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### **Review: Maria Fabricius Hansen, *The Spolia Churches of Rome: Recycling Antiquity in the Middle Ages*, trans. Barbara J. Haveland.**

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munity was riven by religious controversy—this study joins Chaucer’s interlingual translations with the internal structural logic of the *Canterbury Tales* as the reclothing of recurrent central ideas in a colorful array of vestments. *Tellers, Tales, and Translation* attests to the generous wisdom, born of “l lungo studio e l grande amore,” that Ginsberg brings to the poet he reads here.

KARLA TAYLOR, University of Michigan

MARIA FABRICIUS HANSEN, *The Spolia Churches of Rome: Recycling Antiquity in the Middle Ages*, trans. BARBARA J. HAVELAND. Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2015. Pp. 255; many color and black-and-white figures. \$34.95. ISBN: 978-87-7124-210-2.

doi:10.1086/693752

Some years ago, early on a Sunday morning in an out-of-the-way piazza in Rome, I was standing in front of a medieval doorway photographing its ancient marble frame when a group of German tourists came by. To my astonishment, their guide pointed out “spolia,” and they all duly observed the door frame before marching on. *The Spolia Churches of Rome* was written for tourists like these, inclined to “get off the beaten track” and walk, ride the bus, or cycle to early Christian and medieval churches where they will find “fascinating and instantly appealing, not to say downright entertaining” assemblages of *spolia* in the colonnades (10). It is a guidebook with three parts: an overview of the Christian use of *spolia* (“Recycling Antiquity,” 9–83); a catalog of eleven “Selected *Spolia Churches*” that readers are encouraged to visit (84–217); and “Practical Information,” including a list of other “*spolia churches*,” a timeline, and a glossary (218–46). The book is profusely and beautifully illustrated with mostly original photos, many by the excellent photographer Pernille Klemp. Though not in itself a scholarly work, unlike most guidebooks it is deeply informed by scholarship, especially the author’s own.

*The Spolia Churches of Rome* is an abridged and reorganized version of the same author’s substantial monograph of 2003, *The Eloquence of Appropriation*, subtitled *Prolegomena to an Understanding of Spolia in Early Christian Rome* (Rome, 2003). The apparatus has been suppressed—there are no footnotes and only the most cursory bibliography in the guidebook—along with the extensive quotations from patristic sources, the comparisons with rhetoric and mnemonics, and the methodological reflections that make *The Eloquence of Appropriation* a notable if slightly controversial contribution. Hansen’s thesis is that the spoliare colonnades of Roman churches represent a new architectural style that expressed an equally new, distinctively Christian worldview (*weltanschauung*). “Anti-naturalistic and metaphorical” (*Eloquence*, 38), abstract and anticorporeal, this worldview both rejected and embraced the legacy of the ordered and rational Roman past. The style of its architectural manifestation can be understood by analogy with rhetoric, that is, by examining written sources ranging from Eusebius’s *Life of Constantine* to Hrabanus Maurus’s *De rerum naturis*, especially the writings of Augustine of Hippo. The construct of the worldview frees the interpreter from any need to demonstrate that the mental habits perceived in these elite texts were shared by less educated strata of society, since worldview is a mental framework “independent of the conscious knowledge and degree of learning of individuals” (38). Thus masons and philosophers could share the appreciation of colonnades comprising heterogeneous capitals, bases, and shafts as pleasing in their variety; as signs of a “programmatic break” (184) with Roman tradition; as manifestations of the Christian license to pick out and reuse what was valuable in pagan culture; as symbolic of the heavenly Church, of the relation between the Old and New Testaments, and of the possibility and process of conversion.

In the absence of Hansen’s original methodological asides, the interpretations of *The Eloquence of Appropriation* reappear in *The Spolia Churches of Rome* as simple fact. All guide-

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books make such reductions, of course, and it is otiose and in this case ungrateful to complain about them. Hansen's guidebook is a unique resource for intellectually curious people who wish to explore Rome's medieval churches or to know more about the newly popular phenomenon of *spolia*, and by and large they will be well served by it. For this one can only congratulate and thank her. Still, this specialist reader could not stifle a few regrets, chiefly concerning Hansen's definition of the worldview. It is a "new Christian world view" (*Spolia Churches*, 36) that is new with respect to ancient Rome yet synchronous with the life of the spoliator colonnade. As such it is an ahistorical abstraction that compacts the near millennium from the Lateran Cathedral (c. 313) to Santa Maria in Aracoeli (1260–70) into a single, undifferentiated "medieval" mindset, reaffirming the Renaissance stereotype that Hansen herself rails against (*Eloquence*, 11–13, 279). Historically, the *spolia* colonnades of the twelfth century, however like their fourth-century predecessors in appearance, could not have had the same symbolism. They could hardly have represented a break with Roman tradition because they *were* the tradition, the proper and generally recognized form of the Roman church colonnade handed down for eight hundred years. The failure to acknowledge this and other such developments valorizes a static image of the Middle Ages at the expense of the much more dynamic one found in the specialist literature. As a reviewer of *Eloquence* already observed, the book's method is out of step with trends in the study of *spolia* of the past twenty-five years, which have become relativistic, emphasizing context, reception, and ambiguity (see Elizabeth Marlowe's review of *Eloquence*, *CAA Reviews* [2004], <http://www.caareviews.org/reviews/674#.V7d8-DVrv1A>). While *The Spolia Churches of Rome* presents *spolia* as a code that has already been deciphered, a more contemporary approach would emphasize the range and instability of messages they might have conveyed.

The entries on individual churches are clear, informative, and generally reliable, although the dates of the *spolia* are sometimes off. Hansen did not have the benefit of Patrizio Pensabene's monumental catalog of *spolia* in Roman churches, which appeared only in 2015 (Patrizio Pensabene, *Roma su Roma: Reimpiego architettonico, recupero dell'antico e trasformazioni urbane tra il III e il XIII secolo* [Vatican City, 2015]); readers interested in more authoritative datings can consult it. The amateur architectural vocabulary introduced by the translation ("barrel-vaulted ceiling," "side-aisles," "triple-naved," "marble beams," for barrel vault, aisles, two-aisled, and marble blocks, respectively) grates on the specialist, but this is a cavil. *The Spolia Churches of Rome* is a worthwhile purchase for anyone interested in the topic. It will take its readers into wondrous medieval spaces, draw their attention to colors, textures, patterns, and feats of carving that they might otherwise overlook, and stimulate thinking about cultural transmission and the meaning of ornament. This is an admirable achievement.

DALE KINNEY, Bryn Mawr College, Emerita

GENEVÈVE HASENOHR, *Textes de dévotion et lectures spirituelles en langue romane (France, XIIIe–XVIe siècle)*. (Texte, Codex & Contexte 21.) Turnhout: Brepols, 2015. Pp. 914; 3 black-and-white figures. €109. ISBN: 978-2-503-52985-1. doi:10.1086/693479

Over the last forty years, Geneviève Hasenohr has published a series of groundbreaking articles in three major fields: religious literature in medieval French, vernacular manuscripts, and the history of libraries. This volume falls into the first category, for it collects articles on religious literature in medieval French vernaculars (Occitan as well as Old and Middle French), scattered in a variety of journals and collected volumes and published in at least five different countries. She has often focused her attention on the wealth of late medieval devotional texts, both translations and original compositions, many of them unedited. Her work thus offers pre-*Speculum* 92/4 (October 2017)