

Seymour's arrogance and the assumption of her guilt in the death of Thomas Seymour is mistaken. While acknowledging the duchess's political influence and her acute sense of her elevated status, Warnicke places her actions in the larger context of the plots against her husband and the competition for patronage at Edward VI's court. Her chapter provides a compelling portrait of the duchess as an important religious patron in her own right. Similarly, Lettice Dudley was also targeted by polemicists incensed with the power waged by her husband, Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester. Warnicke discusses at length the limitations of court gossip and highlights the problems with such evidence. As she demonstrates, charges of adultery against the countess are based largely upon her husband's reputation for philandering and the questionable claim that her loose-fitting wedding attire was a sign of her pregnancy. Through Warnicke's deft analysis, the countess emerges in this chapter as an influential matriarch and a dedicated Protestant patroness.

Warnicke's final two chapters focus upon Jane Colt and Alice Middleton, the wives of Thomas More. Warnicke disputes scholarship that depicts Jane as an obstinate wife and finds no evidence to support such a claim. Rather, she shows this interpretation misapplies references in literary texts to Jane in order to highlight her husband's saintly character. Alice Middleton's reputation as a shrew is likewise problematic and based upon misinterpretations of Erasmus's works and on the opinions of William Roper, whose legal disputes with his mother-in-law clearly shaped his negative depiction of her. Warnicke's careful scrutiny of Alice reveals instead an obedient and loving wife who carefully managed her household and exemplified the modesty and piety expected of Tudor women.

Warnicke succeeds admirably in her aim to provide more careful assessments of these women. One of the strengths of her monograph is her astute scrutiny of the limitations of the evidence used to malign these women, albeit some chapters are more compelling than others. Her monograph offers a valuable reassessment of women like Anne Seymour, Lettice Dudley, and Alice More and ought to encourage more careful study of their careers. While Tudor historians may not agree with her conclusions, Warnicke's text offers a thorough and insightful study that is a valuable addition to scholarship on queenship, political power, and gender in early modern England.

Melissa Franklin Harkrider, Wheaton College

LOUISE J. WILKINSON. *Eleanor de Montfort: A Rebel Countess in Medieval England*. London: Continuum, 2012. Pp. 232. \$34.95 (cloth).
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In this straightforward but engaging and scholarly biography of an often-mentioned but rarely studied thirteenth-century noblewoman, Louise J. Wilkinson illuminates how Eleanor de Montfort, like her grandmother Eleanor of Aquitaine, became embroiled in both family intrigue and national politics. Wilkinson's approach to exploring Eleanor's life is strictly chronological, but she accomplishes much more than a utilitarian retelling of the facts. Readers are treated to a vivid illustration of the worldview, lifestyle, and personal, political, and legal affairs of a medieval noblewoman.

As the daughter of King John and the sister of King Henry III, Eleanor's matrimonial importance was understood early. The Montfort surname that Wilkinson bestows upon Eleanor in her title came from her second, more noteworthy, marriage, but Eleanor first wed one of England's wealthiest bachelors, the younger William Marshal. Wilkinson highlights how, despite the elder Marshal's chivalric fame, there was concern on both sides about an unequal union (Eleanor's two sisters had royal spouses). She postulates that the famous

History of William Marshal was commissioned by his heir in part to bolster his ancestral credentials prior to cementing the espousals.

William Marshal died when Eleanor was sixteen. Wilkinson's two chapters on Eleanor's early widowhood underpin her analysis and her most original insights into Eleanor's personality and how her position and interests intersected with issues of national importance. Wilkinson argues that when Eleanor chose to become a vowess three years after Marshal's death, she was motivated by neither grief nor spirituality, but instead she hoped that entering chaste widowhood would help her attain and protect her dower. The issue of Eleanor's dower overshadows all subsequent events in Eleanor's life, and Wilkinson clarifies for nonspecialists the legal principles of widows' portions along with the difficulties even prominent noblewomen experienced trying to achieve rights to dower.

In the second half of Eleanor's biography, Wilkinson introduces Simon de Montfort and examines how and why Eleanor broke her vow of chastity to wed an indebted third son, albeit one with illustrious family connections and a claim to the earldom of Leicester. Wilkinson explores why both Eleanor and her brother Henry III favored the match, despite Eleanor's previous vow of chastity, Simon's foreignness, and his comparatively lesser status. Eleanor was able to enjoy motherhood, and she gained an ally at court (where Simon and Henry were initially on friendly terms) to help her continued pursuit of her dower. Such cordial relations at court were brief, as scholars of thirteenth-century England know well. Wilkinson tells the story of Henry III's conflict with his barons, led by Simon, from Eleanor's perspective. Thus we learn how Eleanor lost her position as favored royal sister and turned to her sister-in-law's mother, Beatrice of Provence, to mediate. Most significantly, we learn how Eleanor's continued pursuit of her share of the Marshal inheritance was central to the breakdown of both family relations and national unity. In highlighting the significance of family wealth to Montfort's position in the reform movement, Wilkinson follows John Maddicott's scholarship, which emphasizes Montfort's acquisitiveness and his personal grudge against a king and a brother-in-law who neither settled Eleanor's dower nor offered her a suitable dowry (J. R. Maddicott, *Simon de Montfort*, Cambridge University Press, 2004). Despite conflicts between the Montforts and the Crown, Wilkinson documents the financial and political grants made by Henry to both Eleanor and Simon, demonstrating that tension was not irreversible from its outset but instead oscillated.

Although the analysis of Eleanor's quest for dower is illuminating, one wonders if it looms too large in Wilkinson's analysis. Because it is one of the most traceable aspects of Eleanor's life, appearing with regularity in surviving royal documents, Wilkinson perhaps implicitly, not explicitly, overstates its importance by omitting other aspects of the barons' fractured relationships with Henry, thereby simplifying diverse national and international issues. Moreover, when addressing Eleanor's private life at home, Wilkinson unfortunately has to employ qualifying words like "probably" and "usually" to discuss Eleanor's leisure activities or expressions of piety; although primary sources inform us about the lifestyles of other noblewomen, few shed light on this aspect of Eleanor's life.

One source that does provide a glimpse into Eleanor's private world is her sole surviving household roll, one of the most important early household accounts from medieval England. In a fascinating final chapter depicting the events of the tumultuous year 1265 from Eleanor's standpoint, Wilkinson wisely considers this document in its proper chronological context, to illustrate this year's momentous events (the portion that survives covers February through August 1265), rather than employing the roll elsewhere in the text to describe a noblewoman's daily life. In a year that began with the Montforts at the height of power and ended with Eleanor in exile in France after Simon's death, many of the purchases made, the visitors hosted, and the issues of concern recorded in this document were surely unique to these months. Wilkinson's discussion of the accounts and Eleanor's role in personal and national events before and after the battle of Evesham is superb.

In conclusion, Wilkinson has offered up a fine biography of Eleanor de Montfort based upon an impressive assortment of primary texts. Although she does not find major points of contention with historians who have been more focused on the era's men, the concerns and events of the thirteenth century from a noblewoman's perspective are refreshing. Though avoiding much direct engagement with feminist scholars in the debate over female agency or victimization, Wilkinson nevertheless highlights Eleanor's opportunities and involvement rather than portraying her as a pawn in marriage or politics. Finally, with great success, Wilkinson provides an understanding of the wider world of thirteenth-century noblewomen. She discusses Eleanor's childhood, marriages, and role in motherhood in the context of the lives of other women; she places Simon and Eleanor's patronage of mendicants in the wider context of the expansion of these orders; and she analyzes Eleanor's quest for dower alongside the legal and cultural expectations for dower in thirteenth-century England.

Caroline Dunn, Clemson University

DONALD A. YERXA, ed. *British Abolitionism and the Question of Moral Progress in History*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2012. Pp. 320. \$49.95 (cloth). doi:10.1017/jbr.2013.86

The notion that British abolitionism was, in the famous words of nineteenth-century historian W. E. H. Lecky, among “the three or four perfectly virtuous acts recorded in the history of nations,” is as old as the abolitionist movement itself (7). Credit for this virtuous act has frequently been given, not only to the British nation, but also to the evangelical Christianity that many British abolitionists embraced. The abolitionist Thomas Clarkson claimed, in fact, that credit for the abolitionist movement belonged “to Christianity alone” (23). This provocative collection of fourteen essays, with an introduction by editor Donald A. Yerxa, grapples with that historiographic tradition, taking up what Yerxa identifies in his introductory essay as one of the “big questions” facing historians: “Is there moral progress in history?” (2). Yerxa's preoccupation with this question reflects his long-standing concern to establish the role of Providence as an engine of historical change. Yerxa, an emeritus professor at Eastern Nazarene University and a contributing editor to the popular evangelical magazine *Christianity Today*, argued in an essay published by the *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* in 1997 that Christian historians should work to identify the hand of Providence in history. That impulse is visible in this collection, with “moral progress” standing in for the guiding hand of Providence.

Of course, the notion that the credit for abolitionism belongs to the British nation or the reforming spirit of evangelical Christianity has had its critics. Historians have pointed out that the vagaries of the Atlantic sugar economy during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries contributed to the political success of abolitionism, that the persistent rebelliousness of the enslaved lent urgency to abolitionist concessions, that abolitionism provided a reassuring hegemonic counterpoint to the miserable conditions of industrial laborers, and that abolitionists themselves were sometimes deeply racist. Several essays in this volume mention these objections only to brush past them, in order to place the moral virtues of the abolitionist movement once more at the center of analysis. The exemplary moral status of abolitionists is taken for granted by C. Behan McCullagh, who, in reflecting on “the lessons of history,” suggests that the life stories of abolitionists have the potential to inspire history students in a similar manner to “the most inspiring person in human history . . . Jesus of Nazareth” (132).

Although the book's title suggests a focus on British abolitionism, the essays range widely and somewhat disjointedly, commenting on the historian's craft by taking up historical,