Magnificence and the Sublime is a welcome addition to The New Middle Ages series, and a significant contribution to interdisciplinary scholarship on medieval aesthetics. Jaeger's Introduction to the volume sketches out his case that the principles of the magnificent and the sublime infuse medieval aesthetics, even if relatively few medieval authors addressed the topic directly, and his summary of the volume's contents demonstrates how these principles are likely to have operated across disciplines, geographies and cultures from the late antique to the late Gothic. He also makes the case that scholarship on medieval aesthetics has been hindered by two key factors: the idea that the Middle Ages is a small and humble thing compared to Antiquity and the Renaissance that became embedded in twentieth-century scholarship (Jaeger labels this the "Diminutive Middle Ages"), and the denial or trivializing of the topic that characterizes the work of two of the periods most influential scholars, E. R. Curtius and Eric Auerbach. Each of the essays that follows picks up on issues raised in the introduction, critiquing definitions of the magnificent and/or sublime in both the primary and secondary sources, making this both a very coherent volume and one that offers a variety of theoretical and disciplinary views and subjects.

The following three papers focus on the earlier Middle Ages. In "The Magnificence of a Singer in Fifth-century Gaul," Christopher Page examines the case of the liturgical singer Mamertus Claudianus, presbyter of Vienne and brother of the bishop. Claudianus corresponded with Sidonius Apollinaris, bishop of Clermont, and most of the evidence for his life and work is preserved in Sidonius's letters. According to Sidonius, Mamertus Claudianus was magnificus, highly learned, accomplished, a master of music possessing a greatness of action. He was also a phonascus, a term that Page argues places Claudianus at the pinnacle of his art, magnificent in the eyes of his contemporaries. Danuta Shanzer focuses on literary style in her "Incessu Humilem, Successu Excelsam": Augustine, Sermo Humilis, and Scriptural ὕψος. The essay is in part a re-evaluation of some of her own earlier thoughts on Auerbach's Literary Language and Mimesis, but the bulk of it provides a close reading of passages from Augustine and analysis of his problematizing of high and low style. Shanzer concentrates on the Confessions, arguing that Augustine had internalized Biblical style, and that both the cumulative and subliminal effects of his writing produced works that were truly magnificent when read well. Passages like the Vision at Ostia do not so much persuade their readers as produce feelings that allow the good reader to touch the divine. For Augustine, she concludes, "hypsos and magnificence and high style were alive and well" (70). Picking up on Jaeger's critique of the "Diminutive Middle Ages," Adam S. Cohen demonstrates that the miniature can be magnificent. In his chapter "Magnificence in Miniature: The Case of Early Medieval Manuscripts," he argues that "by focusing on material, formal, and iconographic components of early medieval books, it is possible to comprehend how they stimulated awe and served as expressions of Magnificence" (80). Books like the early eighth-century Codex Amiatinus could inspire awe through their size alone. The miracles worked by books such as the Lindisfarne Gospels of the Gospels of Margaret of Scotland could make the books themselves magnificent. However, the rich decoration and treasure bindings of many manuscripts inspired wonder of a whole different order. Cohen focuses on Ottonian illuminated manuscripts, which contain some of the most jewel-like colors and lavish use of gold of all medieval books. He also considers the ways in which these materials are used, particularly in the two-page spreads for which the Ottonians are renowned, to express the magnificence of patrons like Otto III, Archbishop Egbert of Trier, or even lesser figures such as Count Theodoric II and Countess Hildegard. Cohen's paper does not really interrogate the meaning of "magnificence" in the way that some of the other papers in this book do, and one could ask whether awe, wonder, even the miraculous really mean the same thing.

Margot E. Fassler's paper "Helgauf of Fleury and the Liturgical Arts: The Magnification of Robert the Pious" continues the theme of magnificent patrons and patronage. Fassler provides a reading of texts by the cantor/historians Adémar of Chabannes and Helgauf of Fleury that serve to magnify King Robert the Pious by means of his liturgical and ecclesiastical patronage. Robert was a problematic figure with a scandalous personal life, but Fassler argues that in the Epitoma vitae regis rotberti pi Helgauf recasts the king in the model of his own likeness, creating a figure magnificent through his piety his architectural patronage, and his attitudes towards music and the liturgy. Rather than the bejeweled splendor of the Ottonian figures discussed by Cohen, Helgauf emphasizes the king's inner beauty, which is made manifest through his many gifts and deeds of charity.

Both Paul Binski and Arelia Marina focus on architectural magnificence. In "Reflections on the 'Wonderful Height and Size' of Gothic Great Churches and the Medieval Sublime," Binski returns to the issue of Auerbach and the medieval "low" style espoused especially in Mimesis. He notes that unlike classical and early modern notions of the sublime, the lack of sources generally necessitates our locating the medieval sublime in objects rather than subjects. As was the case with Robert the Pious, grand architectural patronage and expenditure were ways of making visible inner qualities such as moral or spiritual beauty and authority. But soaring churches such as the cathedrals of Chartres or Amiens could also awe through the humility imposed on the viewer by their sheer scale, most especially their height, and their ability to do so is made clear in the writings of Bernard of Clairvaux or Gervase of Canterbury. If the modern sublime
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Eleanora Stoppino's "'Error Left Me and Fear Came in its Place': The Arrested Sublime of the Giants in Dante and Medieval Literature," also explores a distinctly medieval sublime focussed on perception and experience. She asks whether the gigantic can be a part of the medieval sublime, and responds that, if so, the "disoriented perception" brought about by encounters with the gigantic, as well as by literary style, in "Inferno" Canto XXXI should be considered a key component of it. Stoppino references Kant's definition of the sublime to argue that the

Emma Dillon's "Listening to Magnificence in Medieval Paris," argues that the medieval city is inherently magnificent, inspiring awe, wonder and fear, and transporting those who really experience the city outside of themselves. Sound was a crucial part of the experience of medieval cities, and Dillon analyzes the way sound works in a number of descriptions of Paris written around the turn of the fourteenth century: Guillaume de Paris's ca. 1300 Dit des rues de Paris, Jean de Jandun's 1323 Tractatus de laudibus Parisius, and the Vie de Saint Denis de 1317. In the experience of medieval cities that these texts record, "the vanishing quality of sound was...surprisingly well-suited to a notion of magnificence and the sublime as a sense of excess, superlative, or in the original sense of magnum facere" (217). Their authors created sound worlds that overwhelmed the reader/listener and, in doing so, they too participated in the creation of the city's magnificence. Some passages transport the reader through their beauty, as is the case with Jandun's description of the Sainte-Chapelle, others through their sense of bustle and variety, as in the descriptions of commerce in the Vie de Saint Denis. Moreover, the cacophony, polyphony, and literary style of the texts could also create magnificent cities, at once real and ideal.

"Richard of St. Victor and the Medieval Sublime," Jaeger's own contribution to the volume, begins with an analysis of the sublime as theorized by Longinus in Peri hypsous, and Augustine in De doctrina Christiana before moving on to a close reading of passages from Richard of St. Victor's Benjamin Major, in which the sublime is located in a self-transcendence brought about by the experience of overwhelming divinity. For Richard (and Jaeger) the sublime is thus based in the experience of the viewer rather than in the object. Objects might be marvellous, but they are not sublime. They can, however, lead the subject to reach the sublime—as did Abbot Suger's bronze doors at St. Denis. Jaeger makes clear that while his focus is primarily on Christian spiritual texts, it is only because they provide the best evidence for "reflected commentary on the Sublime," (158) and not because the sublime is not also present in secular sources, such as chivalric romance. He also notes that one of the things that distinguishes the medieval sublime from that of the modern is its ability to express itself through humility—through renunciation and self-denial.

In the final paper of the volume, "How Magnificent was Medieval Art?" Beth Williamson questions the ways in which the terms "magnificence" and "sublime" have been employed in art-historical writing. Much of the scholarship on medieval art and architecture that makes the effort to interrogate magnificence, she claims, does so from an Aristotelian basis: lavish expenditure and display creates admiration (as a number of the contributors to this volume have argued). She also notes that concepts of magnificence are likely to have changed with time, so it is dangerous to think of a monolithic concept that would apply to the whole of medieval art. Williamson uses the examples of Charles IV's Prague and the ca. 1350 Röttgen Pietà to critique theories and definitions of the magnificent and sublime, concluding that the medieval sublime must be understood as transcendence, while medieval magnificence was understood largely in secular terms.

There are problems with the book. The quality of the plates is not good, and many of them are produced at such small scale that they undermine both individual arguments and the book's focus on magnificence. Moreover the art historical papers, especially Adam Cohen's, which deals at some length with the effects of color and light, would have benefited immeasurably from color plates. There are also inconsistencies. In some papers translations are placed directly after the passages in the original language, in others that order is reversed, and in yet others the translations are in the notes. In Danuta Schanzer's paper the authorial emphasis given to some words in the Latin passages is missing from the translations (54, 67). Paul Binski's acknowledgements appear both at the end of his text and again at the beginning of his notes.

Finally, there is no agreement amongst the contributor's about what constitutes the "magnificent" or the "sublime," but there is perhaps no reason that there should be. This is a book that breaks important new ground. Each of its essays makes an original contribution to the field of Medieval Studies, and each also provides scope for future research.
discussion of art, architecture, music, and literature. These analyses of an aesthetic of grandeur show an artistic practice in the Middle Ages that strove for and celebrated grand effects. ...more. Get A Copy.