

## REVIEWS

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SWIFT, Helen J. 2016 *Representing the dead. Epitaph fictions in Late-Medieval France*. Cambridge, D.S. Brewer

Helen J. Swift, professor of medieval French history at St Hilda's College, Oxford, authors this book, which is part of the studies on the history of death. From this historiographical perspective, she takes the aspect of representativeness, a line of research already announced by Philippe Ariès.

Following the approach proposed by the French historian, *Representing the dead. Epitaph fictions in Late-Medieval France*, aims to study the representations of death in the French late Middle Ages in fictional narratives. In particular, attention is focused on what the author calls "*epitaph fictions*", understood as compositions, in verse or prose, that use fiction to explore the relationship between death and identity, the central point of the book. Thus, in order to carry out her research, the author selects several literary texts ("*Belle Dame*" *querelle*, *Le Jardin de plaisance*, *Temple de Bocace*, among others), mainly from the 14th to the 15th century.

From the outset, Swift discusses the historiographical and literary debate surrounding the definition of epitaph, in which all the works agree in their desire to keep the memory of the deceased alive; and secondly, the complex process of constructing the identity of the individual through this literature. Faced with this vast undertaking, Swift rightly chooses to divide the work into four chapters, each devoted to a source. In the first, she analyses language, the shaping of identity through words, mainly through the expressions *je suis* and *cy gist*, giving an interesting insight into what he calls testamentary literature. Then, in the second chapter, he delves into the lyric and how, with the appearance of final epigraphs, in this case positive ones, the character's identity is forged. Thus, in the third chapter, he plays the opposite game, showing how the construction of identity can become a negative *exempla*. The final chapter is devoted to the spaces (cemetery, hospital and temple), frontiers between life and death, which are also essential to the process of identity construction. It is also worth mentioning the interesting and apt final section of the book, which the author devotes to the explanation of various illustrations related to the subject.

Here, the reader interested in death and its representation becomes aware of the various factors surrounding identity creation, some of which are constantly repeated by the author throughout the book. One of the essential factors is the will of the medieval individual to forge an identity in order to be remembered, a goal only possible if the person is remembered, as well as recounted, by someone with the will to do so. However, all that has been said so far is not possible without a public that creates this identity in its imagination.

From this basis, the process of identity construction takes place, which, as Swift points out, begins in life and has no end, but is mutable, causing the boundary between life and death to blur. The author argues that epitaphs, as representations of a dead individual, are by nature fiction, since imagination is required.

Finally, and in view of the difficulties of comprehension that the reader may have encountered, which certainly exist at times due to the complexity of the text, Helen J Swift, quotes the Purgatorio of Dante's *Divine Comedy*: "*forti cose a pensar mettere in versi*" [to put in verse things hard for thought].

SERGI REXACH CAMPS

**DOMENGE, Joan; VIDAL, Jacobo (eds.), 2017. *Visurar l'arquitectura gòtica: inspeccions, consells i reunions de mestres d'obra (s. XIV-XVIII)*, Palerm: Edizioni Caracol**

Among the various types of documents –fortunately abundant in the case of the Crown of Aragon– that allow us to approach the constructive history of Gothic masonry, this volume aims to vindicate the suitability of the *visuras*, the name by which the inspections or surveys entrusted to expert masters are known. To this end, a series of contributions linked to the activities of the Magna Ars research group are presented.

The reports made by experts on an architectural work are a source of great interest for the understanding of monuments from a technical, formal and constructive point of view. They are also a magnificent record of aspects related to construction practice, with all the conditioning factors and vicissitudes involved in it, and are even essential documents for understanding the architectural thinking of the period.

The preface to the volume, written by Joan Domenge, defends the relevance and usefulness of expert reports or inspections for the history of art. Unlike contracts or work books, they have been surprisingly undervalued by historiography, despite the substantial information they provide on very specific practical aspects relating to technique, the structural solutions adopted, the choice and use of construction materials in medieval times and the effects of the passage of time on buildings. They also provide the aforementioned insight into the architectural thinking and construction mentality of the period.

The geographical area of reference for the contributions is the former Crown of Aragon, and more specifically Catalonia and Mallorca. In addition to such an exceptional and relevant case

as that of the consultations on the Cathedral of Girona around 1400, the volume highlights other lesser-known but equally interesting examples of *visuras* carried out in this area. The work studies *visuras* referring to Gothic buildings, but also includes some that go beyond the late medieval period, with the aim of incorporating later maintenance or conservation *visuras*, which also provide a very interesting approach to Gothic architecture. It should be noted that all the articles are complemented by a documentary appendix or a transcription of the analysed texts.

The first and extensive article that opens the volume, written by the two editors, Joan Domenge and Jacobo Vidal, is an interesting and exhaustive state of the art on the documented *visuras* of Catalan Gothic works. It is a text that manages to establish a general framework for the rest of the contributions. First of all, the *visuras* are considered from a theoretical and conceptual point of view. The authors deal with the terminological aspects and the variety of cases in which a *visura* is necessary. The chapter explains how master surveyors were chosen and how these experts expressed their opinion on various issues: the model to be followed in a new building, how to continue a work that presents some kind of problem, etc. This is therefore an essential chapter to provide this work with a unitary approach that goes beyond the particular analysis of the various case studies that follow. Some of the works that are analysed in detail in the following articles are already mentioned in this introductory chapter, but the examples provided go much further: from *visuras* covering other artistic fields to inspections of buildings in areas far removed from the geographical frame of reference.

In short, the analysis of the different cases is an excellent example of how the *visuras*, although historiographically undervalued, allow a special approach to technical and constructive aspects of a specific factory. At the same time, they are useful for studying aspects such as the evolution of construction, the tension between ideals and budgetary restrictions as conditioning factors of a construction, or the architectural thinking that guides the beginning of a work and its successive modifications.

PAU VIVES XIOL

**MARTÍNEZ GIRALT, Alejandro, 2019. *Els vescomtes de Cabrera a la Baixa Edat Mitjana. Identitat familiar, dinàmica patrimonial i projecció sociopolítica*, Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas.**

The history of the medieval Catalan aristocracy has aroused little interest in historiography to date. Certainly, apart from a few classic works, such as that of Santiago Sobrequés, there are

few exhaustive studies devoted exclusively to the great noble families of Catalonia –most of the works focus on the monarchy. Even the knowledge of a lineage such as that of the Viscounts of Cabrera, one of the oldest and most powerful families of the high nobility of late medieval Catalonia, still shows several important gaps, despite the existence of different historical and, more recently, archaeological studies.

Fortunately, Alejandro Martínez Giralt’s work makes up for many of these shortcomings and becomes an authentic reference work not only for the Cabrera family but also for future works devoted to the study of noble lineages, Catalan or otherwise. In fact, from the outset, the author –very critical of the current backwardness of Catalan noble studies– openly sets himself the primary objective of improving and extending current knowledge of the Cabrera viscount family, illuminating, from multiple perspectives, many obscure areas of the history of this family.

In this attempt at a history that we could describe as “total” –“global”, says the author– Martínez Giralt focuses his attention on a multitude of areas and aspects that, in a broad chronological framework (1199-1423) cross almost all the political, socio-economic and also ideological aspects of the Cabrera lineage. In this sense, the choice of chronology is not in vain, since, in addition to a greater volume of preserved documentation, we must add the fact that it is precisely in these little more than two hundred years that we find the keys that allowed the Cabrera family to become one of the most –if not the most– powerful and prestigious families in the Crown of Aragon, very close to the royalty.

The access to and meticulous examination of a large number of sources –most of them unpublished– in different archives in and outside Catalonia, allows the author to address, over the course of this long period of time, a very wide variety of themes. The work is divided into the rise and consolidation of the Cabrera family –from its beginnings to the establishment of the lineage in Sicily, once the confidence of the monarchy had been regained– and the mechanisms of perpetuation –biological, socioeconomic, political, identity and patrimonial– of this aristocratic family.

In this sense, it is undoubtedly in this second part where the most interesting aspects of the work are to be found. Thus, the analysis of the internal workings of the family itself, from its origins, emphasises such fundamental issues as the processes surrounding the creation of a dynastic memory and the strategies for preserving the lineage through marriage alliances and succession solutions. But Martínez Giralt also focuses on the projection of the lineage in its patrimonial space, from its beginnings, through all the systems of exercise of seigniorial power and the strategies for achieving dominion over the territory and the vassals of one of the most important noble families in the medieval and modern history of Catalonia.

JORDI SAURA NADAL

**CHALMETA, Pedro (Ed. Y Trad.), 2019. *Ibn ʿAbd al-Raʿûf, Córdoba a mediados del sigloX, Almería: Textos andalusíes, 9, Fundación Ibn Tufayl de Estudios Árabes, Grupo de Investigación Andalucía y sus relaciones con el Magreb (Universidad de Almería).***

Pedro Chalmeta, Professor Emeritus at the Complutense University of Madrid, authors a new study on the regulations that governed markets in Al-Andalus. He analyses and edits the first known treatise, that of Ibn ʿAbd al-Raʿûf, which describes the commercial and social legislation of Caliphate Cordoba. In fact, the author devotes a third of the 45 pages of his work to setting out the religious rules on very elementary but necessary subjects in the sphere of Islam: prayer, fasting, Koranic taxes, burials, marriages, dowry and a long etcetera, which, according to Chalmeta, were still necessary in a society that was in the process of acculturation. It is well known that in the 10th century Muslims did not make up the majority of the population of Al-Andalus, as shown, for example, by the recommendation made by Ibn ʿAbd al-Raʿûf announcing that care must be taken and there should be “no littering in and around mosques and mosque esplanades”.

Chalmeta’s work consists of an introduction (pp. 5-7), where he describes the events that surrounded the work and its discovery, an introductory study (pp. 9-38), a translation of the original text (pp. 39-130) conveniently annotated, a very complete bibliography (pp. 131-162) and a very useful index of anthroponyms that shows, for example, the four times that the toponym Mecca appears, the dozen paragraphs where the work of the great jurist ʿAbd al-Malik Ibn Habîb of the Mālikî school of thought is quoted, and other terms that may be of interest to the reader. This is followed by two photographs of the beginning and the colophon of manuscript B, preserved in the Egyptian Institute of Islamic Studies in Madrid, and two photographs of the beginning and end of the manuscript preserved in the Bibliothèqure Générale in Rabat. Finally, there is the heavily annotated edition of the Arabic text, also accompanied by the corresponding Arabic index.

Chalmeta, a specialist in the economic history of Al-Andalus and author of several treatises on market governance, compares wherever possible the work of Ibn ʿAbd al-Raʿûf with that of other authors, and particularly with the work of the *mostassaf* from Malaga *al-Saqatî*, who wrote, during the first third of the 13th century, a great work that not only enjoyed great fame in his time throughout the Maghreb area, but even in 1932 it is recorded that in Salé it was still referred to as a legal basis. Its influence also reached the Christian lands, as can be seen in the *Ordenanzas* of Malaga, Sevilla and Granada and in different *Llibre de Mustaçaf* from the Catalan area.

The ordinances conveyed in the *Ordenanzas* deal with many of the trades of the time, such as shopkeepers or spice merchants, sellers of linen, wheat, figs, butter, oil, honey and eggs, among others. It also deals with the regulations on the production of bread and the sale and preservation

of milk. It is worth mentioning the pages devoted to the trade and the treatment of meat, where regulations are given on how to cut the throat of cattle, how to cut their meat and how cooks should cook it. It also details the rules to be followed by those who fry fritters or fish and what fishermen should observe in their work.

Other non-food products also find their place in the fragments devoted to furriers, shoemakers of various types of footwear and weavers and, naturally, the care of the correct measures of length and capacity of the products sold and how the scales and their saucers should be. Naturally, this was to ensure the healthiness of food and also to prevent fraud and adulteration.

All this makes the reading of this edition and study very useful for scholars who will have to deal with certain medieval texts in the future, whether or not they are scholars of Al-Andalus. Moreover, this is a work that is not only useful for scholars of Hispanic medieval economic history, society and anthropology, but it is also very illustrative in terms of what society was like in the 10th century.

This work is in line with previous work by Chalmeta. His erudition and high quality of his research already emerges in his doctoral thesis *El señor del zoco en España: edades media y moderna, contribución al estudio de la historia del mercado* (Instituto Hispano-Arabe de Cultura, Madrid 1973, Libros Hiperión, Madrid 1990) and continues in subsequent publications devoted to similar topics.

DOLORS BRAMON

**SANCHO FIBLA, Sergi, 2019. *Escribir y meditar. La obra de Marguerite d'Oingt, cartuja del siglo XIII*. Madrid: Siruela (El Árbol del Paraíso)**

The book by Sergi Sancho i Fibla, *Escribir y meditar. La obra de Marguerite d'Oingt, cartuja del siglo XIII*, is a rewrite of his doctoral thesis (Universitat Pompeu Fabra). It is the first research to have studied the totality of Marguerite d'Oingt's works, comparing them with other works of her time, following a multidisciplinary method. The work is divided into four parts, each of them for each of the works of Prioress Marguerite d'Oingt: *Pagina Meditationum*, *Speculum*, *Li via seiti Biatrice d'Ornaci* and two of her illustrations (IV and V). It must be specified that the nun came from the County of Forez (Kingdom of France) and not from the Dauphiné of Vienne (Holy Roman Empire) as stated in the book, even though she was a member of the Carthusian Order, an institution of Dauphiné origin inspired by the Desert Fathers. Marguerite d'Oingt is one of the mystics of her order who wrote down her sensory experience, expressing externally the divine visions of her internal experience. A cultured noblewoman, who mastered the styles

of the various literary genres of her time such as autobiography, ‘mirror’, hagiography and epistolography, she was able to control the flow of her emotions, order her thoughts, and share the full spiritual power of God’s knowledge through her own human self-knowledge, by means of the use of visualisation and memorisation techniques. His poetic, symbolic and allegorical language is materialised through the processes of *scriptio*, *lectio*, and *contemplatio*, which lead to the mystical union with the son of God, thanks to negative (apophatic) and abstract (aphaeretic) theology.

The *Pagina Meditationum* is her only work written in Latin. The meditation is a literary genre that emerged in the 11th century and was popularised by the ‘*Méditations Vitae Christi*’ in the 14th century. In any case, this work of the prioress (13th century) is related to the Franciscans and their devotion to the story of the Passion of Christ, but also to the Book of Revelations and its announcement of the Final Judgement. This is manifested in symbolic mortification and eschatological psychic suffering. Here salvation through the incarnated Christ-like judge is found through the divinisation of the Five Senses of Man. In addition, the liturgical and canonical hours structure the monastic everyday life, in the manner of a book of hours, for the visualisation of the story of the life and death of Christ. This sensitive experience allows for a symbolic death that leads to an inner renewal of the meditator. It deactivates a cathartic and healing function within him, a ‘self-disclosure’ that allows his spiritual ascent according to the ‘Scala claustralium’ and thanks to the ‘Imaginatio’, which leads to the ‘Theosis’ or enlightenment. In fact, during the Passion, the blood of Christ is a ‘Fons vitae’ or a purgative baptismal water that translates the neoplatonic and pseudo-dionysian ‘super-fluent’ as the concept of vehemence, i.e. liquid spiritual force. It is both the water of celestial seas and rivers in which the saints dwell and drink, and the *Lumière fluente* (*fließende licht*) tripartite of the *Scivias* by Hildegard von Bingen. In the cloister of the monastery of Poletains, the paradisiacal ‘Hortus conclusus’ of the *Song of Songs* and its infernal duality coexist, illustrating the battle between the forces of Good and Evil.

The *Speculum* is written in Francoprovençal, the vernacular language of the ancient Kingdom of Burgundy, and is characteristic of a literary genre initiated by Saint Augustine. The mirror allows for the reflection of the figures of Margaret and Christ as models of initiation, progression, and then moral perfection and behaviour (The Ladder of Divine Ascension) in the life journey of the nuns. She does this as prioress, speaking in the third person, following the topos of humility towards the Lord. The *Speculum* becomes a book of conscience, which is like an account book of the good and bad deeds done in one’s life. “Enter into yourself”, said Jan van Ruysbroeck. The book is like a door that opens to reveal to us the mysteries of Christ by uniting spirituality and the ‘Marvellous’, following the model of Chrétien de Troyes through the pagan-Christian mixture of Celtic mythology and Cistercian spirituality.

In the '*Li via seiti Biatrix d'Ornaciú*', in Franco-Provençal, emotion is experienced as an essential monastic practice, channelled through a lachrymal devotion, whose tears baptise, purify and externalise the inner states of the soul, taking the subject from suffering and anguish to serenity, to be symbolically reborn in God. In the Eucharist, Biatrix chokes on the flesh and blood of Christ by eating the host, and ends up feeding only her soul. She witnesses the death of Christ in the altar located in the church of Ornacieux, in the apse where the Eastern sun is born, where the Saints and Angels gather around the body of Christ, at the confluence of the Garden of Eden and the heavenly Jerusalem, for his coronation.

The illustrations IV and V (Franco-Provençal), draw with the words a dry inverted tree that the water of the mountain will revitalize. Following Diego Zorzi, the author tells us that water represents the divine grace that converts the fallen human nature with its vital energy. This allows a divinisation of man through the process of spiritualisation of the carnal man, building, as Roland Maisonneuve said, a 'spiritual' or 'pneumatic' man. Thus, the tree of Marguerite d'Oingt is an Edenic orchard or Tree of Knowledge that recovers its essence. There is a step from dryness to greening, from fall to elevation through the tree of the Cardinal and Theological Virtues. This is combined with the troubadour and courtly style of the 'Chanson de reverdie' in which the sentimental instability of the love experience affects the relationship *Arbor bona/Arbor mala* of the prioress. The rectification and regeneration of man is sought by means of Gnosis, since from the Tree of Life was made the Holy Wood of the Holy Cross which made the Glory of Christ.

All in all, it is a fascinating book, which allows us to understand the use of meditation as a spiritual instrument, since the techniques carefully described by Sergi Sancho i Fibla give us an understanding of the anthropology and social psychology of medieval mysticism through the case of Margaret of Oingt.

YAN BULTEZ-GOBERT

**BOADA Coloma, BRUGUÉS Irene, COSTA Xavier (ed.), 2019. *El Monestir de Sant Joan. Primer cenobi femení dels comtats catalans (887-1017)*, Publicacions de l'Abadia de Montserrat**

The book that is reviewed here is the result of a conference that, under the title *Sant Joan de les Abadesses. 1000 anys d'absència*, held in October 2017 in Sant Joan de les Abadesses, commemorated the millennium of the dissolution of the nunnery. A group of scholars delve into the nunnery and its context from new perspectives and lines of research marked by the study of the monastic landscape and the history of women; they also bring together, as the title and epilogue indicate, a cutting-edge perspective of analysis related to the spaces of memory, this being a theme that runs through the whole volume that, not in vain, celebrates the millennium of an dissolution and the endurance of a memory.



The book is structured in four large blocks following a thematic order, preceded by an introduction (Gari) and closed by an epilogue (Jornet). The first of the four blocks presents the origins of female asceticism and monasticism, addressing key concepts of the evolution of the forms of female spirituality in the 3rd-5th centuries. This block highlights the problems of the sources and how to interpret them, a fact that the various authors of the work will insist on. In addition, the different monastic rules, both feminine and masculine, are presented as a precedent for dealing with the problem of the Rule of Saint John, which will be explained in the third section. The main aim of this first major section, both in the case of the chapter by M<sup>a</sup>Dolores Martin Trudet and in that of Jordina Sales Carbonell, is to provide an understanding of the particularities of female asceticism and to highlight the difficulty of studying early monasticism due to the lack of sources and their bias. Irene Brugués Massot completes the block by putting the nunnery of Sant Joan de les Abadesses in context with the other three nunneries of which there is evidence in the Catalan counties of the early Middle Ages.

The second major section of the work focuses on the foundational stage. There we find two works by Xavier Costa in which he studies the relationship of the nunnery with the Counts and above all the foundation of its great patrimony as a key to power, reconstructing respectively the initial stage of the nunnery during the abbacy of Emma and the evolution of its patrimony between the 10th and 11th centuries with the following abbesses. Both works provide new approaches to the sources. One of the main objectives of this section is also to unravel the role played by the nunnery in the struggles for the organisation of the territory between the counties of Barcelona-Girona-Osona and Cerdanya-Besalú, as proposed in Jonathan Jarret's work.

The third block provides, under the title *Les Dones de Sant Joan*, a more general view of women in the monastic and spiritual environment of the early years of the Catalan counties. Teresa Vinyoles develops the idea of women as active participants in the creation of these counties, a concept that highlights the importance of the nunnery as something more than anecdotal. In her chapter, Coloma Boadas interprets the ways in which the Rule of Saint Benedict was adapted in the women's communities. Araceli Rosillo focuses, through a cultural and educational perspective, on the daily life of the nuns and gives them a front-line space, disassociating herself from the traditional historiography which tended to treat these matters in a secondary way.

Finally, the fourth major section of the book, *L'extinció del monestir de Sant Joan. Un projecte d'èxit estroncat*, is devoted to the dissolution of the female community of Sant Joan. In the first chapter of the section, J.M. Salrach connects with the second section of the book by dealing with the geopolitical issues that affected the nunnery and the political and religious events that surrounded the expulsion of the nuns. Irene Brugués pursues in the documentation the fate of the women of the community once they had left the nunnery in 1017. Finally, Joan Ferrer i

Godoy analyses the later life of the nunnery, when it became a male canonical monastery. In general terms, the trend of the third section is followed here, attempting to provide a possible explanation based on a new approach to the sources, putting forward hypotheses and making clear the difficulty of verifying the facts.

In the epilogue, a space is devoted to memory and its relationship with the identity of the community, whether in its toponymic, archival or cultural aspects, where the legend of Count Arnau is still inscribed in the imaginary and in the memory that has remained of the community. In the same way, the nunnery's contribution to the political configuration of the Catalan counties is once again highlighted.

The work as a whole follows a specific order that claims two main objectives. On the one hand, placing the nunnery in the monastic landscape and its interrelation with the spiritual and political life of the territory to which it belongs and, on the other, to study the life of the women who lived there, both from a spiritual and material perspective. This structure makes for an easy read, and at the same time provides a wealth of insights and new perspectives for each of the themes, especially for the key points: from Emma's abbacy to the possible political motives for the expulsion of the last abbess, Ingilberda. In general, the meticulous use of documentation and the way the studies are approached help the reader to follow the authors' line of thought. It is also worth mentioning the extensive bibliography at the end of the work, which brings together all that has been written about the monastery as well as historiographical works on the history of women and female monasticism. In short, this is undoubtedly a necessary and welcome work.

ANTONIO MARTÍNEZ BERNAL