

The final two chapters in the book, describing life after the conquest, are supplied by Cecily Clark and Elizabeth Williams, neither of whom continues the affirmative stance taken by Fell in the first seven. Clark makes no allowance for the "armed-camp" nature of Norman society in the post-conquest years, and, in spite of her numerous citations of the active rôle taken by women in the commercial life of the growing urban centres, she continues the presumption of inferiority which infests contemporary attitudes toward women's social rôle throughout history. When Williams dismisses the rôle of women in Old English poetry, "where she must be prepared to accept a dynastic marriage and is characteristically seen as a focus of hospitality in a ceremonial, male-centred society," (p. 172), one wonders whether she has in fact read the first seven chapters of the book.

If *and the impact of 1066* fails to continue its promise, in *Women in Anglo-Saxon England*, Christine Fell has made a valuable contribution to the much-needed revaluation of women's historic rôle, and, indeed, to the growing body of social history in general. If one may twist the epigram, "Certe amo te, Sabidal!".

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The Marriage Bargain: Women and Dowries in European History, Marian A. Kaplan (ed.). *New York: Harrington Park Press, 1985, pp. 182*

Five essays, four of them reprints, which examine the nature and use of dowry in specific parts of Western Europe from the eleventh to the fourteenth and in the nineteenth to the twentieth centuries, are assembled in this book, itself a reprint of another work also published in 1985. Several themes recur in two or more essays. Dowry is presented in its broadest sense as the provision made by her natal family for a daughter. Supplying a dowry may require sacrifice by one or more men of that family. The payment of

dowry as money satisfies the interests of men in stable and expanding societies. Dowry is a symbol and extension of relations between father and daughter and between brother and sister, and even between mother and daughter and between sister and sister. Dowry is pre-mortem inheritance and often a form of disinheritance. Dowry inflation occurs in periods of economic expansion or when there is a shortage of men for eligible women. Women have contributed to the creation of their own dowries, particularly in recent times. Dowry, or part thereof, may exist as labour intensive handwork, but when women have access to money, trousseaux are likely to be bought. In modern times, a woman's education and training may be her dowry. The original purpose of dowry — to maintain a daughter outside her natal home — has often been realized and exceeded, as dowry has provided a key to feminine independence, particularly in widowhood.

The first two essays consider the Western Mediterranean regions in the Medieval to Renaissance periods. In the first and most comprehensive essay of the collection, "From Bride-price to Dowry in Mediterranean Europe" (1978), Diane Owen Hughes describes the rise and fall of bridegift and the complementary fall and rise of dowry on the northern littoral of the Mediterranean in the period from the Barbarian invasions to the Renaissance. Between the fifth and eleventh centuries, Germanic law and practices — or variations of these practices — prevailed. The husband gave a gift to his bride's father and a morning gift to his wife in recognition of her lost virginity, and her father transferred the husband's gift to his daughter once the marriage was established. With the establishment of such practices, woman ceased to be a chattel and as a wife came to enjoy relatively independent status. In widowhood she could enjoy something close to dower, in the form of the usufruct of her husband's estate and sometimes even a portion of the estate. The wife of a living husband thus exercised control over her

own property; as a widow her rights extended so far as to infringe on the inheritance rights of her husband's family. The woman also remained an heir to her patrilineal property. Moreover, the morning gift component enabled a man to claim sexual rights over his wife from that wife herself; relations between the couple mattered more to the couple than those with kin.

All this changed drastically in the High Middle Ages with the rise of towns and the recovery of Roman law. Morning gift and counter dowry were sacrificed for dowry, usually paid in money which could readily be absorbed into a man's estate for his lifetime. A father determined, by the amount of the dowry, the future husband and social status of his daughter. The use of dowry meant that the relations of the couple with the wife's kinsmen had a greater impact on the couple than the connection between man and wife. In general, a woman's inheritance rights to the property of her own family declined; her right to inherit or transmit real property almost disappeared. Women remained dependent upon their fathers for their place in society except during the Renaissance when dowry inflation for the highest ranks of society promoted the interdependence of father and daughter, as the latter's marriage came to enhance the social status of the former. Ironically, women's patrilineal inheritance rights may at that point have begun to be restored, and with those rights some independence from their husbands. In a society characterized by the use of dowry, a woman's sexual purity was the greatest prize of her husband. But at the same time, a husband's sexual rights over his wife declined, the gallant flourished and cuckolds became increasingly familiar.

Seeking to explain women's loss of economic and social prerogatives in the period prior to the Renaissance, Eleanor S. Riemer, in "Women, Dowries, and Capital Investment in Thirteenth-Century Siena", published now for the first time, engages in a case study of the use some women made of their dowries. In the thirteenth century,

at men's insistence, money dowry was preferred to dowry including real property. Moreover, under Roman law in force from 1176, women were no longer subject to guardianship and could make independent decisions about the use of their dowries. Consequently, women had the money and independence to participate in the growing capitalistic economy of Siena. Widows were more likely than other women to be major investors; they would enjoy the full use of their dowries, even if this meant having to go to law to redeem mortgages against their husbands' estates.

While their economic independence lasted, women of thirteenth-century Siena used it constructively. They entered into partnerships with other women, engaged in transactions involving real property, lent money and left money to other women, including daughters, other female relations and friends. Widows were especially likely to choose women heirs. Affection was the guiding principle of many such decisions.

As the economy grew and time passed, men sought larger dowries for their future wives. Other men often had to give these larger dowries to their daughters and restore their mothers' dowries at a moment when, being at the height of their own careers, they desired to invest large amounts of capital in their own enterprises. Many such men must have been very hard-pressed. Late thirteenth-century dowry inflation may well have contributed to general inflation and been a cause of severe dislocation in the Sienese economy. Unable to limit the size of dowries, men passed laws to curb women's free use of their dotal property. Wealth belonging to men and controlled by men would be invested in the commercial economy of the early fourteenth century — and beyond.

The remaining essays study dowry in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Italy, Germany and Greece. A particular dimension of the dowry is studied by Jane Schneider in "Trousseau as

Treasure: Some Contradictions of Late Nineteenth Century Change in Sicily" (1981). In this period the major part of an artisan or peasant woman's dowry, even if she should bring real property into the marriage, was her trousseau, which served an economic function not unlike that of money dowry. Such trousseaux consisted of so many *letti* or "beds", including bedsheets, pillowcases and a bedcover; whitewear for the bride; and perhaps a supply of towels and tablecloths, all carefully decorated with embroidery or lace.

The involvement of women of the popular classes in the creation of such household goods and "decencies" did not, as has been argued elsewhere, contribute to hard times by making female labour unavailable for income-producing activities or preventing agrarian and other forms of economic development. The production of such trousseaux by artisan and peasant women actually occurred in the depressed economic conditions of the late nineteenth century, which also prompted the departure of men from Sicily. Sicilian trousseaux consisting primarily of labour-intensive handwork remained symbols of social status as well as of the purity of a girl's life in the lengthy period preceding a necessarily late marriage. But above all, *letti* were multidimensional and multifunctional forms of treasure, readily convertible into a medium of exchange. In due course, education and vocational training would become the dowry of many Sicilian women. But before that happened, a woman's possession of so many *letti* assured that she would contribute to her husband's and her children's welfare. *Letti* constituted stored wealth which a family could readily use in an emergency.

Marian A. Kaplan provides a study of the use of money dowry and of trousseau by middle class Jews in "For Love or Money: the Marriage Strategies of Jews in Imperial Germany" (1983). Most women in late nineteenth-century Germany had been socialized and educated for mar-

riage and only for marriage; Jewish women were no exception. Despite new notions that love should be the foundation of marriage, most marriages involved financial negotiations between families. Again, Jews were no exception. Everything depended on the size of the dowry the Jewish woman brought into marriage. Dowry could consist of real property, jewellery, cash and investments. A woman would also provide a trousseau consisting of linen, clothing, tableware, kitchen utensils and probably furniture. Hand-embroidered linens formed a staple part of the trousseau until the turn of the century, when store-bought items began to be substituted for such linens. Trousseau inflation followed.

Dowries were highest in the cities, with Berlin ahead of the rest. Young Jewish women with meagre monetary resources might have to move to a small town or even marry a Gentile to maintain social status if their dowries were too small. Single men but not single women left towns to live in larger cities; as a result, there was a surplus of women in small towns. Dowries remained essential for marriage in all social categories; only the amounts declined with social status. Dowries were traded for the financial position of the bridgeroom. The professions ranked ahead of business; the dowry helped to establish the bridgroom in his station in life. Cousins might marry to keep money in the family and to consolidate businesses. Dowry inflation took place throughout Germany over the period.

Jewish marriage practices till 1918 or the 1920s thus reflected the importance of wealth to the middle class and also the extent to which Jews resisted complete assimilation into German society. While Jewish marriages remained economic transactions from which both partners were to derive benefit, they were also intended to perpetuate Jewish families and maintain Jewish religion and community. Capital and wealth could buy security in a hostile environment. As anti-Semitism grew in the late

nineteenth century, Jews had good reason to seek both in the form of the dowry.

In the final essay entitled, "Dowry in Modern Greece: An Institution at the Crossroads Between Persistence and Decline" (1972), Jane Lambiri-Dimaki considers the legal and social aspects of dowry in Modern Greece, thereby linking this essay with the first two. Among very poor and very rich women, dowry has recently favoured early marriage, though it has been an obstacle to early marriage in the middle classes. Among the urban middle classes marriage has been delayed to permit a woman to finish her education and gain a job to enable her to provide her own dowry; in this way the institution of dowry has encouraged female emancipation as well as later marriage. But the use of dowry in Modern Greece has been subject to abuses, including the likelihood that hypergamy would occur for men and hypogamy would occur among women, or, in other words, that men would gain and women lose social and economic status through marriage accompanied by the payment of a dowry, whether by the woman's family or by the woman herself. New trends observable in the early 1970s were judged likely to undermine the dowry system and to create a situation in which a woman's dowry is her education and her work.

Any of the five essays could stand alone; as a collection they are less satisfying. They permit none of the precise comparisons which would be possible if they dealt with the same place over time or with similar social categories in different places during the same period. Together the essays tell us very little about general trends in the various cultures over the vast period they collectively study. Indeed, the places and periods omitted may be more important than those included; axial periods in the social history of the places studied are not considered. Thus, Medieval France but not early modern France, Medieval but not Renaissance Siena, late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Sicily and Germany but not Norman Sicily or Reformation

Germany, contemporary but not classical or even post-Turkish Greece are examined.

Other more pertinent omissions occur. Despite Jack Goody's challenge (1983), neither Hughes nor Riemer has considered the role of the Church in promoting the use of dowry. It is surprising that the editor did not require an endnote or postscript on this subject from Hughes. And what of men's misuse of their wives' dowries? The silence of the last three essays on this subject raises the question of whether we will have to continue to depend entirely on modern European literature to describe this phenomenon.

A magisterial study of the nature and use of dowry in Western Europe from the late Middle Ages to the present would be a welcome addition to sources for the study of women's history. This collection of essays should not be mistaken for such a study. But if such a book should ever be written, its author will have to incorporate the findings of these interesting, carefully researched and well-written essays into that larger synthesis.

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The Captured Womb: A History Of The Medical Care Of Pregnant Women. Ann Oakley. Oxford: Basil Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 1984, pp. 352

Ann Oakley does it again. In *The Captured Womb*, as in her earlier books on domestic work and childbearing, she pioneers in her feminist analysis of an aspect of social life which has been used as a means of furthering the domination of women. *The Captured Womb* is an enthralling and painful book to read.

It is enthralling because Oakley pieces together the framework of social analysis and