

be futile. Monstrous creatures are not always bad! I particularly liked his analysis of the capitals at Vézelay, where Ambrose sees the variety of forms catering to different audiences—the laity and the religious, each of whom had their own particular needs and interests. His focus here is on the perception of poetics as well as the cultural and social concerns of the patrons.

The final chapter, “Imagining Cosmos,” brings the reader to Portuguese material with a case study on the western portal of São Cristóvão de Rio Mau. The author points out the dominant use of monstrous creatures to the exclusion of the human figure in Portuguese art of the twelfth century. The tympanum he focuses on is also unusual in terms of location for such imaginary animals, and his focus on the crudeness of the style is significant but not entirely convincing. His belief is that the style evokes an earlier period in Portugal’s ecclesiastical history and is deliberate. For him, technique is related to intention.

My pleasure in reading this interesting book was marred by the poor quality of the images, through which the author has not been well served. It is nearly impossible at times to see what is being discussed: the quality is poor and some of the angles are worthless. Similarly, the captions are lacking in detail and certainly not intended for the reader who is unfamiliar with the material. These small reservations aside, it is an insightful and overdue study that will pave the way for future research and will hopefully make us aware that we need to open our eyes wider to the marvelous and monstrous.

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GLAIRE D. ANDERSON, *The Islamic Villa in Early Medieval Iberia: Architecture and Court Culture in Umayyad Córdoba*. Farnham, Surrey, UK, and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2013. Pp. 258; 82 black-and-white and 16 color figures. \$109.95. ISBN: 978-14094-4943-0.

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For several years now art historians that specialize in civil architecture have been emphasizing the need to study not only big palaces but also other more domestic buildings not necessarily used for official purposes; and especially not only urban buildings, but also suburban and rural ones. Likewise, the study of architecture in connection with its landscape environment is also being stressed, highlighting the need to analyze green spaces (gardens and orchards) since they have been historiographically ignored, not taken into account when restoring a building, or destroyed because their meaning was unappreciated. We can now celebrate that all these elements are indeed present in Glaire Anderson’s work, *The Islamic Villa in Early Medieval Iberia: Architecture and Court in Umayyad Córdoba*. Moving beyond the splendid palace-city of Madinat al-Zahara in tenth-century caliphal Córdoba, or the spectacular Aljama Mosque in the city of Córdoba, Glaire Anderson firmly and painstakingly leads us towards the *munyas*, or villas, in the surroundings of the city of Córdoba, sharing her love for these spaces with the reader.

The concept of villa is already introduced in the very title of the book, and it immediately generates discussion. The word “villa” evokes ancient Roman villas, but also Renaissance Italian villas. Both Roman and Renaissance villas are traditionally presented as two missing links in a chain, ignoring their existence in the Middle Ages, an aspect that has hardly been analyzed by the scientific community at large but has bravely been dealt with by this author here.

The main argument is that the conception of the Roman villa as a distant space for retreat, but at the same time as a cultural nucleus deeply connected with its natural environment, both in its architectural configuration and in its productive function, was never lost. The author believes that the villa was present in the medieval period and was represented in

the *munyas* that were built in ninth- and tenth-century Umayyad Córdoba. She also states that the building of villas was a phenomenon that was seen in the Islamic world, both in the Eastern and the Western part, the latter essentially represented in eighth- through fifteenth-century Al-Andalus. It is certainly a very interesting idea, an idea that the author develops throughout the book by making use of an impeccable methodology, since she includes all the relevant archaeological and material remains, even minor ones, as well as text references in Arabic both from that time and from the immediately subsequent period.

The book has a clear structure. In its introduction, the concept of *munya* is defined as a place for agricultural production, but also a place for the retreat and rest of certain elites who also played a relevant role in the political and cultural relations of tenth-century Córdoba. The bulk of the book is essentially divided into five chapters, each one showing remarkable historiographical novelty. The first chapter, "Social Dimensions of Patronage," reveals that not only were the ruler and his heirs prolific and visible sponsors, but also that the subjugated elite—men and women who were enslaved and eventually manumitted, but who enjoyed both power and influence—exercised wide patronage. This elite's patronage has been scarcely explored so far, and the author's analysis of the specific case of the *munyas* invites us to reflect upon the patronage that this social class brought to Al-Andalus, thus revising traditional approaches to Al-Andalus architecture, studies of which have generally been focused solely on the figure of the ruler. In the following chapter, "Architecture and Ornament," the material evidence of these *munyas* is examined, and a preliminary classification into clearly developed typologies is made with the aid of magnificent ground plans, axonometric views, and recreations that were specifically designed for this publication. In the chapter entitled "Gardens," the author breaks stereotypes again by offering a brilliant study of green spaces that, besides containing gardens of pleasure created with flowers and aromatic plants, were also configured with orchards grown with a system of terraces full of olive and grapevine trees. In the last chapter, "The Landscape of Sovereignty," an analysis is provided on how the *munyas* played a relevant role as diplomatic spaces and centers of power.

The book has two goals. The first is to prove the continuity between the ancient and the modern world argued for above by offering examples of Islamic medieval villas in the Iberian Peninsula (as stated in the main title of the book) and drawing ambitious comparisons that range from Umayyad Syria to Renaissance Italy. In my opinion, to reveal that chain of continuity between Roman, medieval, and Renaissance villas it would be necessary to offer additional in-depth comparisons with other medieval contexts. It would be interesting, for instance, to analyze examples from the Almoravid and Almohad empires, as well as to delve into further detail with regard to some passing remarks on other examples of connections—such as the case of the Generalife, a type of Al-Andalus *munya* from the thirteenth or fourteenth century near the palace-city of the Alhambra (thirteenth through fifteenth century) in Granada, which the author describes as an example of a clear connection between Islamic medieval villas and those of the early modern European era. Secondly, the other goal of the book is to explain this hypothesis for the specific case of *munyas* in Umayyad Córdoba, a very appropriate choice, since it offers interesting questions and wonderful material. We could see this book as a first step that could be followed by an interesting second publication by the same publishing house aimed at establishing those links between Al-Andalus *munyas* and Italian villas in chronological contexts that would go beyond the tenth century.

In sum, this book is full of intellectual insights that are useful not only for specialists in Islamic art but also in medieval art, and it provides brilliant remarks that entail a fresh approach to architecture. The book encourages further research on the part of the reader,

and we therefore enthusiastically encourage both the author and the publishing house to continue these reflections on villas in Islamic contexts beyond the tenth century.

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(Translated by Óscar Jiménez Serrano)

DANIEL ANLEZARK, ed., *Myths, Legends, and Heroes: Essays on Old Norse and Old English Literature in Honour of John McKinnell*. (Toronto Old Norse–Icelandic Studies 5.) Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011. Pp. vi, 272; 8 black-and-white figures. \$65. ISBN: 978-0-8020-9947-1.
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Myths, Legends, and Heroes: Essays on Old Norse and Old English Literature is described by its editor Daniel Anlezark as a tribute to the work of John McKinnell, himself a distinguished contributor to this wide field. A charge often leveled against festschriften such as this is that the essays contained in them are not closely enough linked in subject matter to constitute a coherent whole. But this is surely to miss the point: the sheer pleasure to be had from reading a series of short, diverting, and informative pieces on subjects allied to—but crucially, not all precisely centering on—one’s own particular area and differing in approach and perspective. Of course, the success of the project depends first upon the quality of the individual essays, and then on that delicate balance between variety and coherence. Fortunately, this volume succeeds on both counts. The essays are always thought provoking, often quite fascinating, and entertainingly wide ranging. Most acknowledge a debt to McKinnell’s work, and it is his work—itsself encompassing both Old English and Old Norse traditions—that determines a wider but still unifying theme: as Anlezark formulates it, “the myths, legends and story-telling traditions of the northwestern shore of Europe in the early Middle Ages.” This is not merely a clever catchall; it constitutes a clearly defined field, and anyone interested in it will enjoy this volume.

The volume gets off to a fine start with a characteristically shrewd and learned essay by Judith Jesch on a subject that above all demands both qualities: the knowledge of Old Norse mythology in Anglo-Scandinavian England. McKinnell’s position is that the depiction of scenes from Norse myth on Viking-age sculpture in the British Isles is strong evidence of knowledge of myths visually alluded to. Jesch surveys literary and archaeological evidence and suggests directions for further work. Next, Rudolf Simek, who collaborated with John McKinnell and Klaus Düwel to produce *Runes, Magic and Religion* (2004), looks at a wide range of materials that might indicate that elves have the power to cause fevers; the identification of elves with demons demonstrates the continuity of this belief from pagan to Christian times. The third essay in the group labeled “Transforming Paganism” concerns an ostensibly arcane aspect of the reception of Old Norse myth in postmedieval times: Margaret Clunies Ross investigates a picture of the Old Norse mythic cosmos by the nineteenth-century scholar Finnur Magnússon, a strange diagram that somehow found its way into the frontispiece of E. V. Gordon’s *Introduction to Old Norse*, thus becoming the first visual impression of that cosmos received by generations of students.

In the next section, “Using Poetry,” John Lindow shows how depictions of figures from the other world play out contemporary medieval anxieties about the pagan past. Alison Finlay’s article looks at possible links between the Eddaic poem *Vafþrúðnismál* and head-ransom poems, such as Egill Skalla-Grímsson’s *Höfuðlausn*. Her article might very usefully be read alongside Laurence de Looze’s work published elsewhere on poetic and oracular severed heads in Norse literature. Rory McTurk proposes Menippean satire as the generic