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Paolella, Christopher. Human Trafficking in Medieval Europe: Slavery, Sexual Exploitation and Prostitution

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Paolella, Christopher.

Human Trafficking in Medieval Europe: Slavery, Sexual Exploitation and Prostitution.

Social Worlds of Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2020. Pp. 278 + 7 b/w ill. ISBN 9789463723336 (hardcover) €105.

Christopher Paolella's ambitious monograph covers human trafficking and the slave trade through the Middle Ages from the consequences of the fall of the Roman Empire to the late medieval sex trade. It is a large-scale study of Europe that uses archival documents (mostly in the UK and France) and secondary sources, focusing on specific and individual examples to illustrate the lived experiences of medieval human trafficking. While the study has sections on the Mediterranean and eastern Europe, its focus is on western Europe, particularly areas north of the Alps and the Pyrenees during the High and Late Middle Ages (1000–1350). Through an examination of human trafficking that resulted in slavery—both legal and illegal—Paolella offers a study of medieval human trafficking and sexual exploitation with an eye on repeating rhythms and patterns that continue to occur today.

Paolella argues four main points, summarized in his conclusion. The first is that human trafficking can only be combatted by a strong, centralized authority committed to its end. The second point is that human trafficking does not have a fixed methodology but is ever changing in the face of opposition. These two points make the chaos of late antiquity the perfect site for human trafficking but also expose the complicity of early modern authorities to sexual exploitation. A strong central government does not necessarily mean the end of enslavement; Paolella demonstrates that most western European cities with strong municipal identities endorsed the sexual exploitation of the vulnerable to protect their honourable women.

The last two arguments emerge in later chapters that consider the early modern period: 1) human trafficking patterns changed dramatically north of the Pyrenees and Alps over the High Middle Ages, and 2) this change was not a break from earlier modes of human trafficking but was linked by the continuity of the experiences of women and children. His focus on gender as the locus of human trafficking is a welcome one, although a more thorough exploration of gender's intersections with otherness and identity would have been welcome.

Paolella's study reads like the first book out of a dissertation, but this is not necessarily a negative attribute. The arguments are clearly stated, and each chapter works towards the arguments rather than getting lost in the details. The monograph is organized mostly chronologically, although Paolella does inject a thematic chapter on gender in the middle of this chronology. The first chapter outlines early medieval slave trading from late antiquity to the change into localized trade in the seventh and eighth centuries. The second chapter, "Stuffing the Beaches," continues chronologically from the first into the early medieval period between the ninth and eleventh centuries. Each geographical region is covered in a section, from Italy to Scandinavia, and the role that governments played in each region is explored. The third chapter takes a turn into a thematic discussion of gender and gendered differences in human trafficking. It is the shortest chapter but covers from late antiquity to the thirteenth century in terms of how women were trafficked both locally and internationally. It suggests that sexual violence was part and parcel of human trafficking and the slave trade in the Middle Ages. By the fourth chapter, Paolella returns to a chronological approach and discusses the high-medieval pivot from agricultural slavery to sexual labour. In addition, the nature of sex trafficking changed as western Europe internalized its Latin Christian identity. Enslavement was then done to non-Latin Christians as the formation of an "other." His discussion of prostitution and sexual exploitation plays well into his last chapter on the late medieval and early modern sex trade which focuses specifically on the area north of the Alps, where the expansion of the money economy led to a commercial sex industry sanctioned by officials. The ambitious study pays off in the conclusion where Paolella's main arguments are reiterated and convincingly argued.

Paolella brings a welcome theoretical framework to his analysis of human trafficking, and rightly positions gender as the main intersection where these issues must be analyzed. His use of Jennifer Glancy's thesis that slavery is a relationship of domination and is inherently gendered provides his study with modern and medieval applications. In particular, Paolella argues that women and children could expect sexual violation in slavery and trafficking, while men, although liable to be sexually assaulted during their captivity, did not necessarily experience it as a foregone conclusion. Using women and children's experiences, Paolella provides a link between early medieval slavery and its change to an urban nature in the late Middle Ages.

The monograph also provides stories of women in modern day America who have been victims of human trafficking, sexual exploitation, and sexual slavery. These are interspersed through the first and last chapters of the text in places where the same themes reoccur from the medieval to the present day. In this way, Paoella makes his study's relevance clear: human trafficking is an ongoing issue that requires attention to both its history and its present-day occurrences.

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Persson, Fabian.

Women at the Early Modern Swedish Court: Power, Risk, and Opportunity.

Gendering the Late Medieval and Early Modern World. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2021. Pp. 340. ISBN 978-9-4637-2520-0 (hardcover) €109.

In *Women at the Early Modern Swedish Court: Power, Risk, and Opportunity*, Fabian Persson creates a map of the foreign and national women appointed at, or members of, the Swedish court during the early modern period. This extensive study is divided into three main parts, covering many queens, princesses, chamber maids, maids of honour, and more—all connected to the Swedish elite over a period of three hundred years, roughly from the 1500s to the 1800s. While previous studies on the Swedish court have primarily focused on individual women, Persson seeks to explore a much broader view, revealing what possibilities and restrictions royal and courtly women faced in terms of agency and power.

The first part of the study, entitled “Outsiders,” gives the impression that it will cover rare findings: about ordinary people, the peasants and farmers, and the poor. However, depending on how one interprets the author's intention, the title promises more than it delivers. Certainly, Persson does manage to tell a small piece of this rare, previously untold history, but the focus is still—naturally, due to the material preserved—on the court's efforts to provide help for the less privileged. This task was taken more seriously by female regents than male, an issue discussed with particular interest in relation to Queen