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## Review of Christopher N. L. Brooke, *The Medieval Idea of Marriage*

Carole Levin

University of Nebraska - Lincoln, clevin2@unl.edu

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He suggests that the mark of a true historian is a sufficient but not excessively skeptical attitude in handling evidence. He points out that one cannot necessarily trust that what people reported in tax records, diaries, and the like was accurate. People may have had reasons to falsify.

Brooke chooses to focus on some specific people and texts. He deftly uses the writings of St. Augustine to discuss early Christian attitudes. He also devotes several chapters to Peter Abelard and especially H el oise. In contrast to Duby, who only mentions Abelard and H el oise briefly and suggests that their correspondence is spurious, Brooke carefully traces the arguments for and against the authenticity of the correspondence and argues convincingly that we might accept it as authentic. He then uses the letters to provide a powerful illumination of twelfth-century values and the nature of H el oise's character.

Other particularly useful sections include a commentary on Margaret Beaufort, the mother of Henry VII, and a comparison of the marital arrangements and problems of twelfth-century Capetian monarchs and Henry VIII. Brooke also makes a strong case for what the historian can learn from the literary critic and devotes several chapters to medieval literature, including an analysis of the works of the German poet Wolfram von Eschenbach and Geoffrey Chaucer. Brooke also provides a sort of epilogue to the literary section by discussing romantic relationships in a number of William Shakespeare's plays of the 1590s.

Brooke ends his study with an analysis of the painting of the Arnofini Marriage by Jan van Eck. He demonstrates how this painting is not merely an exchange of wedding vows in a nuptial chamber. It represents not only their wedding day but also their marriage as a whole and the institution of marriage itself.

Brooke uses a personal voice in this work. It is a meditation on medieval ideas about marriage and the interior aspects of marriage and human relationships. He claims that "we cannot study the history of marriage without imagination and insight—without infusing into our scholarship our knowledge of ourselves and of human nature" (p. 258). Brooke's study is an elegantly written evocative essay that uses a wide variety of sources and focuses on some perhaps idiosyncratic people and texts as examples of a larger construct of what the medieval idea of marriage really was. Experts in the field will probably not learn too much here that is new to them, but Brooke has provided a useful, gracefully written, and highly scholarly synthesis that will be particularly valuable to scholars and students of the period.

CAROLE LEVIN  
*State University of New York,  
New Paltz*

CHRISTOPHER N. L. BROOKE. *The Medieval Idea of Marriage*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1989. Pp. xviii, 325. \$29.95.

Christopher N. L. Brooke's study serves as a fine complement and counterpoint to Georges Duby's *The Knight, the Lady and the Priest: The Making of Marriage in Medieval France* (1983). Duby's innovative study looked at aristocratic marriage in medieval France within both a political and a religious and social and economic framework. Brooke, who has had a long career as a medievalist, has produced a more personal statement about his research into the meaning of marriage in the Middle Ages. There are two recurrent questions in Brooke's study: what is marriage, and is Christian marriage something different in its nature from other relationships?

The purpose of the book is to synthesize experts' studies in a variety of disciplines. Brooke addresses the work of scholars who do social history, theology, and legal history as well as the work of literary critics and art and architectural historians. Brooke is also properly cautious about the complete validity of various sources.