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Rollo-Koster, Joëlle.

The Great Western Schism, 1378–1417: Performing Legitimacy, Performing Unity.

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022. Pp. xiv, 406 + 5 figures, 2 maps, 3 tables. ISBN 978-1-107-16894-7 (hardcover) US\$143.95.

Joëlle Rollo-Koster's new study fills a gap in English-language literature on the Great Western Schism by drawing together both recent and well-known scholarship into an intriguing cultural framework. This is a big book, covering a fifty-year period in which important events occurred at high speed in locations across Europe and contextualizing those events with a narrative that stretches back to the early fourteenth century. Analyzing three papal obediences, two ecclesiastical councils, two subtractions, and the many ways that their participants enacted legitimizing and unifying messages, the author has produced an extremely detailed study based on extensively footnoted research. In an effort to expand the focus from an institutional narrative, this new book examines the period as a social drama, using the double papal election of 1378 as a starting rupture and the opening of the Council of Constance in 1414 as the closing resolution. Within that framework of Schism as social drama, the study explores how participants adopted actions that enhanced their legitimacy as popes and rulers and signalled the illegitimacy of their rivals. Using ideas drawn from the history of the senses, language analysis, and cultural anthropology, Rollo-Koster seeks to "gauge the impact the Schism had on contemporaries" (4).

The first five (of seven) chapters set the historical scene and establish the study's cultural-historical framework. The author engages extensively with the period's historiography, which is one of the book's undisputed strengths. Rollo-Koster explains how cultural theory reveals the Schism to be an extended liminal moment, and how responses to it are linked to use of space, spectacle, and embodied sensorial messages. While this discussion of the Middle Ages and the Schism is detailed and thoughtful, statements about the period after Pope Martin V's election are surprisingly simplistic. The second and third chapters explore a series of events and primary sources that reveal individual responses to the Schism's conflicts. Administrative and liturgical innovations—specifically *bullae*, new Marian feasts, and the Golden Rose—characterize performances of legitimacy. These are important ways of thinking about responses to conflict that reveal Rollo-Koster's deep interest in cultural history and align

with other recent investigations of the papal court. The author's discussion of Antonio Baldana's *De Magno Schismate* (c. 1419), Ulrich Richenthal's *Chronicle* (1414–18), and the *Angers Apocalypse Tapestry* (1373–80) can offer ways of considering “performative reception,” which seeks to know how audiences received these artifacts and their visions of Schism. While this discussion is fascinating, more illustrations of the artifacts would have clarified and increased the argument's impact.

The fourth chapter focuses on the performance of usurpation and tyranny and considers whether contemporary authors labelled popes tyrants. This effort to incorporate the Great Western Schism into political theory beyond conciliarism offers an interesting discussion of definitions (e.g., *intrusus*) and a deep analysis of rhetorical and propagandistic strategies in ecclesiastical and secular texts. Rollo-Koster cites identifying “defect of title,” describing overreach or failure in official roles, and unnamings as strategies that contemporaries employed to illustrate tyranny. To complement this discussion of how popes and princes were judged externally, the fifth chapter turns to strategies used by ceremonialists to project strength through papal funerals. A comparison of *ordines* (scripts for liturgical actors) from the first *sede vacante* in each obedience shows very different strategies. In the absence of a pope, François de Conzié concentrated power in the hands of the *camerlenghi* rather than the fractious College of Cardinals. In contrast, Pierre Ameil objectified the pope's body as a representation of institutional continuity to transform it into an object of memory, which “allowed it to continue ‘performing’” (215). This close reading of two important *ordines* is set alongside Agostino Paravicini Bagliani's research and draws on recent literary scholarship to reveal how contemporaries considered “seeing” to be central to the ideas of performance and the embodiment of papal authority.

Disentangling the Schism from the secular political instability and war that it encouraged is challenging, especially in the sixth and seventh chapters. This study is in great part an account of the Schism's effects on the cities of Rome and Avignon, often examined through extant texts, objects, or other accounts. In the last two chapters, which comprise a third of the book, analysis of performance occupies far less space than recounting cities at war. Rollo-Koster argues convincingly that part of understanding performance is exploring how individuals and groups sought agency and used performances of legitimacy to craft and control their own destinies. At times investigating how groups (like

the College of Cardinals, royal factions, or city councils) performed seems like an institutional focus. Extensive use of primary sources works to mitigate that bias, by presenting the words of contemporaries. However, combining a thematic investigation and a general historical account makes these chapters long. While they offer useful discussions of performance and a detailed account of each city's experience, one wonders if all politics and war could be seen as a string of performances.

In sum, this is a tremendous contribution to the English-language investigation of the Schism and the fourteenth-century Catholic Church in France and Italy. Joëlle Rollo-Koster's mastery of primary sources from this period and supporting historiography is impressive. The author also uses a wide variety of cultural ideas to investigate contemporary thoughts and efforts, usually to good effect. Some ideas like "the Lateranization of the Capitolio" could profit from further discussion and a deeper connection to social drama. Similarly, a stronger connective structure linking the shorter chapters would remind the reader of the book's direction and entrench analysis in the larger argument. Finally, there are some unusual vocabulary choices for an English-language book (i.e., the Vaticano, Capitolio, and Laterano). The publisher might have employed a closer eye to copy-editing. Nevertheless, scholars will find this study to be a monumental support in future studies of the Great Western Schism and investigations of the conflict's effects on cultural performance.

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