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*Women in the Middle Ages: Religion, Marriage and Letters.* By Angela M. Lucas. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983. Pp. 215. Bibliography, index. \$25.00

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Hooglund offers an analysis of the difficulties and ultimate failure of the program. The majority of peasants (75%) obtained less than enough land for subsistence living. Hooglund argues that as a result of the failure of the land reform program, the the government did not achieve its political goal of gaining rural support, and "the majority of villagers were unprepared to support the Shah" in 1978 and 1979. (p. 148)

Although few will disagree with Professor Hooglund's conclusions, his writings contain a discrepancy. In *Land and Revolution* he identifies three phases of land reform (pp. 55-73), but in his earlier article, "Rural and Socio-Economic Organization in Transition: The Case of Iran's Buneh," in *Continuity and Change in Modern Iran* (Suny Press, 1981), p. 161, he mentions four distinct phases. He provides no explanation for the revision in his more recent work. Furthermore, the preface, contents, and illustrations of the volume suggest that Hooglund concentrated his field research in central and southwestern Iran where the agricultural patterns differ from those in the North, particularly in the Caspian Sea strip. His generalizations may therefore not apply to the country as a whole. Nevertheless, the primary sources and field research that Hooglund does include make *Land and Revolution* a much welcomed study.

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*Women in the Middle Ages: Religion, Marriage and Letters.* By ANGELA M. LUCAS. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983. Pp. 215. Bibliography, index. \$25.00,

Perhaps no area of medieval studies has been as neglected over the years as women's history. Despite increased interest during the past decade, the fundamental economic and social status of women, particularly in the early Middle Ages remains largely unknown. Angela Lucas' survey attempts to remedy this problem in several areas, among them, religion, marriage, and letters. It is unfortunate, however, that the book is largely derivative in nature, betraying the promise of its title by focusing primarily on women in English vernacular literature.

Important weaknesses of the book lie in the author's prejudices in subject and sources. In the preface she admits that her fundamental focus on England and its vernacular literature serves as the paradigm for discussion throughout the work (p.xi). Continental sources, such as Gregory of Tours, do appear from time to time, but always as a sidelight to England. The author also juxtaposes sources as if historical context

somehow might not influence points of view. The most striking example of this disjuncture occurs when a discussion of virginity places Tertullian, Cyprian, and a thirteenth-century English treatise on marriage in sequence, without any explanation of the connection. (pp. 23-4)

Lucas relies heavily on secondary sources in her analysis of non-literary subjects. Much of her discussion of marriage and convent life is derived from Suzanne Wemple and Eileen Power. There is a general reluctance to discuss social themes in depth. Attention to the important work being done in demographic studies might have presented a clearer picture of her analysis of women's interests in the marriage arrangement. (p. 80ff) The absence of a treatment of *wergild*, the value assigned to an individual in Germanic law as a monetary payment to avoid blood-feud, is also unfortunate. Historians are only gradually recognizing the importance of women, particularly of childbearing age, in the early Germanic laws.

The final sections of the book, chapters nine to eleven, describe the literary role of the medieval woman. Lucas' description reveals the range of women's artistic activities in the twelfth to fifteenth centuries. Although she presents a fine survey, there is little that is new in these chapters. The format is mainly a succession of brief literary biographies largely concerned with England. The final two chapters consider women as "patrons of literature" and the rise of "literate lay women", but the narrative does not go beyond a standard discussion of the world of romance. Consideration of new genres of literature such as the *Book of Hours*, a devotional book intended for a lay, frequently female, audience might have brought the bourgeois world of the late medieval town into better focus.

Angela Lucas has written a good description of the role of medieval women but she has not analyzed their condition in any depth. The book's reliance on secondary sources makes it unsuitable for primary research. Nowhere is material presented that adds to the picture painted by Eileen Power's classic, *Medieval Women*, written some forty years ago. The jacket of this book promises a "highly original study"; Lucas provides instead a survey of ground already covered.

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