

their methodologies to a broader sweep of time). More innovative is Mostern's study of regional variations, whereby she exploits GIS-generated maps to show how Song centralization followed different patterns in different parts of the empire. Overall, this book is an important contribution to the field, providing a good account of the role of jurisdictional change in Song governance.

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Ruth Mazo Karras, *Unmarriages: Women, Men, and Sexual Unions in the Middle Ages*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012. Pp. 304. \$49.95 (ISBN 978-0-812-24420-5).
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In *Unmarriages*, Karras challenges the modern notion that “traditional marriage” was the only acceptable sexual relationship between a man and a woman, and the only alternative to a life of solitude in the Middle Ages. The purpose of the study is to uncover the many other variations of opposite-sex unions that existed outside of a church-sanctioned, legally recognized marriage in medieval Europe. Chronologically and geographically, the investigation could not be wider in scope as it dips back into the legacy of ancient Rome up to the Protestant Reformation, and spans from Iberia to Scandinavia. This is an impressive and complex undertaking; however, I think it was a necessary one, because the question at hand is so pertinent in today's society. In effect, Karras has produced a work that liberates the Middle Ages from the misconception that the premodern world was a simpler, and by extension, better, era for marriage.

The introduction of the book offers an extremely helpful analysis of the traditions (Biblical, Roman, and Germanic) that shaped the concepts of Western marriage, and it demonstrates that the Middle Ages never inherited a clear-cut definition from its ancestors. Instead, all of these influences were fairly ambiguous or restrictive in their terminology, rituals, and law codes. From there, the discussion falls into a series of thematic chapters. Chapter 1 addresses the ways in which the Catholic Church attempted to assert its authority over marriage. Here we gain some sense of a historical narrative, in that Karras traces the evolution of the church's policies toward marriage from late antiquity through to the twelfth century; however, much of her attention is placed on specific cases of marital disputes that required the involvement of the clergy. This latter portion includes recognizable figures such as Abelard and Heloise and Philip Augustus and Ingeborg of Denmark. Chapter 2 explores groups of men and women who could not legally marry; what she calls “unequal unions”

of a Christian and a Jew, or a slave and a free person. What binds this section together is the notion that men always had the position of power in these relationships because of sexual double standards. A man had more sexual freedom, and, therefore, no one would judge his encounters with a woman of a lower class, whereas no honorable woman would risk her reputation by forming a union with a man who would diminish her social standing. Chapter 3 deals with priests and the issue of clerical celibacy. She frames the analysis around two pivotal historical moments of debate surrounding whether or not priests could get married: the late eleventh and early twelfth century, and the sixteenth century. Both eras of reform addressed not only priestly marriage, but also the role that priests' female partners played in the deliberation and in society at large. All of these chapters demonstrate Karras' ability to synthesize existing scholarship, published primary source material, and archival documents in an original and persuasive fashion.

The culmination of the book, in my opinion, is Chapter 5, where Karras narrows her focus to Paris at the end of the fifteenth and beginning of the sixteenth century. By this time, marriage was a much better defined institution, both legally and spiritually; however, some Parisians chose, for whatever reason, to enter into nonmarital sexual unions. From a methodological perspective, this section reminded me somewhat of Joanne Ferraro's *Marriage Wars in Late Renaissance Venice* (2001), although Karras is examining criminal records from a Parisian archdeaconry that dealt with sexual and matrimonial cases. I think that Karras, like Ferraro, is successful in teasing out women's voices from these records, thus creating some sense of balance to an otherwise patriarchal perspective of marriage. She provides, for example, the case from 1505 of Marianne la Pierresse, who brought forth a charge against her married lover of 18 years for breach of promise of marriage. From the complications of the case, Karras reveals that Marianne was perhaps consciously manipulating the legal system in order to get back at her lover of close to two decades for not marrying her, and in the process, she walked away with a substantial financial settlement. The details from cases such as this reinforce the concept that many opposite-sex long-term relationships existed outside of marriage, and that no tidy paradigm of "traditional marriage" emerged at the end of the Middle Ages. Throughout the whole text, Karras never oversteps her bounds, as she acknowledges that there is only so far that sources may take us in our exploration of the different types of "pair bonds." As such, this work would be of tremendous valuable to scholars of gender and marriage, but it deserves a much broader audience.

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