

*Dealing with the Dead: Mortality and Community in Medieval and Early Modern Europe.* Thea Tomaini, ed.

Explorations in Medieval Culture 5. Leiden: Brill, 2018. xii + 450 pp. \$172.

The present volume contributes productively to the universal interest in a major aspect of human culture—death—drawing from many different perspectives. The book consists of three parts, the first dealing with the interactions between the dead and the living, mostly in the early and the high Middle Ages (Hilary Fox, Jill Hamilton Clements, Melissa Herrman, Kathryn Maude), although Stephen Gordon also examines cases in the late Middle Ages, pertaining to reflections on allegedly undead individuals. In the second part, the contributors take into view legal approaches to death, especially in the case of criminals and, hence, of executions. Some of the issues addressed here concern questions regarding proper burials (Justin T. Noetzel), the transport of the dead back home for necessary burial (Martina Saltamacchia), burials at sea (Nikki Malain), the concept of the cemetery (Anthony Perron), and the role of the corpse in court proceedings during the Elizabethan period (Thea Tomaini).

Finally, in the third part, the focus rests on funerary art and memento mori. Two studies deserve to be highlighted above the others: Christina Welch examines so-called *transi*, life-like sculptures of the dead, commonly produced for the wealthy and the powerful in late medieval England in a stunningly realistic fashion. And Libby Karlinger Escobedo examines Holbein the Younger's use of the motif of memento mori in many of his paintings and woodcuts, commonly associated with the *vanitas* concept. Spanish funerary art is the topic of Sonsoles García González's essay, but others could be singled out as well.

It is easy to accept Wendy J. Turner's assertion in her afterword that death is a pervasive, transcultural, and trans-chronological entity and, thus, deserves to be studied closely. Many scholars before her and the other contributors to this volume have done just that, perhaps most influentially Paul Binski (*Medieval Death*, 1996). But it seems rather strange that such volumes as *Death in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Times* (ed. A. Classen, 2016) are not listed in the final bibliography or anywhere else (with one exception: Christina Welch, who cites her own study in that volume, which addresses exactly the same topic). However, we can agree with Turner, Tomaini, and other contributors that death represented a concrete presence in medieval and early modern times, both in positive and negative terms.

Most of the articles deal with death and its manifestations in the early and high Middle Ages, including law cases of a child murder and subsequent pogroms against Jews in Norwich as a way to find a culprit (Mary E. Leech). It is also extremely important to consider the common practice of transporting a dead person over long distances for a dignified burial (Martina Saltamacchia) and to take into consideration quite common forms of superstition concerning the living dead, vampires, and ghouls (Stephen Gordon).

Even though this volume brings to light a number of special cases, the basic work on this topic was already done years ago, in a much more comprehensive fashion, by Romedio Schmitz-Esser (*Der Leichnam im Mittelalter* [2014; 2nd ed. 2016]; Carolin Radtke and I recently translated it into English for Brepols). There is hardly any topic pertaining to the corpse that would not have been discussed at great length in this large volume, based on an enormous range of historical, literary, medical, art-historical, architectural, economic, political, and religious sources. Neither the editor nor the contributors engage with German materials; they are obviously not familiar with the German language. The series editor and the publishers have also entirely neglected to take into consideration Schmitz-Esser's seminal study. Granted, *Dealing with the Dead* offers valuable additional insights, complementing Schmitz-Esser's findings, but it is also rather frustrating to observe—and this in our day and age—both how little these young scholars, some of whom are still working on their PhDs, know about international scholarship and that they evidently do not have the necessary linguistic command to take research into consideration that was published in a language other than English.

Even though the subtitle of this book promises studies on early modern Europe, this is hardly the case. Mechanically, however, Tomaini has done an excellent job in editing this volume, which concludes both with a general bibliography and a most welcome index. The included illustrations are of a high quality. The book is clearly structured, and the studies have been well prepared. Nevertheless, the scholarly value is not as high as I would have expected from a book published by Brill, disregarding a whole world of relevant research and reinventing the wheel.

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*Slavery and the Slave Trade in the Eastern Mediterranean (c. 1000–1500 CE)*.  
Reuven Amitai and Christoph Cluse, eds.

Mediterranean Nexus 1100–1700 5. Turnhout: Brepols, 2017. 488 pp. €125.

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This valuable volume studies various facets of the problem of slavery in the later medieval eastern Mediterranean. The supply of slaves to Mamluk Egypt is its primary focus. N. Housley opens part 1, “Religious and Cultural Contexts,” by aptly framing the slave trade neither as a history of norms, which were unstable to begin with, nor simply as one of practice. K. Franz’s “Slavery in Islam” provides an exceptionally useful and clearly written overview: there was no static reality that can be called “Islamic slavery”; the study of this history is complicated empirically (lack of source material, especially for the most common variety, domestic slavery), conceptually (lack of sophisticated Arabic vocabulary denoting the various realities that were subsumed under the word *slavery*), and methodologically (the gulf separating works of intellectual