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*Spiritual Seeing: Picturing God's Invisibility in Medieval
Art (review)*

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Heather Dubrow, *Shakespeare and Domestic Loss: Forms of Deprivation, Mourning, and Recuperation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 242 pp.

The subject of this historicist study is compelling because timeless. Dubrow's investigation of commonplace forms of domestic grief and disaster, represented at the center or lurking in the margins of Shakespearean plays and poems, is loosely organized around three deceptively simple headings. Burglary, fire, and the early death of parents are categories whose cultural specificity and epistemological instability become evident as her account unfolds. Dubrow's eclectic procedures—splicing the concerns of Shakespeare with those of contemporaneous texts (whether the literature of rogues and vagabonds, for example, or the lively Renaissance canon of romance and pastoral) and braiding the claims of historians with the those of recent cultural, gender, and psychoanalytic theorists—generate an illuminating and finely tuned poetics of loss. Shuttling between literary texts and cultural contexts, the design of her book stages the argument, allowing the political, ideological, gender-inflected, and epistemological significance to reverberate, often with startling insights (as in her reading of the centrality of the changeling boy to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*). Some of her conclusions are, to be sure, formulaic or should be attributed to rhetorical overkill (Shakespeare “writes in, to, and for a nation of mourners”?). But they in no way detract from Dubrow's considerable analytic skills, the importance of the questions she asks, and the broad scholarly reach brought to bear in her negotiation of the elusive relationship between the literary and the contextual.

—*Elizabeth Freund*

Herbert L. Kessler, *Spiritual Seeing: Picturing God's Invisibility in Medieval Art* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), 265 pp.

To recognize that medieval art is complex is one thing, to demonstrate it adequately is another. Despite Kessler's own judgment some years ago that the best recent work on medieval art consists of articles or monographs focused on individual monuments to allow for a consideration of very specific contexts, his own collection of eight essays offers a more synthetic view of a rather essential question. At least once per semester the professor of medieval art is asked by some searching undergraduate: But how could the Christians make art if the second commandment forbids graven images? This, broadly, is the leitmotif that Kessler addresses throughout these essays. Drawing on a vast body of icons, ivories, mosaics, wall paintings, manuscript illuminations, patristic, medieval, and Byzan-

tine commentaries, these investigations articulate the remarkably intricate ways that medieval art could constitute profound theological arguments about the nature of images as a reflection of Christ's incarnation, the abrogation of the Old Testament, and the relationship of copies to originals. Above all, such art offered the possibility of viewing God through this material medium, though care was usually taken to underscore that God could only be fully apprehended by the intellect. Nonetheless, the power of medieval art to stimulate the (mostly learned) faithful to the contemplation of divinity and of God's role in sacred history is here restored, demonstrating, like the originals under study, how Christian art could show the invisible by means of the visible.

—*Adam Cohen*

David Shulman and Guy G. Stroumsa, eds., *Dream Cultures: Explorations in the Comparative History of Dreaming* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 325 pp.

The title of this fine collection of essays is not particularly promising. Its pretentious pluralization of *culture* augurs tokenism at best and, in our darkest fears, a morass of multiculturalism. The fuzzy feel-good subtitle about “explorations in the comparative history” of its ephemeral subject does little to allay these fears. But, behold, this book actually delivers what many of us have disingenuously claimed when proposing our own symposium volume to publishers or funders as a grand synthesis of knowledge in one field or another. It really does have an important argument to make on the nontrivial ways in which particularistic aspects of cultural context inform both the experience and the interpretation of dreaming. In this collection are gathered the distinctive voices of some of the world's leading interpreters of culture in a chorus of erudition on a broad range of classical, oral, and clinical “texts.” They sing individually of the meaning assigned to dreams in traditional China, India, and Meso-America, in the ancient, medieval, and Renaissance West, and in the linked allegorical discourse of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. One could hardly demand from such a varied assemblage of writings anything close to a unified perspective, much less a consistent vision. Yet, taken together, they go a long way toward defining and generalizing the parameters of dream as a culturally determined expression of the stirrings of human consciousness.

—*Andrew Plaks*