
H-France Review Vol. 12 (July 2012), No. 96

Isabelle Heullant-Donat, Julie Claustre and Élisabeth Lusset, eds., *Enfermements: le cloître et la prison (VIe-XVIIIe siècle)*. Actes du colloque international organisé par le Centre d'études et de recherche en histoire culturelle (CERHiC-EA 2616) de l'Université de Reims Champagne-Ardenne et l'association Renaissance de l'abbaye de Clairvaux (Troyes--Bar-sur-Aube--Clairvaux, 22-24 octobre 2009). Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2011. 379 pp. Notes. 35.00€. (pb). ISBN 978-2-85944-673-4.

Review by Sara Beam, University of Victoria.

Under the capacious but useful category of *enfermements*, this polished and varied collection of conference proceedings investigates the relationship between cloisters and prisons in medieval and early modern Europe. While most of the articles focus on the medieval period, particularly the twelfth through fifteenth centuries, the volume reaches back to late antiquity to explore the beginnings of a Christian penitential conception of clerical enclosure and ends in the eighteenth century just before the birth of the modern prison. Although both Foucault and Goffman are repeatedly cited, these scholars on the whole stress the degree to which pre-modern enclosure was multi-purpose, porous and temporary.

The conference, held in 2009 at Clairvaux—a famous monastery that later became a prison—explored the intersection between these institutions in Western imagination and practice for over a millennium. The idea that a prison sentence, as both a form of penitence and a test of faith, could bring one closer to God—an idea that emerged during the early persecution of Christians under Roman rule—can already be found early hagiographies. As the prison could be understood as a cloister, the cloister soon after came to be seen as a prison, albeit one in which spiritual awakening could take place, and this, too, became a common trope in Western writings about spirituality. The volume ends with the French Revolution, when many monasteries were actually turned into prisons, cementing the relationship between the two in the modern imagination. During the intervening centuries, many writers, from municipal judges to clerics to prisoners themselves, drew parallels between prison and purgatory and between spiritual awakening and bodily freedom.

The organizing concept of *enfermements* has encouraged the contributors to organize their investigations in terms of two binaries: voluntary/involuntary and penitential/punitive. Not surprisingly, given the intellectual debt to Foucault and Goffman, most writers focus on coercive enclosure: the imprisonment of laymen for debt, for example, the isolation of errant clerics within the monastery, or papal efforts to enclose women behind convent walls. Only one article, Anna Benvenuti's interesting study of female recluses who chose to live in cabin-like structures in busy medieval Italian piazzas, deals with individuals who sought enclosure for themselves. Most of these historians do investigate the relationship between the penitential and the punitive elements of enclosure, generally agreeing that they coexisted throughout the medieval and early modern periods. This tightness of focus gives the volume intellectual coherence, even while it deals with a wide variety of places, ranging from Constantinople to Châlons. While most of the articles focus on France, some attempt is made to frame the French experience within a broader European context.

The volume is cleanly produced and clearly organized. Abstracts are provided in both English and French; the translations from English are clear, but retain some idiomatic echoes of the author's style;

for the most part, the articles speak to one another in a conversation that one can imagine having been lively and impassioned during the conference itself. The contributions are individually strong and all are clearly relevant to the central concerns of the volume. The book is organized thematically, allowing the editors to avoid a progressive linear narrative, while parallel echoes and minor harmonies tie the various pieces together. Claude Gauvard's masterful concluding chapter constructs an overall narrative very effectively without oversimplifying the diversity of the case studies.

The individual articles support the three central propositions articulated in the introduction: that enclosure became more urbanized, laicized and feminized during the medieval period. The claim that the thirteenth century was a key moment of transition justifies the inclusion of several articles focusing on this period. Megan Cassidy-Welsh, consulting medieval hagiographies, demonstrates, by her intriguing readings of these documents, how interpretations of the imprisonment of saints intersected with the relatively new doctrine of purgatory. Élisabeth Lusset explores an interesting new topic, the punishment of disobedient monks by means of isolation and imprisonment within the cloister. Though by no means entirely new, this practice intensified in the late twelfth century, a period when bishops urged the construction of clerical prisons and archeological evidence demonstrates that they were built. Likewise, thirteenth-century inquisitors sent out from Rome to Languedoc to investigate the Cathars liberally sentenced heretics to life imprisonment, a punishment just short of execution. James B. Given effectively shows how the imprisonment of a single important individual could affect an entire community by encouraging others to confess voluntarily the spiritual sins that the prisoner might have the power to reveal.

The church was not the only institution that began, during this period, to make increasing use of imprisonment. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, as the inquisitorial method replaced the accusatory judicial system, temporal authorities began to replace fines with short prison sentences. Discussing prison as a new method of punishment in European cities, Guy Geltner cynically suggests that civic authorities often exploited the Christian notion of penance as a means of rationalizing this new form of social control.

There is general agreement in this volume about the convergence of lay and clerical practices in the thirteenth century, but not about its causes. While Lusset sees the proliferation of prisons within monasteries as a response to lay innovation, Geltner more traditionally connects the rise of punitive imprisonment to clerical exposure to Roman law. Neither attempts a more global explanation of the causes for this critical turning point in Western penal practice. Recent work on the history of emotions in the medieval period, in particular on the history of pain, could have added more depth to analyses of this important topic.

Several articles argue that that by the fifteenth century these innovations had become fully integrated into European culture and society. Consulting court records from the late medieval period, Véronique Beaulande-Barraud examines the sentencing practices of church courts in several French cities. By the fifteenth century, she convincingly demonstrates that the prison sentence had become well-established as a punishment for crimes as varied as homicide and other violent crimes, aggravated theft, and bigamy. Most sentences were short and were imposed in lieu of fines on the poor, as they continued to be throughout the early modern period. Julie Claustre argues that by that fifteenth century a new "prison literature" had emerged, featuring narratives about the suffering, both physical and spiritual, that the writers experienced in jail. Drawing as they did both on classical allusions and on the Christian concept of penitence, Claustre offers compelling evidence that these texts resonated in a society increasingly preoccupied with verbal and visual representations of the suffering Christ. Claude Gauvard argues that new social practices, such as the freeing of prisoners when the French king made his royal

entry into a city, and the rise of confraternities who ministered to prisoners, also testify to the normative integration of prisons into European society. Together, these authors put to rest the traditional argument that medieval prisons were only holding tanks for defendants awaiting trial, thus supporting other recent research on English and Italian jails.

Several writers document the material life of French prisons. Romain Telliez and Camille Dégez reject the idea that prisons were *oubliettes* where prisoners were summarily dumped and forgotten, citing new archival evidence that, while some prisoners did languish in dank pits, most were housed in towers, where cold rather than dampness was the problem and where escape through the windows a real possibility. Social rank was an important factor in prison life: while wealthy prisoners could pay for decent food, wine, and a private bed with sheets, the poor had to subsist on bread and water. Interestingly, inmates in medieval and early modern French prisons, who were not expected to work, had ample time to socialize, play cards and gamble. German prisoners, on the other hand, as Falk Bretschneider demonstrates, were sometimes forced to engage in municipal sanitation or construction projects, humiliated in public view. The real physical hardships of prison life are not minimized in this volume. A prison sentence was understood to be a form of corporeal punishment not all that different from the stocks and execution. Prison life could kill; yet most prisoners, who were most often briefly incarcerated for debt, in fact survived the experience.

The exploration of all of these themes in the early modern period is more haphazard. Although prisons had been located in monasteries for centuries, Daniel-Odon Hurel points out that some early modern clerics, including most famously Jean Mabillon, were less than enthusiastic about endorsing isolation and enclosure as a path to rectitude and salvation. Judging from the rules of several eighteenth-century French religious orders, prison sentences within monasteries were still conceived of as a last resort, imposed only to avert actual expulsion of the offender from the community. Bretschneider's well-conceived contribution about trends in early modern Germany reveals the complicated ways in which the idea of the enclosure was significantly broadened in the sixteenth century when houses of correction and poor houses were founded in several German cities. Analogously, Marie-Claude Dinet-Lecomte's schematic but very clear contribution is successful in showing the interlocking histories of hospital, cloister and prison throughout the early modern period. Overall, the early modern contributions reveal the artificial duality of the volume's framework: by focusing on the binary nature of cloister and prison, other coercively enclosing institutions also founded in the medieval period, such as municipal brothels, foundling homes, and hospitals are given less attention than they deserve. The intersection of all of these institutions has been a major preoccupation of early modern historians for some decades, and readers primarily interested in this issue would be better served elsewhere.

The theme of the feminization of enclosure during the medieval period is both a strength and a weakness of the volume. During the early centuries of Christianity, there emerged the belief that women needed special protection behind walls. Sylvie Joye argues that, by the sixth century, a clear distinction was being made between the two main categories of unattached women, widows and virgins, though she insists that entering a convent did not necessarily cut a young woman off from her family or the broader community. Julia Hillner and Gregoria Caveró Domínguez show that the practice of forcibly enclosing lay women—for example, adulteresses and widowed queens—a practice that began as early as the sixth century in Constantinople under Justinian, quickly spread to Gaul and to the Spanish peninsula. That women resisted such efforts is effectively demonstrated in articles by Elisabeth Makowski, who writes about the widespread failure of the 1298 *Periculoso* decree in late medieval England, and by Marie-Élisabeth Henneau, who describes the mixed reaction of post-Tridentine nuns in seventeenth-century France to a similar effort. Further documenting an already well-established historical narrative, these articles confirm that coercive enclosure was consistently shaped by gendered conceptions of power.

Nevertheless, this stress on the coercive nature of female enclosure in convents distorts the historical record. As Claude Gauvard points out, throughout the late medieval period, communities of widows and other pious women, particularly in the Netherlands but also to a more limited extent in France, founded houses where they lived together without taking formal vows. The flourishing of lay confraternities also reveals that new, alternative communal models of piety were developing during the late medieval period. Had the authors acknowledged this religious diversity more directly, they might have considered why enclosure nevertheless remained such a powerful model for both male and female religious throughout the early modern period.

The emphasis on coercion is counterbalanced in this volume by articles that emphasize the multi-purpose nature of prisons and cloisters and the porousness of their boundaries. As Domínguez shows, from as early as the sixth century, convents functioned not only as religious communities, but also as hostels for travelling clerics, health care centers for the poor, and prisons for errant lay women—a variety of functions that she argues must have shaped the lived experience of their permanent inhabitants. We have long known that late medieval monks and nuns stayed connected to their families and birth communities, but Domínguez emphasizes how early the diversity of life within convent walls was first established. Dinet-Lecomte shows that even as, during the early modern period, hospitals began to focus more on medical care and convents on education, this multiplicity of function continued, distinguishing these institutions from their modern equivalents, which impose a more controlled and isolating experience.

The porousness of cloister and prison walls is also made clear. Enclosure was often episodic rather than permanent; walls often fostered, rather than prevented the exchange of objects and ideas. Dégez notes, for example, that the location of the Conciergerie prison in Paris within the bustling Cité judicial complex allowed inmates airing themselves in the prison courtyard to see and pass messages to people walking in the galleries above. Imprisonment often did not prevent prisoners from communicating their ideas. Elsa Marmursztejn deals with the career of Jean de Rocquetaillade, who, imprisoned for his beliefs in the fourteenth century, was moved from prison to prison for over a decade, yet continued to produce over 1500 manuscript pages of his best-known works. Even the breaching of prison walls was somewhat acceptable in the late medieval period. As Marmursztejn shows, scholastic theologians debated at length whether prisoners were obliged to obey their jailors, concluding that in fact they were morally obligated to try to escape. Louis de Carbonnières points out that if late medieval French prisoners successfully escaped without destroying prison property, they could and often did petition the king for a pardon, both for the escape and for the original crime. Carbonnières also explores the fascinating legal practice of *prison ouverte*, a form of binding-over common in the late medieval period by which an individual on trial might be granted freedom to roam the city or even the country as a whole as long as his property was retained as security. Though not denying that most prisons had jailors who locked doors at night, these studies show that the potential isolation of prison could be negotiated in various ways, particularly if one were wealthy, well-connected, and male.

Overall, this volume showcases the innovative work currently being done on late medieval punitive enclosure and accurately represents the emerging consensus about the importance of prisons in late medieval European society. It is a well-conceived collection that will be useful to all historians interested in the Christian model of disciplining the body to perfect the soul.

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ISSN 1553-9172