

PREFACE

This Variorum contains many of my articles on women and gender, beginning with my first, published in *Signs* in 1975, “Dame Trot.” The articles are arranged in sections, on marriage, slavery, historiography, and medieval lives. This represents only a portion of my medieval scholarship, nonetheless women and gender have compelled my interest throughout my career.

Part One presents a brief autobiography that appeared in *Women Medievalists and the Academy* in 2005.

The Part Two studies on medieval marriage, dowry, and consumption began with archival work in the Ragusa/Dubrovnik archives: “Dowry increase and increments in wealth in medieval Ragusa (Dubrovnik)” (1981). A series of notarial records named the *Liber Dotium* within the Ragusan Chancellory, begun in 1348 and stretching through the fifteenth century and beyond, were compared with the earlier thirteenth century dowry records published from the notebooks of the Ragusan notary Thomasina de Savere, 1278–82. This series provided snapshots of a steady increase in dotal awards and yielded important information on how dowries were composed and awarded.

Reading more widely on medieval marriage in southern Europe broadened my interest into the wide range of gift giving at marriage. The change in the direction in which wealth moved at marriage, originally husband to wife but with the rise of the Roman dotal regime, from bride’s family to groom, had been largely ignored although it represented a significant change in the flow of familial wealth. In the new Roman system of the twelfth century husbands did not own, but still controlled, wives’ dowries gaining wealth and status by the very act of marrying. Statute laws required husbands to invest dotal wealth and increase it but never lose it. This was a tall order in a commercial economy laden with risk: through mishap, or on occasion, intent dowry wealth was directed toward other ends than supporting a married woman and her heirs in time of need. I explore these issues in “Burdens of matrimony: husbanding and gender in medieval Italy” (1994).

Sumptuary laws in fourteenth century Italian cities attempted to regulate ostentation at weddings; some provisions went so far as to supervise the award of dowries and other wedding gifts. These laws tended to regard women as spendthrifts who wasted family resources. In practice most families of wealth and standing promoted ostentation at weddings and increasingly honor and prestige rode on the arranging, conduct, and celebration of marriages. Ironically mature

men of standing were more likely to increase their consumption of clothes, accessories, and other ostentatious wares upon marriage than their brides. This conundrum is explored in “Gravitas and consumption,” (1999) and in “Marriage gifts and fashion mischief,” (2005).

Part Three concerns slave systems. As before my interest in medieval slavery began with archival study in Ragusa/Dubrovnik. A thirteenth century series of documents registering slaves at the Ragusan Chancellory were available in edited form. There was additional information in notarial “documents of practice” that while some slaves were destined for domestic service in town, others were sold abroad. Over 90% of the slaves were female, generally young girls who came from the Balkan highlands. This largely untrained and unfree labor force supplied essential services in town and sometimes slaves learned skills that attracted purchasers from Italy. Domestic slaves were preferred to other workers because they were domiciled and as such easily policed, “Urban domestic slavery in medieval Ragusa,” (1983).

My interests branched out into the ways in which slavery served as a delivery system for labor in medieval city states. In *Past and Present* in 1995 I published “Ancillary evidence for the decline of medieval slavery,” which won the Berkshire Prize for Best Article in 1996. It explored the long term consequences of women remaining enslaved through the medieval centuries in light of Marc Bloch’s earlier optimism regarding a decline in slavery in the Early Medieval West, see *Slavery and Serfdom in the Middle Ages*, trans. William R. Beer (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975). In 2001 I published another article on the tradition of revived Roman law that policed domestic slavery, entitled “*Qui natus est de ancilla mea.*” One theme runs through these two last-mentioned studies; whereas the legal definition of *servi* or serf evolved over the medieval centuries, *ancilla*, or female slave, displayed a remarkable stability of meaning profoundly affecting women slaves and their offspring.

In Part Four I turn to the current wave of medieval women’s history and history of gender dating from the 1970s, which regards itself as a self-consciously revisionist project. Those practicing the new women’s history recognized that received historical traditions prevented consideration of women; “public” history concerned with the emergence of state systems, wars, and treaties ignored women and regarded them as the underpinnings of history with an unchanging, thus ahistorical, past. The articles that follow demonstrate efforts to create a place for medieval women in historical study by demonstrating that women possessed dynamic histories worth study.

In 1981 I completed an investigation of the Annales school of historical writing seeking some new methodologies for pursuing women’s history, “The Annales school and feminist history.” A general overview of the contributions of American historians to the history of women appeared in 1989 in “A new

dimension? North American scholars contribute their perspective.” I also investigated new thinking about gender in twelfth century Italy in an article for *Thought* that year, “From women to woman: new thinking about gender, c. 1140.” Gender as a field of inquiry requiring the tools of the linguistic turn in history was the topic of “The chase after theory” in 1992. “Dame Trot” (1975), included in Part Five reflects these concerns as well.

A review of literature on the history of medieval women and gender from 1972 to 1992 was my keynote address for a Center of Medieval and Renaissance Studies Conference at the University of Binghamton in 1992. My assignment was to assess changes from the time of the first conference on the Role of Medieval Woman, at Binghamton in 1972. My address was titled “The three-decade transformation: medieval women and the course of history.” Unfortunately the volume in which it was to appear with other papers from the conference was never published, so this article appears here in print for the first time. Part Four ends with a study of the life and career of Eleanor Shipley Duckett (1880–1976), a Cambridge University trained Latinist who changed her field from Classical Studies to early medieval history and wrote about women.

Beyond “Dame Trot” that appeared in 1975 in the year *Signs* began publishing, I have included two brief biographical works in Part Five. “Benci del Buono and family” reflects my enduring interest in this Florentine businessman who restored his family’s fortunes through trade in the Adriatic world. I have employed his life as illustration in two books, *A State of Deference*, (University of Pennsylvania, 1987) and *Gilding the Market* (University of Pennsylvania, 2006). This previously unpublished study draws together my findings on Benci, his marriage and Florentine family. Lastly “Maria of Venice (1379-1399)” sets this Dominican tertiary’s *Vita* in the context of law, economy, and society in late medieval Venice. A brief version of this study focused primarily on law appeared in “Satisfying the laws: *legenda* of Maria of Venice (1379-1399)” in *Law and the Illicit in Medieval Society*, eds Ruth Maso Karras, Joel Kaye, and E. Ann Matter (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), pp. 197–210.

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