Medieval women are 'good to think' with

Review of:

Therese Martin, ed., *Reassessing the Roles of Women as 'Makers' of Medieval Art and Architecture,* Visualising the Middle Ages, volume 7, 2 vols, Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2012, 1,280 pp., 287 b&w illustrations, 32 colour plates, ISBN: 978-90-04-18555-5 (hardback), E-ISBN: 978-90-04-22832-0, Euro 215.00 / US$ 299.00

In the Fall of 2010, I team-taught with Fiona Griffiths of New York University's Department of History a graduate colloquium titled 'Women and the Book: Scribes, Artists, and Readers from Late Antiquity through the Fourteenth Century'. The goal of the course as set out in the syllabus was to examine the cultural worlds of medieval women through particular attention to the books that they owned, commissioned, and created, and to consider the evidence for medieval women's book ownership, scribal and artistic activity, and patronage in relation to larger issues of women's authorship, education and literacy, reading patterns, devotional practices, and visual traditions and representation.

During the first class meeting, Professor Griffiths and I posed a series of questions to the students enrolled: was there still a need to teach a course of this nature, one focused solely on women's engagement with books? Or, after four decades' worth of scholarship aimed at 'writing … women into' our respective fields, as historian Joan Scott put it,[1] had the moment arrived to consider medieval women's activities within the framework of a broader course on 'medieval people and the book'? Indeed, did making gender an organizing principle of the course contribute to the marginalization of medieval women and their artistic, intellectual, religious, and cultural activities and sustain their relegation the realm of the aberrant? Had we, through the very nature and structure of our course, foreclosed the possibility of viewing women's bibliophilic activities as a 'normative' aspect of medieval culture?[2]

The thirteen women and one man enrolled in the colloquium were unanimous in the opinion that a course devoted to 'women and the book' was still the right forum for an investigation of our topic. They shared Therese Martin's

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[1] Joan W. Scott, 'Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis', *American Historical Review* 91, no. 5, 1986, 1054; and see also Joan Wallach Scott, 'Gender: Still a Useful Category of Analysis?' *Diogenes* 57, no. 1, 2010, 7-14.

[2] Kathryn A. Smith, *Art, Identity and Devotion in Fourteenth-Century England: Three Women and their Books of Hours*, The British Library Studies in Medieval Culture, London: The British Library Publications and Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003, 5.

conviction, articulated in her introduction to *Reassessing the Roles of Women as 'Makers' of Medieval Art and Architecture*, that scholars still approach medieval art and architecture not from a 'position of neutrality', but rather from one that regards the material as 'masculine in origin and intent' and in which women, by virtue of the 'real limits' to which they were subject in medieval society, 'play secondary roles' (1-2). Moreover, the students concurred with Martin that, in order to appreciate the full range of medieval women's artistic and cultural activities, scholars must abandon the existing analytic framework by which female patrons and artists are regarded as 'the exception[s] that prove the rule' and replace it with a new framework or lens, one through which women's artistic agency is viewed as a 'new rule waiting to be recognized' (1). Yet the students also acknowledged that medieval women, like Claude Lévi-Strauss's 'natural species', are 'good to think' with.[3] Publications like *Reassessing the Roles of Women as 'Makers' of Medieval Art and Architecture* force us to examine whether, and how, our 'operative assumptions' differ when analyzing women's patronage, consumption, or production of art and architecture, as opposed to the activities of men.[4] In studying medieval women, we must continually ask ourselves whether we set the bar at different levels when evaluating the evidence for women's and men's engagement with art and architecture, and whether, in every instance, we are justified in doing so.

As Martin explains in her 'Acknowledgements', *Reassessing the Roles of Women as 'Makers' of Medieval Art and Architecture* had its genesis in a graduate seminar she taught at the University of Arizona in 2008. The contours and content of the collection were shaped by a pair of sessions Martin subsequently convened at the 44th International Medieval Congress (Kalamazoo, MI), held in 2009 and sponsored by the International Center of Medieval Art (ICMA), and an international conference she organized the following year at the Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, Madrid, which she joined in 2009 as Científica Titular in the Instituto de Historia (Centro de Ciencias Humanas y Sociales) (xxxi-xxxii). The two volumes of the collection include, in addition to Martin's introductory essay, twenty-three substantial chapters treating a millennium of Christian, Muslim, and Jewish women's patronage, production, use, and reception of art and architecture produced across a broad swath of medieval Europe, including France, the Iberian Peninsula, German-speaking regions, Italy, England, Ireland, Scandinavia, and the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem. Authored by a distinguished slate of international scholars and treating a wide variety of monuments and media, including textiles, metalwork objects, jewellery, religious architecture, castles, tombs, inscribed runestones, devotional sculpture, and illuminated manuscripts, the chapters are presented in six broad thematic groups or subdivisions: 'Display and Concealment', 'Ownership and Community', 'Collaboration and Authorship', 'Family and Audience', 'Piety and Power', and 'Memory and Motherhood' – although most of

[3] Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Totemism,* trans. Rodney Needham, London: The Merlin Press Ltd, 1964, 89.
[4] Scott, 'Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis', 1067.

the essays engage issues that make them relevant to more than one of these thematic groups.

      Martin's wide-ranging introduction, 'Exceptions and Assumptions: Women in Medieval Art History', is indeed fundamentally concerned with medieval women's artistic activities, as its subtitle avers, and it should earn a place among several classic and more recent studies of overlapping subject and scope as a 'must-read' on the subject.[5] Yet Martin offers fresh perspectives on her topic by focusing not solely on the status and agency of medieval women but also on the meanings and uses in the Middle Ages of the Latin verb *facere*, 'to make' (or *fecit*, 'made'). As Martin emphasizes, the artist/patron 'dichotomy' is a 'false' one in the medieval period, and the word *fecit* as used in inscriptions and other forms of documentation '…denotes at times the individual whose hands produced the work' and at other times 'the person whose donation made the undertaking possible' (2). Deploying as touchstones for her discussion of women's agency the Eleanor Vase, the inscription on which gives precedence to Eleanor of Aquitaine (d. 1204), queen of France and England, among that object's numerous and illustrious, earlier and later owners and donors, as well as the spectacular chalice given after 1063 to the palatine church of San Isidoro, León, by the infanta Urraca (d. 1101), among other works, Martin urges scholars to consider the full range of women's strategies of and motivations for art and architectural patronage, and the possibility that 'the role of "maker"' can be extended not only to a work's donor but even to its intended recipient, whose status, needs, aspirations, and interests may have been the impetus for the object's creation, donation, or gifting (6). The frescoes of c. 1320 in the Convent of Santa Clara in Toro, 'made' (*fecit*) by a certain Teresa Díez, and the images of a male and female book artisan at work, found in the lower margins of a mid-fourteenth-century Parisian *Roman de la Rose* manuscript ─ artisans identified by Richard and

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[5] These include Dorothy E. Miner, *Anastaise and her Sisters: Women Artists of the Middle Ages*, Baltimore: Walters Art Gallery, 1974; Susan Groag Bell, 'Medieval Women Book Owners: Arbiters of Lay Piety and Ambassadors of Culture', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 7, no. 4, 1982, 742-68; reprinted in *Women and Power in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Mary Erler and Maryanne Kowaleski, Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1988, 149-87; Jeffrey F. Hamburger, 'Art, Enclosure and the *Cura Monialium*: Prolegomena in the Guise of a Postscript', *Gesta* 31, no. 2, 1992, 108-34; Madeline H. Caviness, 'Anchoress, Abbess, and Queen: Donors and Patrons or Intercessors and Matrons?', in *The Cultural Patronage of Medieval Women*, ed. and with an intro. by June Hall McCash, Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1996, 105-54; Annemarie Weyl Carr, "Women as Artists in the Middle Ages: "The Dark is Light Enough"', in *Dictionary of Women Artists*, ed. by Delia Gaze, 2 vols, Chicago and London: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, 1997, vol. I, 3-21; Rosamond McKitterick, 'Les femmes, les arts et la culture en occident dans le haut moyen âge', in *Femmes et pouvoirs des femmes, à Byzance et en Occident (VIe – XIe siècles)*, ed. by Alain Dierkens, Stéphane Lebecq, Régine Le Jan, and Jean-Marie Sansterre, Villeneuve d'Ascq: Centre de Recherche sur l'histoire de l'Europe du Nord-Ouest, Université de Charles de Gaulle-Lille, 1999, 227-49; Jill Caskey, 'Whodunnit? Patronage, the Canon and the Problematics of Agency in Romanesque and Gothic Art," in *A Companion to Medieval Art: Romanesque and Gothic in Northern Europe, 1000-1300*, ed. by Conrad Rudolph, Malden, MA and Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2006, 193-212; and June L. Mecham, 'Breaking Old Habits: Recent Research on Women, Spirituality, and the Arts in the Middle Ages', *History Compass* 4, no. 3, 2006, 448-80.

Mary Rouse as the husband-and-wife team Richard and Jeanne de Montbaston – are among the works and images that Martin marshals to illustrate the challenge of recovering medieval women artists.[6]

In addition, Martin rightly emphasizes the importance of collaboration in the making of medieval art and architecture, and the greater potential that a collaborative model of production affords for discovering and elucidating women's artistic activities and agency (31). In several of these thought-provoking and potentially fruitful moves, Martin's introduction finds parallels in an illuminating article by Jennifer Summit, who, in considering the question, 'Were there women authors in the Middle Ages?', challenged readers to shift the 'burden of proof' from 'women' to 'author' and 'authorship'.[7] Like Martin, who emphasizes how ill suited is the post-medieval concept of the 'great artist' to medieval artistic production (31), Summit affirms the extremely 'limited application' to the medieval evidence of 'modern definitions of the author as an original, self-expressive individual'.[8] Once one allows for the 'collaborative nature of medieval textual production' and for the importance of compilation and tradition to medieval writers; once one takes into account the tendency of medieval women writers (women mystics and visionaries especially, but also many male religious writers) to employ the language of 'humility' and 'self-negation', along with the particular cultural values medieval writers assigned to the signature and to anonymity; and once one acknowledges the essential roles of patrons and readers in shaping literary production, one may arrive at a new definition of authorship that encompasses 'the range of women's authorial activities' in the Middle Ages.[9] One need only substitute 'artist' for 'writer'/'author', 'artistic' or 'architectural production' for 'textual/literary production', and 'viewer' for 'reader' here to appreciate the many points of intersection between Summit's and Martin's approaches. At the heart of both scholars' essays are questions concerning the nature of authority in the Middle Ages.

It is a credit to all of the contributors to *Reassessing the Roles of Women as 'Makers' of Medieval Art and Architecture* that they cast their nets widely for evidence to support their explorations of their material. This is certainly true for two essays on textiles and three concerning architecture whose authors employ a plethora of approaches in service of their arguments. As Jenifer Ní Ghrádaigh notes, missing from the art historical record are actual examples of high-status textiles made in Ireland, whether linen shrouds, liturgical vestments, or embroidered altar cloths;

[6] For the Montbastons, see Richard H. Rouse and Mary A. Rouse, *Manuscripts and their Makers: Commercial Book Producers in Medieval Paris, 1200-1500*, 2 vols, Turnhout: Brepols, 2000, vol. I, ch. 10, 'A "Rose" by any other Name: Richard and Jeanne de Montbaston as Illuminators of vernacular Texts', 235-60.

[7] Jennifer Summit, 'Women and Authorship', in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Women's Writing*, ed. by Carolyn Dinshaw and David Wallace (Cambridge, UK and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 91-108, at 91.

[8] Summit, 'Women and Authorship', 91.

[9] Summit, 'Women and Authorship', 91, 105.

their absence has 'doomed the discussion of textile descriptions to an obscurity…it ill deserves (126)'. In 'Mere Embroiderers? Women and Art in Early Medieval Ireland' Ní Ghrádaigh examines accounts of textiles and their production and donation found in chronicles, legal tracts, hagiographic works, and poetry, as well as archaeological evidence, images in manuscripts, and well-chosen *comparanda* from Hiberno-Saxon, Anglo-Saxon, and Romanesque art, making a compelling case for the intimate involvement of both aristocratic laywomen and female religious with high-status textiles, and for the close association of embroidery with virtue in early medieval Irish culture. In contrast to Ní Ghrádaigh's material, the seven embroidered objects of Stefanie Seeberg's attention are extant, although only one has been the subject of extensive study. In 'Women as Makers of Church Decoration: Illustrated Textiles at the Monasteries of Alternberg/Lahn, Rupertsberg, and Heiningen (13th-14th C.)', Seeberg mines the historical evidence to construct rich contexts for her analyses of these German figural and narrative embroideries, the financing, design, and production of which were the result of collaboration among 'women and men from both within and outside the convent[s]' (371), and to suggest how these artefacts were used to promote the *memoria* of the convents' key benefactors and their families and to affirm and broadcast the monasteries' self-image. As did Ní Ghrádaigh, Jane Tibbetts Schulenberg interrogates a wide variety of mainly textual evidence in her article, 'Female Piety and the Building and Decorating of Churches, c. 500-1150', including chronicles, cartularies, the *vitae* of female saints, and inscriptions and imagery on historiated Romanesque capitals, arguing convincingly for the extensive involvement of women in church-building in the early Middle Ages, whether as 'primary agen[ts]' (249) or as joint patrons with their husbands. Annie Renoux's impressively synthetic 'Elite Women, Palaces, and Castles in Northern France (c. 850-1100)' sets out what is known from the documentary and archaeological evidence about the 'place in the power system' of queens, countesses, and noble abbesses, and the nature and extent of their authority with respect to the foundation, development, and design of palace and castle sites (741). Renoux concludes that high-echelon women were indeed 'at the very centre' of power politics in early medieval Francia (754), and that a strong case can be made for elite women's activities as having stimulated or established a hospitable environment for new developments in castle design, with the tenth and early eleventh centuries standing as particularly important moments in this regard. The power of one woman – Emma, Countess of Blois (d. 1005), founder in the late tenth century of the abbey of Maillezais in western France — is the subject of Mickey Abel's 'Emma of Blois as Arbiter of Peace and the Politics of Patronage'. Emma's activities and persona were the subject of a fulsome retrospective account in a chronicle of 1067 authored by the monk Peter of Maillezais. As Abel argues, Peter emphasized the 'various emotional characteristics' of the countess's behaviour, including her 'states of inspiration (*inspirare*), wisdom (*sapiens*), anger (*furor*), piety (*pius*), insightfulness (*prudens*), and strength (*potens*)' (829), in order to affirm her

political power in the region as well as her role as a mediator of family disputes; analysis of Peter's narrative and ekphrastic strategies, Abel avers, can shed light on the political, economic, and social interests and motivations underlying the various phases of the monastery's construction (825). There are many threads to Abel's argument, and the author's line of thought is at times difficult to follow. Yet Abel does succeed in showing how Peter's various characterizations of Emma – as puissant aristocrat, pious patron, wronged and wrathful spouse, and 'inspired' mediator, among other roles and personae – served the monks' interests in ensuring the security and prosperity of their community.

Among the questions that Martin charged her contributors with considering is whether there is 'anything "female" about works made by or for women' (22). Melissa R. Katz's essay on the 'Non-gendered Appeal of *Vierge ouvrante* Sculpture' opens with an incisive observation on a related issue, namely, that scholars' emphasis on gender 'as a lens through which to view the production of material art' has resulted in certain works or genres being regarded as 'inherently gendered' (39). Accordingly, Katz seeks to revise our picture of the audiences for the *Vierge ouvrante* (or triptych Virgin or shrine Madonna), a class of sculpture that has been associated particularly with cloistered female audiences, first, by means of a critical survey of the earlier literature on these compelling artefacts, and second, through an examination of the evidence offered by Spanish and Portuguese examples, some of which appear to have been commissioned by or for male patrons or monastic communities, or which, by virtue of their destinations (parish churches, private chapels, urban cathedrals, lay confraternities), would have been viewed by audiences comprising both genders. Readers will find much of value in both portions of Katz's essay. Nevertheless, the author might have interrogated her evidence even more deeply in order to explicate the complicated ways in which gender could, and did, have an impact on viewers' experience of these works. Katz notes in passing (at 68) that the Benedictine cathedral priory at Durham once possessed a large triptych Virgin. Known as Our Lady of Boulton and displayed in a south transept chapel, the sculpture was an important object of veneration for pilgrims travelling to Durham to venerate the shrine of St. Cuthbert and the relics of the Venerable Bede, the cathedral's 'main attractions'. Yet, even on important feast days, when the image was opened to reveal a Trinity 'most curiouslye and fynely gilted', as the *Rites of Durham* (1593) describe it, Our Lady of Boulton was accessible only to men. Women, who were permitted no further than the west end of the nave, had to be content with viewing in the Lady Chapel two other Marian images, neither of which appears to have had cultic significance.[10]

Not surprisingly, historiography occupies a crucial place in nearly every contribution to *Reassessing the Roles of Women as 'Makers' of Medieval Art and Architecture*, including two excellent chapters on French Gothic religious

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[10] For Our Lady of Boulton, see Richard W. Marks, *Image and Devotion in Late Medieval England*, Stroud: Sutton Publishing Limited, 2004, 198-99.

architecture. Ellen Shortell's 'Erasures and Recoveries of Women's Contributions to Gothic Architecture: The Case of Saint-Quentin, Local Nobility, and Eleanor of Vermandois' reveals how nineteenth-century restorers' aesthetic judgements, as well as their replacement of the heads of female donors with male heads in several stained glass windows, distorted not merely the appearance but also subsequent study of this important Gothic monument. 'The grand narrative of Gothic architecture retains a distinctly masculine character' (157), as Shortell aptly puts it. Yet after reading Shortell's accounts of the evidence for women as donors at Saint-Quentin specifically and women's involvement in Gothic building projects more generally ─ not only as benefactors but also on the construction site ─ along with her analysis of Eleanor of Vermandois's political and economic influence in the region, it becomes eminently possible to imagine medieval 'women's actions as essential to the larger [Gothic] project' (174). Alexandra Gajewski's 'The Patronage Question under Review: Queen Blanche of Castile (1188-1252) and the Architecture of the Cistercian Abbeys at Royaumont, Maubuisson, and Le Lys' is both a fascinating contribution to the burgeoning literature on the cultural patronage of medieval queens and an astute, revisionist account of Blanche's activities that, like Shortell's essay, has broad implications for how scholars think about women's contributions to the history of medieval architecture. As Gajewski observes, the picture of Blanche in the literature as a 'munificent, active patron' (199) of illuminated manuscripts and stained glass is at odds with accounts of her architectural activities, in which the queen and regent is portrayed as playing a distinctly secondary role to her son, Louis IX. Gajewski methodically critiques the picture of Blanche's patronal activities, motivations, and taste painted in earlier scholarship, particularly the work of Robert Branner, who framed the ostensible stylistic 'austerity' of monuments with which the queen is associated as a function and expression of Blanche's gender and 'modest' character, while the more magnificent, 'real' court style monuments are associated with Louis's 'kingly' patronage (208).[11] In making a case for Blanche and Louis as 'collaborators in religious patronage', for the impact of economics, and for the influence and intervention of 'clerics, institutions, administrators, and the artist' (223, 244), Gajewski shows that both the 'patronage question' and the style question with respect to these three royal Cistercian churches are considerably more complex than previously has been allowed.

　　Blanche of Castile is among the best-known royal female patrons in medieval art history. Less certain are the extent of the artistic activities of Melisende (d. 1161), the daughter and heir, wife, or mother of four kings and queen *regnant* of the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem. As Jaroslav Folda notes in 'Melisende of Jerusalem: Queen and Patron', the source of this uncertainty is the short biography of the queen in William of Tyre's late twelfth-century chronicle, *The History of*

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[11] Robert Branner, *Saint-Louis and the Court Style in Gothic Architecture* (London: A. Zwemmer Limited, 1965).

Outremer, which records as Melisende's sole act of patronage the foundation, construction, and sustained endowment of the female monastery of St. Lazarus in Bethany. Drawing on his own foundational scholarship on Crusader art as well as more recent studies of the queen's political, religious, and cultural activities, and interrogating with a fresh eye not only William of Tyre's text but also royal charters and the works of art and architecture themselves, Folda argues for Melisende's 'substantial role in making Jerusalem' and, by extension, her agency in the creation of 'a new "Crusader" art starting in the 1130s' (431). Among the artefacts, monuments, and institutions that Folda links with Melisende as 'maker' (using this term in the broadest possible sense, as advocated by Martin) are, in addition to the spectacular Psalter of Queen Melisende (London, British Library Egerton MS 1139), long associated with the queen, which Folda maintains was '*un cadeau expiatoire*' given to Melisende by her husband Fulk of Anjou in the context of their 1135 reconciliation; the Knights Hospitaller, to which Melisende, jointly with Fulk, made numerous donations; the Crusader Church of the Holy Sepulcher, the Church of St. Anne, and the Armenian Church of St. James, all in Jerusalem; and the queen's own tomb in the Valley of Jehoshaphat.

Therese Martin's area of expertise is medieval Iberia, a field to which she has made significant contributions in the area of women's patronage.[12] Thus, it is not surprising to find in *Reassessing the Roles of Women as 'Makers' of Medieval Art and Architecture* several essays by scholars who study Spain and Portugal. This aspect of the collection will be welcome not only to specialists but also to medievalists working on other regions of Europe whose familiarity with the Iberian material is more limited. Moreover, several of these chapters almost certainly will become starting-points and touchstones for future scholarship on their topics. One of these is Miriam Shadis's excellent 'The First Queens of Portugal and the Building of the Realm', which examines 'the relationship between royal women's patronage and the foundation and legitimization of the Portuguese monarchy and realm' (671). Impressively wide-ranging and brimming with detail and insight, Shadis charts the patronage of royal women from Teresa (d.1130), daughter of Alfonso VI of León, who inherited the county of Portugal from her father, to Malfada (d. 1256), sister of Alfonso II of Portugal. As Shadis demonstrates, as royal daughters' political importance was 'debilitated', the nature of their artistic and architectural patronage shifted 'from the monumental to the personal and the particular' (691, 693). Even more sweeping in scope is María Elena Díez Jorge's 'Women and the Architecture of Al-Andalus (711-1492): A Historiographic Analysis'. The value of this essay lies not only in its author's dedication to recovering the overlooked roles played by women in respect to Andalusi and Mudejar architecture — including mosques, palaces, cemeteries, charitable institutions, military buildings, baths, and other public and

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[12] Therese Martin, 'The Art of a reigning Queen as dynastic Propaganda in Twelfth-century Spain' *Speculum* 80, no. 4, December 2005, 1134-71; Therese Martin, *Queen as King: Politics and Architectural Propaganda in Twelfth-Century Spain*, Leiden: Brill, 2006.

private structures and spaces – as well as her synthesis and analysis of a trove of primary and secondary sources, but also in her incisive observations concerning the limitations and biases of the sources, which include commemorative inscriptions, legal treatises, payment records, collections of legends, and Arabic poetry produced by both men and women. Glaire D. Anderson's 'Concubines, Eunuchs, and Patronage in early Islamic Córdoba', which treats Umayyad Al-Andalus (756-1031 CE), adds a new facet to the lens of gender by considering in tandem the overlooked agency of two important, unfree constituencies of the Umayyad court: royal concubines and elite eunuchs. In general, as Anderson shows, these groups used their wealth, acquired mainly through gifts from the ruler, to endow charitable foundations, an activity that provided them or their children 'with a stable means of income' as well as spiritual and social benefit (665).

More narrowly focused than Shadis's, Díez Jorge's, and Anderson's essays but no less rich in implication and insight are chapters by Ana Maris S. A. Rodrigues and Felipe Pereda. In 'The Treasures and Foundations of Isabel, Beatriz, Elisenda, and Leonor: The Art Patronage of four Iberian Queens in the Fourteenth Century', Rodrigues asks several interconnected questions about her subjects, four Christian queens of Portugal and Aragón, and the precious objects, buildings, and religious institutions they commissioned, founded, or endowed. Among these questions are: 'did queens' art patronage differ from abbesses' and from other aristocratic women's patronage? Did women's art patronage change according to their life cycle? Could their patronage be characterized as "female" as opposed to the patronage of their male counterparts?' (903). As Rodrigues notes, the particularities of later medieval Iberian matrimonial law, according to which these royal women received dowries from their parents as well as dowers from their husbands, meant that their potential as patrons substantially exceeded that of women religious and non-royal women. Moreover, royal women's authority and capacity for agency increased with their age: the longer they lived, and especially if they became widows and queen-mothers, these women could 'materialize their own wishes and create new patterns of spirituality and patronage' that were independent of their husbands' preferences and activities, and that became templates for the patronage of succeeding generations of women (933). The essays by Rodrigues, Anderson, and Pereda are but three of several contributions to *Reassessing the Roles of Women as 'Makers' of Medieval Art and Architecture* in which the patronal activities of women are shown to have been inflected not only by their gender but also by their social status and social and familial role(s). In 'Liturgy as Women's Language: Two Noble Patrons prepare for the End in Fifteenth-Century Spain', Pereda introduces Mencía de Mendoza (d. c. 1500) and her mother-in-law, Beatriz Manique (d. 1473/74), two influential Castilian noblewomen whose testaments, among other records, give evidence of their related strategies of patronage. Both women commissioned splendid funerary chapels: Mencía, the Chapel of the Condestables in Burgos Cathedral; Beatriz, a chapel in the church in

the monastery of Santa Clara, Medina de Pomar (Burgos). Both were actively involved in the decoration of these spaces and in shaping the funerary liturgies performed within them. As Pereda eloquently describes it, and as his case-studies richly demonstrate, patronage 'can always be considered a negotiation of *memory*, where buildings and works of art both functioned as the instruments of the spiritual transaction and visual repository of the patron's remembrance' (938-39). The notion of patronage as a 'negotiation of memory' is a fundamental theme of several chapters in the collection, including Seeberg's essay on German textiles, as noted earlier, and Eileen McKiernan González's 'Reception, Gender, and Memory: Elisenda de Montcada and her Dual-Effigy Tomb at Santa Maria de Pedralbes'. González considers a single, fascinating monument: the tomb executed in the 1340s of the Catalán noblewoman Elisenda de Montcada I de Pinós (1292-1364), queen (from 1322-27) of the Crown of Aragón. Constructed in the church in the Clarissan monastery in Barcelona that Elisenda founded and built with her husband's support, the tomb has two sides: a 'church side' on the south wall of the presbytery featuring an effigy of Elisenda, crowned and dressed in regal robes, that was visible to the clergy officiating mass as well as the laity in the nave; and a 'cloister side' dominated by a second effigy showing a veiled, wimpled, crownless Elisenda wearing the simple garb of a widow or tertiary, intended for the eyes of the nuns of Pedralbes, who counted Elisenda as their principal benefactor. González's essay constitutes an important contribution to the burgeoning literature on the architecture and art associated with female monasticism in general and the Poor Clares in particular;[13] Elisenda herself may be added to the long list of 'savvy' medieval queens (González's characterization, at 349) concerned with shaping their self-image through visual means, both in life and after their deaths.

While most medievalists are by now accustomed to thinking about the potential agency of women with respect to the making of tomb monuments, textiles, illuminated manuscripts, and metalwork objects, many will be surprised to learn that royal and elite women sponsored the building of bridges. Shadis offers evidence for the responsibility of some Iberian royal women for the construction of bridges, an activity that cannot but have held importance during the period of the 'building of the realm'; Matilda (d. 1167), daughter and heir of Henry I of England, who ruled briefly in her own right, built a bridge across the Seine in Normandy, as Shadis notes (685). Bridge-building is also an activity associated with early medieval Scandinavian women, as Nancy L. Wicker details in her eye-opening,

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[13] Fundamental contributions include Caroline Bruzelius, 'Hearing is Believing: Clarissan Architecture ca. 1213-1340', *Gesta* 31, no. 2, 1992, 83-91; Caroline Bruzelius, 'Nuns in Space: Strict Enclosure and the Architecture of the Clarisses in the Thirteenth Century', in *Clare of Assisi: A Medieval and Modern Woman*, ed. by Ingrid Petersen, St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 1996, 53-74; Hamburger, 'Art, Enclosure and the *Cura Monialium*' (as in n. 5); Holly Flora, *The Devout Belief of the Imagination: The 'Meditations on the Life of Christ' and Female Franciscan Spirituality in Trecento Italy*, Turnhout: Brepols, 2009; and Holly Flora and Arianna Pecorini Cignoni, 'Requirements of devout Contemplation: Text and Image for the Poor Clares in Trecento Pisa', *Gesta* 35, no. 1, 2006, 61-76.

admirably rich chapter, 'Nimble-fingered Maidens in Scandinavia: Women as Artists and Patrons'. Wicker introduces us to the mothers, daughters, wives, and widows who, in addition to spinning, weaving, and embroidering textiles, raised inscribed runestones and bridge-stones, sponsored the construction of bridges, and commissioned and perhaps even made jewellery. The monument that Wicker uses as an entrée into all of these topics is the Dynna stone, an approximately three-metre-high, four-sided stone carved sometime in the first half of the eleventh century that preserves on one of its broad faces Ringerike animal-style depictions of the Nativity and the Adoration of the Magi. A poignant inscription on one of the narrow faces informs us that Gunnvor, daughter of Thrydrik, sponsored the runestone itself as well as a bridge to commemorate her daughter Astrid, who was, as the inscription proclaims, 'the handiest maiden in Hadeland' (867). Wicker's essay addresses several fascinating issues pertaining to Viking-age art, among them pagan-Christian syncretism during the period of Scandinavia's conversion to Christianity and women's potential roles in the conversion process; the nature and extent of women's involvement in the raising of inscribed runestones and bridge-stones, and the implications of the stones' imagery and inscriptions with respect to inheritance and lineage, trade and transportation, and the spread of Christianity; the evidence for Viking-age women as makers of textiles and as goldsmiths; and the notion that commissioning and wearing bracteate pendants and other jewellery established women's 'power and status' and served as declarations of religious allegiance, including 'lingering pagan resistance' (901).

Although essays treating the activities of female religious are substantially outnumbered in *Reassessing the Roles of Women as 'Makers' of Medieval Art and Architecture* by those focused on the activities of laywomen, the former bring to the fore comparably compelling issues. The chapters by Jane Carroll and Loretta Vandi are concerned with nuns' patronage and artistic production in relation to spiritual authority. Carroll's aptly titled contribution, 'Subversive Obedience: Images of Spiritual Reform by and for Fifteenth-Century Nuns', focuses on the illustrated fifteenth-century copy made in the reformed Dominican convent of St. Katharine's in Nuremberg (Nuremberg, Stadtbibliothek, Cent. V, 10a) of the *Schwesternbuch* (a collection of nuns' *vitae*) authored c. 1340 by Elsbeth Stagel, prioress of the Swiss convent of Töss. While the fifteenth-century Dominican reform movement focused on 'stricter practices, … practical work', community, and 'skepticism about female mysticism' (710), the nuns who illustrated the Nuremberg manuscript cherished earlier spiritual traditions and ideals characterized by an emphasis on ecstatic visionary experience, the miraculous, and 'the empowering possibilities of personal piety' (728). Through each careful iconographic choice, Carroll argues, the nuns sought to reconcile or balance both models of religious life, that is, to recall and retain the authority accrued through individual piety and visionary experience while acknowledging the practical, communal ideals of the Order's fifteenth-century reform. The political, religious, and artistic activities of Humbrina, builder

and abbess (from c. 1089 to 1124) of the female Benedictine monastery of Santa Maria at Pontetetto, near Lucca, suggest that the canny abbess was actively resistant to 'improper interference' in the life of her monastery by the regular canons of the nearby Cathedral of San Martino (784). On the basis of close examination of the documentary, stylistic, palaeographical, iconographic, and liturgical evidence, Vandi argues that four late eleventh- or early twelfth-century illustrated manuscripts – the Lucca Antiphonary (Lucca, Biblioteca capitolare MS 603), the Edili Missal (Florence, Biblioteca Laurenziana MS 111), the Pistoia Antiphonary (Pistoia, Biblioteca arcivescovile MS R 69), and the Florence Commentaries on the Song of Songs (Florence, Biblioteca Riccardiana MS 276) ─ were all produced in the Pontetetto scriptorium during Humbrina's tenure, and further, that features of their textual and pictorial contents register the desire of the abbess and her nuns to express their independence from the canons and their awareness of their 'powers as religious women' (785). Vandi also positions the Pontetetto manuscripts as posing a challenge to the prevailing picture in the literature of the *cura monialium* ─ the pastoral care of nuns ─ in which female religious, their spirituality 'controlled' by male religious authority, are passive recipients of the essential religious services provided by priests and confessors (818). Vandi's observations about the manuscripts and their imagery are suggestive. Yet it should be noted that scholars' conception of the *cura monialium* has been importantly modified in recent years by studies that emphasize the 'delicate negotiation(s)' between nuns and priests over nearly every aspect of spiritual care, and that highlight instances in which female religious were active agents in seeking quality care, even going so far as to criticize or call for the replacement of priests whose services did not measure up to the ideal.[14]

A trio of chapters treats laywomen's artistic and cultural activities in late medieval England and Ireland. Loveday Lewes Gee's 'Patterns of Patronage: Female Initiatives and Artistic Enterprises in England in the 13th and 14th Centuries' reprises and extends ideas put forward in her earlier publications, considering royal and noble women's patronage and representation in and on a variety of media, especially seals, manuscript imagery, and tombs.[15] Gee makes the piquant observation that the convention on some women's seals of displaying heraldic shields on trees may do more than proclaim the women's status and lineage: it may also resonate with the 'chivalric practice' of hanging up shields before a tournament to identify the contestants or challengers, and thus may be interpreted as

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[14] See in particular Fiona J. Griffiths, '"Men's Duty to Provide for Women's Needs": Abelard, Heloise, and their Negotiation of the *Cura Monialium*', *Journal of Medieval History* 30 (2004), 1-24; reprinted in Constance Hoffman Berman, ed., *Medieval Religion, New Approaches*, London: Routledge, 2005, 290-315; and Fiona J. Griffiths, *The Garden of Delights: Reform and Renaissance for Women in the Twelfth Century*, The Middle Ages Series, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007.

[15] See especially Loveday Lewes Gee, *Women, Art and Patronage from Henry III to Edward III: 1216-1377*, Woodbridge, UK: The Boydell Press, 2002.

'advertising the lady's knights and protectors' (577). Although containing a few misprints and some inconsistent information in regard to the manuscript evidence, both Gee's readable text and her five appendices provide useful overviews of the material.[16] In 'The Roles of Women in Late Medieval Civic Pageantry in England', Nicola Coldstream offers illuminating comparative case-studies of the participation in *tableaux vivants* of women on nearly every rung of the social ladder, from the queens and noblewomen who were the honourands of these pageants, to the craftswomen and performers who helped to create the costumes and mobile stages or sang songs, delivered speeches, or performed scenes (there are no documented instances of women as 'devisors and directors' of the pageants, as Coldstream observes, at 194). It is noteworthy that young girls appear to have had more freedom to participate in pageants than older girls of marriageable age: as Coldstream speculates, 'it is almost as if girls were, until puberty, essential neuter' (194). In '"Planters of Great Civilitie": Female Patrons of the Arts in Late Medieval Ireland', Rachel Moss demonstrates the extent to which Irish women played the roles of artistic and cultural ambassadors, patronizing poetry and its performance, sponsoring the construction and decoration of churches, commissioning funerary monuments and (often jointly with their husbands) wayside and churchyard crosses, furbishing the home with fine domestic and imported goods, and overseeing the creation and outfitting of family chapels.

Katrin Kogman-Appel's absorbing chapter, 'Portrayals of Women with Books: Female (Il)literacy in Medieval Jewish Culture', the sole essay in the collection that treats women and Jewish art, is a thought-provoking contribution to the literature on medieval women's literacy, education, prayer, and involvement in ritual practice. Kogman-Appel considers illuminated Passover *haggadot* produced between the late thirteenth and late fifteenth centuries in several regions of medieval Europe, focusing on the depictions of the *seder* table that became a standard component of the image programs of these manuscripts. She charts the appearance after the fourteenth century in Italy and the Ashkenazi realm of images

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[16] The Fitzwarin Psalter (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France MS lat. 765) is dated to c. 1350-60 in the text (at 580) and the '1340s?' in Appendix B (at 607). The Grey-Fitzpayn Hours (Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum MS 242), previously assigned to the Sir Richard Grey and Joan Fitzpayn, has been reassigned with some confidence to John de Pabenham and Joan Clifford, and thus is to be dated c. 1315-30 rather than c. 1300-1308 (609). The De Lisle Hours is New York, Pierpont Morgan Library MS G. 50, not Anc. 6 (609). In earlier literature, the Taymouth Hours (London, British Library Yates Thompson MS 13) has been assigned variously to Isabella of France, queen of Edward II of England, Philippa of Hainault, queen of Edward III, and Joan of the Tower, daughter of Isabella and Edward II; Gee associates the manuscript with the last of these royal women (609). Published too late for Gee to have considered is the argument that the manuscript was commissioned by Philippa for Eleanor of Woodstock, sister of Edward III, in connection with Eleanor's betrothal to Reinald of Guelders; see Kathryn A. Smith, *The Taymouth Hours: Stories and the Construction of the Self in Late Medieval England*, London: The British Library Publications and Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012. The Neville of Hornby Hours (London, British Library Egerton MS 2781) is more likely dated to the fourth than the fifth decade of the fourteenth century (609).

of women holding open books, arguing that these images constitute 'a sort of iconographic formula of literacy and knowledge obtained through education' that reflects 'a norm' in 'certain strata of Jewish society [in these regions] in the late Middle Ages' (540-41) as well as 'present[ing] a model for it' (561). Kogman-Appel's essay is also a rich repository of information about rabbinic attitudes to women's education, women as teachers and scribes, and women's patronage of books.

Although several essays, including Martin's, Wicker's, and Coldstream's, discuss the evidence for women as artists, only one chapter, Pierre Alain Mariaux's 'Women in the Making: Early Medieval Signatures and Artists' Portraits (9th-12th c.)', is focused solely on that subject. As Mariaux rightly notes, the surge of interest in recovering medieval women artists that began in the 1970s was one facet of an effort, pursued largely by feminist scholars, to create a comprehensive history of women's creativity and a lineage of women artists from the ancient through contemporary worlds. Mariaux considers a series of case-studies of 'self-portraits', signatures, and inscriptions to illustrate the equivocal nature of the evidence for early medieval women artists. His first case-study is the famous image of 'Claricia' (she is named as such near her 'portrait'), who swings by her arms from the foliate body of a letter Q in the late twelfth-century German psalter that bears her name, her slender body forming the tail of the letterform. Long believed to be a 'lay woman active in a convent scriptorium in Augsburg during the late twelfth century' (400), Claricia is an artist-heroine for more than one writer, including Germaine Greer, who praised her 'charming portrait'.[17] Mariaux follows Jonathan Alexander in analyzing the image of Claricia in relation to its pictorial, codicological, and psalm contexts, arguing that the image is more likely a negative *exemplum* of or a commentary on female vanity and malicious speech than an artist's self-portrait.[18] It is true that the psalm which Claricia's figure accompanies, Psalm 51, *Quid gloriaris*, contrasts the malicious, deceitful speech of the sinful person with the just man's fear and praise of the Lord; moreover, if considered in relation to the picture of the Virgin and Child Enthroned on the facing folio, 'Claricia' appears to turn her back on the holy figures, as Mariaux observes (402). But should one read the figure of Claricia solely in a negative light? When the psalter was closed, Claricia would have faced the Virgin and Child rather than turning her back on them. Might the very act of opening and closing the book have encouraged the devout reader to view Claricia as both an anti-model of vanity and sin, and, simultaneously, a model of repentance?

As Mariaux rightly observes, 'The use of a portrait or of a subscription is a powerful means of ensuring a continuous presence in the collective memory of the living' (426): artistic creation is, like patronage, a 'negotiation of memory'. Some

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[17] Germaine Greer, *The Obstacle Race: The Fortunes of Women Painters and Their Work*, New York: Farrar Straus and Giroux, 1979, 158.

[18] Jonathan J. G. Alexander, *Medieval Illuminators and their Methods of Work,* New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1992, 20.

readers may take issue with Mariaux's further characterization of the gestures of and inscriptions associated with male artists as having a 'sacerdotal' character (394), and the notion that when artists represented themselves, whether through a self-portrait, an inscription, or a signature, they 'situated [themselves] in relation to Creation and to the Incarnation' and were 'declar[ing themselves] to be … mediator[s], just as a priest is' (421). It would have benefited Mariaux's arguments to note here that, in contrast to male artisans, female artists and scribes are rarely shown wielding their pens or brushes in early medieval art. Mariaux uses as one example of a male artist's 'mediating' signature the inscription on a historiated capital in the ambulatory of the Romanesque church of Saint-Pierre, Chauvigny, which declares 'Gofridus me fecit' – 'Gofridus made me'. As have most scholars, Mariaux assumes that Gofridus is the artist who carved this capital and others in the ambulatory. But can one be sure? The theme of the capital on which the Gofridus inscription appears is the Adoration of the Magi – the quintessential image of gift-giving in medieval Christian art. In view of the association of the inscription with this particular theme, might 'Gofridus' have been the patron who sponsored the sculptural campaign or even the construction of the church itself, rather than the artist? Clearly, the evidence for male artists can be as equivocal as that for their female counterparts.

That this collection and its individual contributions have stimulated a review of this length is a testament to their value, interest, and quality. But it is not enough either to praise the authors for their service to the discipline in contributing such fine, thoughtful essays, nor to laud Martin for conceiving this project and shepherding it through to publication. Through their sustained emphasis on and attention to women's artistic agency, Martin and her contributors have challenged us to conceive medieval art and architecture through a fundamentally different lens, one that naturalizes women's contributions to and participation in their 'making'. In this, *Reassessing the Roles of Women as 'Makers' of Medieval Art and Architecture* is a milestone not only in the study of medieval women in art history, but also in medieval art history *tout court*. Now that Martin and her authors have thrown down the gauntlet, are medievalists ready to take it up?

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