of the community along with the mother. Enslaved Muslim women, even if they had converted to Christianity, had no control over either property or the destiny of their children and were rarely freed because, in Winer's view, Christian charities in Perpignan concentrated on ransoming Christian captives.

The surviving documents enable Winer to show the variety of practices in Perpignan regarding marriage, dowry and counter-gift, widow's portion, and divisions of inheritance that might be eventually managed by a widow within both Christian and Jewish communities. Was property to be inherited by one son, or was it divided among all of them? How do dowries paid for daughters at marriage limit their access to other inheritance? Does the widow get back her dowry immediately upon the death of her husband, or only when children come of age? Winer concurs with those before her who have tended to associate the differences between Perpignan and Catalonia more generally with conflict between Visigothic and Roman law. It is possible, on the other hand, that many of the various solutions adopted in marriage and inheritance contracts in Perpignan at the time reflect not so much conflict between law codes as a tendency towards ad hoc solutions, which would only gradually be generalized into feudal law.

Winer begins with a story of three (actually four) women found in the documents from winter 1276–1277: Raimunda, the Christian widow; Regina, a Jewish orphan in the guardianship of three male members of the Jewish community; and the Muslim slave Issa, whose Christian female owner, Romia, sold her that winter. In stories like these Winer reveals possible situations of women not only among elites, but also among artisans. Relationships with men or children as well as life stage determines the status of both Christian and Jewish women: they are daughters, wives, mothers, or widows. Both Jewish and Christian women enter the public sphere as widows acting as guardians who manage the estates of minor children, and make investments (in local or long distance trade, money-lending, etc.).

But given how many documents have been lost, can we generalize beyond this evidence? I would say sometimes yes, and sometimes no. Allow me to explain in the terms of social scientists. Most of the time even if every source has been consulted, generalized trends can only be extrapolated from the data if the survivals can be treated as a random sample of the larger population. Winer does not attempt to argue that the surviving seventeen registers out of an estimated 1000 from the thirteenth century constitute a random sample. Still, in a best case scenario, assume that survivals were a random sample, with every register assumed to have 200 documents and thus a total population of documents of 20,000 of which all but about 3400 are now lost. The margins of error or confidence range for the percentages derived from a sample of 3400 cases out of a population of 20,000 can then be found from on-line calculators for margin of error for random samples. In this case a random sample from such a population would have a margin of error of plus or minus 5.3.<sup>1</sup> To have

statistical significance (and to generalize from the numbers) for any percentage calculated, the range of confidence surrounding that percentage must not overlap with the range of confidence of any other percentage provided. Thus, when Winer provides percentages of 45 versus 55 percent, the margin of error bracketed percentages for 45 percent [39.7 to 50.3] versus those for 55 percent [49.3 to 60.3] do overlap, which suggests that even in the best case (where it could be argued that she has a random sample) the evidence cannot be used to show anything that can be generalized to the larger population, but only to reflect what is found in the surviving documents. That is, the documents cannot be pushed too far in making comparisons to other populations in other times and places.

This calculation is not intended to criticize an important dissertation/book, but to show that in some places its statistics are generalizable. For instance, Winer's statistics concerning the number of loan contracts in which women (often acting as guardians) are the principals must be taken very seriously in comparison to those of other studies. She finds that women were principals in Jewish loan contracts recorded in the surviving Latin notarial registers in only twenty percent of the contracts, with men being principals in eighty percent. Given assumptions in the previous paragraph for the same set of surviving documents and population, the same confidence ranges are appropriate. Thus twenty percent women becomes 14.7 to 25.3 percent and eighty percent men gives 74.7 to 85.3 percent. Here not only do confidence ranges not overlap, but they are so far apart that even if our assumption of randomness is violated, the relationship, that for Perpignan, Jewish men did undertake about four times more lending than Jewish women, probably holds. This finding at first sight appears to conflict with evidence from northern France analyzed by William C. Jordan but (as he makes clear in his study of the French monarchy and the Jews) he was describing the Jewish community of Picardy at a moment of severe disruption. In face of Christian pressures nearly all Jewish men had fled, and Jewish women were forced to take over financial oversight of family affairs.<sup>2</sup> For a population not under such stresses as in Perpignan, subject to Catalan and Majorcan not French rulers, Winer's numbers are probably more generalizable, but Winer and Jordan agree that Jewish women had the commercial expertise to engage in money-lending when forced to do so by unfortunate circumstances.

But this is only peripherally a book about Jewish women and lending. Winer has been remarkably successful in her mission to show the range of possibilities for or limitations on Christian, Jewish, and Muslim women acting as members of either families or households that can be discovered even in

a study confined almost entirely to the surviving Latin documents. Including a chapter on enslaved women, based on very fragile evidence carefully used, allows Winer to lift the veil on how women of different religions and social class treated one another, possibly on how they regarded one another, and certainly on how we should compare them to one another. This is an honest and impressive achievement.

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#### NOTES

1. <http://americanresearchgroup.com/moe.html>.
2. William C. Jordan, *The French Monarchy and the Jews from Philip Augustus to the Last Capetians* (Philadelphia: U Pennsylvania P, 1989), pp. 155–76.

