change gender. The instability of the hyena's gender serves as a metaphor for the Jew's devotion to God and the desire to pursue riches. The hyena, then, underscores Christian anxiety about blurred boundaries and hierarchies, given the liminal and influential position Jews occupied in Christian society. Unfortunately, very little attention in these chapters (and throughout the entire book) is given to Muslim works, which cannot be attributed to a dearth of sources. Persian or Arabic zoological works, such as al-Damīrī's *Ḥiyāt al-Ḥayawān*, would serve well to represent parallel Muslim polemics against Jews and Christians through animal imagery.

Cuffel's work, through its emphasis on the role of bodily functions in religious polemic, contributes greatly to our understanding of interfaith and intercommunal relations in late antique and medieval cultures. Discussions of purity/impurity evoke larger concerns regarding gender boundaries, intermarriage, power relations, and religious and/or political identity. What is most compelling about *Gendering Disgust* is the sheer volume of provocative and entertaining exempla Cuffel employs to illustrate these compelling theoretical points. However, given the sheer number of diverse examples from Pagan, Jewish, Christian and Muslim traditions, and the broad sweeps across time and space, Cuffel often sacrifices nuanced differences in the complex religious systems of purity and impurity to her larger methodological framework with its focus on gender. For example, can menstrual blood really be equated with faeces, urine, and pork? Linking them together highlights the similarities among different religious traditions, but ignores important disparities. In addition, the heavy focus on menstruation eliminates examinations of other impurities that are not readily feminized, like seminal fluid, which is taken up in intra- and interreligious polemics on homosexuality. With little to do with the denigration of the woman's body, religious concerns over the impurities of anal intercourse, or debates over acceptable relationships between men, also reveal important boundary and identity concerns in the sectarian milieu. In sum, however, *Gendering Disgust* makes a positive and unparalleled contribution to the field of medieval studies. The examples alone present a rare window of opportunity through which to glimpse a complex world where lines dividing confessional identities and convictions were often blurred. In such a chaotic world, we see how religious groups fashioned a hostile rhetoric to hone necessary difference, sadly to the detriment of women.

Kathryn Kueny

LYNN JONES:

Between Islam and Byzantium: Aghtʿamar and the Visual Construction of Medieval Armenian Rulership.

xvi, 144 pp. Aldershot and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007. £55.
ISBN 978 07546 3852 0.
doi:10.1017/S0041977X09000214

This admirable and indispensable book offers a lavishly illustrated comparison of the visual construction of kingship by the rival Armenian dynasties of the Bagratunis and the Artsrunis. It considers the period from 884 when, with the caliph's approval, the Armenian kingship that had been abolished in 428 was revived by Ashot I Bagratuni, to the eleventh century when, under Turkish and Byzantine pressure, the kingdoms of Artsruni Vaspurakan, whose ruler Gagik was proclaimed king by the Arab governor Yusuf in 908, and of Bagratuni Kars and Ani, ended. Jones carefully analyses all the evidence, of different types,

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0041977X09000214 Published online by Cambridge University Press

surmounting the challenge of its scantiness and patchiness. Ten Bagratuni royal portraits (ch. 3), two from the Bagratunis' Georgian branch, survive. Representing eight persons they comprise three pairs in sculpted relief from the 960s and 970s, one portrait in a photograph of a lost early-eleventh-century statue, and three in a picture on a mid-eleventh-century single and damaged folio. The only surviving Artsruni visual representations of Artsruni kingship and the ideology associated with it are those produced for Gagik, in the external sculptured relief and interior frescoes of his palatine church of the Holy Cross on the island of Aghtʿamar, built between 915 and 921 (ch. 4). Gagik is the only aristocrat reviewed whose building projects are described in detail in the written sources (ch. 5). Quarrying them Jones teases out the implications of ceremonial (ch. 2). She finds some twenty reasonably detailed contemporary descriptions of episodes such as the investiture or coronation of Armenian princes and kings, by Caliphs, their governors and by heads of the Armenian Church, from 851 to 928, and a few more limited and later accounts of Bagratuni ceremonial 928–1043.

Jones establishes that the Bagratunis avoided Islamic regalia and iconography in portraits of their princes, and foreign regalia in general in those of their kings, characterizing themselves as Armenian and pious. She emphasizes the contrast with Gagik Artsruni, who used Islamic court iconography, stressing his temporal power, as well as underlining his own piety and the pious history of Vaspurakan. Her demonstration that Gagik as a penitent is a recurring theme, and that much of the decoration and design of the Holy Cross implies that Gagik in his kingdom could be likened to Adam in Paradise are important contributions. More could be said about the portrait, above one of Adam, that she interprets as representing Gagik, in an inhabited vine scroll on the east façade of the church, and reproduced, unfortunately in reverse, on the dust jacket (though correctly, matching Jones's description, on p. 59). Jones shows its similarity to a contemporary portrait of the Caliph though comments that the wine here becomes that of the sacrament. Two particularly interesting details go unremarked. The drinking vessel that Gagik holds differs significantly in shape from that of the Caliph. It resembles a chalice. Second (as Jones notes), Gagik reaches for a bunch of grapes. Grapes in a vine scroll have often been used to symbolize Christ and His blood in the Eucharist. This portrait therefore does not simply associate Gagik with Adam, but emphatically states his devotion to Christ, in a sense balancing the depiction on the west façade where he presents his church to Christ.

Jones explains the different representational choices made by the Bagratunis and Gagik Arstruni by stressing that Gagik was simultaneously superior in power and inferior in religious prestige. She points to the fact that since 850 the Artsrunis had furnished Armenian history with two (feigned) apostate princes and one excommunicate whilst the Bagratunis had produced two martyrs. Further, Gagik's earlier, though temporary, alliance with Yusuf against King Smbat Bagratuni, and his being made king himself, had contributed to the latter's martyrdom in 914. Jones's thesis is plausible, but might not be the entirety or even the major part of the explanation for the different artistic representations. It is here that the evidential limitations are the most serious and frustrating. The mid-eleventh-century manuscript Bagratuni royal portraits contrast with the earlier seven in using Islamic courtly iconography and exclusively secular imagery. The reasons for this, and the history of what Jones regards as a secondary rather than an alternative tradition, are entirely unclear. Perhaps some investigation of the audience of the royal imagery would illuminate the differences. The sculpted Bagratuni portraits were located at churches where the spectators were presumably expected to be Christian, perhaps local, numerous and regular visitors. The lost Kars manuscript that contained the last portraits

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0041977X09000214 Published online by Cambridge University Press

might have been intended for a select group, perhaps in a monastery or perhaps the patron and his family. The church at Aghtʿamar by contrast, being part of Gagik's palace complex, was surely meant to impress various occasional visitors, including Muslims, who came as envoys, as well as Armenian Christians. International motifs and iconography, especially those stressing that Gagik's power and status were backed and recognized by the Caliphate, would have been needed to do this.

The great strength of this book is the art-historical analysis, and it has yet more that is important, most notably a demonstration of Armenian dissociation of possession of relics of the True Cross from Byzantine patronage. The introduction to the historical context (ch. 1) concentrates on a narration of political history. Some ideas about good rulership are dealt with briefly, the subject being picked up again in the investigation of royal building and patronage of churches (ch. 5). But important aspects of the structure of society and its ethos, such as the warrior ethic, bloodfeud and the traditionally non-urban character of aristocratic Armenian society (which strengthens the case that Gagik emulated the ʿAbbāsids, since he is recorded as building cities) are not included.

Scholars and students should welcome this book and will eagerly anticipate the study of the patronage and representation of women in medieval Armenia, Georgia and Caucasian Albania that Jones is planning.

A. E. Redgate

CHARLES KING:
The Ghost of Freedom. A History of the Caucasus.
xxii, 290 pp. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008. £17.99.
ISBN 978 0 19 517775 6.
doi:10.1017/S0041977X09000226

The Caucasus is Europe's most complex region in terms of its ethno-linguistic makeup; even if one draws the line between Europe and Asia along the ridge of the main chain, this statement would remain true. On this basis alone, then, there is wide scope. The "Father of History", Herodotus, knew that the Caucasus extended to the Caspian Sea, noting (Book I, section 203): "Along the west of it [the Caspian] stretches the chain of the Caucasus, the longest and loftiest of all mountain-ranges, inhabited by many different tribes". He speculated on the Egyptian origins of the Colchians of western Caucasia (which is reflected in the folk-history of one of the races, the Abkhazians, who are indigenous to what was northern Colchis), basing his opinion in part "on the fact that the Colchians, the Egyptians, and the Ethiopians are the only races which from ancient times have practised circumcision" (Book II, section 104). One might, thus, conclude that there is also much to say on the vertical axis of time. But the Caucasus rather slipped off history's highways (at least as far as Europe was concerned). Writing of late-eighteenth-century Russian knowledge about the contemporary western Georgian kingdom, Isobel de Madariaga noted in her *Russia in the Age of Catherine the Great* (2001, 369): "So little was known about the area that when an emissary of King Solomon of Imeretia asked to be received in St Petersburg in 1768, Catherine called for maps, and found that according to some of them Tiflis was on the Black Sea, according to others, on the Caspian)", whereas the Georgian capital in fact lies somewhere in the middle of the isthmus formed by these seas.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0041977X09000214 Published online by Cambridge University Press