

## PUBLISHED VERSION

Martin, Austin Lynn.

Jessica Warner, *Craze: Gin and Debauchery in an Age of Reason, Consisting of a Tragicomedy in three acts in which High and Low are brought together, much to their Mutual Discomfort. Complete with Stories, some witty and some not, conducive to meditation on Recent Events*, *Continuity and Change*, 2003; 18 (2):318-319.

Copyright © 2003 Cambridge University Press

### PERMISSIONS

<http://journals.cambridge.org/action/stream?pagelId=4088&level=2#4408>

The right to post the definitive version of the contribution as published at Cambridge Journals Online (in PDF or HTML form) in the Institutional Repository of the institution in which they worked at the time the paper was first submitted, or (for appropriate journals) in PubMed Central or UK PubMed Central, no sooner than one year after first publication of the paper in the journal, subject to file availability and provided the posting includes a prominent statement of the full bibliographical details, a copyright notice in the name of the copyright holder (Cambridge University Press or the sponsoring Society, as appropriate), and a link to the online edition of the journal at Cambridge Journals Online. Inclusion of this definitive version after one year in Institutional Repositories outside of the institution in which the contributor worked at the time the paper was first submitted will be subject to the additional permission of Cambridge University Press (not to be unreasonably withheld).

10<sup>th</sup> December 2010

<http://hdl.handle.net/2440/39813>

## Book Reviews

---

DOI: 10.1017/S0268416003214727

Madawi Al-Rasheed, *A history of Saudi Arabia*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.) Pages xvii + 255. £40.00; £14.95 (paperback).

The disciplines of history and anthropology have in many ways converged in recent years. Those historians who have followed the ‘cultural turn’ have increasingly adopted methods developed by anthropologists. In turn, anthropologists have themselves taken on the task of writing history, stressing their interests, for instance, in representations rather than ‘facts’, in symbolic acts and social practice, narratives and counter-narratives and historical memory. The London anthropologist Madawi Al-Rasheed has written a handbook on Saudi history which might serve as an example of the advantages of anthropologically informed history-writing.

The book is divided into seven chapters, plus introduction and conclusion. In her introduction, Rasheed defines an ambitious aim, namely to challenge dominant narratives in Saudi history-writing, especially with regard to the legendary role of Saudi Arabia’s founder eponyms, Ibn Saud (d. 1953). Far from being an unique case among its colonized neighbours, Saudi Arabia’s foundation and consolidation in the first three decades of the twentieth century were, according to Rasheed, as much due to British influence and subsidies as to Ibn Saud’s ‘personal genius’, constantly highlighted by official historiographies. She stresses that the foundation of Saudi Arabia was the result of a complex process of state-formation that was due to several factors, among them British influence and the support of Wahhabi religious scholars.

In Chapter 1, Rasheed gives an introduction to Saudi history between 1744 and 1891, comparing the strengths and weaknesses of the different peninsular emirates during the nineteenth century. Chapter 2 describes Ibn Saud’s rise to power up to 1932, thoroughly analysing the role of British influence, which upset the balance of

power in the peninsula to Ibn Saud's advantage. Furthermore, Rasheed argues that the *mutawwa'a* (religious ritual specialists) were a second crucial factor leading to the consolidation of Ibn Saud's nascent emirate.

In Chapter 3, Rasheed deals with the consolidation of the Saudi state between 1932 and 1953, treating subjects as diverse as the marginalization of the Saudi family's collateral branches, the royal *majlis* and further symbolic acts and practices with which the royal family distinguished itself from its subjects, the court's finances, the first oil concession of 1933 and the development of Saudi society after the start of oil production. This part contains an especially interesting interpretation of Ibn Saud's famous marriage practices. Hitherto, his numerous marriages have commonly been interpreted as an outcome of his desire to cement his political alliances by marrying daughters of former or potential rivals. Rasheed, however, shows that the 'King's marriages could only be seen in terms of a general policy to subordinate the Arabian population through a systematic appropriation of its most cherished and valued members, women' (p. 79).

In Chapter 4, the developments between Ibn Saud's death (1953) and the oil embargo of 1973 are analysed, emphasizing the reign of Faysal (1964–1975). Rasheed deals with the development towards the all-encompassing welfare state and the process of the royal family overcoming potential rivals in society, especially the hitherto powerful merchants.

Chapter 5 describes the further development up to the Second Gulf War (1973–1990), focusing on the growing sense of vulnerability of Saudi Arabia, which led the government to deepen its security partnership with the US. In the meantime, Saudi society struggled to reconcile its sudden and immense wealth with rapid modernization and its adherence to Islam. This proved to be more and more difficult after the economic crisis which began in 1985. This crisis triggered internal debates between Islamists and 'Liberals', announcing future conflicts.

In Chapter 6, Rasheed interprets the Gulf War as a catalyst of these debates, which resulted in the emergence of an Islamist opposition. Although the government reacted with a combination of repression and limited steps to reform, public debate intensified.

Chapter 7 proves to be the most unconventional, as far as history books are concerned, when the most striking examples of 'state-sponsored representations of the past' in official historiography (especially schoolbooks), political rhetoric and festivities are presented. Here, Rasheed describes those legends she tried to contest in her analysis in Chapter 2, adding examples of the growing number of counter-narratives challenging the official historiography, too.

Rasheed's book will surely become standard reading on Saudi history for the near future. By giving cultural factors, especially religion, their due share of the presentation, she correctly stresses the roles of the 'ritual specialists' in the emergence of the Saudi state. By challenging widespread legendary representations of Saudi history, she will be a prominent voice within a wider debate that has only recently started.

However, she is wrong in stating that in the literature on the matter not enough attention has yet been paid to the *mutawwa'a* (p. 8). This holds true for

the Anglo-Saxon literature, but she seems not to be fully aware of the German writings of Werner Ende, Esther Peskes and Reinhard Schulze, among others. While there are obvious practical reasons for this neglect, an informed study of the religious and religio-political aspects of Saudi history will always suffer when their works are not referred to.

GUIDO STEINBERG  
*Berlin*

DOI: 10.1017/S0268416003224723

Raffaella Sarti, *Europe at home: family and material culture, 1500–1800*, trans. A. Cameron. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002.) Pages xi + 324. £19.95.

Many books claim to tell about European history but turn out to deal mostly with Britain and France, and the further one moves from the few core countries the more anecdotal the evidence becomes. Therefore it is a special merit of this book that the author, Raffaella Sarti of the University of Urbino, Italy, has seen to it that the edges of Europe are also included. She takes the reader from the Arctic Circle to the Aegean Islands and from Ireland to Russia, even though she is more at home in Italy, her own field of study.

The book offers a fascinating overview of the history of living conditions, eating and clothing in early modern Europe. It analyses ‘social relations expressed through objects’ (p. 7), everyday life with all its practical, material, cultural and symbolic preconditions and consequences. It shows ‘how different ways of being were translated into different ways of having and different ways of having influenced in turn different ways of being’ (p. xi). The living conditions and life styles of different social groups in different regions are associated with major developments, from the discovery of America (with the tomato, maize and potato) and the birth of a consumer society to urbanization and the feminization of domestic service.

The book is very logically organized, in line with its down-to-earth subject. It starts by discussing the home and family. In most cases this ‘way of being’ meant life in a family and the ‘way of having’ meant having a house or a home to live in, but Sarti also discusses people who lived in convents, workhouses, prisons and orphanages, who were homeless, had insecure homes or were non-sedentary, with movable dwellings. For defining the concept of a family she presents a history of the word ‘family’, or the Latin *familia*. I found this discussion most interesting, as the etymology of ‘family’ here is so totally different from that of the corresponding word in my mother tongue, yet today they mean the same.

The second chapter, on setting up a family and a home, gives a lively and learned image of marriages, with dowries and trousseaus, transfers of property and rites of passage. All the many differences make it difficult to generalize, yet it seems justified to conclude with Sarti that usually the birth of the new couple was

‘the result of a protracted and laborious process’ (p. 74). The family and the house are then related to each other: how they interact, overlap and perhaps become disjointed.

Throughout the second half of the book the author takes the reader around and into the houses and homes of peasants and townspeople. We learn how people lit their homes, what kinds of furniture or pots and dishes they had, how they slept and how first masters and then servants began to enjoy some privacy. We are told by a gentleman what he was served as a meal in an Alpine hut, but we are also informed about the breastfeeding of babies. Clothes mean women spinning, weaving and sewing, but ‘clothes also categorize people’ (p. 211), marking them out as Jews, servants, the military, the nobility.

It is to the credit of the author that she emphasizes the shifting patterns and the variety of everyday life: ‘there was no shortage of exceptions’ (p. 76). Similar forms may have come into being for different reasons, and vice versa: ‘very similar systems of inheritance transmission and family formation can lead to different family forms’ (p. 82). Nonetheless, she also distinguishes between rural and urban life, between ‘the high’ and ‘the low’, and between central and northern Europe (with weak family links), on the one hand, and Mediterranean Europe (with strong family links), on the other.

The book is written in a sympathetic, inviting style, with titles such as ‘Excuse me, may I come in?’ (p. 99). The colloquial style matches the issues discussed, such as the preparation of meals, the number of chairs as an indication of forms of sociability, the washing and changing of underwear, or horses and cows living under the same roof with the farmer’s family. By skilful use of autobiographies, diaries and court cases Sarti revives the experiences and reflections of men and women of the past, making the reader feel at home with them. What more can one ask?

MARJATTA RAHIKAINEN

*Department of Social Science History, University of Helsinki*

DOI: 10.1017/S026841600323472X

S. H. Rigby (ed.), *A companion to Britain in the later Middle Ages*. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003.) Pages xviii + 665. £85.00.

The worst thing about this fine book is the title, which does not reflect its full range and value. It is very much more than a ‘companion’, and it covers a much longer period (1100–1500) than is normally understood by ‘the later middle ages’. Dr Rigby has assembled a stellar cast of contributors, who cover a wide range of topics broadly divided into four parts: economy and society; politics, government and law; church and piety; education and culture. The aim of each chapter is to provide an overview of modern scholarship, and to introduce the historiography of the topics. Different authors have treated the brief in various ways. The approach of most of the scholars in this volume is best categorized as broadly empirical, and theoretical discussion is relatively limited.

One of the most important developments in recent years has been the development of a British history which, if not integrating Irish, Scottish and Welsh history with that of England, has nevertheless done immeasurable service in bringing out not only the links but also the comparisons and contrasts between the different countries. In this volume, Seán Duffy discusses these broad issues. In all the other articles, the separateness of the different parts of the British Isles is maintained, but the editor has taken very good care to ensure that what was once known as the 'Celtic fringe' receives proper attention. The book is a companion to Britain, and so the English-held lands in France are not included; Normandy has eight references in the index, and Gascony a mere six. Yet, as Duffy rightly points out, 'it is assuredly a mortal error to remove Britain from the continental orbit in which it revolved'.

The discussions of the way in which historical interpretations have changed demonstrate just how active historians of later medieval England have been in recent years. What is omitted is just as interesting as what is included; some areas of study are no longer at the cutting edge. The detailed work done by Tout, in six magnificent volumes on English royal administration, has sunk almost without trace. Constitutional history is a thing of the past. For example, discussion of the principle expressed in *plena potestas*, the full powers of representatives to bind their communities, is limited to a brief discussion of the Irish parliament. What has replaced such themes? There are few signs of a postmodernist approach, and the editor's own stress on Marxist theory finds few echoes among his contributors. Study of the nobility and gentry, of law, of the church and popular religion, and of culture and society, all receive full and expert attention. One area which of course receives much more emphasis than would have been the case even thirty years ago is that of gender. The most remarkable story in this rich volume is told by Judith Bennett. It is that of John Rykener, who was instructed by a prostitute called Anna how, as the court put it, to practice the 'detestable vice in the manner of a woman'. This he did with great success, convincing all his clients (who included many priests, as they paid best) that he was a woman. The tale serves not merely to titillate, but to demonstrate the contradictions and ambiguities which might be entailed in gender identity in the fourteenth century as much as in the twenty-first.

The study of war, taken in a broad sense, has received much attention from scholars in recent years. In his overview of 'Kingship and the political community, 1272–1377' Scott Waugh gives full attention to the concept of a 'war state', and Bruce Campbell emphasizes the role of war in his discussion of factors behind the transformation of the English economy in the fourteenth century. Yet the volume is not as strong in this field as it is in others. Arguments over English strategy in the Hundred Years War and the impact of chivalric culture on war receive little attention in the volume. The greatest achievement of medieval military architecture, the astonishing castles built by Edward I in Wales, receives little more than passing consideration, while the rethinking in recent years of castle studies in more general terms has gone virtually unnoticed.

It is not possible within the scope of a review to do full justice to all of the authors who have contributed to this book, and it would be invidious to single a

few out for special praise. Let it suffice to say that all the contributions are very useful; some are superb.

MICHAEL PRESTWICH

*Department of History, University of Durham*

DOI: 10.1017/S0268416003244726

Kim M. Phillips, *Medieval maidens: young women and gender in England, 1270–1540*. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003.) Pages xv + 246. £14.99.

In the last decade, the never-married women of medieval England have begun to acquire a history of their own. Once entirely overlooked, singlewomen first attracted notice in the wake of Hajnal's identification of a specific northwest European pattern of late marriage and high proportions of never-marrieds. They have more recently moved beyond their role as ciphers in population estimates, meriting fuller attention in articles by Kim Phillips, Cordelia Beattie, myself and others. Phillips' *Medieval maidens* is especially welcome as the first book-length study of these women.

Phillips focuses her attention on just one segment of the never-married population, that is, young women moving from childhood toward the full adulthood of marriage and motherhood. Drawing on a wide range of prescriptive and normative sources, Phillips offers her readers a fascinating cultural history of the ideals, lessons, labours and limits of maidenhood. Her first substantive chapter explores the chronology of this adolescent phase (roughly, early teens to early twenties) and then argues persuasively that, whereas mid-life was imagined as the perfect age for men, young maidenhood was seen as the perfect age for women. Hence, for example, the Virgin Mary was usually depicted as a young woman, even when shown at death or in the company of her full-grown, bearded son. Maidenhood as woman's perfect age is one central theme of Phillips' book; the other, maidenhood as a time of training for marriage and motherhood, is explored in her next two chapters, on education and work respectively. A penultimate chapter considers the sexual rules that circumscribed the lives of maidens, and the last looks at how singlewomen negotiated the constraints and possibilities of their age. Throughout, Phillips attempts to include all social ranks, although, as with much cultural history, her sources and conclusions are most secure for the more elite and literate segments of late-medieval English society.

The book's twin themes – maidenhood as perfection and maidenhood as preparation – are somewhat opposed. After all, if maidenhood was the perfect age for women, why should maidens have been trained for another role? Phillips rightly sees the perfect-but-incomplete nature of medieval maidenhood as a tension more than a contradiction. Comfortable with both feminist and cultural theory, Phillips carefully negotiates the dangerous shoals of such concepts as 'autonomy', 'woman', and 'adolescence' and lands finally at the conclusion that among

maidens 'a desire for security ... is easier to trace than any longing for liberation' (p. 204). I am not confident that any scholar has ever claimed that medieval maidens longed for liberation, but Phillips' perspective is a useful corrective to Felicity Riddy's vision (quoted on p. 123) of 'spirited and daring girls ... who led risky, unconventional, and adventurous lives'.

Phillips' grasp is surest with social elites and literary texts; when treating artisans, working people and peasants, she often relies on secondary studies and printed editions of selected documents. Yet it is here that Phillips produces some of her most interesting and challenging conclusions. She suggests, for example, that peasant women had less access to land after the Great Plague than before, even though the immense mortality of the age should have created more land claims by heiresses and widows. She discerns broad social differences in the policing of female virginity: noble daughters were self-restrained, whereas women of lesser rank were socially constrained, and noble virginity focused on the purity of lineage, whereas among lesser folk virginity was especially important for household rather than dynastic reputation. Phillips also raises the possibility that, over the course of the fifteenth century, maidens' guilds fell under the closer control of male parochial officers. And although she suggests tabling the contentious question of whether women's work opportunities improved after 1348 (see p. 128), there can be no doubt that her overall assessment of the status of single working women in the century after the Great Plague is a gloomy one.

Since Phillips focuses solely on those singlewomen presumed to be negotiating successfully the transition from childhood to marriage, her book tells us little about the life-long singlewomen for whom this 'phase' extended throughout adult life. Her book also focuses a bit overmuch on virginal maidens, revealing little about the never-married women who had sex with men and bore children. As a cultural history, in other words, her book says more about 'good girls' (p. 194) than about the many others who blurred the clarity of what it meant to be a medieval maiden. Yet, as Phillips insightfully shows, there is much to learn about her particular subset of singlewomen: their place in the social imagination of late-medieval England; their training for what Phillips called the 'active docility' (p. 13) of medieval womanhood; their varied experiences according to social rank; and their changing opportunities between the thirteenth and the sixteenth centuries. *Medieval maidens* is a welcome step forward in our understanding of late-medieval women. Written in an accessible and straightforward style, this is a book that will appeal to scholars and students alike.

JUDITH M. BENNETT

*Department of History, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill*



DOI: 10.1017/S0268416003254722

Jessica Warner, *Craze: Gin and Debauchery in an Age of Reason, Consisting of a Tragicomedy in three acts in which High and Low are brought together, much to their Mutual Discomfort. Complete with Stories, some witty and some not, conducive to meditation on Recent Events.* (London: Profile Books, 2003.) Pages xviii + 267. £16.99.

I have frequently used Jessica Warner's articles in my own research. They invariably demonstrate high standards of scholarship and are heavily footnoted, showing an impressive grasp of the primary sources, especially of the pamphlet literature of early modern England. As a result, I refused to let the quaint title of her book mislead me; here, I told myself, would be a work of high scholarly standards. The verdict? Yes and no. On the one hand, Warner panders to a lay readership by including sensational material not at all relevant even to the sensational topic of gin and debauchery. For example, did she have to include the story of the bird's nest built in the skull of an executed criminal? Worse yet are the ten pages devoted to cases of spontaneous human combustion, which permit Warner to make forced comparisons to the witch craze but which ignore recent scientific evidence on the phenomenon. On the other hand, Warner builds on the scholarship of Dorothy George, George Rudé, Peter Clark and Lee Davison and presents the results of her own archival research, particularly when dealing with the informers who made money by testifying against those who sold gin illegally.

The scholarly apparatus is likewise disappointing: no bibliography, an inadequate index and at first glance no notes. The text contains no mention of notes or numbers that would indicate their presence, but Warner references her material in the back of the book by a page number, followed by a brief quotation from her text, then the source – for example, '174. "Not to receive any more Informations against persons": *Read's Weekly Journal*, 7 July 1739, p. 3'. This system does not always work. Evidently, in their efforts to make books appealing to the lay reader publishers not only want the notes out of sight at the back of books but they also want an invisible system of references.

The availability of cheap gin led to the widespread consumption of what Warner calls 'the first modern drug' and to the 'Gin Craze' between 1720 and 1751 among London's labouring poor. The average annual consumption of spirits among adults increased from about one-third of a gallon in 1700 to 2.2 gallons in 1743, and this resulted in the social, economic and moral degradation that William Hogarth captured in his *Gin Lane*. 'Polite society' panicked and the authorities reacted by placing restrictions on the consumption of gin. The book's focus is on the eight 'gin acts' passed by the English Parliament between 1729 and 1751, and a helpful 'Chronology' lists them and briefly describes them. Warner analyses the reasons for the passage of each act, the opposing forces at work in Parliament, the efforts to implement the acts, the public reaction to them and the causes of their failure to achieve the desired results. She argues (p. 7) that 'The real pattern behind the gin acts was very simple: people worried about gin when very little else seemed to be happening – and when the government was flush. And so people worried about

gin and passed laws against it in times of peace, and conveniently forgot about it in times of war.'

As a scientist and an expert on addiction with a cross-appointment in the Department of History at the University of Toronto, Warner entitles her final chapter 'The Author Also Grows Old, and Reluctant to Conclude the Narrative, Meditates upon Recent Events.' The recent events are the American government's war on drugs, in particular, the crack cocaine epidemic of the 1980s. Warner compares the reaction of eighteenth-century 'polite society' to the gin craze with the reaction of late-twentieth-century 'polite society' to the crack cocaine epidemic and condemns both reactions for failing to address the causes of poverty, which in turn was the root cause of addiction. It was not quite as simple as that, for Warner acknowledges that the consumption of gin peaked in England when working-class wages were high in the first half of the eighteenth century and then fell when wages declined in the second half of the century. Affluence as well as poverty might be a cause of addiction.

A. LYNN MARTIN

*Department of History, University of Adelaide*