

Summaries of articles

Courtly love, masculine society and figures of power

Ch. MARCHELLO-NIZIA

Several features which characterize courtly love have remained enigmatic until the present time. This study suggests an interpretation which would permit taking this factor into account. The analysis concerns that category of courtly love which unites a young bachelor knight with a married woman of noble status : Tristan and Yseut, Lancelot and Guenevere are the perfect models.

A comparison of the tales in verse of the late 12th century with the written prose version of a half-century later reveal a striking change : the passion which connects the lovers is nevertheless mediated, and always by a masculine figure. The author thus suggests that this type of adulterous courtly love can be seen as the displacement, the figurative expression of a still more transgressive love, of a relationship of homosexual seduction connecting the young knight and the master. This hypothesis, which does not run counter to the interpretations of G. Duby and E. Köhler, takes into consideration the complexity of relationships of opposition or of affection which could bend men together in feudal society.

Prostitution networks in Quattrocento Florence

R. C. TREXLER

Population and life in the official brothel of fifteenth-century Florence is the subject of this article. Through the records of the Office of Decency, it first studies the provenance, housing, and longevity of the professional personnel. Then it identifies the origins and occupations of the clients. An examination of the Office of Decency's court records shows that it did in fact protect the prostitutes from their clients as well as settle internal disputes and regulate whore activities. Finally, this article places brothel prostitution within the larger context of a crisis of womanhood at the end of the fifteenth century which involved as well nuns, foundlings, servants, and old women. An office begun (1403) in a period of low population with the intention of combatting male homosexuality through sponsoring female prostitution began the new century by trying to stop prostitution's spread in a period of increasing population.

An ethnology of marriage in the Age of Humanism

Ch. KLAPISCH-ZUBER

Through his treatise "Li Nuptiali" (On Marriage), the Roman humanist M. A. Altieri (written at the beginning of the 16th century) intended to make the members of the urban aristocracy of Rome aware of the reasons for their decadence. The restoration of political values, in his view, also comprehended that of collective rituals—in particular the rituals of

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marriage. He also tries to explain the meaning of the nuptial rituals, which were in the course of being lost. He describes them as they were practiced a century or a century and one half before his time and he seeks to find in them ancient parallels which enhance and justify their significance. His repeated reference to the legend of the rape of the Sabine women sustains a vision of marriage in which the rituals are supposed to serve as privileged mediators for social cohesion and social order, because the very fact of marriage itself derives from a situation of rupture and violence. Thus, Altieri proposes an original dialectic concerning marriage and takes his distance from the traditional Christian positions.