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then in Wiccan rituals. Finke underscores the limits of friendship in the context of the lone-witch image fed by social media. In the last essay, Clare A. Lees and Gillian R. Overing value modern-medieval storytelling to narrate the silence on female friendships. Engaging with male-authored medieval texts alongside modern female-authored stories, they imagine a conversation between Queen Iurminburg and Abbess Ælfflæd, seventh-century women separated in the literary record but united by their shared connections.

In the afterword, Penelope Anderson writes that the volume seeks to “write various types of difference back into the story of friendship,” and Women’s Friendship in Medieval Literature accomplishes that goal (267). This collection offers both accessible and theoretically complex iterations of female friendship that appeal to a broad readership, and each successive chapter builds on and often responds to the previous one such that we might best conceive of this book as a well-marked map of female friendship in medieval literature. Remarking upon the multiplicity of female friendship, this collection closes with the observation that care and alliance-building—traits shared by most of the friendships explored in this book—are hallmarks of an equality that does not assimilate difference but rather embraces it—one that creates space for vulnerability and individuality and builds a transhistorical polity of women like those of La cité des dames.

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Elizabeth Makowski’s Apostate Nuns expands our understanding of the late medieval female apostate experience. Her work connects studies of apostasy with current trends in legal and gender history that inspect the female experience as both an actor of and acted upon by the law. Makowski acknowledges the limitations of her legal sources and uses scholarship on women’s spirituality, penitential practice, and disasters to situate and inform her analysis. She challenges the wayward
nun stereotype, arguing that it poorly reflects the lived female religious experience. Instead, nuns left their monasteries for diverse reasons and had numerous avenues to pursue departure. These nuns also often attempted to return to their communities.

Makowski sets the parameters of her study between 1300 and 1540 to evaluate the lives of religious and quasi-religious women in England and continental Europe. She begins in the first half of the fourteenth century, after legislation for religious life was codified. She uses the reform movements as historical context that informed later beliefs on apostasy. She ends her study at the dissolution in 1540 and considers how Thomas Cromwell exploited papal dispensation to release nuns. Makowski’s source material is predominantly from England; however, she balances her work with continental examples where possible, leading her as far as Transylvania in the records. Her sources fit into three categories: canonical rules and regulations, court cases and other documents of practice, and contemporary narratives such as letters (15). Makowski exploits these sources to investigate the motives, means, and opportunities nuns had to become apostates. In design, her book follows the stages in a female apostate’s life that began with her entrance into vowed life, when she left the house, and her return to the community.

Part 1, “The Vowed Life,” is a single chapter that introduces the reader to monastic life and the vows nuns pronounced to take the habit. Makowski uses this chapter to establish the legal realities and debates of apostasy and what constitutes the “casting off” of dress that could lead to the charge of apostasy. Part 2 is the most substantive part of Apostate Nuns. It comprises three chapters exploring why a nun revokes her habit. In chapter 2, “Force and Fear,” Makowski analyzes cases where nuns claimed that their vows were null because they took them under duress. She explores the socio-economic make-up of the female religious through an examination of papal petitions by well-to-do nuns. In the petitions, Makowski found quasi-religious women who could not technically be apostates also petitioning for their freedom from the charge, demonstrating the blurred line between lay religious women and nuns.

Building upon her findings in chapter 2, Makowski scrutinizes common law cases and parliamentary evidence in chapter 3, “Land, Love, and Lust.” She explores parts of monastic life that hindered the ideal divide between the laity and the religious, such as observance of the vow of poverty, which prohibits the inheritance of lands and goods. Across continental Europe and England, nuns came from “socially privileged” backgrounds ranging between gentry and nobility (81). These
nuns were more likely to inherit land, which increased the attraction of apostasy to them. As Makowski explains, “already disregarded barriers” (91–92) like visits with outsiders were welcomed worldly intrusions on monastic daily life. These events could motivate nuns to renounce their vocation or argue they never professed and seek secular status to fight for their inheritance in court.

In chapter 4, “Diversions and Disasters,” Makowski explores the circumstances that could lead to a religious leaving her house, sometimes for years. A nun could unintentionally become an apostate by visiting friends and family or to regain health outside of the monastery without prior approval. The papal decree, Periculoso, issued in 1298, forbade nuns to leave their monastery. Despite this, bishops and monastic superiors approved respites for nuns outside of their house to visit kith or kin or attend to an illness. When they did not seek approval, the nuns who left their convent, possibly intending to return to their house, became apostates. Other times circumstances beyond their control, such as plague, famine, and warfare could lead monastics to leave their houses and incidentally enter apostasy.

In part 3, Makowski appraises the process of reintegration into religious life for the apostate. In chapter 5, she outlines the different ways the process could begin: petitioning the Papal Penitentiary, meeting with local ordinaries, or a simple expression of remorse. Her purpose in this chapter is to demonstrate that “there is no standard mechanism for beginning the return journey . . . [but the] sin required a penitent’s contrition” and a priest with the power to forgive it (141–42). She also assesses the tensions between the episcopal authority’s duty to return apostates to the flock and St. Benedict’s advice to limit apostates to only three readmittances. She demonstrates that canonical commentaries justified the reservations of monastic superiors in their letters. In chapter 6, she surveys commentaries, registers, and papal statutes on reentry into a religious house. During the late Middle Ages Church authorities increasingly called for the return of apostates. Part of this escalating desire to reclaim apostates was an emphasis on forced return for those unwilling to resume religious life. These calls by Church officials created a growing dependence on secular authorities to help find and return apostates, which was part of solving the social problem of vagabondage caused by apostasy described in chapter 4.

Makowski’s book is a groundbreaking work on the much-neglected female apostate experience. She writes a deep analysis that ties together important historical context by drawing upon a diverse group of historians like Cordelia Beattie, Caroline Dunn, Donald F. Logan,
Caroline Walker Bynum, and Nancy Bradley Warren. She examines gender, law, and female agency while also filling the gaps left by the records with scholarship on female spirituality, penitential practice, and the impact of natural disasters. Readers and students unfamiliar with female religious life will find *Apostate Nuns* accessible and engaging. Scholars and educators will find it a useful teaching tool with its many examples and anecdotes to facilitate class discussion.

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Medieval prostitution was more than just a trace social element: the entire life of prostitutes, including relationships, self-esteem, religious beliefs, morality, and social position, were all defined by the fact that they and their communities had decided that they would exchange sex for money. Yet, as Maria Serena Mazzi argues in this brief study, we actually know little about the motivations that led women into prostitution, or how they lived once there. Was it due to choice, or circumstance, or coercion (viii)? Whatever the reason women ended up on this path, prostitution was a consistent and remarkably prominent aspect of medieval urban life. As Mazzi justifies her study, the endurance of the phenomenon alone suggests we (and medieval people) cannot do without it (ix).

Originally published as *La mala vita: Donne pubbliche del medioevo*, the book is organized into three sections consisting of twelve chapters of sometimes less than ten pages each. Mazzi’s archival base is drawn almost entirely from Florentine civic registers, statutes, police records, and censuses, though her argument is largely pieced together via secondary literature. From these other sources she includes Italian cities (primarily Perugia, Ferrara, and Pistoia), medieval urban Spain, France, and from time to time, northern European cities as well.

Chapter 1 captures much of Mazzi’s argument: the primary reason that prostitution has always been so controversial, she explains,