

continuation of his picaresque novel (Alvarez Roblin), or Las Casas, who built a theological and moral argument about Amerindian religious belief that aimed to protect these individuals against conquest through just war (Cárdenas Bunsen).

The introductory chapter provides a starting point for scholars that may be unfamiliar with the field of casuistry. For those looking for a more procedural approach, the essays of Bidwell-Steiner, Mañero Lozano, and Kallendorf are recommended. Two essays delve into the early modern political and ethical landscape: Scham's analysis of Sancho Panza's governorship and Cárdenas Bunsen's study of Las Casas's *Apologética*.

One of the collection's stated aims relates to gender: "to bring out important considerations of gender in the literary works as well as in the culture more generally" (2). Within the essays, gender appears in thematic concerns of honor and women's voices in male-authored texts, rather than directly through the voices of women writers. Another promising idea mentioned in the introduction is that of the Jewish and Muslim legal and theological context, which is partially touched on in Bidwell-Steiner's essay. Additionally, Bidwell-Steiner and Traninger discuss connections between casuistry and the converso identity of Pleberio and of the writers Rojas and Reinoso. One question readers can pursue is whether the specific focus on casuistry offered in this collection succeeds in teasing out a keener understanding of the texts that is distinctive from other approaches.

All told, the collection proves through the diversity of genres, time periods, and textual situations, that casuistic discourse is an important mental paradigm that informed how writers crafted their texts, and it contributed to the development of new literary genres in Spain. Another key takeaway is that the writers from early modern Spain who used methodologies from casuistry drew on what current scholarship would understand as a multidisciplinary foundation, bringing the imaginative creations that they produced into conversation with theology, the law, ethics, and politics.

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*Women Readers and Writers in Medieval Iberia: Spinning the Text.*

Montserrat Piera.

The Medieval and Early Modern Iberian World 71. Leiden: Brill, 2019. xxiv + 484 pp.

This 507-page book consists of two main parts ("Reading Women" and "Writing Women"), followed by an epilogue. It comprises eight well-balanced chapters, which make an innovative contribution to the knowledge of female subjectivity in the Middle Ages. The main subject concerns the premodern reading of medieval Iberian Christian women: the "often-silenced female voice" in multiple forms of textualities in court and convent. Montserrat Piera proposes to approach these voices through

the materiality of the text and multiple practices of writing, based on a cultural history of women in medieval Iberia. It is the activity of reading in a broad sense that she proposes to reinterrogate: its social significance and its involvement in practices that she reconsiders in order to place the act of reading at the heart of women's lives in the Middle Ages.

The introduction is an important part of the volume. It discusses historical and theoretical questions, and defines the method and the main research lines followed: first of all, the notion of space. An important debate on the representation of public space leads the author to argue that this paradigm is inappropriate for the Middle Ages, and a review of the critical tools allows her to define a new epistemology of the texts studied. This analysis, which draws on a wide range of classical and more recent bibliographical sources, seeks to highlight the fluidity of exchanges around geography and the interaction and negotiation that took place within the multicultural and multiconfessional society of the Iberian Peninsula. Women's interactions in the spaces studied in the book are taken into account: the home, the market, the street, the convent, and the court. Women's writings are the product of a cultural moment; to present them as exceptional rarities is yet another way of ignoring them. Hence the need to revise paradigms.

The writings examined in the microstudies of part 2 are compared to other texts in a social circle or community. Teresa de Cartagena dialogues with Pedro de Luna, Violant de Bar with Guillaume de Machaut (part 2, chapter 4), in a section whose analysis is rich and challenging. This is a very successful part of the book that looks back at a historical figure who is sometimes misunderstood. Violant de Bar is revealed in her major role as mediator of French culture in the kingdom of Aragon. The author shows that she accelerated a process already developing during the reign of Jaume II of Aragon (1291–1327), who supported the circulation of books, the creation of universities, and the development of literature in Latin, Catalan, and Hebrew, in a context of Catalan expansion in the Mediterranean. This part highlights the literary contribution of cultural mediation in fourteenth-century Aragon, addressing the diffusion of Machaut's corpus among Catalan and Aragonese intellectuals. Piera opens new research perspectives by suggesting the possible influence of Machaut's writings on the development of Iberian sentimental fiction. She discusses the hypothesis of a fourteenth- and fifteenth-century sentimental fiction with an authentically Castilian origin and invites readers to reflect on the connections between chivalric and sentimental literature in Aragon and, perhaps, on the possibility of a new Iberian literary history.

The author also insists against partial visions in which literacy alone is taken as an indication of access to culture. Books as objects were fully integrated into the daily life of medieval women, in various ways. The opinion of the moralists should therefore be taken with a certain distance. The relationship of women to the written word cannot be appreciated solely through biblical and hagiographic stories and Christian dogma. A

plurality of sources can offer access to the ordinary and informal creativity of women in the Middle Ages. The author repeatedly distances herself from abstract frameworks to assert instead “a concrete bodily act, an act felt sensually and emotionally and not solely intellectually” (12).

Rhetorical strategies with a significant political dimension are also a relevant aspect of the analysis devoted to the aristocratic woman Leonor López de Córdoba (part 2, chapter 5). The discussion on the classification of the written word, between memoirs or *relaciones*, raises the question of truth from the perspective of the female subject. The author considers female discourse in a historical context of propaganda, in a moment marked by the search for royal favor, where writing was a powerful instrument for social advance. The author’s rigorous effort rejects the paradigm of autobiography in order to unravel what it meant for a woman to write about herself in the Middle Ages. Rhetorical strategy stresses the importance of the dialogue of Teresa de Cartagena with Alonso de Cartagena; however, women authors show their subjectivity most strongly when they express the suffering of an afflicted humanity. The retreat into consolation establishes the act of writing not only as a rhetoric defense but also as a form of resistance.

In all, the book follows the path of medieval women in search of a voice of their own, and the interpretation proposed brings them out of their isolation, “trying to share a space with men” (426).

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*Bad Humor: Race and Religious Essentialism in Early Modern England.*  
Kimberly Anne Coles.  
Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2022. xiv + 204 pp. \$65.

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This book offers a refreshing new approach to early modern critical race studies by investigating the correspondence of early modern science and religion in the construction of race and its manifestation in colonial practices. Specifically, Coles traces the process whereby wrong religion, caused by excess of melancholy corrupting the body and soul, becomes marked on the skin. She clarifies that in early modern England “the assignation of color is the index of religion—or its absence” (13). By merging early modern science and religion in her study, Coles demonstrates how theories of the body and soul were manipulated to designate people of color and their offspring as non-Christian in order to justify colonial oppression.

Coles weaves together close readings of sonnets, masques, closet drama, epic poems, and stage plays alongside religious history, early modern medical theory, and early American law. In the first three chapters of the book, Coles examines discursive