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Images, Iconoclasm, and the Carolingians. By **Thomas F. X. Noble**. Middle Ages Series. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009. 488 pp. \$65.00 cloth.

Images, Iconoclasm, and the Carolingians is a magisterial reexamination of a period in which long-lived ideas about the power and limitations of Christian images were first articulated in the medieval West. Challenging received ideas about the incompetence of Frankish responses to Byzantine image theory, the book skillfully explores Carolingian discourses about images in relation to Byzantine and papal positions in the eighth and ninth centuries. Closely reading a series of key texts that have yet to be translated and have never before been examined as a corpus, Noble elucidates the anxieties, aspirations, and argumentative stakes—both theological and ideological—that drove Frankish writing on the role of images in religion. Suggesting that much Carolingian “art talk” (a problematic term for the exclusively *textual* discourses considered) was not really about art at all, *Images, Iconoclasm, and the Carolingians* argues that eighth- and ninth-century debates about the status of religious images served as important sites for the negotiation and articulation of Carolingian ideas of tradition, order, and worship.

The book’s first chapter examines “art talk” in the period ca. 300–700 C.E. in order to discern what ideas, texts, and practices concerning images were established before the eruption of Byzantine iconoclasm in the eighth century. The following chapter provides a historicist chronological review of the chief events and textual monuments of the first period of Byzantine controversy over religious images. Examinations of the *horos* of Hieria (754), the *Peuseis* of Constantine V, and the *acta* of II Nicaea (787) lay the groundwork for the comparative analyses of Western “art talk” pursued in subsequent chapters.

Chapter 3 considers Bede’s “art talk,” the *Liber Pontificalis*, the reconstructed florilegium of 731, the Roman Synod of 769, and the contribution of Pope Hadrian I (772–795) in order to sketch the Western textual-theoretical landscape from which the *Opus Caroli Regis contra syndoum* (OCR; or, less properly, *Libri Carolini*) emerged. Contemporary textual references to works of art and surviving artworks from the Roman context are also considered briefly. The chapter emphasizes the continuity of positions concerning religious images, both within the Western context and between East and West.

In chapter 4 the OCR and the Frankish court’s agitated response to II Nicaea, culminating in the Council of Frankfurt (794), take center stage. After an initial discussion of how the OCR was compiled, its relationship to the *Hadrianum* of 785, to the *Capitulare adversus syndoum* sent to Rome in 792, and to Pope

Hadrian's *Responsum*, the continuation of the chapter examines the contents and structure of the *OCR* in detail, a major contribution to our understanding of this oft invoked, but little parsed foundational text.

Chapter 5 situates the *OCR*'s claims within the broader Frankish context, comparing the text's treatment of three "themes" (207)—tradition, order, and worship—with other contemporary texts and, briefly, with a limited selection of contemporary artworks. Drawing parallels between the treatment of tradition, order, and worship in the *OCR* and at the Carolingian court, the chapter argues that the substance of the *OCR* gives voice to concerns animating its historical milieu.

Chapter 6 begins by considering ninth-century Byzantine iconoclasm both as a phenomenon in its own right and as it was received by the Franks via the letter of Michael II to Louis the Pious in 824. The bulk of the chapter then examines the dossier of texts produced in relation to the Paris "Colloquy," a gathering of theologians (*not* a council, as Noble convincingly insists) convened by Louis the Pious in 825 in response to Second Iconoclasm. Noble's analysis of the Parisian documents reveals the sophistication of the ninth-century Frankish position on religious images and its masterful use of Patristic authorities.

The book's seventh and final chapter examines a contemporary "home-grown image quarrel" (287), first provoked by Claudius, the iconoclastic Bishop of Turin. Distilling the contributions of Jonas of Orléans, Dungal, Agobard of Lyons, Walahfrid Strabo and the lay courtier Einhard, Noble provides a compelling account of the terms and stakes of this period of Frankish debate. After brief discussions of the contemporary visual environment, the ubiquity of *tituli* in ninth-century works of art, and the synthetic conjunction of word and image in Hrabanus Maurus's *In Honor of the Holy Cross*, the final section of the chapter explores how ideas about tradition, order, and worship continued to preoccupy the Franks during the reign of Louis the Pious.

By diachronically tracing Frankish concern with tradition, order, and worship through the texts he examines, Noble makes the case for the broader implications of the specific instances of "art talk" he examines in successive chapters. In this analysis, the Carolingians' "principled indifference" (326) to images emerges not as a confused or unmediated reaction to Byzantine developments, but rather as a cultivated *via media* that had, by design, serious implications for the Franks' ongoing relations with both Byzantium and the Papacy. Through their "art talk," Noble demonstrates, the Carolingians were articulating not simply a position on Christian images but also a specifically Frankish form of Christian authority, developed in relation to their conceptions of tradition, order, and worship.

Despite its title, *Images, Iconoclasm, and the Carolingians* says very little about actual images and their role in Carolingian culture. Although the

volume does not include a single illustration, its argument may be followed without the help of figures: this is both telling and troubling. When images and iconographic types are referenced, Noble repeatedly invokes a kind of disciplinary humility topos, leaving more serious examinations of the visual record to other interpreters. Art historians have long recognized “medieval art as argument” (Herbert Kessler’s influential formulation); nonetheless, in *Images, Iconoclasm, and the Carolingians* artworks are treated as the precipitate of history—mute objects, passively subject to the historical force of authoritative texts. By contrast, the formal complexity, material opulence, and iconographic sophistication of surviving Byzantine and Carolingian works of art witness to divergent eighth- and ninth-century conceptions of what the religious image should and could do, a discourse about religious works of art articulated *by means of* religious works of art.

Images, Iconoclasm, and the Carolingians brilliantly illuminates how Byzantine, papal, and Frankish textual discourses about religious images were vitally involved in the negotiation and contestation of forms of power, both theological and political. In this impressive study, Noble offers an important new perspective on a foundational chapter in the history of Western theorizations of the religious image. It is to be hoped that interpreters of medieval art will respond to this invitation, which is also—in its disciplinary circumspection—a provocation and a challenge.

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The Written World: Past and Place in the Work of Orderic Vitalis.

By **Amanda Jane Hingst**. Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2009. xxiv+272 pp. \$40.00 paper.

Orderic Vitalis was not a particularly influential historian during the Middle Ages, but for modern scholars his vast, detailed, and often idiosyncratic history is a crucial source for studying Western Europe, particularly Normandy and England, in the eleventh and early twelfth centuries. As Amanda Jane Hingst’s clever title indicates, her book focuses on place, space, and geography in Orderic’s work.

In her first chapter, Hingst explores Orderic’s view of the Norman monastery he called Ouche (generally known today as Saint-Évroul) where he spent most of his life after being sent from England as an oblate at the age of ten. In particular Hingst shows how Orderic viewed Ouche as a holy site, less because of the relics of its patron saint, most of which had been lost during