

Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, ed. *A History of Women in the West, Vol. 2: Silences of the Middle Ages*. Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1992. Pp. x, 575. Cloth, \$29.95.

Medieval sources often ignored women or viewed them through male eyes, creating problems for historians. This collection of integrated essays, first published in Italy in 1990, is a new entry into the growing number of works dealing with women in the medieval West. Unlike some collections of essays, *Silences of the Middle Ages* was prepared so that the chapters fit together as a coherent whole. The twelve chapters are organized around four themes: Norms of Control, Family and Social Strategies, Vestiges and Images of Women, and Women's Words. Aside from three chronological chapters, the approach is a thematic one designed to explicate how women were portrayed, how their conduct was regulated, and how they responded.

The first section, composed of five chapters, examines how medieval men saw women and how they prescribed correct conduct for women. Appropriately, the clerical depiction of women is the subject of the first chapter by Jacques Dalarun. While he demonstrates some change over time, the clergy maintained a largely misogynistic stance in its view of women. Claude Thomasset follows with the medical view of women, one that depicted women's nature as often contradictory, but one that was also a male fantasy at times, uninformed by reality. Carla Casagrande details how the classification of women in society was used to enforce male hegemony, emphasizing that women could not be their own guardians. Silvana Vecchio turns to marriage in her chapter, "The Good Wife." The focus then moves to fashion with Diane Owen Hughes's analysis of the means used to regulate women's fashions and how some women were able to circumvent such regulations.

The second part is a chronological treatment of women's history from the fifth to the fifteenth centuries. Suzanne Fonay Wemple treats the period from the fifth to the tenth centuries, emphasizing the impact of Roman law and Germanic custom in defining the status of women. Paulette L'Hermit-Leclercq follows with a treatment of women in the central Middle Ages and Claudia Opitz emphasizes the hardening of rules surrounding single women in the late Middle Ages. A chapter by Georges Duby deals with the largely positive impact that courtly love had on the status of women from the central Middle Ages onward.

The third section examines non-written evidence. Françoise Piponnier reviews archaeological evidence and Chiara Frugoni inquires into the artistic depiction of women.

Danielle Régnier-Bohler's final chapter returns to the perplexing question of how to recover women's true voice. In it she treats various women writers, especially mystics, as one means of breaking through the largely male domination of the sources.

Overall, there is a good deal of value here. The authors are leading scholars in the areas they treat, the translations from French and Italian are felicitous, the bibliography is reasonably complete, and the coverage is sound. Specialists might find some quibbles, for example Opitz may overestimate the capacity granted to women to practice medicine in countries other than late medieval France, but such quibbles are to be expected in a work that assays to cover as much ground as this one does.

In spite of the strengths of *Silences of the Middle Ages*, teachers searching for a book to assign for a medieval history class might be better served by turning to David Herlihy's *Opera Mulierbra* or Margaret Wade Labarge's *Small Sound of the Trumpet*. The essentially non-chronological format of the book is both a strength and a weakness. The chronological chapters are necessarily brief, but this brevity may limit their effectiveness for a student wishing to gain an overview of women in the Middle Ages. Even though the authors sprinkle their work with examples, the concreteness of Labarge and Herlihy's works may be more helpful to students. Nonetheless, some of the chapters, such as Frugoni's treatment of women in art or Thomasset's examination of the medical view of women, are highly useful summaries of the literature. *Silences of the Middle Ages* is a helpful work for students to dip into for condensed summaries of the literature rather than a book to be read in its entirety.