stylistics. For example, after a lengthy and abstract sentence in Christine de Pizan's *The Debate of Two Lovers*, the translators note, "the long sentence that runs from line 124 to 135 is a common Middle French construction describing what a hypothetical observer would have seen at these festivities" (302, n. 4).

The *Anthology* collects works in an under-studied genre by well-known authors and, by putting the works into dialogue (even debate) with one another, shows how they voice opinions on issues like gender politics, literary politics, and the uses and abuses of authority, issues of vital interest to medieval audiences and modern scholars. In addition to the explicit themes of heterosexual relationships and gender roles that impel the debates, the works are connected by their constructions of complicated narrative identities, especially in relation to their patrons. Christine's narrative persona is particularly interesting. When the three male narrators–the comically inept ones in Guillaume's and Chaucer's works and Chartier's lovelorn one–are compared to Christine's female narrator, she appears to be surprisingly authoritative. She dares to tell her patron, the duke of Orléans, that, even if the material does not interest him, "it does no harm / To listen to things / On a variety of topics" (ll. 19-21). This anthology, beautifully bound with ample margins, would make an excellent source to introduce these topics in Women's Studies courses, literature courses, and medieval culture courses.

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Constance Brittain Bouchard. *"Every Valley Shall Be Exalted": The Discourse of Opposites in Twelfth-Century Thought.* Cornell University Press, 2003. pp. xi + 171.

"*Every Valley Shall Be Exalted*" continues the trend of recent inquiries into a topic which has often gone unremarked-upon by earlier historians: namely, that the use of opposing categories in twelfth-century French culture was not limited to Scholasticism, but instead permeated all aspects of medieval intellectual culture. Catherine Brown's work on opposites and dialectic and Sarah Kay's work on contradictions, both slightly earlier than Bouchard's book, begin to explore how oppositional thinking was a cornerstone of the intellectual tradition of the High Middle Ages.[1] Bouchard's book is broader and more holistic, using texts from the genres of literature, philosophy, theology, jurisprudence, and natural philosophy to explore the use of opposing categories in scholastic thought, literature, religious conversion,

conflict resolution, and gender. Bouchard contends, persuasively, that opposition was a way of understanding fundamental questions in twelfth-century France. The dialectical method in twelfth-century philosophy, best exemplified in Peter Abelard's *Sic et Non*, reached a high point in this period, influencing how people thought about conversion, legal disputes, literature, and gender. However, unlike later Scholasticism, in which opposing categories were posited in the service of synthesis and systematization, twelfth-century intellectuals purposefully constructed a reality in which both categories in an opposing pair–such as life and death–remained unresolved. Furthermore, Bouchard argues that twelfth-century writers viewed both values in these opposing sets as co-productive of one another. Categories such as "masculine" were meaningless without the opposite category of "feminine."

"Every Valley Shall Be Exalted" begins with an inquiry into the philosophical roots of this discourse. The Platonic origin of the construction of opposing categories was expressed partly in Plato's *Timaeus* as finding harmony in dissonance. This conception was further developed by Aristotle, especially in his dialectical method. This was in turn transmitted to twelfth-century intellectuals via the Bible and patristic authors, especially Augustine. This strand, along with a new approach informed by Martianus Capella and Boethius, eventually flowered into the discourse of opposites in twelfth-century France. Bouchard builds her argument with a multi-disciplinary approach focused on textual analysis. In each chapter, she examines a few key texts in depth and works outwards, sometimes including visual material. The section on early scholasticism examines the glosses on reversals in the New Testament, especially in the *Glossa Ordinaria*, and in Abelard's *Sic et Non*. From there, the book delves into the tension between love and honor in twelfth-century romance and epic, especially Chrétien de Troyes' *Lancelot*. Religious conversion, especially entrance into monastic orders, was particularly attended to in this period, as men and women increasingly converted to monks and nuns as adults, rather than being given to an order as child oblates. Thus conversion was seen as a radical change from one status to its polar opposite. In the area of conflict resolution there was not this same shift from one end of the spectrum to the other; rather, quarrels were often resolved by a delicate balance between the opposites, mutually agreeable to both parties, even while both parties continued to hold mutually exclusive positions. Bouchard concludes with a chapter on gender, examining ideas about gender as well as gender roles (including contrary roles within one gender).

It is in the chapter on gender where Bouchard makes her boldest argument; that the discourse of opposites reached its zenith on topics related to gender. She examines twelfth-century ideas of gender in areas of sex difference and misogyny, theology, gender roles, and love. Building her argument mainly from

theological texts and secondary sources, Bouchard argues that "masculine" and "feminine" were co-constitutive polar opposites; each having intrinsic value and giving meaning to the other. Indeed, Biblical glosses stressed the fact that the categories "masculine" and "feminine" had been created *before* the creation of the two sexes. The dominance of Platonic over Aristotelian philosophy in this period meant that less restrictive ideas about gender and gender roles were common, as theologians valued both masculine and feminine attributes in both sexes. Despite structural misogyny in twelfth-century medieval society, male theologians believed that women had important roles in that society, and that those roles were valued. It is interesting to note, however, that the only place at which women authors are mentioned is the section on women's writings on gender.

The central argument of *"Every Valley Shall Be Exalted"* is both provocative and valuable. It is refreshing to read scholarship on the twelfth century that does not present the uses of contradiction as a step toward unitary vision. Rather, Bouchard makes it clear that twelfth-century writers recognized that both poles of a continuum required one another and that these writers valued both poles. Furthermore, she stresses repeatedly that the endeavor on the part of these writers to find a way to balance the tension between two opposites enabled them to construct a reality based on this balance. Yet it remains unclear how this idea of balance or harmony differs significantly from the idea of resolution or concord, which is often thought to characterize thirteenth-century thought. Perhaps the difference lies in the creation of a new category, the result of synthesis. Bouchard states more than once that the twelfth-century intellectual aim of maintaining a precarious tension between two opposite ends of a dichotomy is not related to the Averroist doctrine of double truth, in large part because Averroes was unknown in the twelfth century. This raises the questions, however, of what the relationship was between the twelfth-century discourse of opposites and Averrosim, and if the twelfth-century paradigm made it possible for scholars in the thirteenth century to engage intellectually with a worldview composed of binary distinctions.

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End Note

1. Catherine Brown, *Contrary Things: Exegesis, Dialectic, and the Poetics of Didacticism* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1998); Sarah Kay, *Courtly Contradictions: The Emergence of the Literary Object in the Twelfth Century* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2001).