

changes created the centralized Spanish court, with the emergence of surging visions for the new servant of this state: the Spanish courtier.

Through the rise and fall from preeminence of the early modern Spanish court, Armon attributes the generic atomization of courtesy literature to the emphasis on form at the expense of function. Taking the concept of “strategies” from Michel de Certeau, her work identifies three masculine virtues—fame, dissimulation, and adaptability—that the man of court will adopt. These virtues are the main focus of the book, and the search for unity in the different texts analyzed by Armon is both fructiferous and thought provoking, although at times she forces into the same category texts that were obviously intended for different publics—as in her pairing of the socializing advice of *El Galateo español* (The Spanish gallant) with Saavedra Fajardo’s political emblems. At the end, Armon relies on Elias’s notion of change through repetition of acts, while criticizing his reliance on French examples, consequently advocating for the importance, originality, and transcendence of Spanish courtly models.

Armon perspicaciously decouples the political and economic notion of imperial fall after 1640 from its unwarranted extension to a crisis of masculinity. Finally, she employs another novel strategy in gathering texts from different genres under the common rubric of their attention to masculine conduct. As a whole, this study constitutes a welcome contribution to the history of masculinity in early modern Spain.

Jose Rico-Ferrer, *Wayne State University*

doi:10.1017/rqx.2019.301

The Crown of Aragon: A Singular Mediterranean Empire. Flocel Sabaté, ed.
Brill’s Companions to European History 12. Leiden: Brill, 2017. xiv + 564 pp. \$257.

While the origin of the Crown of Aragon can be traced back to the dynastic union of the Kingdom of Aragon and the County of Catalonia, in 1137—giving birth to the Catalan-Aragonese Confederation—this Brill Companion to European History begins in the post-Carolingian period and ends in the early eighteenth century. The majority of the nineteen essays focus on the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, but the longitudinal approach effectively circumscribes a nationally centered narrative. This, as Flocel Sabaté rightfully points out, has led to a “teleological view of history” that has obscured, and even erased, the history of even as powerful a player as the Crown of Aragon (vii).

The Crown of Aragon was not technically an empire—only Byzantium or the Holy Roman Empire had the right to the title—but its expansion certainly qualifies it as such. At its largest, it included the Principality of Catalonia, the kingdoms of Aragon, Valencia, Sicily, Naples, and Sardinia, and the Balearic Islands, and it had control over the duchies of Athens and Neopatra in the Eastern Mediterranean. Its singularity

comes from its major contradiction of being “an economic power house” in the Mediterranean—a second generation of merchants following the Italians—albeit with a decentralized political system that gave way to a mosaic of jurisdictions and autonomous local political institutions (515).

The marginalization of the Aragonese territories after the Habsburgs succeeded to the double Trastámara inheritance (Castile and Aragon), only strengthened the medieval model of participative government, culminating with the well-known Revolt of the Catalans (1640). But it was actually the settlement of Utrecht (1713) at the end of the War of the Spanish Succession that geographically severed the Crown of Aragon, with the permanent loss of Naples, Sicily, Sardinia, and Minorca. The abolition of the political traditions of local autonomous government with the adoption of the *Nova Planta* by the Bourbon dynasty, the new ruling dynasty since 1700, caused an important part of the Crown of Aragon’s identity since its inception to cease to exist. The year 1716 thus provides a coherent and satisfying ending point to this volume, effectively avoiding the worn-out—and obscuring—rise-and-decline paradigm of imperial histories.

Regional coverage is also effective and balanced, and while the volume does not shy away from identifying Catalonia as the dominant player within the Crown, other regions—the islands and constitutive kingdoms of Valencia, Aragon, Naples—receive meaningful attention. Scholars of Jewish and Islamic history will also find the volume useful; not only are there chapters specifically dedicated to these groups, but references to them are incorporated throughout the volume, as an integral part of the history of the Crown. There are some excellent chapters, such as that by Lola Badia and Isabel Grifol on Jewish influence on the royal court during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. A lucid concluding essay by David Abulafia reminds us that Valencia became a laboratory where Christian rulers figured out how to deal with the Muslim population, the implications of which lasted for centuries and were felt in the Mediterranean and even across the Atlantic. In turn, this highlights the advantages of producing historical narratives focusing on process rather than outcomes. Economic and cultural historians will find much useful material on urban manufacturing and long-distance trade, which facilitated the dissemination of Aragonese culture, and solid discussions of Aragon’s role in the spice and silk trades. Original maps, such as the ones depicting the Aragonese consulates in the Mediterranean, add to the value of the collection. All the authors place the political, literary, linguistic, artistic, architectural, regional, social, and economic history of the Crown of Aragon within a larger regional history of the Mediterranean, making this a recommended read for medievalists, Renaissance scholars, and early modernists.

Women and gender receive marginal coverage in the volume, and it is surprising that no specific chapters were commissioned on the topic. This is particularly problematic given that recent and groundbreaking work on medieval and Aragonese queenship (by Theresa Earenfight and others) has been so critical in the reconceptualization of

kingship and monarchy. Despite this major blind spot, this important volume will be of great value to any student of European history.

Silvia Z. Mitchell, *Purdue University*
doi:10.1017/rqx.2019.302

Midwife to the Queen of France: "Diverse Observations." Louise Bourgeois.
Ed. Alison Klairmont Lingo. Trans. Stephanie O'Hara. *The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe: The Toronto Series* 56; *Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies* 520. Toronto: Iter Press; Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2017. xx + 452 pp. \$59.95.

What is not to love about a book penned by a powerful, self-possessed midwife to the royals of France in the early seventeenth century that begins with a strong swipe in verse at potential slanderers; poetically praises a who's who of influential players of the court; weaves together multiple, curious gynecological observations and remedies, interspersed with remarkably detailed witnesses to noble births of dramatic, and at times highly comedic, proportions; and finishes with a remedy to soothe vomiting? It is with great joy that we announce the birth of Alison Klairmont Lingo and Stephanie O'Hara's long-awaited, beautifully presented edition of Louise Bourgeois's work *Diverse Observations*. Swaddled in impeccably researched scholarly commentary and aglow in its smart, readable translation, this important opus awaits our visitation with great promise.

The editor's claim that Bourgeois's work represents a "landmark text in the history of medicine" (12) is easy to accept, given the wide-reaching and comprehensive scope for not only the author's contemporaries but also for today's readers eager to learn more of the gendered landscape of the medical professions in the early modern period. *Diverse Observations*, presented and translated here in its entirety, originally appeared in three volumes across the span of Louise Bourgeois's illustrious career as midwife in the most rarefied circles of Parisian society—a career that made her present at several royal births. Bourgeois, not immune to engaging playfully in the metaphorical richness of her subject, declares in "To the Reader," "The birth, then, of this book, a sample of my practice, is a school that teaches everyone the admirable effects of the divinity of Medicine married to the midwife's industriousness" (92). Her previous entreaty to the queen has prepared this project boldly: "It is also reasonable that I be the first woman of my art to take pen in hand to describe the knowledge that God gave me, in order to make known the mistakes that can occur, & the best way to practice the art [of midwifery] well" (90). Her mission is thus pedagogical, professional, and urgent in its claim to save women's lives from an industry shrouded in ignorance, superstition, and theory-based medicine, unchecked by the practical experience that Bourgeois has to offer as a seasoned midwife.