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## **Making Women, Masculinity, Same-Gender Desire, and the GenderQueer Visible in Medieval Iberian History**

**Michelle Armstrong-Partida**

In the opening line of the most cited book on medieval women in the Iberian Peninsula, Heath Dillard remarks: “Historians tend to overlook the vital participation of women in the shaping of Hispanic society during the Reconquest and medieval expansion of Christian ‘Spain’.” At the time that Dillard published her one and only monograph, there was very little available on medieval Iberian women in English-language scholarship written to scholars outside of Spain and a limited number of Spanish scholars working primarily on medieval women’s history.<sup>1</sup> In spite of the tremendous impact of Dillard’s work, it is notable that the study of women in frontier zones remains largely untouched, as does research on much of the lives of peasant, laboring class, and bourgeois women. Nearly forty years after Dillard published *Daughters of the Reconquest* in 1984, this special issue of the BSPHS asks us to reflect on the past scholarship in the field of women’s, gender, and sexuality history and to consider the uncharted territory we have yet to map out.

Every “state of the field” essay begins with the same questions: where are we, how did we get here, and where do we need to go? This essay starts out with a discussion of how, from its inception, the field of medieval women’s history has mostly sidelined the work being done on women in Iberia, which is a pattern that continues to this day. With the sincere hope that non-Iberian scholars might use this essay as a bibliographic guide to incorporate Iberia into their own work, much of the scholarship I cite is in English for those who do not read Spanish, Catalan, or Portuguese. I then set out to outline what decades of research on medieval Christian, Jewish, and Muslim women have revealed about women’s roles, participation, and activities in overlapping spheres of influence, such as the political, economic, religious, social, and familial environments, before moving on to address the research that needs to be done on Iberian masculinities. I make the case that it is time to consider new methodologies and revise past work on medieval Iberian sexualities because much of this research is grounded in prescriptive sources and favors elite attitudes about sex. The lack of recent work on gender and sexuality history has only reinforced medieval Iberia’s invisibility, especially in a field where cutting-edge research is increasingly focused on northwestern Europe. I offer suggestions as to how medieval Iberian women’s, gender, and sexuality history can be more fully integrated into scholarship outside the field of Iberia. This essay ends with a call for Iberianists who specialize in the

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<sup>1</sup> Heath Dillard, *Daughters of the Reconquest: Women in Castilian town society, 1100-1300* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

Middle Ages to consider broader trends in the discipline of history that have been influenced by the rise of World and Global history, such as the “global turn” and the use of Mediterranean and Atlantic World frameworks that treat a geographical region as unit of historical analysis, to think “big” in their methodologies as well as their geographical and chronological scope. The idea is to make a greater effort to connect medieval Iberia to large-scale developments and practices happening throughout medieval Europe without losing the distinctiveness of the Iberian context.

My starting point is the 1970s and 1980s when the history of medieval women was flourishing in the academy in a time before scholars truly engaged with gender theory or paid much attention to female or male sexuality beyond marriage or the sex trade. Today, medieval women’s historians are still very much influenced by the work of feminist scholars who were defining the field then—Joan Kelly, Judith Bennett, Barbara Hanawalt, and Maryanne Kowaleski, to name a few. Medieval Iberian women, however, were nowhere to be found in the important collections that influenced the next generation of scholars. Produced by these giants who focused mostly on England, collections such as *Women and Work in Preindustrial Europe* and *Women & Power in the Middle Ages* framed much of the scholarship on women’s work, royal women and power, and monastic women, saints, and medieval women’s religiosity.<sup>2</sup> Iberia was also left out of Susan Mosher Stuard’s *Women in Medieval History and Historiography* (1987) because not enough scholarship existed on the topic—even though Dillard’s book and a number of collections of essays in Spanish were in print.<sup>3</sup> Fast-forward to 2013 when Judith Bennett and Ruth Karras published *The Oxford Handbook of Women and Gender in Medieval Europe* with the express aim of mapping out

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<sup>2</sup> Mary Erler and Maryanne Kowaleski, eds., *Women and Power in the Middle Ages* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1988); Barbara Hanawalt, ed., *Women and Work in Preindustrial Europe* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986).

<sup>3</sup> In the 1980s a great number of Spanish scholars published articles in collections that assessed the roles and attitudes toward women based on legal codes. It was uncommon yet to find monographs solely on women. See *Las mujeres medievales y su ámbito jurídico: actas de las II Jornadas de Investigación Interdisciplinaria* (Madrid: Universidad Autónoma, 1983); *Las mujeres en las ciudades medievales: actas de las III Jornadas de Investigación Interdisciplinaria* (Madrid: Universidad Autónoma, 1984); *La condición de la mujer en la edad media: actas del coloquio celebrado en la Casa de Velázquez, del 5 al 7 de noviembre de 1984* (Madrid: Universidad Complutense, 1986); *Més enllà del silenci: les dones a la història de Catalunya* (Barcelona: Generalitat de Catalunya, 1988); Angela Muñoz Fernández and Cristina Segura, eds., *El trabajo de las mujeres en la Edad Media Hispana* (Madrid: Al-Mudayana, 1988). During the 1980s and the coming decade, important feminist historians, such as Teresa-Maria Vinyoles i Vidal, María del Carmen García Herrero, Cristina Segura Graíño, María Teresa López Beltrán, and Montserrat Cabré i Pairet made significant contributions to the field. For an assessment of the field in 2006, see Cristina Segura Graíño, “Veinticinco años de historia de las mujeres en España,” *Memoria y Civilización* 9 (2006): 85-107.

“what we now firmly know [...] after four decades of scholarship on women and gender in medieval Europe.”<sup>4</sup> And, here too, the experiences of Iberian women are nearly absent from the narrative of women’s lives presented in a collection where more than seventy-percent of the authors focus on England and northern Europe and where only one Iberian scholar was included among thirty-six authors.<sup>5</sup>

Every geographical specialty does a good bit of navel-gazing, but Iberia, as well as Italy and Eastern Europe, are too often left out of the standard medieval narrative. Initially, much of the exclusion of Iberia had to do with language barriers (American and European scholars more often learned French and German rather than Spanish, Catalan, or Portuguese)<sup>6</sup> and the limited access to the published work of scholars in Spain and Portugal in a time before the digital age made it possible to download articles or books in pdf form. Another issue that has continued to plague the field is the persistent belief that Iberian history is so dissimilar from northern Europe that comparisons are rarely, if ever, undertaken and this perception has also seeped into gender and sexuality histories. For scholars focused outside of Iberia, the explosion of scholarship on the conflict between Christians and Muslims and the coexistence of multi-ethnic, multi-religious communities in Iberia from the 1980s to the present appears to have exoticized Iberia (and Sicily) as a region so distinct politically, socially, and culturally that it has little in common with England and northern Europe.<sup>7</sup> The cross-cultural interactions among Christians, Jews, and Muslims, therefore, are used to demarcate Iberia as an entirely different beast and, from the perspective of scholars focused on northern Europe, becomes a reason to exclude integrating Iberia into larger trends and practices taking place in greater Europe. Ultimately Iberia is seen as far more intertwined in the Mediterranean than it is with its neighbors to the north.

In respect to women’s history, the problem is compounded by medieval scholars who have relied on the demographer John Hajnal’s European Marriage Pattern (EMP) to brush aside decades of research from Iberia and southern Europe

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<sup>4</sup> Judith M. Bennett and Ruth Mazo Karras, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Women and Gender in Medieval Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013): DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199582174.001.0001

<sup>5</sup> Marie Kelleher is the only Iberianist included in this significant and highly influential collection of essays.

<sup>6</sup> For the professionalization of History in the nineteenth century and the value placed on reading French and German, see Bonnie Smith, *The Gender of History: Men, Women, and Historical Practice* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998) and Anthony Grafton, *The Footnote. A Curious History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997).

<sup>7</sup> Here I refer to the work of Robert I. Burns, John Boswell, James F. Powers, Elena Lourie, Jessica A. Coope, Mark Meyerson, David Nirenberg, Brian Catlos, Lucy Pick, Jonathan Ray, Debra Blumenthal, Maya Soifer Irish, and Janina M. Safran, but there are many more scholars that cannot possibly be included in this short essay.

in general. Formulated in 1965, the EMP distinguished northwest Europe (the British Isles, the Low Countries, German-speaking areas, northern France, Scandinavia, and Iceland) from southern Europe by the late age of marriage, single-family households, and a high population of life-cycle servants who delayed marriage and brought down fertility rates as a reason for the region's greater economic growth and success. In terms of evidence, Hajnal relied solely on the marriage ages of bourgeois and elites in fifteenth-century Florence reported in David Herlihy and Christiane Klapisch-Zuber's 1978 *Tuscans and Their Families*. He made the argument that early age of marriage, higher fertility rates, and multi-generational households marked societies in Italy, and by extension Iberia and southern France.<sup>8</sup> Medieval historians working on women and marriage in England and northern Europe embraced the EMP, offering it as an explanation as to why comparisons with southern Europe about women's economic opportunities prior to marriage, women's migration, and women's roles in marriage formation are not brought into their discussions.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, the prevailing assumption is that marriage or the nunnery was the destiny of all women and that singlewomen did not exist in Mediterranean societies. As one British scholar on women's work summarized it: "In southern Europe, including southern France, Italy, and Spain, women tended to marry relatively young and move directly from their parental household to that of their husband. This meant that working as servants before marriage was rare."<sup>10</sup>

While a monograph has yet to be written on laboring class women working as servants and apprentices in medieval Iberia, such a claim seems outlandish given that other works in English, Spanish, and Catalan illustrate the various and extensive role of domestic servants and enslaved women working in homes. For example, the work of Teresa-Maria Vinyoles i Vidal considers not only the wills of bourgeois married women in Barcelona who left dowries for their female servants but also discusses the domestic tasks required of freeborn and enslaved servants in the household.<sup>11</sup> Dana Wessell Lightfoot's monograph on marriage among the working class in fifteenth-century Valencia dedicates two

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<sup>8</sup> John Hajnal, "European marriage patterns in perspective," in D.V. Glass and D.E.C. Eversley, eds. *Population in History: Essays in Historical Demography* (Chicago: Aldine Pub. Co., 1965), 101-143; Hajnal, "Two Kinds of Preindustrial Household Formation System," *Population and Development Review* 8, no. 3 (1982): 449-494.

<sup>9</sup> Susan McDonough and I have challenged Hajanal's EMP and the repeated claim by historians who focus on northern Europe that life-cycle domestic service for working class singlewomen did not exist in our article "Singlewomen in the Late Medieval Mediterranean" (forthcoming in *Past & Present* May 2023).

<sup>10</sup> Jane Whittle, "Rural economies," in *The Oxford Handbook of Women and Gender in Medieval Europe*, ed. Judith Bennett and Ruth Karras (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 320.

<sup>11</sup> Teresa-Maria Vinyoles i Vidal, *Historia de les dones a la Catalunya medieval* (Lleida: Pagés Editors, 2005); Vinyoles i Vidal, *La vida quotidiana a Barcelona vers 1400* (Barcelona: Editorial Rafael Dalmau, 1985), 135-143.

chapters to the daughters of artisans and farmers spending their youth as domestic servants to earn the resources for a dowry and highlights the agency of both local and immigrant women in choosing a spouse and contracting their own marriages.<sup>12</sup> Also in late medieval Valencia, unmarried enslaved women labored inside and outside the home, and masters and mistresses not only contributed to dowries but in many cases also selected and approved the new spouse of their former slave woman, as Debra Blumenthal has shown.<sup>13</sup> In late medieval Madrid it was common for adolescent boys and girls to leave the natal household to work and, once married, to live in single-family households—a pattern that is not supposed to exist according to the EMP.<sup>14</sup> What is more, a study of Lisbon in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries shows that singlewomen and widows made up one-fifth of the households, showing that a significant number had to rely on their labor to survive.<sup>15</sup> The evidence that not all women married and that unmarried women—freeborn, enslaved, and formerly enslaved—worked prior to their marriage in Iberia, similar to singlewomen in London and Paris, can be easily pieced together from articles and essays on women’s labor. Yet, all of these works remain largely unintegrated into the scholarship of women’s historians outside of Iberia. Such is the staying power of misconceptions about Iberia and of historiographical traditions that permit scholars to disregard even the most recent work of Iberianists.

Setting aside the supposed non-existence of working singlewomen in Iberia, we can nevertheless see that decades of research on Iberian women’s history shows the significant roles of women across the social, religious, and marital spectrum in their local communities and economies, as actors, influencers, and as links in a myriad of networks. While earlier scholarship emphasized the role of women solely within their families, recent studies have highlighted women and their shifting, multiple, and overlapping interactions and conflicts outside the family to highlight their role as liminal agents who could cross economic, social, and religious boundaries.<sup>16</sup> For example, in Catalonia, Jewish and converso

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<sup>12</sup> Dana Wessell Lightfoot, *Women, Dowries, and Agency: Marriage in Fifteenth-Century Valencia* (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 2013). An earlier published article should have caught the eye of scholars working in the north: Wessell Lightfoot, “The Projects of Marriage: Spousal Choice, Dowries, and Domestic Service in Early Fifteenth-Century Valencia,” *Viator* 50, no. 1 (2009): 333-353.

<sup>13</sup> Debra Blumenthal, *Enemies & Familiars: Slavery and Mastery in Fifteenth-Century Valencia* (Cornell: Cornell University Press, 2009), 82-87, 143-147.

<sup>14</sup> Ángel Carrasco Tezanos, “Entre trabajo y familia: la situación de las mujeres de las clases populares en Alcalá de Henares a mediados del siglo XVI,” in *Los Espacios Femeninos en el Madrid Medieval*, ed. Cristina Segura Graíño (Madrid: Almudayna, 2015), 55-84.

<sup>15</sup> Teresa Rodrigues, *Cinco séculos de quotidiano: A vida em Lisboa do século XV aos nossos dias* (Lisbon: Edições Cosmos, 1997).

<sup>16</sup> See the various essays in Michelle Armstrong-Partida, Dana Wessell Lightfoot, and Alexandra Guerson, eds. *Women and Community in Medieval and Early Modern Iberia* (Lincoln: University

women involved in moneylending forged economic relationships across religious lines and were able to bridge Jewish and Christian communities through their interreligious networks.<sup>17</sup> Jewish wives, after the forced conversions of 1391, had to make hard decisions about remaining married to their converso husbands and navigating the familial and social kin networks of the Jewish and converso community in respect to their family life and business as they continued to interact with Old Christians.<sup>18</sup> And, Mudejar married and singlewomen in Xàtiva denounced fellow Muslim, Jewish, and Christian opponents and appear in both Muslim and Christian courts suing to right wrongs and for economic redress, indicating that they were familiar with both Islamic and Christian law. As litigants, these Mudejar women were property owners, contractors, and mothers seeking justice for an abducted daughter or son.<sup>19</sup> These studies have been critical to gendering the experiences of ethno-religious minorities in a field that too often focuses exclusively on military conflict, personal violence, and the royal and ecclesiastical policies aimed at controlling Jewish and Mudejar communities where women appear as passive objects that are killed, abducted, raped, enslaved, married off, and used as boundary markers to police interfaith sex but are never the protagonists in their own story.

Recent works have also highlighted women's roles as the creators, facilitators, and patrons of art and architecture, as actively participating in and shaping legal culture, and as writers and producers of knowledge.<sup>20</sup> Royal wives and concubines who amassed great wealth in al-Andalus demonstrated their generosity and piety by founding mosques, cemeteries, and charitable foundations. These women had direct access to royal architects and were likely

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of Nebraska Press, 2020). For an important assessment of the field in Portugal, see Ana Maria S. A. Rodrigues, "Gendering Medieval Portugal," in *Gendering the Portuguese-Speaking World: From the Middle Ages to the Present*, ed. Francisco Bethencourt (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 13-31; Manuela Santos Silva and Ana S. A. Rodrigues, "Women's and Gender History," in *The Historiography of Medieval Portugal (c. 1950-2010)*, eds. José Mattoso, Maria de Lurdes Rosa, Bernardo Vasconcelos e Sousa, and Maria João Branco (Lisboa: IEM, Instituto de Estudos Medievais, 2011): 483-97.

<sup>17</sup> Sara Ifft Decker, "Jewish Women, Christian Women, and Credit in Thirteenth-Century Catalonia," *Haskins Society Journal* 27 (2016): 161-178; Elka Klein, "Public Activities of Catalan Jewish Women," *Medieval Encounters* 12, no. 1 (2006): 48-61.

<sup>18</sup> Alexandra Guerson and Dana Wessell Lightfoot, "A tale of two Tolranas: Jewish women's agency and conversion in late medieval Girona," *Journal of Medieval Iberian Studies* 12, no. 3 (2020): 1-21.

<sup>19</sup> Isabel A. O'connor, "Muslim Mudejar Women in Thirteenth-Century Spain: Dispelling the Stereotypes," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 27, no. 1 (2007): 55-70.

<sup>20</sup> Denise Filios, *Performing Women in the Middle Ages: Sex, Gender, and the Medieval Iberian Lyric* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); Montserrat Piera, *Readers and Writers in Medieval Iberia: Spinning the Text* (Leiden: Brill, 2019); María Morrás, Rebeca Sanmartín Bastida, and Yonsoo Kim, eds. *Gender and Exemplarity in Medieval and Early Modern Spain* (Leiden: Brill, 2021).

involved in the construction and design of royal palaces, such as the Alhambra. Christian queens, royal abbesses, and noblewomen were likewise important patrons of churches, monasteries, and charitable institutions. Women used ecclesiastical patronage not only for strategic political ends that established alliances with local religious leaders and neighboring elite families but also as a means to advertise their ancestry, status, wealth, and religious devotion.<sup>21</sup> Indeed, feminist historians have done much to underscore the power, influence, and political savvy of queens. A gendered lens has revealed the corporate nature of monarchy in Iberia, where royal women not only ruled massive territories as lords, were involved in military affairs, functioned as intercessors, diplomats, and as cultural transmitters, but were also rulers in their own right or wielded political authority as regents, co-rulers, and as queen-lieutenants.<sup>22</sup> While past scholarship focused on biographies of royal women deemed exceptional, this work reframes women's role in the public sphere by studying institutions of power, such as medieval monarchy and the networks of familial and political alliances elite women forged as lords and rulers to show that women's power in the political arena was far from exceptional.

Other studies have emphasized women's agency in choosing their sexual partners, contracting their own marriages, and in managing their affairs and business dealings. This has been critical in showing that, along with the diversity of women's experience, women had varying degrees of power to exercise direct or informal control in their everyday lives. The peasant woman who formed a long-term domestic union with a parish priest or chose to be a layman's concubine

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<sup>21</sup> See the essays by María Elena Díez Jorge, Glaire D. Anderson, Miriam Shadis, and Ana Maria Rodrigues in *Reassessing the Roles of Women as 'Makers' of Medieval Art and Architecture*, ed. Therese Martin (Leiden: Brill, 2012). See also D. Fairchild Ruggles, "Mothers of a Hybrid Dynasty: Race, Genealogy, and Acculturation in al-Andalus," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 34, no. 1 (2004): 65-94.

<sup>22</sup> Therese Martin, *Queen as King: Politics and Architectural Propaganda in Twelfth-Century Spain* (Leiden: Brill, 2006); Núria Silleras-Fernández, *Power, Piety, and Patronage in Late Medieval Queenship: Maria de Luna* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); Silleras-Fernández, *Chariots of Ladies: Francesc Eiximenis and the Court Culture of Medieval and Early Modern Iberia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015); Theresa Earenfight, *The King's Other Body: Maria of Castile and the Crown of Aragon* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009); Miriam Shadis, *Berenguela of Castile (1180-1246) and Political Women in the High Middle Ages* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); Janna Bianchini, *The Queen's Hand: Power and Authority in the Reign of Berenguela of Castile* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012); Elena Woodacre, *The Queen Regnant of Navarre: Succession, Politics, and Partnership, 1274-1512* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); Lucky K. Pick, *Her Father's Daughter: Gender, Power, and Religion in the Early Spanish Kingdoms* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2017). There are several articles on noblewomen and queens under "Women and Power in the Late Middle Ages" in a special issue coordinated by Darlene Abreu-Ferreira and Ivana Elbl, eds. "Women in the Lusophone World in the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Period," *Portuguese Studies Review* 13, no. 1-2 (2005).

before committing to marriage, or the prostitutes in port cities who flouted the law regarding their work in the brothel to engage in a short-term relationship with itinerant workmen or foreigners made these choices out of self-interest with the hope of improving their economic situation.<sup>23</sup> The Valencian women who were at the forefront of neighborhood feuds with their verbal insults and gestures aimed at attacking and dishonoring their enemies chose to participate in a culture of honor and violence because they and their families gained status in the community.<sup>24</sup> Women's actions and decisions, by way of influence, persuasion, or force, affected their own lives and that of others.<sup>25</sup> When we recognize that women's decision-making and calculated risks were intentional, we see that prostitutes, concubines, Jewish, Muslim, enslaved, and impoverished women from all walks of life exercised individual power, which is a crucial message to impart in the classroom when students and even some scholars continue to view medieval women only as passive victims of an oppressive patriarchy. These moments of agency are documented in the acts of resistance, subterfuge, and accommodation to preserve religious customs and rituals in the homes of Jewish and Muslim women or when women navigated and negotiated the power structures and legal institutions dominated by men in the marketplace, the workshop, the courtroom, and at court. This is seen in the women from across the social spectrum who appear in notarial records making wills, buying and selling goods, and entering into *comanda* contracts; who engaged with the legal system as plaintiffs, defendants, and witnesses in court cases; who used gendered language and ideas to game the system; and who were willing to go to court to protect their financial security and reputation and defend their rights.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> María del Carmen García Herrero, *Del nacer y el vivir. Fragmentos para una historia de la vida en la Baja Edad Media* (Zaragoza: Diputación de Zaragoza, Institución "Fernando el Católico", 2005); Michelle Armstrong-Partida, "Concubinage, Clandestine Marriage, and Gender in the Visitation Records of Fourteenth-Century Catalonia," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 26, no. 2 (May 2017): 207-238; Susan McDonough and Michelle Armstrong-Partida, "Amigas and their Amichs: Prostitute-Concubines, Strategic Coupling, and Laboring-Class Masculinity in Valencia and the Medieval Mediterranean," forthcoming in *Speculum* vol. 98/1 (January 2023).

<sup>24</sup> Mark Meyerson, "Women, Violence, and Community in Late Medieval Valencia," in *Women and Community in Medieval and Early Modern Iberia*, 105-131.

<sup>25</sup> Marie Kelleher, "What Do We Mean by 'Women and Power'?" *MFF* 51, no. 2 (2015): 104-115.

<sup>26</sup> See, for example, Marie Kelleher, *The Measure of Woman* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010); Rebecca Lynn Winer, *Women, Wealth, and Community in Perpignan, c. 1250-1300: Christians, Jews, and Enslaved Muslims in a Medieval Mediterranean Town* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006); María Jesús Fuente, "Christian, Muslim, and Jewish Women in Late Medieval Iberia," *Medieval Encounters* 15 (2009): 319-333; Renée Levine Melammed, *Heretics or Daughters of Israel? The Crypto-Jewish Women of Castile* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999). See also the essays by Natalie Oeltjen and Stephanie Cavanaugh on Mallorcan Conversas and Moriscas in Madrid in *Women and Community in Medieval and Early Modern Iberia*.

As actors in the economic sphere, women's labor within the household and their contribution to the survival of the family was critical, particularly at the lower levels of society where they sold homemade foodstuff and goods; by working as day laborers in agricultural fields and by laboring as *panaderas*, *horneras*, and even as construction workers; and by participating in a variety of skilled and unskilled labor within the woolen and silk textile industries that were so important to the Iberian economy.<sup>27</sup> In towns and cities, women also appear as tailors, shoemakers, potters, candlemakers, second-hand dealers, particularly in the reselling of clothing, and as hostellers and tavernkeepers, although we have yet to find evidence of their membership in craft guilds.<sup>28</sup> Poverty and economic vulnerability, of course, were a reality for many women—seen in the widows who sought assistance from each other and charitable organizations, in the manner singlewomen lived huddled together in the same house or in neighborhoods, in the abandoned wives left to fend for themselves and their children, and in the large numbers of immigrant women of all marital statuses that dabbled either part time or full time in the sex trade. Immigrant and poor women, including young and minority women, whether living in a rural or urban environment, were at greater risk of experiencing violence at the hands of men, especially rape. In fact, our understanding of women's migration patterns from rural to urban areas in search of work, how they survived, or their movements along sea routes that brought them to port cities along the coast of Iberia and to the islands of Mallorca and Sicily is quite limited.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> María Teresa López Beltrán, "El trabajo de las mujeres en el mundo urbano medieval," *Mélanges de la Casa de Velázquez* 40, no. 2 (2010): 39-57; M. Elena Díez Jorge, "Relaciones de Género en las Artesanas Mudéjares y las Artesanas Moriscas," in *VIII Simposio Internacional de Mudéjarismo*, vol. II (Teruel: CEM, 2002); Antonio Ortega Villoslada, "El trabajo femenino en Mallorca. La labor de la mujer en la actividad marítima de la primera mitad del siglo XIV," *Espacio, Tiempo y Forma* 17 (2004), 461-469; See the essays written by Mercedes Borrero Fernández and Teófilo Ruiz in *Women at Work in Spain: From the Middle Ages to Early Modern Times*, ed. Marilyn Stone and Carmen Benito-Vessels (New York: Peter Lang, 1998); Victoria López Barahona y José Nieto Sánchez, "Artesana Europeas, Castellanas y Madrileñas en los siglos XIV al XV," in *Los Espacios Femeninos*, 85-123; Maria Helena da Cruz Coelho, "A mulher e o trabalho nas cidades medievais portuguesas," *Revista de História Económica e Social* 20 (1987): 45-63; Iria Gonçalves, "Regateiras, padeiras e outras mais na Lisboa medieval," in *Lisboa medieval. Os rostos da cidade*, ed. Luís Olivera Krus et al. (Lisboa: Livros Horizonte, 2007), 1-29.

<sup>28</sup> María Asenjo González, "Las mujeres y el trabajo en las ciudades de la Corona de Castilla (siglos XIII-XIV. Integración y marginación)," in *La donna nell'economia secc. XIII-XVIII. Atti della Ventunesima Settimana di Studi*, ed. Simonetta Cavaciocchi (Firenze: Le Monnier, 1989), 553-562.

<sup>29</sup> Mireia Comas-Vias, *Entre la solitud i la llibertat: Vidues barcelonines a finals de l'Edat Mitjana* (Roma: Viella, 2015); María Jesús Fuente, "Más allá del amor: Mujeres moras y judías víctimas de violencia en la Castilla del siglo XV," *Espacio, Tiempo y Forma: Serie III Historia Medieval* 30 (2017): 309-333; Michelle Armstrong-Partida, "Women, Injurious Words, and Clerical Violence in Fourteenth-Century Catalunya," in *Women and Community*, 83-104; M.

The economic activities of women, both within and outside the home, is a topic that should be revisited because the generalization that women played a minor role in the urban and rural economy requires far more nuance and reconsideration, especially if we consider Jane Whittle's argument that "confusion between women's role in housework and home production in the pre-industrial economy has consistently led to an underestimation of women's contribution to other areas of the economy, such as agriculture, food processing, and textile production. Men's work is always considered as part of the wider economy even when it is unpaid, but women's work is not."<sup>30</sup> What little we do know about property ownership or the economic power and consumerism of married, widowed, and lower-class Christian women often comes from economic studies that tangentially focus on women when outlining the economic growth of towns or the development of a middling class with its different professions.<sup>31</sup> And yet, In Porto women invested in businesses through *comanda* contracts and could be owners of boats that transported wine and goods along the river.<sup>32</sup> In Mallorca, women purchased and sold enslaved men and women as an investment strategy and leased out their slaves to work for trades people.<sup>33</sup> Notarial registers from Barcelona reveal that married women and widows were either involved in the family business in their husband's absence or had separate professions from their husbands and managed their own businesses. The Jewish wives of middling level artisans were likewise involved in their husbands' trade as silk weavers, silk embroiderers, silversmiths, and coral cutters, while less wealthy Jewish women contracted themselves out as wetnurses to other Jewish families.<sup>34</sup> Because much

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Armstrong-Partida, "Precarious Manhood: Adolescence and Gang Rape in the Late Medieval Europe" *MFF* 56, no. 2 (Spring 2021): 125-175; Michelle Armstrong-Partida and Susan McDonough, "Singlewomen in the Late Medieval Mediterranean," (forthcoming).

<sup>30</sup> Jane Whittle, "A Critique of Approaches to 'Domestic Work': Women, Work, and The Preindustrial Economy," *Past and Present* 243, no. 1 (May 2019): 35-70.

<sup>31</sup> Jeff Fynn-Paul, *Family, Work and Household in Late Medieval Iberia: A Social History of Manresa at the Time of the Black Death* (New York: Routledge, 2018), 191-206; Gregory B. Milton, *Market Power: Lordship, Society, and Economy in Medieval Catalonia 1267-1313* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 112-116.

<sup>32</sup> Arnaldo Sousa Melo, "Mulher, trabalho e família: a dimensão económica de agregado familiar. Porto, 1340-1450," in *Os Reinos Ibéricos na Idade Média. Livro de Homenagem ao Professor Doutor Humberto Carlos Baquero Moreno*, vol. 1, ed. Luís Adão (Porto: Livraria Civilização, 2003), 273-287.

<sup>33</sup> Kevin Mummey, "Measuring the margins: Women, slavery, and the notarial process in late fourteenth-century Mallorca," in *Rethinking Medieval Margins: Women, Slavery, and the Notarial Process in Late Fourteenth-Century Mallorca*, ed. Anne E. Zimo, et. al. (London: Routledge, 2020), 111-128.

<sup>34</sup> Mireia Comes, Carme Muntaner, and Teresa Vinyoles, "Elles no només filaven: producció i comerç en mans de dones a la Catalunya baixmedieval," *Recerques* 56 (2008): 19-45; Anna Rich Abad, "Able and available: Jewish women in medieval Barcelona and their economic activities," *Journal of Medieval Iberian Studies* 6, no. 1 (2014): 71-86.

of our information on women's economic activities and labor come from studies published in articles, we have only snapshots of the experiences of non-elite women in the countryside or in cities, particularly peasant women, craftswomen, female apprentices, and those involved in any type of business. The abundance of late medieval notarial records, especially in the Crown of Aragon, have yet to be tapped for book-length studies of the economic and professional activities of middling and laboring-class women.

If we consider women's earning ability, then wet-nursing was a valued occupation that rendered higher salaries for married, widowed, and even some singlewomen more than other kinds of female labor. Recent scholarship on wetnurses is changing the historiography by showing that, contrary to previous assertions that breastfeeding was "men's business" due to their patrimonial concerns, mothers in Iberia exercised control over the employment and oversight of the *dida*.<sup>35</sup> In Iberia, the kingdom of Aragon is unique in that husbands in their wills sought to ensure the nourishment of their offspring by stipulating a salary for a wetnurse or providing a stipend for their widowed wife to do the breastfeeding, indicating the importance placed on maternal breastfeeding and the bond it created between mother and infant.<sup>36</sup> Given the high cost of a wetnurse and its use among the affluent, the post-partum bodies of enslaved women were also exploited to serve this function while their own infants were sent away, sold, or abandoned in foundling hospitals.<sup>37</sup> For laboring class women and even enslaved ones, wet-nursing offered social and economic advantages and broadened friendship networks among mothers.

Lest we forget the labor and professional vocation of women as medical practitioners, evidence that some women in Barcelona and Valencia were licensed to practice medicine and were surgeons shows not only that they were called upon to take care of pregnant women, children, and the poor but also that their work was valued across the social spectrum and sought after by many beyond their immediate communities.<sup>38</sup> The domestic work of healers caring for family members and friends brings to light the women who were not physicians,

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<sup>35</sup> See both Rebecca Lynn Winer, "The Mother and the Dida [Nanny]: Female Employers and Wet Nurses in Fourteenth-Century Barcelona," 55-78, and Debra Blumenthal, "'With My Daughter's Milk': Wet Nurses and the Rhetoric of Lactation in Valencian Court Records," at 103, 101-114, in *Medieval and Renaissance Lactations: Images, Rhetorics, Practices*, ed. Jutta Gisela Sperling (London: Routledge, 2016).

<sup>36</sup> María del Carmen García Herrero and Cristina Pérez Galán, "Salaried Mothers: Breastfeeding and Rearing Infants in the Kingdom of Aragon," *Early Modern Women* 11, no. 2 (2017): 3-21.

<sup>37</sup> Rebecca Lynn Winer, "Conscripting the breast: lactation, slavery and salvation in the realms of Aragon and kingdom of Majorca, c. 1250-1300," *Journal of Medieval History* 34 (2008): 164-184.

<sup>38</sup> María del Carmen García Herrero, "El trabajo de las mujeres en la corona de Aragón en el siglo XV: Valoración y defensa del mismo por la reina María de Castilla," *Temas Medievales* 20 (2012): 33-47.

midwives, nurses, or apothecaries. As part of the medieval health-care system, women regularly washed bodies, administered purges, circulated medical recipes, prepared ointments and poultices, and fed the sick with special foods to recover their health.<sup>39</sup> While Jewish women were also granted licenses to treat Jewish and Christian patients, a study of beauty and health recipes reveals that Jewish and Christian women shared the same knowledge and similar practices to treat infertility, pregnancy, common illnesses, and improve their appearance. Examples of cross-cultural interaction and the transmission of knowledge among women shows that Christian women sought the healing expertise of Jewish and Muslim women in their communities.<sup>40</sup>

In spite of the fragmentary nature of women's involvement in professions like medicine and the cross-cultural interactions of women in sharing knowledge and practices, these studies are a good reminder that a dearth of information should not hinder our quest to recover women, the gender fluid, or any elusive other's participation and activities in sociocultural, economic, political, and religious spheres. The documentation may be sparse, but the extant sources are nevertheless suggestive. We should cast our net more widely in the types of sources and fields brought to bear, such as archaeology, bioarchaeology, visual and material culture, in our analysis. We can also be more creative in using our professional expertise to employ a "disciplined imagination" to reconstruct lives and experiences and to "suggest highly probable female actions and behaviors" that are informed by other studies of medieval women and minorities in similar time periods and in neighboring geographical locations.<sup>41</sup> This includes using more conceptual frameworks and theories, such as intersectionality and postcolonial theory,<sup>42</sup> to interpret the sources and increase our knowledge of women's lives, as well as to understand the spectrum of gender identities and expose the sexual cultures and histories of gender non-conforming individuals.

Given the territorial conquest, military culture, and ethnic and religious diversity of Iberia, it is astounding that we do not have more historical studies of the masculinities of kings, caliphs, and emirs, on the men in Christian and Muslim

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<sup>39</sup> Montserrat Cabré, "Women or Healers? Household Practices and the Categories of Health Care in Late Medieval Iberia," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 82, no. 1 (2008): 18-51; Ana Echevarria, "The female body in the practice of minority Muslim communities in Iberia," in *Religious Boundaries for Sex, Gender, and Corporeality*, ed. Alexandra Cuffel, Ana Echevarria, Georgios Halkias (London: Routledge, 2018), 48-62.

<sup>40</sup> Carmen Caballero-Navas, "The care of women's health and beauty: an experience shared by medieval Jewish and Christian women," *Journal of Medieval History* 34 (2008): 146-163.

<sup>41</sup> Valerie Garver used this methodology of a "disciplined imagination" in *Women and Aristocratic Culture in the Carolingian World* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009). Nicola Denzey used a similar methodology to imagine women's experiential connections to spaces and visual art in *The Bone Gatherers: The Lost Worlds of Early Christian Women* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2007).

<sup>42</sup> Nadia R. Atlschul has made the case for Iberia in "The future of postcolonial approaches to medieval Iberian studies," *Journal of Medieval Iberian Studies* 1, no. 1 (2009): 5-17.

armies, of Christian military orders, of townsmen living in frontier societies, and of Iberian soldiers and merchants abroad.<sup>43</sup> The use of gender theory as a historical analytical tool, advocated by Joan Scott in 1986, is about the structures, negotiation, hierarchies, and the exercise of power between men and women but also among men.<sup>44</sup> Yet, as a theory that explores the inequalities of power and relationships of power, including the subordination of and competition among men across social, economic, political, and religious lines, scholars who work on Muslim-Jewish-Christian relations, politics, or urban Iberian history overlook or underestimate the uses of gender theory. All medieval men were not created equal when it came to their manliness and the socioeconomic influence and political authority that entailed. How did Christian lords and knights construct their masculine identity when facing Muslim warriors, working as mercenaries, performing at royal or caliphal courts, or in the context of political dissent?<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Ulrike Strasser and Heidi Tinsman have made a similar case for how world history and the study of gender and sexuality “converge naturally” given that world history “commonly centers its analyses on domains of life in which men are primary actors, be it patterns of trade and labor exploitation, or empire building and state formation.” See “It’s a Man’s World? World History Meets the History of Masculinity, in Latin American Studies, for Instance,” *Journal of World History* 21, no. 1 (2010), 77. The number of historical studies focusing on masculinity in Iberia is limited and most of the work on medieval masculinities in Iberia has been done by literary scholars. See, for example, Louise Mirrer, “Representing ‘Other’ Men: Muslims, Jews, and Masculine Ideals in Medieval Castilian Epic and Ballad,” in *Medieval Masculinities: Regarding Men in the Middle Ages*, eds. Clare Lees, Thelma S. Fenster, Jo Ann McNamara (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 169-86; Francisco A. Marcos-Marin, “Masculine Beauty vs. Feminine Beauty in Medieval Iberia,” in *Multicultural Iberia: Language, Literature, and Music*, eds. Dru Dougherty and Milton Azevedo (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 22-39. See also the literary essays on Iberian Masculinities in *Queer Iberia: Sexualities, Cultures, and Crossings from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance*, eds. Josiah Blackmore and Gregory S. Hutcheson (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999).

<sup>44</sup> Joan W. Scott, “Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis,” *American Historical Review* 91, no. 5 (1986): 1053-1075. See also Michael Kimmel, *The Gendered Society*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

<sup>45</sup> A few historians have studied knightly masculinity in the kingdom of Portugal and the masculinity of the cathedral canons of Braga who came from the knightly class. See Ana Maria S. A. Rodrigues, “Um mundo só de homens. Os capitulares bracarense e a vivência da masculinidade na Idade Média,” in *Estudos de Homenagem ao Prof. Duotor José Marques*, vol. 1 (Porto: Faculdade de Letras da Universidade do Porto, 2006), 161-172; Rodrigues, “La Identidad de Género en la Edad Media, una cuestión polémica,” in *Identitats* (XIV Curs d’Estiu de Balaguer), ed. Flocel Sabaté (Lleida: Pagés, 2012), 43-57; Rodrigues, “Em torno da conquista de Ceuta: Guerra e género na Idade Média,” in *História Antiga e Medieval 6 – Conflitos sociais, guerra e relações de género: representações e violência*, ed. Adriana Zierer and Ana Livia B. Vieira (São Luís: Editora UEMA, 2017), 17-32; Manuela Santos Silva, “Violência ou exibição de virilidade? Comportamentos masculinos nos Livros de Linhagens portuguesas da Idade Média,” *eClassica* 2 (2016): 126-135; Hélder Carvalho and Isabel dos Guimarães Sá, “Knightly Masculinity, Court Games and Material Culture in Late-medieval Portugal: The Case of Constable Afonso (c. 1480-1504),” *Gender & History* 28, no. 2 (2016): 387-400.

What religious, social, economic, and civic activities defined manhood for the parish priest, the Jewish merchant, the patrician elite involved in governance, the urban artisan, the immigrant laborer, or the Mudejar vassal?<sup>46</sup> Where do these men fit into the spectrum of masculinities? Indeed, what were the broad characteristics of the hegemonic masculinities in Iberia and how did these change over time as Christians dominated the peninsula and Iberia became more enmeshed in the politics and trade of the Mediterranean? We do not know. Because gender is too often associated as code for women's history, a resistance to engage with gender theory and read the work of gender historians is **still** an issue.

We have the potential to place Iberian studies at the forefront of exciting developments that are impacting the field of medieval history more broadly. Scholars such as Geraldine Heng are asking us to reconsider the concept of race for the premodern era, to be more expansive in our definition by acknowledging that race is more than biology or physiognomy. Premodern people were racialized through cultural and religious criteria.<sup>47</sup> Intersectionality theory, which takes into account the social identities created through race, gender, sexuality, and socio-economic status to understand interlocking systems of power and oppression can transform how we discuss the experiences of religious and ethnic minorities, the marginalized poor, and the lived realities of genderqueer individuals.<sup>48</sup> For example, when in 1453 the widow Nicolana promised to free

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<sup>46</sup> The only book-length historical study of masculinity for Iberia is my own: Michelle Armstrong-Partida, *Defiant Priests: Domestic Unions, Violence, and Clerical Masculinity in Fourteenth-Century Catalunya* (Cornell University Press, 2017). My other works on masculinity include: Armstrong-Partida, "Concubinage, Illegitimacy, and Fatherhood: Urban Masculinity in Late Medieval Barcelona," *Gender & History* 31, no. 1 (2019): 1-25; McDonough and Armstrong-Partida, "Amigas and their Amichs: Affection, Strategy and Laboring-Class Masculinity in Late Medieval Valencia and the Mediterranean," forthcoming in *Speculum* vol. 98/1 (January 2023).

For an example of works that consider similar questions that can inform how Iberianists approach gender in their own work, see Ruth M. Karras, *From Boys to Men: Formations of Masculinity in Late Medieval Europe* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003); Katherine Lewis, *Kingship and Masculinity in Late Medieval England* (London: Routledge, 2013); *Crusading and Masculinities*, eds. Natasha Hodgson, Katherine J. Lewis, and Matthew M. Mesley (London: Routledge, 2019); Lisa G. Jones, "Ambivalent models of manliness in medieval Islamic hagiography," in *Religious Boundaries*, 132-44; E. Amanda McVitty, *Treason and Masculinity in Medieval England: Gender, Law, and Political Culture* (Melton: Boydell & Brewer, 2020); Elizabeth Currie, *Fashion and Masculinity in Renaissance Florence* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018); Martha Howell, "Merchant Masculinity in Early Modern Northern Europe," *Cultural and Social History: The Journal of the Social History Society* 18, no. 3 (2021): 275-296.

<sup>47</sup> Geraldine Heng, *The Invention of Race in the European Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018). See also Sarah J. Pearce's response to Heng's work: Pearce, "The Inquisitor and the Moseret: The Invention of Race in the European Middle Ages and the New English Colonialism in Jewish Historiography," *Medieval Encounters* 26, no. 2 (2020): 145-90.

<sup>48</sup> See, for example, Roland Betancourt, *Byzantine Intersectionality: Sexuality, Gender & Race in the Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020).

her enslaved domestic servant Maria, identified as from the “*nacionis nigrorum*,” after one more year of service in Mallorca and a repayment of 50 *lliures*, Maria most likely experienced multiple inequities after her manumission (and during her enslavement). This would have included but was not limited to her prior religion as presumably a Muslim and her newly baptized status as a Christian; her racialized body both sexualized and perceived to be hyperactive, insatiable; her nature seen as deceptive and untrustworthy; her unmarried status and the neighborhood she resided in with other poor women and immigrants, including the company she kept, could have marked her as disreputable or involved in the sex trade; her economic standing among the lowest because if finding employment did not present a challenge, the likelihood that her wages would be lower than a freeborn woman and the possibility that she would not be fully remunerated her labor was high; and her treatment by local secular or ecclesiastical authorities who were conditioned to view her as a suspect woman due to all of the above shows the overlapping forms of discrimination and exploitation that kept many of these women living on the social and economic margins of society.<sup>49</sup>

It is also time to renew our efforts in the field of sexuality. Works that have focused on marriage, adultery, fornication, sodomy, prostitution, and concubinage have studied these topics primarily from a legal lens via canonical, diocesan, royal, and municipal laws and statutes. This scholarship has been foundational in elucidating how elite ecclesiastical and secular authorities believed in the good of marriage and the need to control sexual desires to maintain social order.<sup>50</sup> The

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<sup>49</sup> Arxiu del Regne de Mallorca, notario Andreu Boix, no. 1083, 60r. (1453). See also Blumenthal, *Enemies & Familiars*; Pamela Patton, “An Ethiopian-Headed Serpent in the Cantigas de Santa Maria: Sin, Sex, and Color in Late Medieval Castile,” *Gesta* 55, no. 2 (2016): 213-238; Pamela Patton, “Introduction: Race, Color, and the Visual in Iberia and Latin America,” in *Envisioning Others: Race, Color and the Visual in Iberia and Latin America*, ed. Pamela Patton (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 1-17; Valentin Groebner, “The carnal knowing of a coloured body: sleeping with Arabs and Blacks in the European imagination, 1300-1550,” in *The Origins of Racism in the West*, ed. Miriam Eliav-Feldon, Benjamin Isaac, and Joseph Ziegler (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 217-225.

<sup>50</sup> R. Córdoba de la Llave, “Las relaciones extraconyugales en la sociedad castellana bajomedieval,” *Anuario de Estudios Medievales* 16 (1986): 517-619; Córdoba de la Llave, “Criminalidad sexual en la Edad Media,” in *Historia a debate*, vol. 4, ed. Carlos Barros Guimerans, (Santiago de Compostela, A Coruña, España: Historia a Debate, 1995), 49-62; Córdoba de la Llave, *El instinto diabólico. Agresiones sexuales en la Castilla medieval* (Córdoba: Universidad de Córdoba, 1994); Rafael Narbona Vizcaino, *Pueblo, poder y sexo. València medieval, 1306-1420* (Valencia: Diputació de València, 1992); Flocel Sabaté, “Evolució i expressió de la sexualitat medieval,” *Anuario de Estudios Medievales* 23, no. 1 (1993): 163-195; Louis Crompton, “Male Love and Islamic Law in Arab Spain,” in *Islamic Homosexualities: Culture, History, and Literature*, ed. Stephen O. Murray and Will Roscoe (New York: New York University Press, 1997): 142-157; Antonio Planas Rosselló, “Los delitos contra el matrimonio y la moral sexual en el Derecho histórico de Mallorca,” *BSAL* 56 (2000): 45-64; the various essays in

emphasis and the precedence given to the law and the literary and religious discourses of elites on the value of chastity and virginity, on the proper roles for men and women, and the sins of sex outside of marriage, however, is top-down history. Our understanding of the sex and sexual attitudes of medieval people becomes distorted when we view it through the limited lens of the illicit and licit and the perspective of dominant elites. Such a view also produces damaging notions of “normative” and “non-normative” sex and sexuality, which serves only to feature heterosexual relations as the norm and makes aberrant or incidental the sexual lives of trans and nonbinary genders, eunuchs, asexuals, and those who felt same-gender desire. My point is that we must decenter the standard historical narrative by giving more attention to the behaviors and motives of men, women, couples, and the genderqueer folks who navigated the laws that criminalized sex and flouted the standards championed by the powerful elite and patrician class. A spectrum of medieval attitudes on sex coexisted within a society that varied according to socioeconomic status and religion, and thus moving away from a universal view of what was considered appropriate sexual behavior permits a more inclusive history and one that lets the actions of medieval people speak more forcefully than the rhetoric in prescriptive literature.<sup>51</sup>

Indeed, Valerie Traub reminds us that we need to do more than categorize sex acts, identify attitudes about sex, and debate labels, words, phrases, etc. She believes that those who engaged in sex acts produced bodily, erotic, and social knowledge, so we must employ a more flexible and capacious analysis of sex and sexuality.<sup>52</sup> Understanding what specific bodily acts meant to the individual or couple involved and how people used the knowledge gained during a sexual encounter or relationship, reveals more about how people brokered their experiences beyond their immediate intimate act and how these sexual practices functioned in medieval society. It is also important to recognize that same-sex

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Eukene Lacarra Lanz, ed., *Marriage and Sexuality in Medieval and Early Modern Iberia* (Routledge, 2002); Eukene Lacarra Lanz, “Legal and Clandestine Prostitution in Medieval Spain,” *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies* 79, no. 3 (2002): 265-286; Martine Charageat, ed., *Matrimonio y sexualidad: normas, practicas, y transgresiones en la Edad Media y principios de la Época Moderna* (Madrid: Casa de Velázquez, 2003); Jesús Ángel Solórzano Telechea, “Justicia y ejercicio del poder: la infamia y los ‘delitos de lujuria’ en la cultura legal de la Castilla medieval,” *Cuadernos de Historia del Derecho* 12 (2005): 313-353; Solórzano Telechea, “Fama publica, infamy, and defamation: judicial violence and social control of crimes against sexual morals in medieval Castile,” *Journal of Medieval History* 33 (2007): 398-413.

<sup>51</sup> Ruth M. Karras, *Sexuality in Medieval Europe: Doing Unto Others*, 3rd ed. (London: Routledge, 2017), 3, 32, 33; Allyson Poska, *Women & Authority in Early Modern Spain: The Peasants of Galicia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 5-13; Michelle Armstrong-Partida, “Concubinage, Clandestine Marriage, and Gender in the Visitation Records of Fourteenth-Century Catalonia,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 26:2 (May 2017): 207-238.

<sup>52</sup> Valerie Traub, *Thinking Sex with the Early Moderns* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), 3, 9, 10-11, 14.

spaces opened up opportunities for same-gender sexual liaisons and a variety of erotic relationships that took place prior to or during marriage to the opposite sex so that we move beyond the presumed invisibility of non-heterosexual sex.<sup>53</sup> In sum, the problematic binary paradigms that permeate earlier works on gender identity and sexuality need updating to allow for more gender variation and queer sexualities. Gender and sexuality are fluid, unstable, and sometimes slippery and can be situational because both are performative. Identities, whether involving gender or sexuality, or both, change in a person's lifetime, especially in cultures where same-gender relations are permitted in a particular stage of life (adolescence) and when there are different rules for when and how men can sexually use boys or girls.<sup>54</sup>

Fleshing out concrete identities, however, should not consume us. Valerie Traub asks that we think “beyond the protocols of identity history” to unsettle “the boundaries between hetero and homoeroticism, as well as licit and illicit, transgressive and orthodox, sexualities” because “abandoning [a] strict division between such notions, as well as between men and women, same-sex bonds, and heterosexual marriage, enables different configurations of relationships to come to the fore.”<sup>55</sup> In the same spirit, Roland Betancourt challenges us when studying gender and sexuality to leave open a “spectrum of possibilities for the identities and freedoms” of those people who are left out or infrequently appear in the historical record.<sup>56</sup> While research has revealed that communities of same-gender desire existed throughout premodern Europe, the most visible in documents from Florence, Venice, Rome, London, Valencia, and in inquisitorial cases from Castile, Aragon, and Lisbon,<sup>57</sup> scholars are now reevaluating past designations of

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<sup>53</sup> See Judith Bennett, “‘Lesbian-Like’ and the Social History of Lesbianisms,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 9, no. 1 (2000): 1-24; Sahar Amer, “Medieval Arab Lesbians and Lesbian-Like Women,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 18, no. 2 (2009): 215-236.

<sup>54</sup> Leila J. Rupp, “Toward a Global History of Same-Sex Sexuality,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 10, no. 2 (2001): 287-302; Guido Ruggiero, *The Boundaries of Eros: Sex Crime and Sexuality in Renaissance Venice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985); Ruggiero, *Machiavelli in Love: Sex, Self and Society in the Italian Renaissance* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007); Michael Rocke, *Forbidden Friendships: Homosexuality and Male Culture in Renaissance Florence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996); Dyan Elliott, *The Corrupter of Boys: Sodomy, Scandal, and the Medieval Clergy* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020).

<sup>55</sup> Traub, *Thinking Sex with the Early Moderns*, 12, 14-15, at 17.

<sup>56</sup> Betancourt, *Byzantine Intersectionality*, 16, 124, 125-129.

<sup>57</sup> See the work of Ruggiero and Rocke in f.n. no. 46 and Sherry M. Velasco, *Lesbians in Early Modern Spain* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2011); Cristian Berco, *Sexual Hierarchies, Public Status: Men, Sodomy, and Society in Spain's Golden Age* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007); Francois Soyer, *Ambiguous Gender in Early Modern Spain and Portugal: Inquisitors, Doctors, and the Transgression of Gender Norms* (Leiden: Brill, 2012); Gary Ferguson, *Same-Sex Marriage in Renaissance Rome: Sexuality, Identity, and Community in Early Modern Europe* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2016) .

cross-dressing/transvestism and labels of “homosexuality” when studying cases of individuals who presented themselves as different from their assigned sex at birth, such as the cases of Eleanor/John Rykener and Rolandina/Ronchaia in fourteenth-century London and Venice, respectively.<sup>58</sup>

Not only do we have evidence that the sex assigned at birth did not always play the definitive role in determining gender identity, we also have examples of individuals in Iberia who engaged in more than simply same-gender sex, such as Miquel Borràs, the son of a notary from Mallorca, who moved to Valencia and lived as Margalida in woman’s clothing and was reportedly known in their community by this name. In 1460, Margalida was tortured and hanged in men’s clothing for apparently living as a woman and not for the crime of sodomy.<sup>59</sup> We can read other famous examples, such as Catalina de Erauso, the Basque nun dressed as a man who traveled to the Americas, fought in military battles, initiated swordfights, and courted women, as well as Eleno/Elena de Céspedes, who joined the military, trained as a tailor, took on the identity of a licensed surgeon, and married a young woman by the name of Maria, as people who chose to live transgender lives.<sup>60</sup> At great risk to themselves, these individuals were a part of sexual subcultures and found spaces for sexual alterity in Iberian towns and cities, which confirms that some degree of gender non-conformity could exist in premodern society.

Leah DeVun’s recent monograph on non-binary gender underscores the importance of writing about transgender history to show not only the diverse categories of sex and gender, as well as gender-crossings, were far from exceptions but also to insist that non-binary and trans people must be included in standard premodern histories to combat claims that only “traditional” gender has

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<sup>58</sup> Kadin Henningsen, “‘Calling [herself] Eleanor’: Gender Labor and Becoming a Woman in the Rykener Case,” *MFF* 55, no. 1 (2019): 249-266; Roisin Cossar, Ruth M. Karras, and Shannon McSheffrey, “[The Case of Rolandina Ronchaia, a 14th - century transwoman?](https://middleagesforeducators.princeton.edu/case-rolandina-ronchaia-14th-century-transwoman#block-5),” *Middle Ages for Educators*, July 22, 2020. <https://middleagesforeducators.princeton.edu/case-rolandina-ronchaia-14th-century-transwoman#block-5>. See also McDonough and Armstrong-Partida, “Sexual Practices, Fluidities and Trans Lives in a Shared Premodern Mediterranean,” (forthcoming).

<sup>59</sup> Ramon Rosselló Vaquer and Jaume Bover Pujol, *El Sexe a Mallorca. Notes històriques, II* (Palma de Mallorca: Miquel Font Editor, 1994), 167. See also Susan McDonough and Michelle Armstrong-Partida, “Sex, Gender & Sexuality in the Late Medieval Mediterranean,” *The Cambridge World History of Sexualities*, vol. 3, ed. Merry Wiesner-Hanks and Mathew Kuefler, forthcoming.

<sup>60</sup> Catalina de Erauso, *Lieutenant Nun: Memoir of a Basque Transvestite in the New World*, trans. Michele Stepto and Gabriel Stepto (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996); Richard Kagan and Abigail Dyer, eds., *Inquisitorial Inquiries: Brief Lives of Secret Jews and Other Heretics* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 36-43.

existed throughout history until our present day.<sup>61</sup> DeVun's work is relevant because nonbinary-sexed figures in medieval contemporary thought were used in texts and in visual sources to signal a "nexus of embodied and cultural difference that we now call race."<sup>62</sup> In particular, DeVun's research shows that polemical images of Jews, Muslims, and Africans appear as intersex and gender-crossing beings who are considered hypersexual, sodomitic, and corporally inferior as a way to racialize and emphasize the physical and cultural difference of non-Christians.<sup>63</sup> How DeVun's findings fit into an Iberian and Mediterranean context and studies of race in medieval Iberia is something that needs to be explored.

Here, it is impossible to refrain from pointing out that there is a relative paucity of research devoted specifically to sexuality and, as a field, medieval Iberia is still woefully behind the number of studies on women and gender published for medieval England, France, and Italy. To be sure, this is not due to a dearth of archival sources that can speak to these subjects given that Iberia has a richness of archival fonds that makes other scholars jealous. Rather, one issue is that only a handful of Iberian scholars specialize in the field of women's, gender, or sexuality history, and with fewer Iberianists and even fewer WGS medieval historians placed at institutions with doctoral programs that can train the next generation, our numbers are unlikely to grow in the coming decades. Encouraging graduate students to focus their dissertation research in Iberia is only half the battle; the other is to hold ourselves more accountable for integrating women, gender, and sexuality (and their theoretical underpinnings) into their training. The expectation is **not** that every doctoral student will become a women's or gender historian, but that these future academics will understand the value of weaving women, along with gender identities and sexualities, into their analysis and making them visible in their scholarship so that this work is done not only by those who specialize in this kind of history.

We must also do more to ensure that our scholarship is read by historians outside of Iberian studies. An easy approach is to publish in venues that are not specific to an Iberian audience and to reconsider organizing panels at major conferences that are not composed entirely of people in our specific geographical focus. Reaching out to scholars in other areas to do more thematic and

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<sup>61</sup> Leah DeVun, *The Shape of Sex: Nonbinary Gender from Genesis to the Renaissance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2021), 9-10. DeVun's book opens up with a 1331 example from the Catalan town of Perelada that deals with the medical examination of Berengaria, an intersex individual whose body possessed a penis, testicles, and a vagina to show that medical theories and the development of the field of surgery to "correct" intersex individuals affected the lives of real medieval people.

<sup>62</sup> DeVun, *The Shape of Sex*, 4.

<sup>63</sup> See chapters 2 and 3 in DeVun, *The Shape of Sex*.

collaborative work can also enrich our own scholarship and can be read by a wider audience of academics. A harder task that has the potential to make a greater impact in the field of medieval history more broadly requires engaging in more comparative studies and making the effort to place our research in a broader context to show that, in spite of significant differences, our findings fit into larger European patterns of social, economic, religious, intellectual, and political history.<sup>64</sup> This may seem counterintuitive since the trend in Iberian history has been to focus narrowly and offer an in-depth study of a particular topic in a very specific town or city over a very limited period of time rather than expanding the focus to consider a regional or cross-kingdom approach over a larger swath of time. It is surprising how tied we are to basing our studies exclusively on one kingdom or another, instead of considering a topic across the entire Iberian peninsula. And let's all admit that we have fallen short in making an effort to include the kingdom of Portugal into our own research and publications, especially when discussing "Iberian" patterns, customs, and practices. Undoubtedly, microhistories are incredibly important but these need to be balanced with studies that engage with larger social, economic, and religious research questions. If the historian Leslie Pierce can make a case for a common sexual culture across the "hybrid regions" and "human landscape of the 'Middle East' zone,"<sup>65</sup> and scholars of the Mediterranean can employ a framework that establishes the social, cultural, economic, and religious unity of a region born out of cross-cultural interactions, human movement, and the transmission of all kinds of goods and knowledge, then certainly the same can be done with Iberia as a whole.<sup>66</sup>

The reality is that our profession has entered a phase where historians are being asked to think more globally in the wake of the development of World and Global History, the Mediterranean, and the Atlantic World as distinct fields of inquiry. We are seeing this "global turn" for the medieval period as well, where scholars have set out to show a more integrated and diversified Middle Ages by highlighting the mobility and connectivity of geographical regions across the world.<sup>67</sup> Taking into account how other parts of the world stimulated cultural,

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<sup>64</sup> See, for example, the work of Daniel Lord Smail, which has focused on Marseille and Lucca to study the economy of household goods and material culture in *Legal Plunder Household and Debt Collection in Late Medieval Europe* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016).

<sup>65</sup> Leslie Peirce, "Writing Histories of Sexuality in the Middle East," *American Historical Review* 114, no. 5 (2009): 1326.

<sup>66</sup> David Abulafia, ed. *The Mediterranean in History* (London: Thames & Hudson Ltd, 2003); Brian A. Catlos, "Why the Mediterranean?" in *Can We Talk Mediterranean? Conversations on an Emerging Field in Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, ed. Brian A. Catlos and Sharon Kinoshita (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 1-18.

<sup>67</sup> See, for example, the various essays in the special edition of "The Global Middle Ages" in *Past & Present* 238, no. 13 (November 2018): 1-441. Geraldine Heng, *The Global Middle Ages: An*

religious, technological and economic developments in Europe and how Iberia responded or fits into this puzzle bridges the field of medieval Europe and Iberia to other premodern histories, which is something we must do to make our work relevant outside the field of European or medieval history and, especially, to combat claims that our scholarship only serves to perpetuate eurocentrism.<sup>68</sup> The "global turn," therefore, is a significant shift in our discipline and although the Global Middle Ages and the premodern Mediterranean and Atlantic World may be trendy, they are unlikely to disappear anytime soon.<sup>69</sup> Likewise, here I am also not advocating for every Iberianist who studies the medieval period to now specialize in World history or the Mediterranean. I am simply suggesting that we can use some of these same tools of "entangled histories," webs of interaction, world system structures, transculturality and cultural hybridity, and thematic comparisons among social groups and across regions or principalities, to consider how we conceptualize our projects intellectually and geographically.<sup>70</sup> This has the benefit of placing research on women, gender identities, and sexualities in Iberia in a wider lens so that connections or differences between the local, regional, continental, and even the global can be clearly seen. These findings, moreover, can then be connected to scholarship that focuses on other areas of medieval Europe. Because other scholars will not do the work for us, we must make the case ourselves by promoting our work outside the field, by being more

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*Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021); R. I. Moore, "A Global Middle Ages," in *The Prospect of Global History*, ed. James Belich, John Darwin, Margret Frenz, and Chris Wickham (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

<sup>68</sup> Peter Frankopan, "Why We Need to Think About the Global Middle Ages," *Journal of Medieval Worlds* 1, no. 1 (2019): 5-10. For examples of scholarship that go beyond Europe, see Peter Burke, Luke Clossey, and Felipe Fernández-Armesto, "The Global Renaissance," *Journal of World History* 28, no. 1 (2017): 1-30; R. Belting, *Florence and Baghdad: Renaissance Art and Arab Science* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011); Deborah Howard, *Venice and the East* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000). For Iberia, the work of the great Olivia Remie Constable did much to connect Iberia to the Islamic world. See *Housing the Stranger in the Mediterranean World: Lodging, Trade, and Travel in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) and *Trade and Traders in Muslim Spain: The Commercial Realignment of the Iberian Peninsula, 900-1500* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

<sup>69</sup> In fact, the Medieval Academy has released data on the current job market and has noted this "global trend" that require medievalists to have "wider competencies, both geographically and temporally." See <http://www.themedievalacademyblog.org/medieval-job-data-summary/>

<sup>70</sup> Eliga H. Gould, "Entangled Histories, Entangled Worlds: The English-Speaking Atlantic as a Spanish Periphery," *American Historical Review* 112, no. 3 (2007): 764-86; Alison Games, "Atlantic History: Definitions, challenges, opportunities," *American Historical Review* 111, no. 3 (2006): 741-57. See also the various essays in *The New World History: A Field Guide for Teachers and Researchers*, ed. Ross E. Dunn, Laura J. Mitchell, and Kerry Ward (Oakland: University of California Press, 2016) and in *Engaging Transculturality: Concepts, Key Terms, Case Studies*, ed. Laila Abu-Er-Rub, Christiane Brosius, Sebastian Meurer, Diamantis Panagiotopoulos, and Susan Richter (London: Routledge, 2019).

expansive and dynamic in our research focus, and by pushing ourselves out of our comfort zone.