

and the "respectables." The latter came from the professional and the business elements of society. In general, Polish-Americans were more concerned with local than national issues. For example, they did not oppose the principles of the Progressive Movement, but they bitterly opposed prohibition as an infringement of their personal liberty.

In "Notes on Sources and Methods" Kantowicz discusses his methodology: the archives he used, the newspapers he consulted and the individuals he interviewed. Even though he cites its newspaper, the *Dziennik Chicagoski* and its centennial jubilee, he makes no mention of using the archival resources of the powerful Congregation of the Resurrection. This is a glaring omission. The reader wonders if Professor Kantowicz did not have access to the holdings of the Congregation, or if he simply did not use them. The Resurrectionists' mother-house in Rome has extensive, well-organized holdings which cannot be passed over if this work is to be complete.

In conclusion, Professor Kantowicz has produced a useful study of political life among Polish-Americans in Chicago between 1888 and 1940. In spite of the fact that he does not seem to have investigated all the sources available, he has made a contribution to the field of Polish-American studies, in particular, and ethnic studies, in general.

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EILEEN POWER. — *Medieval Women*, edited by M. M. POSTAN. London: Cambridge University Press, 1975.

Eileen Power, who died in 1940, was an authority on the economic history of the middle ages, and particularly on the medieval English wool trade. As a founder of the *Economic History Review*, an editor of the *Cambridge Economic History of Europe* and the author of *Medieval People*, she has left an enduring legacy to all serious students of medieval economic history. Yet those achievements for which she is most frequently remembered do not wholly encompass the subject which was her first and most lasting interest: the economic position of women in the later middle ages. On this topic she published little. Her *Medieval English Nunneries c. 1275-1535* (1922) is the definitive study of English women in monastic life during the three centuries prior to the Dissolution, while the chapter entitled 'The Position of Women' which she contributed to *The Legacy of the Middle Ages* (1926; ed. by C.G. Crump and E.F. Jacob) deals with the general condition of women in that period. But she left most of her vast knowledge of this subject in the form of notes and drafts which were not readily publishable. These have recently been placed in the hands of the American medievalist Eleanor Searle in the hope that she may complete the study of medieval women which Professor Power began. In such circumstances, Professor M. M. Postan, who is Eileen Power's widower, former colleague and literary executor, was willing to authorize the publication for the first time of a collection of essays on medieval women which Professor Power originally delivered as lectures in Britain and America.

The five essays which make up the new collection deal with both the theoretical and actual position of medieval ladies, nuns and working women in town and country. The theoretical position was, of course, dictated by men, principally by clerics. In the churchmen's view, women should avoid at all costs being the cause of man's downfall. They should be patient and unassuming; to their fathers and husbands they should be subordinate and obedient. For the upper class, the theoretical position was further elaborated in secular courtly love poetry which

influenced the behaviour of nobles for a time, though only in their dealings with women in their own class. Thus, in theory, all women resembled either the exalted Virgin Mary or the fallen Eve and in either case existed outside the day-to-day economic life of men.

The actual position of women was rather different, however. As Eileen Power early discovered and as these essays demonstrate repeatedly, in all social groups, women's education and occupations were more similar to men's and women were much more integrated into the economic life of their milieu than the theory ever envisaged. In normal times, women worked alongside men or engaged independently in a trade or craft of their own. Otherwise, not only did ladies administer the affairs of the manor while their lords were at war or on crusade, but in the absence of other men, women could replace their husbands in business, trade, the crafts or agricultural tasks as well. In widowhood and also in spinsterhood, though less often, women from all parts of society took over masculine functions, including those of the professions. Even nuns, though they played a diminishing part in education and business during the later medieval centuries, participated in worldly affairs. In brief, women enjoyed a central place in the economy and a practical equality with men which arose from the mutual economic dependence of the two sexes.

These essays are delightful to read. They are as lucid and witty and are based on as wide a variety of sources as any of Eileen Power's other writing. Moreover, they have been elegantly published with appropriate contemporary illustrations throughout the book.

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VINCENT J. KNAPP. — *Europe in the Era of Social Transformation: 1700-Present*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1976.

For Vincent Knapp, whose book purports to offer an explanation of Europe's transformation from an agrarian society dominated by aristocracies into an industrialized and urbanized one controlled by technocrats and bureaucrats, who have introduced various forms of social welfarism to deal with problems which are almost exclusively economic, social history is a new disciplinary weapon. His use of it turns it into a rather limp version of naive economic determinism. At no time in his survey of Europe's social and economic history from the eighteenth century to the present is he concerned with the problem of defining or conceptualizing social class; whether it is appropriate to employ class as a term in the pre-industrial period; what heuristic or other value there is in talking about an élite; and what relationship there is between the latter and class. Mr. Knapp evidently believes that these are self-explanatory in his delineation of social groups into upper middle, middle middle, lower middle, working (skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled), peasant (proprietor, middle, and landless), and so on. They require no analysis because apparently simple description of what elements of the population fall into each of these categories will perform the needs of the social historian and respond to the realities of social differentiation. But there is more (or less) behind the blandness of his approach, and these are the Bobbsey twins of industrialism and urbanism which appear as delightful performing puppets who, in the twinkling of an eye, spark social and economic change, cause a bit of discomfort, retire from the scene, and leave all of us in the advanced industrial societies with the knowledge that change is aberrant and that continuity is the permanent feature of history.