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Constance Brittain Bouchard, *“Those of My Blood”: Constructing Noble Families in Medieval Francia*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001. xii + 249 pp. Figures, notes, bibliography, index. \$55.00 U.S. (cl.). ISBN 0-8122-3590-8.

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The history of the family sheds light on other important historical domains, from the history of women to the "new" political history. Historians interested in comparing changes over the *longue durée* from the "pre-modern" to "modern" worlds, as well as medievalists from other disciplines looking for a wider context within which to situate their particular subjects, have been drawn to Georges Duby's inspirational studies of the 1960s-1980s for an exposition of such socio-political relations in medieval France. His eloquent essays not only served as a conduit for ideas developed by German and Belgian scholars, but also deftly sketched an arresting portrait of eleventh- and twelfth-century society and the changing structure of the aristocratic family within it. That view has come perilously close to acquiring for non-specialists the status of a new orthodoxy--authoritatively voiced and unquestionably accepted--in large part because it neatly encapsulates multifarious events within a framework of correlatively-defined institutional structures and mental constructs as the history of France marches through its historiographically-entrenched medieval phases: from the Carolingian empire to the early "feudal" phase to the budding nation-state of the revived Capetian monarchy.[1] Yet many historians of medieval France read Duby's innovative and thought-provoking essays with one eye interrogatively cocked and the other focused squarely on the sources--which seem to depict a socio-political world, as well as a skein of historical continuities and ruptures, more complex than those suggested by the elegantly simple models he erected on a foundation of conceptual oppositions.[2]

One of those historians has been C. B. Bouchard, seven of whose articles on "French" noble families from the ninth to twelfth centuries have been republished alongside a new one in the volume under review. Lightly revised to incorporate material from subsequent scholarly publications, the articles (originally published between 1979 and 1988) have been framed with introductory and concluding chapters to orientate the reader to the general issues illuminated by Bouchard's detailed analysis of important cases and distinct data sets within.[3] Her unifying argument is that a careful accounting for women, especially as spouses taken in marriage, reveals more continuity than radical transformation in the shape of noble families across the decades spanning the year 1000--the time Duby posited as the critical transition from the "early" to the "classically feudal," central, or "high" middle ages.[4]

According to Bouchard, not only were earlier noble families more tightly structured around fathers and sons than generally thought, but women in such an agnatically-biased yet flexible "patriarchal family structure" were never completely marginalized (e.g., pp. vi-vii), continuing to occupy much the same

social space in the eleventh and twelfth centuries as they had in the ninth and tenth. Her approach in individual chapters is the same: to test large claims against careful analysis of the primary sources. It applies when she is repositioning the debate on how best to view evidence for the continuity of the "old" nobility alongside increasingly evident "new" noble families in the eleventh and twelfth centuries (ch. 2); demonstrating that *cognomina* based on castle-names (i.e., toponyms) are not indicators of a family relationship or "family consciousness" (ch. 9 in particular); arguing that nobles strove to follow from the start new incest rules promulgated by churchmen that prohibited the marriage of sixth cousins (ch. 3); tracking the change from appointed to predominantly inherited countships while delineating its implications for genealogical reconstruction in Autun (the new article in ch. 8); or examining particular bodies of data that illuminate one aspect of women's place in noble families whose social-structural axis was tilted in favour of men (chs. 4-7).

Not a startling innovative method, Bouchard's meticulous application of it, in a field where evidence of all types is scarce and most only remotely relevant to the questions historians now want to answer, is noteworthy nonetheless, especially in the reconstruction of family trees.^[5] Such genealogies remain the bedrock on which all modern accounts of medieval socio-political relations are constructed, even as historians carefully distinguish medieval aristocrats' perception of their "family" from the group of all persons that can be shown to have been related to them. However, conjectures of earlier generations of historians have often hardened into "facts" undergirding the received narrative, even when they can be shown to be mistaken. Bouchard's insistence on checking previously-published trees against the fragmentary and widely dispersed primary evidence—consulting original manuscripts to weed out forgeries and later interpolations—as well as her care to distinguish plausible conjectures from verifiable facts, make the genealogical, onomastic, and prosopographical discussions gathered here among the most trustworthy in any language. Furthermore, her solid empirical foundation and some salutary questioning of the seams on the larger conceptual canvas make her balanced critique of received views worthy of note, even when her own wider claims are not wholly compelling. As she rightly reminds readers, primogenital inheritance is a social-historical variable independent of "patrilineality;" "family organization" is analytically distinct from "family consciousness;" prelates appointed by family members could be able and devout ecclesiastics; and Duby actually professed a change of mind (the implications of which are not always fully reflected in his subsequent essays) on the status of knights, belatedly coming to accept that "nobility" and "chivalry," knights and nobles, did not coalesce until the later twelfth century.

Room for criticism remains, however, under two main headings. One is the move from the static to the dynamic, explicating the link between an underlying "family structure" and political action. For example, to make fully convincing her argument about eleventh-century nobles' general acceptance of the new ecclesiastical consanguinity rules (and hence that exogamy, rather than endogamy, early became their preferred marriage pattern), Bouchard must analyse actual cases of "apparently desirable marriages" (p. 52) with second to fourth cousins that were considered but rejected, spelling out specific political advantages foregone by the families concerned, rather than merely showing that very few such marriages in fact took place among the families examined. She admits that the reason for such avoidance could itself be more "political" ["better pre-emptively to avoid disruptions caused by zealous churchmen attempting to break off the match in future"] than a reflection of shared religious belief ["marriage to fourth cousins is against divine law and merits God's punishment"]; however, by focusing on royal and princely families, she overlooks the probability that churchmen first concentrated their reforming zeal on those most exemplary couples whose behaviour, it was hoped, would be imitated by their followers

on lower rungs of the lordly ladder, while the majority of such less exalted nobles continued to arrange marriages within the prohibited degrees when significant local proprietary or political advantages existed.

A related point: Bouchard's attempts to justify generalisations about the "patrilineality" of early medieval family structure made from the analysis of the political behaviour and inheritance patterns in the Carolingian, Ottonian and Capetian royal families (in particular chs. 4-6), are stimulating but not fully representative precisely for **political** reasons. To the extent that notions of public office, a public sphere, "the State" (in Bloch's terms) distinct from the domestic sphere of the noble household persisted in the middle ages, they survived most strongly at the level of kings and kingdoms. In the midst of the most divisive succession disputes of the ninth and tenth centuries, kingdoms were not held to be infinitely partible among all who could claim to be a king's heir, even as rules for royal succession remained "flexible"—i.e., legitimately contestable—within certain clear boundaries. Moreover, the stronger the "public/official" aspects of the honour to be inherited, the greater the likelihood that women would be excluded outright, though in virtually all cases remained important bearers of authoritative claims, whether as blood relations (mothers and aunts) or affines (kings' widows)—possibilities Bouchard does little to consider when discussing whom the various kings and claimants married or named their **sons** after.[6]

Thus, her analysis of noblewomen's secondary places in the "lineages" which made their menfolk competitors for such familiarly-transmitted offices is only half of the story: women's prescriptively-allotted roles—in which they appear largely as placeholders—are distinct from the actions on behalf of their male relatives they performed while playing out their assigned roles within their politically-central households. Though others have taken steps in this direction, Bouchard has not explored the deeds of the women she does mention, particularly when they transmitted a claim to high office or had inherited higher status (i.e., greater lordly authority) than lower-ranking husbands.[7] Analysis of this dynamic dimension is central to demonstrating why noblewomen—queens included—were never wholly marginalized in the ninth through twelfth centuries, even though their 'structural place' in families never equaled men's when property and high office were inherited.

These considerations lead to what is perhaps the least satisfying aspect of this compilation. While one can only laud Bouchard's consistently concise exposition of complex issues and eschewal of the jargon that can serve unjustifiably to distance medieval France from its temporal successors, in this instance her common sense approach to viewing "family" primarily as the "blood" relations with whom an individual is on good terms (pp. 2-6) leads to problems at the analytic and comparative levels alike. An emphasis on subjectively-defined kin groups over against those defined objectively (by one's contemporaries, according to acknowledged rules), with the resultant stress on an individual's shape-shifting groups of operative kin, is fully appropriate in a medieval European context, but in practice Bouchard's defining subject is virtually always a man. This perhaps unconscious positioning raises significant terminological and perceptual quandaries when the volume is read from a noblewoman's perspective and in light of her broader arguments about a salient patrilineal cast to early medieval families.

The assumed male subject at the heart of "families" is seen, for example, when she names the third branch of the Bosonids the "Warnerians" instead of the consanguineally-correct "Tetburgians" (ch. 5,

pp. 88-89). It is more prominent when Bouchard discusses how women begin life as members of one kin group and join another at marriage, but neither remarks upon the kin that husbands acquire at marriage (e.g., p. 98) nor considers wives' continued relations with members of their natal families, most notably their brothers (or, their childrens' "mothers' brothers").^[8] In other words, for Bouchard a man's kin by marriage (his affines) become occasional appendages, not really family in the same way as his "true" family or "primary" relatives (e.g., pp. 50, 66-67, 69, 180), even though men might move to live with their wives and owe their socio-political standing to their wives' natal kin (most notably when they married heiresses or inherited honours from maternal uncles). At the same time, brothers and close (male) cousins contesting the inheritance of lordships are not family for the duration of the struggle—though it is precisely their close kinship that makes such conflicts "worse than civil war" in the eyes of twelfth-century chroniclers like Orderic Vitalis.

With her comments suggesting Norman dukes deliberately denied their relationship to the ancestors of distant cousins when commissioning ducal histories (p. 3) or that groups for whom one endowed prayers did not contain "real" kin because they also contained non-kin (p. 70), Bouchard comes close to ignoring the advice she offers in another context: "beware taking the sign for the thing." Inheriting family property is a sign of an acknowledged kin relationship although not all kin would be considered equally eligible to inherit a duchy—or even a castle; praying for the spiritual well-being of a wider group of relations than from which one would choose heirs to family honours makes those receiving only prayers "family" all the same. Perhaps more clearly than charters, narrative sources reveal that medieval aristocrats had distant kin of both sexes and on both "sides" of their family with whom they rarely interacted in most day-to-day affairs, yet from whom they could still end up inheriting or receiving critical financial or military assistance in readily conceivable—and not infrequent—circumstances because of a "family tie."

Also problematic are the critical terms Bouchard leaves undefined. For example, "lineage" seems to evoke the family extended over time and is especially visible when lands and titles are inherited, but if and how it is different from a house or a dynasty is never clarified. She writes as if only men belonged to lineages (e.g., pp. 120, 134, 178) even though significant numbers of their sisters or daughters transmitted lands and offices from a male (or occasionally female) ancestor they shared with their brothers or fathers to children born to previously-unrelated men (husbands). At the same time, ego's maternal or matrilineal kin disappear from his "family through time" at the point Bouchard shifts her focus to his sons and daughters. Yet evidence is plentiful—below the level of kingdoms and principalities—for honours, claims, men's names, and political support continuing over three or four (and occasionally more) generations to be identified with the woman (or her natal kin) who first brought them to her conjugal family; indeed, claims through women could never be absorbed into "patrimonies" as readily as the lands or titles so acquired.

While she cites Jack Goody's important 1983 study, Bouchard seems unfazed by his critical discussion of the different collection of relatives designated by the term lineage or patrilineage in the works of anthropologists and historians—and even in the studies of the French historians Flandrin and Duby, whose divergent understandings of the term resulted in opposing models postulated for the shape of twelfth-century aristocratic families.^[9] For ease and precision in cross-cultural comparison Goody is not alone in conceptualizing medieval aristocratic families in their temporal dimension as bilateral or cognatic descent groups, in which Bouchard's lineages could be termed "stocks." In other words, Bouchard needs a more anthropologically-informed definition of "family" in its various dimensions, so

that she could use precisely-defined terminology consistently to describe that pool of persons acknowledged by others as one's kin that could be drawn upon when one was "operating," even as the kin group one "operated" with changed according to the socio-political "operation" at hand.

These criticisms do not undermine all of Bouchard's general claims. Particularly significant and worth pondering are her conclusions that "French" noble families prior to the year 1000 were not amorphous, diffuse, or unbounded "kindreds," while their structuring principles were largely the same in the ninth century as in the twelfth. However, whether those "families" are most usefully conceived as "patrilineages" or as "patrilineal" in shape is highly questionable, however much men were favoured over women in certain key socio-political situations, and father-son ties were the preferred links for structuring the devolution over time of lordly family fortunes—political as well as economic. Rather, her summation of A. C. Murray's view of Germanic families in the historical period seems to this reviewer to point in the direction of yet longer continuities, encapsulating a view of familial relationships and residential practices that would apply equally well to the ninth and twelfth centuries for most day-to-day transactions: people "were aware of their relationship with both maternal and paternal relatives, to a distance of perhaps second cousins [the exception in later centuries arising when finding a spouse, when one had to be aware of one's fourth to sixth cousins, depending on the century], and acted in concert with different subsets of these relatives at different times, depending on circumstances" (p. 69). [10]

Indeed, there seems little in the evidence proffered by historians of the medieval family to suggest that the basic Frankish kin group, characterized by Murray in Bouchard's words as "a series of interlocking, bilateral relationships, with the first emphasis on one's children" (p. 68), had changed significantly for twelfth-century French nobles, for whom "conjugal families" of parents and their (hoped-for) children continued to occupy the central place in aristocratic households. As both Evergates and Goody have pointed out, following Duby in reducing "family" to the line of successors to castles or other honours does little to capture the complexity and variety of attested familial forms or the shapes of kin groups acting together in the middle ages. It is especially inadequate when attempting to account for women's place in such families, particularly when a key link in any successorial chain, or a common ancestor revered by lineal descendants, could be—and not infrequently was—a woman.

Bouchard offers this volume as the scholarly underpinning to her 1998 overview of knightly society, written with the undergraduate and general reading public clearly in mind (p. viii). As revised and modestly recontextualized versions of earlier pioneering articles it certainly reveals the materials and questions she worked through while forming her broader synthetic views, but it is not a sustained analysis of the nexus of issues raised by her unifying argument. A more conceptually-sophisticated terminology is needed to assess changes in "family structure," while more thorough discussion of actual events would help elucidate the relation of embedded social structures to the behaviour of politically-active nobles in the ninth to twelfth centuries. Thus, not all readers will be convinced by all of Bouchard's wider claims, yet the clarity of exposition and wealth of important data included make the collection a worthy contribution to a field that resists the straightforward answers which would ease the comparativist's task. The critical review of received opinions alongside several methodologically-exemplary case studies should make the volume useful to graduate students and non-medievalists alike as they look for distillations of recent continental scholarship and alternatives to readily available but problematic portraits of the age. Medieval historians will benefit from having conveniently to hand an important body of scholarship important for reference as well as classroom use, even if they might draw

some divergent general conclusions by reading through a different analytical prism the evidence Bouchard has so expertly presented.

NOTES

[1] Duby contested the received date of transition to France's "feudal" age, but the order and salient institutional features of his sub-periods, along with his view of Philip II Augustus' reign as a key turning point on all fronts, were taken from the received narratives of evenemental political or administrative-institutional history as constructed by his strongly positivist nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century forebears; likewise, changing political structures were the motor driving transformations in all other sectors. For a balanced critique of Duby's work by a specialist in the field, see Theodore Evergates, "The Feudal Imaginary of Georges Duby," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 27 (1997): 641-60.

[2] Even if some of Marc Bloch's conclusions have been refined or overturned, his account of medieval society in *Feudal Society* (trans. L. A. Manyon, 2 vols. [Chicago, 1961]) remains more densely woven--and thus throws into relief more of its evident complexities--than any produced by his successors, including Duby, as Bouchard well appreciates.

[3] Specialists may note one important change: Bouchard accepts the "traditional" view that the Hadwise who married Raynald of Nevers was the daughter of the Capetian king Robert II, rather than his sister, as she had argued earlier (pp. 115 & 214 n. 39).

[4] Bouchard's terminology for, and views on the distinguishing characteristics of, various sub-periods within the middle ages--currently subject to much discussion among medievalists--could be clarified in this volume; she refers both to the high middle ages and the central middle ages as following somewhere upon the implosion of the Carolingian empire in "Francia" without providing even rough dates pointing to their inception, ending or possible overlap.

[5] In a revealing moment Duby once acknowledged Bouchard's talents in this direction; calling her Caroline instead of Constance, he named her alongside Barbara Rosenwein as two scholars whose revisiting of the charter evidence made him blush at the errors he had made in his 1953 Mâconnais study (Georges Duby, *L'Histoire continue* [Paris, 1991], p. 69).

[6] While Bouchard's interest in the names chosen for daughters of royal and noble families (chs. 6 and 7) is refreshing, the patterns discerned are not fully revealing of the place of matrilineal kin in those families unless analysis is made of the circumstances in which sons as well as daughters were named after maternal kin or their father's matrilineal kin: names that more than occasionally represented a potential claim to inherit from the maternal kin of father or son.

[7] See, for example, relevant articles not cited by Bouchard: Elizabeth Ward, "Agobard of Lyons and Paschasius Radbertus as Critics of the Empress Judith," *Studies in Church History* 27 (1990): 15-25; Enza Colonna, "Figure femminili in Liutprando di Cremona," *Quaderni medievali* 14 (1982): 29-60, and further

literature on their political activities cited in Phillippe Buc, "Italian Hussies and German Matrons: Liutprand of Cremona on Dynastic Legitimacy," *Frümittelalterliche Studien* 29 (1995): 207-25.

[8] Mothers' brothers are often clearly identified in narrative sources even if an author did not use classical Latin terms to distinguish paternal from maternal uncles (cf. p. 5); one text whose author consistently did so has become, ironically and inappropriately, a "proof text" for the purported twelfth-century "decline" in the importance of maternal kin (see now in English, Lambert of Ardes, *The History of the Counts of Guines and Lords of Ardes*, trans. Leah Shopkow [Philadelphia, 2001].)

[9] Jack Goody, *The Development of the Family and Marriage in Europe* (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 222-39, 262-77.

[10] See Alexander Callander Murray, *Germanic Kinship Structure: Studies in Law and Society in Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Toronto, 1983).

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