

Marshall, Rosalind K., *The Days of the Duchess Anne: Life in the Household of the Duchess of Hamilton 1656-1716*, Phantassie, East Linton, Tuckwell Press, 2000; paper; pp. 293; 10 colour plates, 16 b/w plates, 3 genealogical tables; RRP £14.99; ISBN 1862321116.

The title of this book can be interpreted in two ways, both of them appropriate to its content. On the one hand the 'days' of Anne, third Duchess of Hamilton (1632-1716) can be seen as her daily life, and a large part of this book is indeed given over to a fascinating account of the everyday lifestyle of a great noble family in their principal home. There is a chapter on that home, Hamilton Palace, another on the servants, a third on clothing and food and a fourth on entertainment, travel, recreation and celebrations. On the other hand, the 'days' of Duchess Anne are 'the days of her life', her appointed days on this earth, to use an old-fashioned phrase, and this book also provides a biography of a truly remarkable woman – born in the days of Charles I, living through the Civil War and the Commonwealth, the Restoration, the Glorious Revolution, the Union of Scotland and England and the coming of the Hanoverians – who, with extraordinary energy, set about restoring the fortunes and standing of one of the great ducal families of Scotland. *The Days of the Duchess Anne* was originally Rosalind K. Marshall's Edinburgh University PhD thesis and was then published by Collins in 1973. Now it has reappeared in a handsome reprint by Tuckwell Press. In the intervening years, Marshall has gone on to publish a number of books, including lives of Mary, Queen of Scots (1986, reprinted 2000), Bonnie Prince Charlie (1988), Henrietta Maria (1990), Elizabeth I (1991), Elizabeth of Bohemia (1998) and John Knox (2000) as well as more general books such as her *Virgins and Viragos: A History of Women in Scotland from 1080-1980* (1983). Clearly *The Days of the Duchess Anne* was only the beginning of a distinguished career which has included much writing about prominent women. One starting point for considering this first work by an important historian is to go back to the original reviews of its first publication. Though these were generally favourable, two mentioned the lack of economic or financial details: the *Times Literary Supplement's* anonymous reviewer in April 1974 complained that this is 'social history with the economics left out' and asks for 'more figures, or at least an explanation of why exact totals were not available' while B.N. Horn in the *Scottish Historical Review* of 1975 suggested that 'An omission is a section on the financial background, which would have been welcome to show how the Hamilton estates recovered from confiscation under the Commonwealth, how the money was raised for the

rebuilding of Hamilton Palace, and the part played by the duchess herself in managing the estate...' These would no doubt have been interesting but it seems a bit hard to ask even more of a book which already offers so much. I cannot help feeling that these comments owe something to the idea that Marshall exhibits a typically female, and therefore narrow, view of history. Certainly such an idea seems to be strongly implied in Horn's somewhat condescending comment that 'Dr Marshall however concentrates on the feminine interest in spending money rather on the more masculine task of earning it'. We have travelled a long way since 1973 and I doubt that many reviewers today would offer such an interpretation. Furthermore it seems a very strange comment to make in relation to a book in which the Duke and his wayward son are conspicuous spenders. Horn also regrets, as did Marshall, the absence of a inventory of furniture in the Hamiltons' houses but in the reprint Marshall is able to report that she has since discovered such an inventory and has rewritten the chapter on Hamilton Palace. Elizabeth Jane Howard, writing perhaps from the perspective of a novelist in the *Spectator* of December 1973, wanted more quotation from letters to bring the Hamiltons alive as people although she acknowledged that the book 'is rather about times than lives'. This is not how it struck me on first reading the book. Rather I would suggest that Marshall has achieved a good balance between the two meanings of 'the days of the Duchess Anne'. It needs to be remembered that the book is based on a detailed examination of the family archives of the Dukes of Hamilton. These are by their nature quite diverse — Marshall describes them as 'letters, accounts, charters, memoranda and lists' (p. 11) — and her skill lies not only in extracting a set of characters and a narrative from the letters but also in using the whole huge range of documents to recreate the daily details of living. As it happens there *is* a narrative, a story to tell, and it is an interesting one. After she had married William, Earl of Selkirk, who emerges from this book as an admirable support to her, the Duchess and her husband began not only to rebuild the family fortunes and the family house but also to plan how the family could continue to play a key role in Scottish society in the person of their feckless son and heir James. They wanted to rebuild the house of Hamilton in both senses of the word 'house'; the two aspects of what Marshall calls 'The Grand Design' went hand in hand. Unfortunately James had a quite different view of his role from that held by his parents. He had little interest in Scotland and was more attached to France than any other place. His role in the negotiations over the Union was not impressive and he eventually died in a sordid duel over matters of no great importance. Fortunately the Duchess lived another four years after his

death, long enough to send her grandson the fifth Duke off to Eton rather than educating him in Scotland, a final sign of her lifelong ability to move with the times. This is good story and it is well told, but by placing it in a study of life in a great noble household Marshall is able to show us not just the abiding human interest of the intergenerational gap but also the precise ways in which a great noble of seventeenth century Scotland envisaged her role, from her hospitality to her clothing, from her plans to express the grandeur of the Hamiltons through building a new palace to her attempts to play a role in the changing politics of her time. In every sense, then, the Duchess's 'days' were well worth recreating and the reprinting of Rosalind Marshall's account of them is extremely welcome.

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Mostert, Marco, ed., *New Approaches to Medieval Communication* (Utrecht Studies in Medieval Literacy 1), Turnhout, Brepols, 1999; paper; pp. viii, 318; RRP EUR35.00; ISBN 2503508146.

This, the first volume in a new series of studies of literacy in the Middle Ages, reveals the breadth of approach that is the hallmark of the series, which has now produced two other volumes and a CD-ROM. Much of the research published by the series comes from the interdisciplinary groups at Utrecht's 'Pionierproject Verschriftelijking' and the Sonderforschungsbereich 231 at Munster. A characteristic of all the papers in the Mostert volume, and of the series' general approach, is that literacy is not only assessed against orality, or non-literacy, but also against all other forms of human social communication, with the result that literacy *qua* literacy is not overvalued nor considered in isolation from other forms of communication. All five essays in Part II of the volume benefit from this broad approach, whether they are discussing the audience of hagiographical texts in early medieval Auxerre, Utrecht and Würzburg, or the introduction of writing into central Europe or points between these two geographical areas.

As befits the introductory volume of a series, this one begins with a short introduction by one of the pioneers of studies in medieval literacy, Michael Clanchy. He reviews past achievements in the field, summarises the special place of the series in medieval literacy research, and suggests some urgent future directions of study. The volume is divided into three parts, Clanchy's essay and