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Le Poète architecte en France: constructions d'un  
imaginaire monarchique (review)

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study of idleness than of reflexion, and is it not sited in twilight rather than night-time? A similar respect for artistic polysemy accompanies Ménager's interpretation of Michelangelo's *Notte* and his reading of Quixote: driven mad by reading the wrong texts at the wrong time, the latter yet performs nocturnal exploits that are the more admirable for being unobserved and fearless. The final chapter ('Nocturnes') provides a long and stimulating treatment of various Renaissance paintings (by Correggio and Bassano, among others), again refusing simplistic equations whereby, for example, night scenes are viewed systematically as mannerist. Within these different pictures, Ménager particularly investigates the sources of light and the allegorical meanings their implications have incited. Although his enthusiasm in rescuing and redefining *la nuit* may even affect its very gender (p. 22: the fate is shared by [*la*] *ciel* (p. 56) and [*la*] *bal* (p. 201)), hyper-criticism is the less appropriate for the work's being so challenging and so wide-ranging: references to Stendhal, Kafka, Maupassant, for instance, stand alongside readings of an extensive gamut of sixteenth-century European authors, especially Ronsard, but not excluding Shakespeare. Specialists will no doubt pick up points of detail: for instance, Ménager's sense of the discipline and temporality of the *Heptaméron* (p. 226) is, by my reading, a little abrupt. Yet in doing so they will scarcely impair the quality of what is a genuinely new perspective on a most fertile field of study.

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*Le Poète architecte en France: constructions d'un imaginaire monarchique.* By CYNTHIA SKENAZI. (Études et essais sur la Renaissance, 48). Paris, Champion, 2003. 344 pp. Hb €55.00.

Cynthia Skenazi's exploration of the role of architecture in French Renaissance literature is both a complement to existing work on this topic and a challenge to it. Rejecting what she sees as the essentially literary emphasis of previous studies, Skenazi seeks to focus more consistently on the political function of textual buildings as articulations of a public image of the kingdom. In addition, she emphasizes the often close relationship between such constructions and real buildings. This approach is fruitful insofar as it enables her both to draw attention to the use by successive kings of France of verbal and visual means (most notably actual building projects) to convey their own vision of the state to their contemporaries and posterity, and to trace the attempts by writers, in their dialogue with royal power, to influence this process and, in so doing, to stake a claim for the importance of their own role in the formulation and articulation of images of power. Skenazi's study may therefore be welcomed as a supplement to existing work by Cynthia Brown and David Cowling, which has traced this process back to the writings of the Rhétoriciens in the second half of the fifteenth century. Unlike previous scholars, however, Skenazi does not attempt an exhaustive survey of the available material, preferring to analyse a choice of works by Jean Lemaire de Belges, Clément Marot, Gilles Corrozet, Joachim Du Bellay and Pierre de Ronsard; although this decision is sensible in the light of the sheer volume of material and its apparent discontinuity (Skenazi declares on page 22 that a linear history of architectural metaphors in the period would not be feasible), readers seeking a full picture of the

development of textual buildings in the sixteenth century will still need to consult Françoise Joukovsky's *La Gloire dans la poésie française et néolatine du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle* of 1969. Those interested in the development of the fundamental architectural metaphors of the period (the poet as builder, the state as building, the body as building and so on) will similarly wish to go beyond Skenazi's somewhat cursory presentation of the Aristotelian conceptual framework of metaphor. Skenazi's readings of the texts of her corpus are enlightening and often persuasive, and her exploration of the links between vernacular writing and urban planning and royal building projects is valuable. Inevitably, however, attempts to demonstrate specific analogies, such as those between Jean Lemaire's allegorical *Temple d'Honneur et de Vertus* and Franco-Burgundian funeral art, must remain speculative, especially when the monograph offers no illustrations of contemporary tombs or, indeed, other buildings. A number of other points may similarly leave the reader unconvinced, such as the suggested numerological significance of the fifteen sonnets of Du Bellay's *Songe* (p. 237) or the claimed link between the artificial memory tradition and Ronsard's *Temple des Chastillons*, but Skenazi's study, with its stimulating emphasis on the dialogue between French Renaissance poets and the builders of the Louvre and Fontainebleau, is a valuable addition to existing work on this rich and fascinating topic.

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*The Power and Patronage of Marguerite de Navarre.* By BARBARA STEPHENSON. (Women and Gender in the Early Modern World.) Aldershot — Burlington, Ashgate, 2004. xii + 214 pp. Hb \$94.95.

Although recent book-length studies devoted to Marguerite de Navarre focus on her literary legacy, Barbara Stephenson foregrounds her political role in Renaissance France. She demonstrates that Marguerite's position was unique as well as illustrative of ways royal noblewomen wielded power through formal and informal channels. Stephenson examines how Marguerite's various spheres of influence enabled her to advance her personal goals as well as those of her clients. She gives ample examples of Marguerite as client, patron and broker, and the political impact of each role. Her conclusions are supported by a careful analysis of letters written by and to Marguerite between 1516 and 1549. Stephenson's statistical findings are significant in their own right. Of the 886 surviving letters, the greatest number date from 1525, the year of the king's imprisonment, during which Marguerite served as diplomat and negotiator for his release. Stephenson divides the correspondence into separate chapters that provide insights into the political power deployed by Marguerite in her roles as sister, reformer and humanist. Besides discussing the letters' content, Stephenson analyses nuances in expressions of courtesy to show that, within a clientage relationship, letter writers used subtle variations in formulaic language to signal superiority, dependence, as well as varying degrees of affection. She postulates that those involved in the interchanges understood these subtleties.

The book's shortcomings are generally editorial in nature and involve inconsistencies. Although Stephenson devotes an entire footnote to the meaning of *écuyer d'écurie* (p. 35), she leaves in French the majority of nobiliary titles, often