



The American Academy of Research Historians of Medieval Spain



AARHMS Newsletter: Spring 2006

The American Academy of Research Historians of Medieval Spain (AARHMS) was founded in 1974 by a small group of historians who shared a common interest in medieval Iberia. Since 1976 it has been an 'affiliated society' of the American Historical Association, and has continuously sponsored research presentations at the AHA annual meetings, at the International Medieval Congress at Kalamazoo, and in other national and regional settings. For further information see: <http://libro.uca.edu/aarhms/index.html>.

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1. From the Editor

Brian A. Catlos • History, University of California Santa Cruz

It is a great honor to accept the blue pencil of the AARHMS Newsletter from Nat Taylor, and I look forward to working with everyone involved in the publication. We are moving to a fully electronic format, so if you are receiving this by regular mail, please send me (bcatlos@ucsc.edu) your e-mail address. Also, although the next issue will not come out until Fall 2006, please feel free to send me information regarding conferences and events, as well as any announcements you care to make or other news which may be of interest to members. Send this at any time and please put "AARHMS" as the subject line.

2. President's Message

Teofilo Ruíz • History, University of California Los Angeles

Dear Colleagues and Friends,

Through the excellent work of Nat Taylor and now Brian Catlos on this electronic newsletter, we have been able to communicate with you about AARHMS' activities and plans for the future. Over the last year and long before that, through the efforts and selfless work of Helen Nader, Jim Brodman, Simon Doubleday, Mark Johnston, Brian Catlos, James D'Emilio, and others, our association has weathered the storm. We ran two well-attended and very high quality sessions at the Annual AHA meeting in Philadelphia this past January. James D'Emilio has organized two sessions at the International Medieval Institute gathering at Kalamazoo this coming May, and we will be well represented at the SSPHS meeting in Kentucky. I am most thankful to all of you for keeping up with your contributions, for attending AARHMS sponsored sessions, and for the hard work that those who put out the newsletter, collect dues, and maintain the association web site have done over the last year.

Ahead of us are several important deadlines. We need to start thinking about the AHA meeting in Atlanta. Soon I will receive requests for panel submissions. Please do let me know as early as possible if you are interested in organizing a panel (that works best) or would like to propose a paper for a panel (I will try to organize panels to fit individual submissions).

For panels and papers at the annual meeting of the AHA (Atlanta, 4 –7 January 2007) write to:

Teofilo F. Ruiz tfruiz@history.ucla.edu

Although the next Kalamazoo meeting will not take place until May 2007, James D'Emilio will also organize panels for that meeting. If you are interested in being part of one of the AARHMS panels at Kalamazoo, please contact Professor D'Emilio at: Professor James D'Emilio demilio@shell.cas.usf.edu.

Please also remember to pay your dues. We have tried to keep our expenses down, but there are always unexpected expenses.

Dues for the year are \$10.00 (the equivalent of two and a half cappuccinos). Dues should be made payable to Helen Nader and mailed to:

Professor Helen Nader
Department of History SSB 215
University of Arizona
Tucson AZ 85721- 0027

Hope you will all have a wonderful Spring and a restful and productive Summer.

Cordially,
Teo Ruiz

3. Book Reviews

Editor: Simon Doubleday • History, Hofstra University

- a) **Bethany Aram. *Juana the Mad. Sovereignty and Dynasty in Renaissance Europe.* Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 2005. 280 pp. ISBN: 0801880726**

Reviewed by Óscar Martín, Yale University

Since Theresa Vann's article on "The Theory and Practice of Medieval Castilian Queenship" (in *Queens, Regents and Potentates*, ed. Theresa M. Vann (Dallas, 1993). pp. 125–47), a number of important books have nuanced our understanding of the medieval and early modern Iberian theory and practice of queenship. Among them are Magdalena Sánchez's *The Empress, The Queen and the Nun: Women and Power at the Court of Philip III of Spain* (Baltimore, 1998); María Jesús Fuente Pérez's *Reinas medievales en los reinos hispánicos* (Madrid: 2003); and, more recently, Theresa Earenfight's collection of articles *Queenship and Political Power in Medieval Spain* (Ashgate, 2005). Bethany Aram's study, originally published in 2001 as *La reina Juana. Gobierno, piedad y dinastía* (Madrid: Marcial Pons, 2001), makes an outstanding contribution to this growing field with her intelligent, engaging and persuasive study on Juana of Castile, popularly known as *Juana la Loca*.

Born in Castile in 1479, third child of the Catholic Monarchs, Juana married Philip the Fair (1496), with whom she had six children. Having become heiress to the Castilian throne after a convoluted sequence of untimely deaths, she became queen following her mother's death in 1504, although she never effectively governed her realms. This was the case, first of all, because she delegated her rule to her husband and then, after his sudden death in 1506, because she relinquished her power to her father until 1516 and after his death to her first son, Charles. Beginning in 1509, she was confined by paternal authority to Tordesillas, where she led an ascetic and pious life, surrounded by a household whose mission was to detach her from effective rule. She died in 1555.

Writing a scholarly book on Juana of Castile is not easy because the elusiveness of the historical Juana is exacerbated by the pervasively anachronistic, disconcerting and romantic image of the "mad queen" created not only by popular legend but also by professional historians, religious scholars, psychologists and artists. The persistent illusions surrounding her unrequited love, misunderstood mental illness, and powerlessness in the face of political abuse have engendered a historiographical vision in which Queen Juana is represented, more often than not, as having been completely effaced from the political arena of her day.

Distancing herself from these traditional narratives and overcoming the documentary limitations, Bethany Aram has effectively recovered Juana's "historical experience" (167), supporting her archival study with a sound interpretation of cultural sources and of a voluminous bibliography covering areas as diverse as "Spanish constitutional thought, female sovereignty, princely courts and household and cultural understanding of madness" (2). Drawing on Ernst Kantorowicz's theory of "the king's two bodies" and its

applicability to early modern Spain, Aram argues that Juana's attitude to power and her (voluntary) rejection of it best embodies the nature of the sovereign's double persona.

In addition to the location of Juana within this important political theory, there are valuable insights in Aram's study that reshape the contours of the traditional historiographical narrative of her life. Previous studies emphasized the importance of the household as a manipulative tool to control Juana, both in Burgundy and in Castile. Aram, using a more theoretical approach to royal households as locations of coercion and political advancement, points, in addition, to surprising instances that show Juana in a more active role in her relation to the household. Her physical use of violence toward her household, for instance, and her conflicts with her servants over her material possessions can be understood as political statements. At the same time, her alleged inward religiosity and detachment in Tordesillas from the world of politics (known as her "recogimiento") can be interpreted as a strategy, never overcome by those surrounding and controlling her, that served Juana's intent to avoid being governed totally by her household. The queen thus became "the first in a line of inaccessible, even invisible, Spanish Habsburgs" (168). Beside household pressure, the contours of her "madness" are also redefined in this study. Avoiding the futile discussion of whether she was or was not mad, Aram demonstrates how Juana's madness or "lack of health" was used, within a culture that cast its accusations about her inability to govern herself and her realm in religiously negative terms, as a shifting political tool to prevent her from governing herself, her realm and her household. She opts then to view madness not as an absolute but as a "flexible concept in the realm of sovereignty" (167).

Her flexible understanding of the nature of Juana's household, its internal relations, and Juana's own mental state introduces the possibility of giving new interpretations to actions traditionally perceived as irrational. Aram studies intelligently how Juana's famous attachment to her husband's corpse was, rather than an excessive obsession, a political statement on the dynastic right of her son Charles against Fernando's plans. In addition, Juana's refusal to support the Comunero uprising of 1520 is interpreted by Aram as a clear expression, on Juana's part, of the necessity of saving the dynastic and familial interests of her successful corporate Habsburg empire: a dynasty that controlled much of Europe during the sixteenth century and that defended a less territorial and personal monarchy. According to Aram, this dynastic imperative also underlies the delegation of Juana's power to her father Fernando, another element traditionally represented either as "irrational" or as a product of political manipulation. Her book is particularly suggestive because it locates her subject in a wider European historical context, providing ample evidence that Juana's actions should be interpreted in the light of other contemporary European queens whose proprietary right to govern was challenged by political and intellectual anxiety over exclusive female rulership. In this context, what made Juana more vulnerable was her early and everlasting widowhood, but the political deferral of her rule intended to safeguard dynastic interests was, according to Aram, not strictly different from that of other queens who similarly relinquished their rights and independence to their husbands. In addition, Aram's study emphasizes that both Juana's isolation and her political action may have been shaped by a previous Iberian tradition going back to Isabel of Portugal (1271–1336), who served her as a spiritual model and as

a model of “recogimiento”, and indeed to Berenguela, who may in 1217 have set a precedent of giving up government to promote her son’s rights.

In short, Aram’s book will become the essential standard by which further discussion of Juana’s political role in Spanish history is judged. Her study provides scholars with a fresh perspective that transforms the traditionally alienated, irrational and inoperative queen into a more plausible historical figure who, attached to the doctrine of the two bodies, consciously delegated proprietary rights to guarantee the future and success of the dynasty while, at the same time, mobilizing her limited resources to engage the supervising and coercing household imposed on her.

b) J. N. Hillgarth. *Spain and the Mediterranean in the Later Middle Ages: Studies in Political and Intellectual History*. Variorum Collected Studies Series CS 764. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003. xii+304 pp. [paged separately]. ISBN 0-86078-912-8.

Reviewed by Mark D. Johnston, DePaul University

Spain and the Mediterranean in the Later Middle Ages, a volume from Ashgate’s Variorum series of collected reprints, offers seventeen publications from over forty years of Professor J. N. Hillgarth’s prolific career. It joins another volume of Variorum reprints of his work, Visigothic Spain, Byzantium, and the Irish, published in 1985. The Variorum reprint volumes offer a real convenience to scholars, since they allow citation of publications with the original pagination, not to mention purging files of tattered photocopies or offprints. This handy compilation is especially useful in the case of Professor Hillgarth, who contributed many essays to periodicals, festschriften, or collected studies not readily available in North American libraries.

This collection of reprints consists chiefly of essays on Ramon Llull, later medieval Mallorca, and the vicissitudes of the island’s cultural, political, and social relations to Western Europe and the Mediterranean world at large. The publication data provided in the table of contents is not always complete enough to allow proper bibliographical citation (and gives an incorrect title for the Lourie festschrift), so this reviewer has added or corrected publication information where necessary in the following list of the volume’s contents:

1. “Spanish Historiography and Iberian Reality.” *History and Theory* 24 (1985): 23–43.
2. “The Problem of a Catalan Mediterranean Empire 1229–1327.” *English Historical Review* Supplement 8. London: Longman, 1975.
3. “The Royal Accounts of the Crown of Aragon.” *Jews, Muslims, and Christians in and Around the Crown of Aragon: Essays in Honour of Professor Elena Lourie*. Ed. Harvey J. Hames. *Medieval Mediterranean* 52. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2004. 1–16.
4. *Who Read Thomas Aquinas?* Etienne Gilson Series 13. Toronto: Pontifical Institute of

- Medieval Studies, 1992.
5. "The Disputation of Majorca (1286): Two New Editions." *Euphrosyne* n.s. 22 (1994): 403–413.
 6. "Raymond Lull et l'utopie." *Estudios Lulianos* 25 (1981–83): 175–85.
 7. "Ramon Llull's Early Life: New Documents." *Mediaeval Studies* 53 (1991): 337–47.
 8. "La Biblioteca de La Real: fuentes posibles de Llull." *Estudios Lulianos* 7 (1963): 5–17.
 9. "Le rayonnement de Lulle dans le royaume de Majorque, illustré par ses manuscrits et ses livres." *Raymond Lulle et le Pays d'Oc. Cahiers de Fanjeaux* 22. Fanjeaux: Privat, 1987. 57–68.
 10. "Some Notes on Lullian Hermits in Majorca, saec. XIII–XVII." *Studia Monastica* 6 (1964): 299–328.
 11. "An Unpublished Lullian Sermon by Pere Deguí." *Aristotelica et Lulliana magistro doctissimo Charles H. Lohr septuagesimum annum feliciter agenti dedicata*. Ed. Fernando Domínguez et al. Freiburg: Albert-Ludwigs-Universität, 1995. 561–69.
 12. "Sources for the History of the Jews of Majorca." *Traditio* 50 (1995): 334–41.
 13. "A Greek Slave in Majorca in 1419–26: New Documents." *Mediaeval Studies* 50 (1988): 546–58.
 14. "Mallorca como centro intelectual, 1229–1550." *Anuario de Estudios Medievales* 19 (1989): 205–211.
 15. "La cultura de las Islas Baleares en la época del descubrimiento." *Les Illes Balears i Amèrica*. Ed. Román Piña Homs. 2 vols. Palma: Institut d'Estudis Baleàrics, 1992. 1:39–46.
 16. "Mallorca e Italia: relaciones culturales durante la baja Edad Media." *La Corona d'Aragona in Italia (secc. XIII-XVIII). Atti del XIV Congresso di storia della Corona d'Aragona: Sassari-Alghero 19–24 maggio 1990*. Eds. M. G. Meloni and O. Schena. 5 vols. Cagliari: Università di Cagliari, Istituto sui Rapporti Italo-Iberici, 1993–97. 5:337–45.
 17. "The Reactions of Catholic Intellectuals to the Jewish Presence in Spain during the Reign of the Catholic Monarchs." *Jews and Conversos at the Time of the Expulsion*. Eds. Yom Tov Assis and Yosef Kaplan. Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center, 1999. 53*–64*.

Like all Variorum reprint volumes, this one adds a basic index, chiefly of authors and texts discussed in the essays, as well as major subjects treated. Given the copious citation

of original manuscript sources and modern scholarship that Hillgarth's studies regularly offer, an index of manuscripts cited and a list of works cited would be even more helpful. Any scholar familiar with Hillgarth's work will immediately recognize that this volume is hardly an exhaustive collection of his essays on later medieval Spain or Mallorca, but certainly represents well the extraordinarily broad scope of his scholarship, ranging widely over intellectual, political, and social history. Especially useful are several studies on Ramon Lull—"Raymond Lull et l'utopie," "Ramon Lull's Early Life," "La Biblioteca de La Real," "Some Notes on Lullian Hermits in Majorca," etc.—that remain essential resources for any scholar of Lull and Lullism. Specialists would surely welcome also a reprint of "Una biblioteca cisterciense medieval: La Real (Mallorca)," *Analecta Sacra Tarraconensia* 32 (1959): 89–191, but this fundamental monographic study was perhaps too long for inclusion in this volume of Variorum reprints. Another volume of reprints could collect that 1959 study, other essays on Lull not reprinted here, and some of Professor Hillgarth's many important book reviews of Lullian scholarship in an equally valuable compilation.

Most of the material first presented in these essays of course appears later in major books, such as *Ramon Lull and Lullism in Fourteenth-Century France* (1971), *The Spanish Kingdoms* (1976), *Readers and Books in Majorca* (1991), or *The Mirror of Spain* (2000). For Professor Hillgarth's colleagues (who include many former students), the essays reprinted here are valuable reminders of how those monumental studies grew from decades of patient and careful scholarship, not limited to narrowly specialized topics, but willing and able to explore whatever intellectual, political, or social subjects presented themselves for elucidation. The result, especially in his studies on Mallorca or the Crown of Aragon, is a body of research that has remained authoritative for over four decades and will certainly continue to be so for decades to come.

c) Peggy K. Liss, *Isabel the Queen: Life and Times Revised Edition* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004) xiv, 473 pp; maps, illustrations. ISBN 0-8122-1897-3 (Paperback)

Reviewed by Miriam Shadis, Ohio University

This monumental study of the Castilian queen Isabel remains an impressive work of scholarship, and a fundamental resource for students of early modern Spain, the Spanish Empire, absolute monarchy, and queenship. Twelve years after the initial publication of this work, Liss has had the luxury of responding to her critics: some will be pleased with her revisions, though several early criticisms remain valid.

Reviewers of the first edition of *Isabel the Queen* (1992) questioned Liss's use of sources. Now, notes are much more complete; whereas previously the bibliography was "selective," now unfortunately it is omitted. A hunt through the notes reveals engagement with recent scholarship, but not enough to dramatically affect Liss's study. A royal biography was not a fashionable choice, as Liss points out, in a period witnessing greater interest in late medieval social and regional Spanish history, but said history is much enriched by understanding the queen who ruled those very societies and regions. Now, in

2006, it is not necessary to defend the choice of studying a queen. A wealth of scholarship on medieval and early modern queens, even Iberian queens, establishes the significance of this field of study. The glaring omission of any reference to current scholarship on queens and queenship is a shame.¹

A more substantive criticism of the first edition regarded Liss's use of royal chroniclers, such as Alonso de Palencia, Hernando de Pulgar, and Diego de Valera as main sources for understanding Isabel; Liss failed to wrestle thoroughly with the apologetic perspectives of these authorities. Liss defends her original choice of these sources for the queen's "character, convictions, and purposes, as well as the ideational, religious, and political contexts of her times," noting that recent scholarship has vindicated her use of undeniably propagandistic material as a source (xiii).² The chroniclers did contribute to the potent ideological world of Early Modern Spain. Isabel's guiding ideology was a product of her understanding of the history and prophesied future of Catholic Spain, and was shaped by writers such as these. The lack of critical analysis of the tensions created by their special perspectives on Isabel and her rule remains troubling, however.

Sentences and paragraphs are revised, but Liss's prose frequently remains both dense and fanciful. Minimal structural revisions include moving a contextual discussion of medieval Spain to the conclusion of the book's first section: having described Isabel's life up to her accession to the throne, Liss backs up and widens the reader's view. I questioned this strategy: a discussion of kings Alfonso X and Alfonso XI, as well as Isabel's father Juan II, would have been helpful placed earlier, as it was in the first edition. In the first edition, Liss "pried apart the jointness of the dual reign of Fernando and Isabel and established the authority and something of the personality of Isabel."(xi) Having set out the complexity of Isabel's personality ("neither simply a woman of saintly piety nor a religious fanatic"), "questions lingered" (xii) In this revised edition, Liss probes more closely Isabel's personality, her internal struggles with her faith, her position as a ruler, and her origins: how did her experiences as a young girl, especially her relationship with her half-brother Enrique IV influence her practice of power? Overall, despite such subtle revisions, Liss has not revised her view of Isabel, stating "Isabel stands firm; she is a major historical figure of the Western world."(xi)

Few readers of Liss's first edition will want to plow through the second one, though they will appreciate the updated critical apparatus, and might find Liss's compositional revisions instructive. This review's remainder, then, is for those reading *Isabel the Queen* for the first time. Isabel, the Catholic, Queen of Castile, patron of Columbus, Dominican tertiary, fierce mother, loyal wife and nemesis of thousands of Iberian Muslims and Jews emerges from this study as a force with whom historians of medieval Spain, religion,

¹ For Spanish queens, one might consult the work of Barbara Weissberger (see below), Theresa Earenfight, myself, Bernard Reilly, Dawn Bratsch-Prince, as well as Magdalena Sanchez; farther afield much has been written on English queenship which could be fruitfully compared with Isabel, especially the work of Carole Levin on Elizabeth I, but also studies of English queens by John Carmi Parsons, Margaret Howell, and Pauline Stafford. Studies of French queenship, crusader queens, and many other elite women crowd the field.

² Liss specifically cites José Manuel Nieto Soria, "Los fundamentos ideológicos del poder Regis" in Julio Valdeón Baroque, ed. *Isabel la Católica y la Política* (Valladolid, 2001.)

monarchies and gender must reckon. Liss captures the multiple dimensions of the complex personality of the queen at the same time that she situates her subject squarely within her “life and times,” the period in which Spain transformed, along with the rest of the Europe, from the medieval into the modern. Isabel’s own view of herself was medieval, in the sense that she looked back to the mission established by her progenitors as Christian rulers of Spain and models for the world – but her absolutism was a product of a changing world.

Historians of medieval queens and elite women will be struck by the wealth of material available to Isabelline scholars. Liss is not reduced to scanning witness lists for precious references to the queen’s men, or to wringing every detail of information from a single image in a prayer book in order to develop a picture of her queen. Rather, her challenge is to sift through the spectacular variety of sources, including Isabel’s own letters, educational tracts, diplomatic materials, treasury accounts, and material remains such as jewels, clothes, and tomb sculptures, as well as the problematic royal chroniclers. This variety of materials aids Liss in creating a rich, informative portrait of the queen and her environment.

Liss is balanced in her presentation of the often unattractive queen. Isabel’s association with crusading, the Inquisition and imperialist exploration fuels her controversial status in the modern world. Liss has worked hard to avoid defending or excoriating Isabel; however, her generally sympathetic view contextualizing Isabel might be read as defensive. The apocalyptic tenor of the day – the desire to take back Jerusalem, and the absolute belief that this was the destiny of the Catholic kings – was a fundamental element of this context. Isabel was tough and uncompromising, with a political will forged by a belief in the righteousness of vengeance, as well as a belief in the unequivocal role of rulers in the salvation of all. She was also a woman who believed wives should submit to husbands (not to be confused with the submission of Castile to Aragon – ever.)

Descriptions of Isabel’s devotion to Fernando and her deep hurt over his infidelity painfully jar with the vision of the vengeful, rigid Castilian ruler. Isabel’s devotion to her children as individuals competed with her devotion to their political historical roles; darling daughters were married in the interest of the state; her son was forced to repress musical and intellectual talents in favor of appropriate royal pursuits. Finally, by the end of Isabel’s life the deaths of several of her children and the madness of Juana, her heir, must have contributed greatly to a sense of failure of her political and personal maternity. At the end of her life as well a subtle shift in the queen’s rigid moral vision can be detected in her uneasiness over the treatment of the “Indians.” These problems highlight the competing and complimentary frameworks of gender and rulership, and hounded an increasingly religious and dynastically committed Isabel to the end.

Liss does not engage in gender analysis. Perhaps this is because such analysis tends toward the relational – the feminine is understood in relation to the masculine – and her primary goal is to separate the Catholic Kings, and understand Isabel as an individual. And yet, Isabel’s gender remains a prime factor in her identity and experience. Thus, I return to the debate over the royal chroniclers. A more critical explanation of who these authorities were, and of their relationship to the queen and the court would have been helpful. Readers of Liss’s work will want to consult Barbara Weissberger’s *Isabel Rules*; as

a literary critic, Weissberger powerfully illuminates the problem of gender in Isabel's reign.³ Both works are part of a continuing conversation about this late fifteenth-century queen whose life, times, and chroniclers dramatically affected the history of the Old World and the New.

d) Mark D. Meyerson, *A Jewish Renaissance in Fifteenth-Century Spain*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004. 272p. ISBN: 0691117497

Reviewed by Marilyn Stone, New York University

A Jewish Renaissance in Fifteenth Century Spain focuses on the final century of the Jewish community residing in Morvedre, a town located in the region of Valencia and part of the federated crown of Aragon. The old Jewish quarter of Morvedre stands in mute testimony to the Jews' existence and exile. The town is now called Sagunto, a form of its old Roman name (*Saguntum*) and one can almost forget that Jews ever lived there at all even though, before 1492, it was the home of a flourishing Jewish community. The story of the Jews of Morvedre begins in 1248 when many Jewish settlers were drawn to that town in the wake of King Jaume I's conquest of the region from the Muslims. It ends with the Jews abandoning their homes and departing for new lands in the summer of 1492, in compliance with the edict of expulsion.

Meyerson indicates that one of his goals in presenting this study was to give the Jews "greater historical agency" and his endeavor was to make them the subjects of their own history. He affirms that it is possible to reconstruct and rethink the history of Christian-Jewish relations in Medieval Spain by examining local and regional texts and studies. Such detailed studies reveal patterns of interaction to help the reader envision how slowly economic and social patterns changed. He further states that the book grew out of his ongoing desire to contribute to the understanding of the dynamics of Christian, Jewish and Muslim coexistence in Medieval Christian Spain. Meyerson describes the social, political and religious processes which resulted in the breakdown of the communities between 1248 and 1492, and highlights "the horrific summer of 1391 when Christian violence irrevocably transformed the world of Christians and Jews" (p.4). However, according to the author, the Jews of Morvedre experienced a renaissance after a difficult period of transition (1391–1416) and enjoyed a positive relationship with the *conversos* of Valencia.

The author tells us that Morvedre was not the only town, nor was the kingdom of Valencia the only region, where Christians and Jews had experienced mob violence in 1391, the actions of the Castilian-run Inquisition and the proclamation of the edict of expulsion. There was an unexpected and unwanted disruption of decades of fruitful interactions. His descriptions of the events leading up to these crises and the expulsion of the Jews of Morvedre provide a fascinating tale of political upheaval, violence and exile. Meyerson's text is enhanced by three maps: the Iberian peninsula in the fifteenth century, the kingdom of Valencia and the main area of activity of the Jews of Morvedre.

³ Barbara F. Weissberger, *Isabel Rules: Constructing Queenship, Wielding Power* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004.

e) Laura Vivanco. *Death in Fifteenth-Century Castile: Ideologies of the Elites*. London: Tamesis, Series A: Monografías 205, 2004. 220 pp. ISBN: 1855661004.

Reviewed by Frank A. Domínguez, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

This book tackles the subject of death and its documentation in fifteenth-century Castile. The topic is of great interest to researchers in the Spanish Middle Ages, particularly after the work of Royer (1992), Guiance (1998), and Martínez Gil (1996); but, because of the large number of works on the subject, an overview of fifteenth-century attitudes towards death is difficult. *Death in Fifteenth-Century Castile* intends to remedy that lack by providing “an analysis of the fifteenth-century Castilian ideologies of death as expressed by and for the elites through a range of written sources” complemented by critical studies on the visual arts (10).

The book begins with Huizinga’s perception that death permeated everything during the Middle Ages, and that life was spent either in contemplation of its approach or morbidly clinging to the enjoyment of the body in the face of life’s brevity. Vivanco, in consonance with other recent critics, takes a more nuanced approach than Huizinga’s by looking at how thoughts of death and its aftermath affected individuals differently, depending on their station in life. To do so, she adopts the famous medieval division of society into three classes (oradores, defensores, labradores) and examines how two of them, the oradores and defensores, responded to death. However, as she states in the introduction, she believes that death and dying were not “as important in the lives of fifteenth-century individuals as Huizinga’s study would lead us to believe” (7). The rest of the work seeks to prove her thesis.

Death in Fifteenth-Century Castile begins with a very useful introduction to the critical literature on death and dying in medieval Europe and continues by reviewing the work that has been done on Castile (Chapter I: “Introduction,” 1–26). Vivanco then devotes separate chapters to describing how individuals died, or were expected to die, and how their deaths were assessed by others (Chapter II: “The Types of Death,” 27–98); how belief in the aftermath of death conditioned those assessments (Chapter III: “The Afterlife,” 99–135); and, how people dealt with the consequences of their bereavement (Chapter IV: “The Bereaved,” 136–177). The book ends with a “Conclusion” (178–184), an Appendix (“Breakdown of the Causes of Death or Near-Death of the Characters in Berceo’s *Milagros de Nuestra Señora*,” 185–187), a “Works Cited” bibliography (189–204), and an “Index” (205–211).

Each of the chapters mentioned begins with its own brief introduction and ends with an equally brief conclusion. The introduction to Chapter II (“The Types of Death”) looks at the “good” and “bad” death in the defensor class. Vivanco draws most of her examples from accounts of the death of kings and contemporary arts of dying. The first section (“The Oradores: Christianity and the Good Death,” 28–54”), further clarifies the book’s thesis and its bias toward the defensores as Vivanco looks at the defensores of more modest station in the three subsequent sections of Chapter II. “The Defensores: Good Death in Battle” (54–63) reveals the class to be composed of individuals who actively seek

and court death, and are more afraid of dishonor than anything else. Their attitude toward death in battle is one of acceptance and exemplifies very different values from those of the Church. Defensores base their definition of a good death on the belief that individuals can have life in death through the fame and honor they accrue in the memory of those they leave behind (57–58), while oradores believe in a life committed not to individual achievement but to abnegation. To some extent, Vivanco finds that the defensor ethos is sanctioned by the Church's concept of crusade, but it is based on an older system of values that is in tension with the Christian religion. This good death that lives on in memory is balanced by the three "Bad Deaths" (64–75) that are the result of 1) accidents or other people ("Sudden deaths as a result of an outside agency," 68–75), 2) executions ("Deaths imposed by the judicial system," 75–85), and 3) suicide ("Self-inflicted deaths," 85–97). Of course, the definition of a good or bad death often depends on the point of view of the writer, who is not above enhancing (or not) his subject's life and death for the sake of advantage.

Chapter III, "The Afterlife," begins with a section called "The Oradores and the Afterlife" (99–108) in which the inscrutable nature of God's decisions pertaining to the salvation of a soul are expounded. It continues with a discussion of the characteristics of "God and the Devil" (108–114), "Heaven, Hell, and Purgatory" (114–127), and "The Defensores and the Vida de la Fama" (127–134). It concludes that the warriors' concept of fame was "a cohesive alternative ideology to that of the oradores", without clearly demonstrating what constitutes a good death among the latter. Vivanco's perception that the concept of death of the oradores was more abstract is important and should also be further explored.

Chapter IV, "The Bereaved," looks at the rituals surrounding death and the different attitudes exemplified by secular and religious authorities. It establishes first the function of the ceremonies ("The Oradores: Ritual and Remembrance," 137–144) and their commingling of the secular and sacred ("Defensores and the Mingling of Secular and Sacred in Funeral Customs," 145–155). An assessment of the excesses of consolation ("Consolation and the Oradores' Opposition to Excessive Grief," 155–160); its role as one of the burdens of the defensores ("Fortaleza, Grief, and the Defensores," 160–165); the different expressions according to gender ("Grief and gender," 165–167); and social standing ("Grief and social status," 167–174) follow. Vivanco arrives at the conclusion that, although the oradores struggled to eliminate from society burial practices that they considered excessive, these practices prevailed despite a certain male reticence to give free rein to an outward expression of excessive grief. There is, however, no consideration of the increasing influence of Stoic philosophy at the time.

Vivanco comes to the overall conclusion that "two coherent and distinct ideologies . . . coexisted and came into conflict in fifteenth-century Castile." The conflict is summarized in the next two sections called "Oradores" (180–81) and "Defensores," (181–182). Oradores saw everything from the vantage point of the moment of death, when the dying sought absolution in the hope of gaining eternal life, whereas for the defensores the total life of the individual was assessed from the vantage point of whether they had led a full and honorable life that ended with a death that assured their survival in the memory of men and benefited their lineage ("Conflict and Coexistence," 182–184).

Of necessity, a book of such wide scope does not treat elements that other researchers would consider important. *Death in Fifteenth-Century Castile* does not tackle what is the most exemplary death in the orador class, celebrated in the most copious biographical genre of medieval literature: the *vita* of the saint. Instead, the values of the oradores are used to ferret out the differences separating them from the defensores rather than fully describing the orador ethos, which at first seems one of the two main underpinnings of the book. It would have been useful to contrast the saint's *vita* as a description of a religious hero with the individual secular biographies that begin to appear with greater insistence in the fifteenth-century, and to examine how the description of death in one is imitated by the other; in other words, to look at what is similar between the narratives that describe oradores and defensores rather than discuss how they differ (32) from the point of view of members of each class. Most of the oradores cited in the book, after all, don't belong to a different "class" (as we understand the term) from the defensores, but fulfill a different function.

The book does not mention the judicial execution of Martín López de Córdoba, the most important medieval death sentence of a member of the elite after that of Alvaro de Luna, and the one that gives rise to one of the exceptional texts of the early fifteenth century: the *Memorias* of Leonor López de Córdoba. Martín López's death would perhaps have led Vivanco to explore the well-developed bibliography on the concept (and the sentence) of *infamia*. Not enough is made, either, of the *Coplas* of Jorge Manrique, which explicitly borrow from the life of a saint to construct the panegyric of a warrior father and extensively counterpoints the "good" and "sudden" death topics. Finally, while the lack of documentation about the *labradores* is a result of the design of the study, in limiting *Death in Fifteenth-Century Castile* to the elites, the book fails to provide a total picture of the influence of death at the time. Missing also, I might add, is consideration of the theme among members of the other confessional groups still inhabiting the peninsula: the Jews and Muslims. Nevertheless, *Death in Fifteenth-Century Castile* is an excellent book on the topic, within its self-imposed limitations. I hope that Vivanco will build on her research and some day give us a truly global study on the impact of death in the fifteenth century.

All reviews are available on-line on the AARHMS website. Books for review, or offers to review books, may be sent to the book review editor, Simon Doubleday, at the Department of History, Hofstra University (via e-mail: Simon.R.Doubleday@hofstra.edu).

4. Recent and Upcoming AARHMS Panels

From: James d'Emilio • Humanities, University of South Florida

AARHMS is sponsoring two sessions at the **41st International Congress on Medieval Studies** (Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, May 4–7, 2006) organized by James D'Emilio and Michael Kulikowski, as part of a set of six sessions on medieval Galicia. The others are sponsored by SSPHS, and all have been supported with grants from the Program for Cultural Cooperation Between Spanish Ministry of Culture and United States' Universities and the Samuel H. Kress Foundation.

Medieval Galicia V: The Romanesque Cathedral of Santiago

Presider: John Williams (University of Pittsburgh)

“Aragon, Navarre and the Early Romanesque Sculpture of Santiago Cathedral”, Manuel Castiñeiras (Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya)

“The Romanesque cathedral of Santiago de Compostela: foundations for a new building history”, Henrik Karge (Technische Universitat Dresden)

“Compostela and the Romanesque art of Galicia”, James D'Emilio (U. of South Florida)

Medieval Galicia VI. Galicia in the Later Medieval Kingdom of Castile:

Marginalization?

Presider: Paul Freedman (Yale University)

“Courtly culture and clerical culture in the thirteenth-century sculpture of the cathedrals of Tui and Ourense”, Rocío Sánchez Ameijeiras (Universidade de Santiago de Compostela)

“Galicia and the Castilian monarchy (1230–1295): marginalization?”, Francisco Javier Pérez Rodríguez (Universidade de Vigo, Campus de Ourense)

“Siervo libre de amor: all things to all men”, David Mackenzie (University College, Cork)

For a **program** listing all six sessions <http://www.ku.edu/~iberia/ssphs/kzoo2006.htm>

James D'Emilio is seeking proposals for sessions sponsored by AARHMS or SSPHS for the **2007 Medieval Studies Congress at Kalamazoo** (May 10–13, 2007). For more information, contact him (demilio@shell.cas.usf.edu) or consult the call for session proposals at: <http://www.ku.edu/~iberia/ssphs/kzoo2007.htm>

5. Libro Update

From James Brodman, University of Central Arkansas

LIBRO has added (1) The Chronicle of James I, King of Aragon, Surnamed the Conqueror, trans. John Forster (Print Edition: London: Chapman and Hall, 1883) (2) Izbicki, Thomas M., Protector of the Faith: Cardinal Johannes de Turrecremata and the Defense of the Institutional Church (Print Edition: Catholic University of America Press, 1981) (3) Richard Herr, An Historical Essay on Modern Spain. LIBRO has also won the FORUM Award for Medieval Studies from FORVM Classical Numismatics Discussion Board. LIBRO encourages suggestions for additional titles, particularly from authors who have or who can obtain the requisite permissions.

6. Other Medieval Hispanist News

Submitted by Members

Frank Dominguez is organizing a session on medieval/early Renaissance for the MIFLC Conference held this year at James Madison University from October 12 to 14. It is open topic. If any of you are interested, please e-mail an abstract as soon as possible. Although the directions give a deadline for submission of March 20, they are still accepting papers. The Conference website is up and running at:
<http://www.miflc.org/call.html>

Abstracts may be submitted electronically to the MIFLC President's e-mail address, given below. Be sure to include your regular mailing address as well when submitting via e-mail. Please include keywords (e.g., 19th century Spanish Peninsular) at the top of the abstract, so that we can more easily organize the sessions.

If you are interested in submitting a paper, in chairing, or in organizing a session, please contact or send your abstract to:

Dr. Carmenza Kline, President, MIFLC 2006
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Jim Brodman announces three forthcoming articles: "Community Identity and the Redemption of Captives: Comparative Perspectives Across the Mediterranean," *Anuario de estudios medievales*; "Unequal in Charity? Women and Hospitals in Medieval Catalonia," *Medieval Encounters*; "Religion and Discipline in the Hospitals of Medieval France," in *The Medieval Hospital and Medical Practice* (Aldershot: 2006). In addition he has contributed two articles, "Medieval Caritative Orders" and "Medieval Hospitals", to the *International Encyclopaedia for the Middle Ages * Online*, ed. Patrick Geary, et al. (Brepols, <http://www.brepolis.net>).

Kevin Poole announces that he will be defending his dissertation, "Visualizing Apocalypse: Image and Narration in the Gerona Beatus Commentaries on the Apocalypse" in June, and that he has received a tenure-track position as Assistant Professor of Spanish Literature and Visual Studies at Clemson University (SC).

Congratulations on both counts!

Rebecca Winer announces the publication of her book, *Women, Wealth, and Community in Perpignan, c. 1250-1300: Christians, Jews, and Enslaved Muslims in a Medieval Mediterranean Town* (Aldershot: 2006).

Congratulations!

Paul Freedman announces that he has been elected a Corresponding Fellow of the Real Academia de Buenas Letras de Barcelona.

Congratulations!

This **newsletter** is being sent to all current and past members of AARHMS on record as of 29 March 2006. It is being sent as an e-mail to those members for whom we have an e-mail address on file; it is also being sent by U.S. Mail to members with invalid or no known e-mail addresses. Members or prospective members receiving the newsletter on paper should please submit a current e-mail address (or, if no e-mail, a fax number). The AARHMS e-mail distribution list will not be made public, sold or otherwise used except for the distribution of the semi-annual AARHMS newsletter.

Please send address **corrections** (especially updated e-mail addresses) to Brian A. Catlos, newsletter editor, at bcatlos@ucsc.edu (please put AARHMS in the subject line).

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