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BOOK REVIEWS

Editor's Foreword

Rituals surround us. They divide our days and mark significant moments in our lives, we witness them in memorialising ceremonies and in the grand ceremonial of state. Rituals are, in short, ubiquitous to the human experience, and our encounters with them are wide and varied, a fact demonstrated by the range of topics and approaches our authors bring to volume 9 of *Ceræ*, themed 'Ritual: Practice, Performance, Reception'. I am pleased to present, on behalf of the editorial team, the largest volume of the journal to date, comprising seven themed articles, one unthemed article, and one *varium*.

In our opening article, Solveig Marie Wang heeds recent calls to Indigenise medieval studies in her analysis of Saami ritual performance. In so doing, she brings nuance to the depictions of Saami in Old Norse texts, reveals the often-neglected roles of Saami characters, and exposes how their rituals could at once be perceived as normative *and* transgressive in the cultural milieux of medieval Fennoscandia. What Wang brings to light is a dynamic 'cultural interface' in which social boundaries between the Saami and their neighbours was far from clear-cut. Staying in the north, our second article comes from Caroline Wilhelmsson who examines royal ceremonial across five centuries of Swedish history. Specifically, she analyses the royal procession

known as the *eriksgata*, in which the king-elect undertook a journey across the realm to have his kingship confirmed by provincial assemblies. Wilhelmsson takes the position that the *eriksgata* served a dual purpose as a political tool, both uniting the realm under one ruler, while also reaffirming and legitimising regional identities and governance.

For our next two articles, we journey across the North Sea to England. Grace Catherine Greiner offers an essay on Chaucer's fourteenth-century dream vision, *The Book of the Duchess*, undertaking an analysis of the narrative framing of the lyric. Greiner suggests that Chaucer is here musing on the nature of performance and loss, that the poet invites the reader (or listener) to both participate in public commemoration and to experience loss on a personal level through the ephemeral performance of elegiac lyric. Michele Seah also turns her attention to performative rituals, but takes as her subject one with significant political overtones: the 1174 pilgrimage of King Henry II to the shrine of St Thomas Becket. Seah argues that Henry's penitential pilgrimage was directed to a wide audience, designed as a visual display to express both the king's humility and to demonstrate his genuine contrition.

For our final three themed articles, we head to continental Europe. Giulia Torello-Hill examines the ritual performance aspects of dynastic weddings in northern Italy by focussing on *cassoni*, or wedding chests. Through her examination of the iconography of these ritual objects, Torello-Hill demonstrates that they served a dual didactic purpose for the young brides for whom they were made. Samantha Happé turns her attention to almanacs produced during the reign of Louis XIV, and

the role the images they contain played in disseminating knowledge of events during the Sun King's reign. Happé's article pays particular attention to the visual framing of the ceremonial welcoming of various foreign embassies into the French court. Finally, Elisabeth Niederdöckl undertakes an analysis of how portable altars were used and staged in the days between Maundy Thursday and Easter. Niederdöckl explores how the very specific liturgical ceremonies associated with these objects during this period of the Church calendar served as allegories for Christ's passion and death.

In addition to these themed articles, Yianni Cartledge and Brenton Griffin offer a full-length study of the 'heretical' Paulician and Tondrakian movements that emerged in medieval Armenia. In turn, Jennifer Perkins supplies a *varium* on human-bird interaction in Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*.

As ever, thanks must go out to our peer-reviewers for offering their time and expertise, and to our committee for their tireless, voluntary efforts in keeping the journal running. Especial thanks must go to my deputy editors, Zoë Enstone and Jenny Davis Barnett for their help in processing the more than twenty submissions received for this volume. And finally, congratulations to our authors on the publication of their fascinating and varied research. It is thanks to all these people that working as *Ceræ*'s editor has been such a rewarding experience, and I look forward to continuing in that capacity for the journal's tenth anniversary edition in 2023.

Matthew Firth

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Finnvitka: The Cultural Interface, Identity Negotiation, and Saami Ritual in Medieval Fennoscandia

Solveig Marie Wang

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In the medieval Eastern Norwegian law codes of the Borgarþing and the Eiðsivaþing, seeking out Saami people to receive divination, believing in their power and participating in their rituals, is prohibited, and, in the latter, equated with outlawry and unlawfulness. The transcription of these laws stipulate that the Saami were indeed sought out for such 'magical' help by people understood as Christian, and interestingly, the transgressor is never presented as the Saami, but rather, those Christians that sought out these rituals. Simultaneously, a multitude of instances from saga story-worlds demonstrate that such transgression occurred (or is presented as occurring) regularly, in different contexts and with different outcomes, and even the saintly King Óláfr Haraldsson is portrayed as seeking out the Saami to participate in Saami ritual performance. The delineations between normative and transgressive activity are therefore not sharp when it comes to this performance, as is also suggested in interpretations of archaeological material from the medieval period. In the proposed paper I will investigate the ambiguity associated with Saami ritual performance in medieval Norse texts, balanced with interpretations of archaeological material as representing similar aspects. Recent calls to 'Indigenise' Medieval Studies will be incorporated as a methodological framework for the investigation.

In the two medieval Eastern Norwegian law codes of the *Borgarþing* and the *Eiðsívaþing*, seeking out Saami peoples to receive divination, believing in their power, and participating in their rituals is prohibited and equated with outlawry or

unlawfulness.[1] These law codes demonstrate an expressed ambiguity associated with the Saami in medieval texts, highlighting a so-called double bind of medieval perceptions and experiences with Saami peoples. The transcription of the law codes demonstrate that the Saami were indeed sought out for 'magical' purposes by people understood (by the transcribers) as Christian. However, interestingly, the laws do not present the transgressor as the Saami ritual performers, but rather, those Christians that seek them out. Parallel to the law codes, a multitude of instances from Norse and other medieval texts, such as the sagas, establish that this transgression – that is, the observation or direct participation in Saami ritual performance – occurred (or is presented as occurring) regularly, in different contexts, and with different outcomes.[2] The delineations between normative and transgressive activity are, therefore, not sharp, and in this article I further investigate the ambiguity associated with Saami ritual performance and how it ties in overall with the Norse-Saami relations in the medieval period. This investigation is grounded in frameworks emphasised in recent calls to Indigenise Medieval Studies in order to arrive at fairer and more nuanced interpretations of Indigenous characters in historical sources. By showcasing the many diverse reactions to, not to mention realities of, Saami ritual performance within medieval texts, I reveal the diversity of medieval Fennoscandia, investigate identity negotiation and shared rituals, and

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[1] *Norges Gamle Love: Norges Love ældre end Kong Magnus Haakonssöns Regjerings-Tiltrædelse i 1263*, ed. by Rudolf Keyser and Peter Andreas Munch, vol. 1 (Christiania: Chr. Gröndahl, 1836), pp. 372, 389–90.
[2] *Olafs saga hins helga: En kort saga om Kong Olav den Hellige fra anden halvdeel af det tolfte aarhundrede*, ed. by Rudolf Keyser and Carl Richard Unger (Christiania: Feilberg & Landmarks, 1849), pp. iv–viii, 16.

emphasise the often-neglected role of Saami characters, and people, within medieval

historiography.

RESEARCH TRADITION, FINNVITKA, AND METHODOLOGY

The Saami are the Indigenous people of Fennoscandia. Sápmi, the traditional

settlement area of the Saami, is located within the contemporary nation-states of

Norway, Sweden, and Finland, and in the Kola peninsula of Russia, although many

Saami people live outside of this region.[3] The borders of Sápmi have been

significantly contested throughout history, especially in the southern regions of

Norway and Sweden, as well as along the Bothnian coast and in the Murmansk

Oblast.[4] Nevertheless, there is considerable historical, linguistic, and archaeological

evidence indicating that the Saami area was significantly larger in the medieval

period. Belonging to the Finno-Ugric language family, the Saami languages (of

which there are ten today) are structurally and etymologically different from the

Nordic languages,[5] which raise questions about bilingualism and communication in

the medieval period. As Carl-Gösta Ojala writes, the Saami 'is not a homogenous

entity, neither in the present not in the past',[6] and this acknowledgement of diversity

is crucial for our recognition of medieval Saami societies as regionally varied and

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[3] Carl-Gösta Ojala, *Sámi Prehistories: The Politics of Archaeology and Identity in Northernmost Europe*, Occasional Papers in Archaeology 47 (Uppsala Universitet, Institutionen för Arkeologi och Antik Historia, 2009), p. 72.

[4] Ojala, *Prehistories*, p. 72.

[5] *Store norske leksikon*, 'Samisk' (last updated 20 December2020) <https://snl.no/samisk> [accessed 27 May 2022].

[6] Ojala, *Prehistories*, p. 73.

linguistically and culturally multi-faceted. As recent research emphasises, the Saami, or the *finnar* (pl.) as they are typically called in Norse sources, were significant social and political players in medieval Fennoscandian societies.[7]

Texts from the classical period onwards portray the Saami as skilled skiers, able fishermen, sought-after teachers of magic, apt ritual performers, and expert hunters, different from but nevertheless a part of Norse society. Saami settlements are referred to as far south as Hadeland in Norway, with Saami presence across the sea in England and in Iceland also alluded to, in addition to the large-scale fur-trade monopoly held by the Saami in the eastern trading networks; altogether representative of the far-reaching influence of Saami societies in the Middle Ages.[8] Close contact between the Saami and Norse groups is consequently not surprising, with trade; personal relationships such as marriage, childrearing, and fostering; personal and military alliances; shared ritual performance; and magic being common themes associated with the Saami across the medieval textual corpus. The emergence of post-colonial scholarship in the past generation and archaeological works focused on liminal identities and cultural hybridity as significant factors in the interactions between the Norse and the Saami has initiated an understanding of medieval Fennoscandia as less monocultural and more multi-faceted and diverse than

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[7] Solveig Marie Wang, 'Decolonising Norse Studies: Colonial Strategies and the Saami as the Other in Scholarship', *Kyngervi*, 3 (2022) [forthcoming].

[8] See Solveig Marie Wang, *Decolonising Medieval Fennoscandia: An Interdisciplinary Study of Norse-Saami Relations in the Medieval Period* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2023).

assumed in previous research.[9]

Across medieval texts, the qualities and attributes ascribed to Saami characters are remarkably consistent, and the stability to purvey these stereotyped textual motifs is undoubtedly the most common theme in the historiographic discourse on the medieval Saami within Norse Studies.[10] As Eleanor Rosamund Barraclough comments, the scholarly tendency to focus on these stereotyped textual motifs of Saami characters in Norse (and more generally medieval) texts focuses on their contrasts to the Norse, thereby highlighting their Otherness.[11] The textual motifs associated with the Saami do tend to concentrate on Othering, chiefly through allusions to hunting and archery, forest animals such as bears and wolves, winter weather and skiing, as well as magic and supernatural beings. This constellation of attributes forms what I have coined the 'Saami Motif-Cluster' elsewhere,[12] and allude

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[9] Marte Spangen, 'Silver Hoards in Sámi Areas', in *Recent Perspectives on Sámi Archaeology in Fennoscandia and North-West Russia*, ed. by Petri Halinen and others (Helsinki: Finnish Antiquarian Society, 2009), pp. 94–106.

[10] Jeremy DeAngelo, 'The North and the Depiction of the "Finnar" in the Icelandic Sagas', *Scandinavian Studies*, 83.3 (2010), 257–86 (p. 258); Sirpa Aalto, and Veli-Pekka Lehtola, 'The Sami Representations Reflecting the Multi-Ethnic North of the Saga Literature', *Journal of Northern Studies*, 11.2 (2017), 7–30 (pp. 12–16); Else Mundal, 'The Perception of the Saamis and Their Religion in Old Norse Sources', in *Shamanism and Northern Ecology*, ed. by Juha Pentikäinen (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1996), pp. 97–116 (pp. 98–101); John Lindow, 'Supernatural Others and Ethnic Others: A Millennium of World View', *Scandinavian Studies*, 67.1 (1995), 8–31 (pp. 11–12); Thomas DuBois, 'Ethnomemory: Ethnographic and Culture-Centered Approaches to the Study of Memory', *Scandinavian Studies*, 85.3 (2013), 306–31 (p. 309); Hermann Pálsson, 'The Sami People in Old Norse Literature', *Nordlit*, 5 (1999), 29–53 (p. 29); Alf Ragnar Nielssen, *Landnåm fra nord: Utvandringa fra det nordlige Norge til Island i vikingtid* (Stamsund: Orkana Akademisk forlag, 2012), pp. 87–9.

[10] Eleanor Rosamund Barraclough, 'Arctic Frontiers: Rethinking Norse-Sámi Relations in the Old Norse Sagas', *Viator*, 48.3 (2017), 27–51 (p. 28).

[11] Barraclough, 'Frontiers', p. 28.

[12] Wang, *Decolonising Medieval Fennoscandia*.

to the Saami across the texts. It should, however, be clarified that these attributes are not exclusive to the Saami only.

Within the Saami Motif-Cluster, magic is the predominant theme and is repeated extensively across medieval texts as well as in historiography.[13] Through descriptions concerning bewitching, spellbinding, divination, weather magic, supernatural beings, shapeshifting, spirit journeys, healing, and ritual performance, in addition to the abilities to disappear, shoot targeted arrows, and hide objects, Saami characters emerge as experts of 'magic' across the written material.[14] While the term 'magic' itself is controversial, the above aspects of expertise and performance are clustered in what I refer to when employing the term here.[15] Saami characters often materialise as teachers of magic or sources of magical expertise, with Norse characters repetitively seeking them out. These characters are usually described as

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[13] Hermann Pálsson, 'Sami', p. 29; Aalto and Lehtola, 'Representations', p. 13; Mundal, 'Perception', p. 114; Barraclough, 'Frontiers', p. 28.

[14] See for example: *Ágrip af Nóregskonunga sǫgum*, ed. and trans. by Matthew James Driscoll (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 2008), pp. 5–6; *Hrólfs saga kraka*, in *Fornaldar sögur nordrlanda eptir gömlum handritum*, ed. by Carl Christian Rafn, vol. 1 (Copenhagen: Ennu Popsku, 1829–30), 48–50; *Ketils saga hœngs*, in *Fornaldar sögur nordrlanda eptir gömlum handritum*, ed. by Carl Christian Rafn, vol. 2 (Copenhagen: Ennu Popsku, 1829–30), p. 123; *Sǫrla saga sterka*, in *Fornaldar sögur nordrlanda eptir gömlum handritum*, ed. by Carl Christian Rafn, vol. 3 (Copenhagen: Ennu Popsku, 1829–30), pp. 444–6; *Sturlaugs saga starfsama*, in *Fornaldar sögur nordrlanda eptir gömlum handritum*, ed. by Carl Christian Rafn, vol. 3 (Copenhagen: Ennu Popsku, 1829–30), p. 613; Snorri Sturluson, *Heimskringla* 2, ed. by Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, Íslenzk fornrit 27 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1945), p. 11; *Færeyinga saga – Óláfs saga Odds*, ed. by Ólafur Halldórsson, Íslenzk fornrit 25 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 2006), pp. 96, 187–90; *Vatnsdœla saga*, ed. by Einar Ól. Sveinsson, Íslenzk fornrit 8 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1939), pp. 30, 34–5; *Historia Norwegie*, ed. by Inger Ekrem and Lars Boje Mortensen, trans. by Peter Fisher (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2006), pp. 62–3; Saxo Grammaticus, *Gesta Danorum: The History of the Danes*, ed. by Karsten Friis-Jensen, trans. by Peter Fisher, vol. 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 344.

[15] See Stephen A. Mitchell, 'Scandinavia', in *The Routledge History of Medieval Magic*, ed. by Sophie Page and Catherine Rider (London: Routledge, 2019), pp. 136–50.

Fjǫlkynngi Finna ('Saami knowledgeable in magic') in the textual material, as is the case for the *Finna ein fjǫlkunnig* ('Saami woman knowledgeable in magic') invited to Ingimundr's feast in the thirteenth-century *Vatnsdœla saga*,[16] or the *fjǫlkunnigra Finna* ('Saami knowledgeable in magic') that manufacture the impenetrable cloak of Þórir hundr as related in Sigvatr Þórðarson's eleventh-century *Erfidrápa Óláfs helga*.[17] The term *finnvitka*, commonly understood as meaning 'performing magic in a Saami way' or 'bewitching like a Saami', only appears once in the Old Norse corpus and is found in *Hróa þáttr* in the late fourteenth-century *Flateyjarbók*.[18]

This performance of magic in a *Saami way* is often unquestionably referred to by scholars in the field of Medieval Studies as a specifically negative attribute. Due to their association with non-Christian activities, such as magic, Jeremy DeAngelo writes that the Saami are 'if not outwardly hostile to the Norse then otherwise foreboding ill through their presence'.[19] He further argues that 'there is no admirable individual among them in the corpus of sagas who counterbalances the prevailing stereotypical portrayal'. Hermann Pálsson describes the Saami as 'seductive, deceitful',[20] Sverrir Jakobsson ascribes the Saami with the title of the 'pagan enemy',[21]

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[16] *Vatnsdœla saga*, p. 30.

[17] Judith Jesch, 'Sigvatr Þórðarson, *Erfidrápa Óláfs helga* 16', in *Poetry from the Kings' Sagas 1: From Mythical Times to c. 1035*, ed. by Diana Whaley, vol. 2 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2012), p. 663.

[18] Veturliði Oskarsson, 'Um sögnina *finnvitka* í *Flateyjarbók*', *Gripla*, xxiv (2013), pp. 269–79.

[19] DeAngelo, 'The North', pp. 264–5.

[20] Herman Pálsson, 'Sami', p. 38.

[21] Sverrir Jakobsson, '"Black Men and Malignant-Looking": The Place of the Indigenous Peoples of North America in the Icelandic World View', in *Approaches to Vínland*, ed. by Andrew Wawn and Þórunn Sigurðardóttir (Reykjavík: Sigurður Nordal Institute, 2001), pp. 88–104 (p. 98).

and Geraldine Heng labels the Saami as 'familiar monstrosities'.[22] Together, these quotes encompass the general scholarly attitude towards the Saami in medieval texts as representing the monstrous and uncivilised, an extreme alterity, and transgressive behaviour. Jeremy DeAngelo writes, more recently, that 'They [the *finnar*] stand between humanity and nature, civilization and savagery, the world as we know it and the supernatural'.[23] Troy Storfjell echoes this attitude when he writes: 'Their geographic proximity to and paradigmatic connection with the *jötnar* [. . .] served to strengthen the association of both with an existence in the chaotic, wild periphery (*útgarðr*) beyond the boundaries of civilization'.[24] The tendency within scholarship to uncritically accept that the Saami are exclusively portrayed as uncivilised 'sorcerers' who only affect the narrative negatively in medieval texts, as a reflection of how Norse people or those responsible for the texts viewed the Saami in real life, is an issue, since it hinders an unbiased reading of the source material. These tendencies risk re-producing previously de-bunked colonial truths about the Saami as 'boxed' representations of alterity, particularly as non-human, given the often-unquestioned assumption among scholars that trolls, *jötnar*, and other extranormal creatures are symbolic representations of the Saami in Norse texts. Most clear from these readings, however, is the reluctance with which our field as a whole has to view the Saami as

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[22] Geraldine Heng, *The Invention of Race in the European Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), p. 273.

[23] Jeremy DeAngelo, *Outlawry, Liminality and Sanctity in the Literature of the Early Medieval North Atlantic* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018), p. 183.

[24] Troy Storfjell, 'The Ambivalence of the Wild: Figuring Sápmi and the Sámi in Pre-Colonial and Colonial Discourse to the Eighteenth Century', in *L'Image du Sápmi: Artes et Linguae* 16, ed. by Kajsa Andersson (Örebro: Örebro University Press, 2013), pp. 112–47.

something else than the Other, or as something other than a 'problem' in the narrative. Jostein Bergstøl and Hege Skalleberg Gjerde have analysed the role Saami people play in recent historiography on the Viking Age and medieval period, concluding that: 'They [Saami people] are seemingly, however, almost always presented as an exceptional case, and an outlier we should consider, again demonstrating that the world of the Vikings and Viking history is primarily about bona fide Norse culture'.[25]

The consequences of Othering have been listed on several occasions in postcolonial scholarship, with Nick Shepherd noting effects such as de-authentication of Indigenous, in this case Saami, self-realisation and conceptualisation, and the assumption that Indigenous peoples exist outside history as ethnographic rather than historical actors.[26] Discourses of Othering are therefore connected with colonialist structures that result in an articulation of the Other as being radically homogenous both in the present and in the past. By exclusively focusing on the notions of Othering associated with the portrayal of the Saami in medieval narration, agency is, albeit unintentionally, removed from the Saami characters. Naturally, the Saami Motif-Cluster was most likely occasionally utilised by the compiler of a given text as a means of highlighting the Other and the

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[25] Hege Skalleberg Gjerde and Jostein Bergstøl, 'Sámi Vikings?', in *Vikings Across Boundaries*, ed. by Hanne Lovise Aannestad and others (London: Routledge, 2020), pp. 166–78.

[26] Nick Shepherd, 'Naming the Indigenous', in *Archaeologies of 'Us' and 'Them': Debating History, Heritage and Indigeneity*, ed. by Charlotta Hillerdal, Anna Karlström and Carl-Gösta Ojala (London: Routledge, 2017), pp. 33–7 (p. 35).

periphery, but categorising Saami characters solely as textual representations of the far-northern, dangerous periphery is a simplification of the role Saami people play in medieval literature and society. Charlotte Damm has condensed the issues connected to simplifying Indigenous characters as Other:

> Half a century ago the majority of historians and archaeologists were not concerned with the past of 'Others', relegating them to extras/supernumeraries, at best secondary in our stories. Now we have taken one step up, in wishing to investigate their history, but maybe the most fundamental problem is that we often portray groups such as the San, the Saami, or the Inuit as essentially different. Through such a perspective we may be perpetuating colonial dichotomies constructed in and for the West. To uphold dominance the powerful needs an opposite, a powerless 'other'. For centuries Indigenous groups across the world have been conveniently amongst these 'others', as they have continued to have no access to the authoritative discourse.[27]

As such, the uncritiqued assumption among most scholars that the Saami are textual representatives of the uncivilised Other may be directly harmful and can strengthen colonial notions of the Indigenous as static and non-human.[28]

The colonial structures inherent in the field of Medieval Studies have recently been challenged by several scholars. Tiffany Boyle and Jessica Carden specifically tie

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[27] Charlotte Damm, 'Archaeology, Ethno-history and Oral Traditions: Approaches to the Indigenous Past', *Norwegian Archaeological Review*, 38.2 (2005), 73–87 (p. 84).
[28] Christopher Crocker, 'What We Talk About When We Talk About Vínland: History, Whiteness, Indigenous Erasure, and the Early Norse Presence in Newfoundland', *Canadian Journal of History/Annales Canadiennes D'Histoire*, 55.1–2 (2020), 91–122 (p. 95).

these structures to the notion of a contemporary acceptance of Scandinavian history as 'untainted' and a general 'cultural amnesia regarding Scandinavian imperial projects'.[29] Johan Höglund and Linda Andersson Burnett also highlight this 'cultural amnesia' and state that 'scholars tied to the field of Scandinavian Studies appear to have been particularly reluctant to engage with the field of Nordic colonialism'.[30] They further address the notion that the colonial pasts (and presents) of the Nordic countries, especially those of Denmark and Norway – both concerning Kalaallit Nunaat and Sápmi, but also Denmark-Norway and Denmark's colonies in the West-Indies and Africa – is often downplayed as charitable and benevolent. It is our responsibility as scholars of a region inhabited by the Saami to confront these aspects of the Nordic past and present.[31] Recent pushes towards decolonising the academy and support for the 'Indigenous turn' of Medieval Studies contribute to a broader understanding of how these colonial structures have and continue to affect historiography within our field.[32] However, the Saami are often forgotten, neglected, or ignored in this expression, which I would argue is a result of the fact that there is

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[29] Tiffany Boyle and Jessica Carden, 'Nordic Colonialism and Indigenous Peoples', in *The Palgrave Encyclopedia of Imperialism and Anti-Imperialism*, ed. by Immanuel Ness and Zak Cope (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021).

[30] Johan Höglund and Linda Andersson Burnett, 'Introduction: Nordic Colonialisms and Scandinavian Studies', *Scandinavian Studies*, 91.1–2 (2019), 1–12 (p. 2).

[31] Brenna Duperron and Elizabeth Edwards, 'Thinking Indigeneity: A Challenge to Medieval Studies', *Exemplaria*, 33.1 (2021), 94–107 (p. 101).

[32] Duperron and Edwards, 'Thinking Indigeneity', p. 101; Crocker, 'Vínland'; Mary Rambaran-Olm, M. Breann Leake and Micah James Goodrich, 'Medieval Studies: The Stakes of the Field', *Postmedieval: A Journal of Medieval Cultural Studies*, 11.4 (2020), 356–70; Sierra Lomuto, 'Becoming Postmedieval: The Stakes of the Global Middle Ages', *Postmedieval: A Journal of Medieval Cultural Studies*, 11.4 (2020), 503–12 (p. 503).

a tendency to reject or forget that the Saami are a part of the Nordic colonial articulation. Carl-Gösta Ojala writes that scholars working with Indigenous, specifically Saami, contexts:

> must never forget that we are dealing with histories of conquest, violence, oppression, exploitation, relocation, assimilation, discrimination, racism, appropriation and erasure of culture, language history and heritage – histories with very real consequences and effects on the social, cultural, and economic lives and the well-being and health of Indigenous communities today.[33]

He adds that as scholars we also need to acknowledge another dimension of these histories, namely 'Indigenous agency and Indigenous strategies for resistance and survival through times of great pressure and change'.[34] With that in mind, it should be noted that there is an active, positive change taking place across scholarship, which is the direct result of the growth of Indigenous Studies as an independent field and the many significant contributions of Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars that have sought and continue to seek to decolonise historical narratives.[35]

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[33] Carl-Gösta Ojala, 'Discussion: Colonialism Past and Present: Archaeological Engagements and Entanglements', in *The Sound of Silence: Indigenous Perspectives on the Historical Archaeology of Colonialism*, ed. by Tiina Äikäs and Anna-Kaisa Salmi (New York: Berghahn Books, 2019), pp. 182–201 (p. 182).

[34] Ojala, 'Colonialism Past and Present', p. 182.

[35] Pirjo Kristiina Virtanen, Torjer Olsen and Pigga Keskitalo, 'Contemporary Indigenous Research Within Sámi and Global Indigenous Studies Contexts', in *Indigenous Research Methodologies in Sámi and Global Contexts*, ed. by Pirjo Kristiina Virtanen, Torjer Olsen and Pigga Keskitalo (Leiden: Brill, 2021), pp. 7–32.

For the purposes of analysing the reception of Saami ritual performance in the medieval period, a decolonising approach becomes particularly useful as it acknowledges majority-culture bias inherent in the narration of history, which in turn allows alternative histories to emerge. Nevertheless, the current academic zeitgeist of decolonising *everything* has been criticised and so employing these frameworks is neither unbiased nor uncomplicated. Brenna Duperron and Elizabeth Edwards write that even research with the best intentions has a tendency to focus the critical inquiry on the imperial gaze.[36] Rather, they support Tarren Andrews' suggested 'Indigenous Turn' of Medieval Studies, which demands an epistemic shift and calls for 'the acceptance of different knowledge regimes, for situated knowledge, and for Indigenous theory'.[37] Like in other calls to decolonise the academy, we need to actively ensure that our good intentions do not become complicit in ongoing Indigenous erasure, or what Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang refer to as 'settler moves to innocence'.[38] Methodologies suggested in Indigenous Studies are therefore of particular value for the current investigation, as they can open our eyes to the Indigene who 'was already there' and enable us to look beyond tropes and tokenisms connected to Indigenous characters,[39] in this case *finnvitka*. *Gáfestallan* (North Saami for coffee break), an Indigenous Research Methdology proposed by

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[36] Duperron and Edwards, 'Thinking Indigeneity', p. 95.

[37] Duperron and Edwards, 'Thinking Indigeneity', p. 95.

[38] Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, 'Decolonization is Not a Metaphor', *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, 1.1 (2012), 1–40 (p. 10).

[39] Duperron and Edwards, 'Thinking Indigeneity', p. 95.

Pigga Keskitalo, Torkel Rasmussen, Rauna Rahko-Ravantti, and Rauni Äärelä-Vihriälä, is based on accountability. *Gáfestallan* can therefore function as a valuable tool to arrive at more alternative readings of Saami characters in medieval texts, since the methodology emphasises active positioning of research literature as well as our own personal actions as researchers and educators.[40] Parallels may here be drawn to Jill Carter's suggested 'red reading', where she revisited canonical texts through Indigenous theory.[41] This type of reading has recently been expanded on by Duperron and Edwards who vouch for the 'reparative readings of medieval texts'.[42] These accountable and reparative readings form the methodological foundation of the succeeding analysis.

FJǪLKYNNGI FINNA, AMBIGUITY AND RITUAL PERFORMANCE

When the portrayal of Saami ritual performance in medieval texts is considered, most scholars tend to focus on its 'shamanistic' features, with John Lindow stating that 'most Norwegians [or Norse people] would have known the rules for a Saami shamanic performance'.[43] The most famous example of a Saami ritual performance

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[40] Pigga Keskitalo, Torkel Rasmussen, Rayna Rahko-Ravanatti and Rauni Äärela-Vihriäla, '*Gáfestallan* Talks of the Indigenous Research Paradigm in Sámi Research', in *Indigenous Research Methodologies in Sámi and Global Contexts*, ed. by Pirjo Kristiina Virtanen, Torjer Olsen and Pigga Keskitalo (Leiden: Brill, 2021), pp. 65–83.

[41] Jill Carter, 'Repairing the Web: Spiderwoman's Children Staging the New Human Being' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Toronto, 2010).

[42] Duperron and Edwards, 'Thinking Indigeneity', p. 102.

[43] John Lindow, 'Myth Read as History: Odin in Snorri Sturluson's *Ynglinga saga*', in *Myth: A New Symposium*, ed. by Gregory Schrempp and William Hansen (Indianapolis: University of Indiana Press, 2002), pp. 107–23 (pp. 117–18).

found in medieval sources is related in the mid-to-late twelfth century Latin chronicle *Historia Norwegie*. Here, two Saami ritual performers are portrayed as practicing a ritual in front of Christian observers:

Once, when Christians who had come to trade had sat down at table with some [Saami], their hostess fell forward all of a sudden and expired. While the Christians felt serious grief at this calamity, the [Saami] were not in the least saddened, but told them that the woman was not dead, merely pillaged by the *gands* of her adversaries, and that they could quickly restore her. Then a magician, spreading out a cloth under which he might prepare himself for intoning unholy sorcerer's spells, raised aloft in his outstretched hands a small vessel similar to a [sieve], decorated with tiny figures of whales, harnessed reindeer, skis, and even a miniature boat with oars; using these means of transport the demonic spirit was able to travel across tall snowdrifts, mountain-sides and deep lakes. After chanting incantations for a very long time and leaping about there with this paraphernalia, he finally threw himself to the ground, black all over [. . .] and foaming at the mouth as if he were mad; ripped across his stomach, with a mighty roar he eventually relinquished his life. Next they consulted another specialist in the magic arts as to what had happened in each case. This individual went through all his practices in similar fashion, though with a different outcome: the hostess arose in sound health and then he revealed to them that the sorcerer had died in the following way: his gand, having taken on the likeness of a whale, was shooting rapidly through a lake when it had the misfortune to encounter a hostile gand, which had transformed itself into sharply pointed

stakes; these stakes, hidden in the depths of the lake, penetrated the repulsed creature's

belly, and this was also manifested by the death of the magician in the house.[44]

Numerous features of the portrayed ritual performance have been compared to early

modern ethnographic descriptions of Saami *noaidevuohta* and early modern to

modern practice of shamanism in circumpolar areas.[45] The *gandus* (or 'helping spirit')

of the bereaved woman, the cloth laid down before the ritual, the chanting, and the

usage of the small vessel (potentially a drum) decorated with figures that enable the

trance are treated in scholarship as indicative of shamanistic performance.[46] The

instance is mirrored in the famous *semsveinar*-episode in *Vatnsdœla saga*, where two

Saami men are presented as undertaking a 'spirit journey' through a trance, enabling

a trip to Iceland which in turn functions as a catalyst for the saga's *landnám*

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[44] 'Quadam uero uice dum christiani causa comercii apud Finnos ad mensam sedissent, illorum hospita subito inclinata expirauit. Vnde christianis multum | dolentibus non mortuam, sed a gandis emulorum esse depredatam, sese illam cito adepturos ipsi Finni nichil contristati respondent. Tunc quidam magis extenso panno, sub quo se ad profanes ueneficas incantaciones preparet, quoddam uasculum ad modum taratantarorum sursum erectis minibus extulit, cetinis atque ceruinis formulis cum loris et ondriolis nauicula eciam cum remis occupatum, quibus uehiculis per alta niuium et deuexa moncium uel profunda stagnorum ille diabolicus gandus uteretur. Cumque diutissime incantando tali apparatu ibi saltasset, humo tandem prostratus totus niger ut ethiops, spumans ora ut puta freneticus, preruptus uentrem uix aliquando cum maximo {fremore} emisit spiritum. Tum alterum in magica arte peritissimum consuluerunt, quid de utrisque actum sit. Qui simili modo, sed non eodem euentu suum implens officium – namque hospita sana surrexit – et defunctum magum tali euentu interisse eis intimauit: Gandum uidelicet eius in cetinam effigiem inmaginatum ostico gando in preacutas sudes transformato, dum per quoddam stagnum uelocissime prosiliret, malo omine obuiasse, quia in stagni eiusdem profundo sudes latitantes exactu uentrem perforabant. Quod et in mago domi mortuo apparuit'. *Historia Norwegie*, pp. 62–3.

[45] Konsta Ilari Kaikkonen, 'Contextualising Descriptions of Noaidevuohta: Saami Ritual Specialists in Texts Written until 1871' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Bergen, 2019).

[46] Lars Ivar Hansen and Bjørnar Olsen, *Hunters in Transition: An Outline of Early Sámi History* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), p. 345.

narrative.[47] Earlier in the saga, the previously mentioned *Finna ein fjǫlkunnig* is described as foretelling the future of the people present during a ritual that sees her dressed in a lavish outfit on a raised platform in the middle of a hall.[48] In both contexts, the Saami ritual and its performers initiate positive outcomes, and especially the good treatment received by the *semsveinar* is emphasised. Correspondingly, in both contexts, the Saami ritual performers are actively sought out by the protagonist.

Seeking out the Saami to participate in rituals is prohibited in two medieval eastern Norwegian law codes, as mentioned in the introduction. The *Borgarþingslǫg*, the law code relevant for the areas around the Oslo fjord from Sarps(borg) to Bohuslän, was likely founded prior to 1164, with its Christian law section and a short section on village-held þings being revised in the new *landslov* of King Magnús lagabæti from 1274.[49] In all three recensions of the law code, one violation of the moral commandments is to seek out the Saami to receive divination: 'it is unlawful for persons to travel to the Saami to ask for divination'.[50] In the *Eiðsífaþingslǫg*, the law code relevant for the Oppland-region and potentially first compiled in the 1150s, a similar prohibition is included. Here, the transgressive activity of seeking out the Saami to participate in their rituals is equally defined as *ubota værk*, but the section is

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[47] *Vatnsdœla saga*, pp. 34–5. The Saami men lie down for three days in a shed without moving or eating, inducing a trance that enables their mind-journey to Iceland.

[48] *Vatnsdœla saga*, pp. 29–30.

[49] *Store norske leksikon*, 'Borgarting' (last updated 10 November 2017) <https://snl.no/Borgarting> [accessed 27 May 2022].

[50] 'Þet er oc vbota værk. er maðr fær a fínmarkr at spyria spadom'. *Norges Gamle Love*, vol. 1, p. 362.

slightly longer: 'No person should believe in [the power of] the Saami, or sorcery, or [their] drum, or sacrifice, or root, or in that which belongs to heathendom, or seek help there. And if a person seeks out the Saami, he is an outlaw and an unlawful person'.[51] The two south-eastern law texts forbid seeking out the Saami and were relevant for the spatial regions that the law-codes covered. Else Mundal has commented that the law documents that Norse people:

> knew about the holy places of the [Saami], that they had faith in what could be achieved
> by visiting such places, that they had most likely witnessed rituals performed at [Saami]
> holy places, and that they perhaps even assisted their [Saami] hosts when they performed
> rituals on their behalf.[52]

The prohibition to seek out the Saami for participation in magical ritual in these areas indicate that Christian people seeking out the Saami for these purposes was perceived as possible, was potentially occurring on a regular basis, and was viewed by the Church as problematic. Now, significantly, the problem expressed in the law codes is not the Saami ritual performance itself but, rather, the fact that Christians sought it out. On a different note, it has also been noted that the activity of seeking out the Saami to participate in their rituals could have been a means for converted people to take in order to re-confirm their pre-Christian identities, as further

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[51] 'Engi maðr a at trua. a finna. eða fordæðor. eða vit. eða blot. eða rot. eða þat. er til siðar hœyrir. eða leita ser þar bota. En ef maðr fær til finna. oc uærðr hann sannr at þui. þa er hann utlægr. oc ubota maðr'. *Norges Gamle Love*, vol. 1, pp. 389–90; Else Mundal, 'Sami Sieidis in a Nordic Context?', *Journal of Northern Studies*, 12.1 (2018), 11–20 (p. 12).

[52] Mundal, 'Sieidis', p. 14.

discussed below. Complicating matters further, Mundal demonstrates that it is often taken for granted that the Saami mentioned in these laws were heathens or exclusively not Christian, which may not be the case. Actually, other prohibitions against magic performance and ritual practice exist across the medieval laws and, in those cases, the practices do not characterise the performers as heathens but rather as 'bad' Christians.[53]

Despite the prohibition for Christians to participate in Saami rituals in eastern Norway, a multitude of instances from Medieval and Norse texts depict such transgressive activity occurring. Most often, Saami ritual performers appear in the narratives because the protagonist of the text, regardless of cultural affiliation, seeks them out. This ambiguous portrayal demonstrates that the understanding of Saami characters, and thereby medieval Saami societies, as textual representations of the 'quintessential horror of the magical outsider allowed into the intimate domestic sphere',[54] is more complicated than often assumed.

Emily S. Lee has argued that, as a concept within postcolonial theory, ambiguity and its ability to recognise complexity promotes non-binary interpretations of cultural fluidity can be useful for understanding the multi-faceted portrayals of postcolonial subjects.[55] This complexity can, admittedly with quite a bit of caution, be extended to function as a tool in our reading of the ambiguous

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[53] Mundal, 'Sieidis', p. 18.
[54] Barraclough, 'Frontiers', p. 45.
[55] Emily S. Lee, 'Postcolonial Ambivalence and Phenomenological Ambiguity: Towards Recognizing Asian American Women's Agency', *Critical Philosophy of Race*, 4.1 (2016), 56–73 (p. 66).

portrayals of Saami ritual performance across Norse texts. Building on this complexity, Martin Nakata's conceptualisation of the *cultural interface* in the meeting between the Indigenous and the non-Indigenous living in the border zones between different identities might also prove useful in our reading of Saami characters. Nakata suggests that the interface results in an ambiguity that incorporates a site of contestation of engagement which in turn represents a space of tension that enables the possibilities for multitude positions in-between.[56]

Instances involved the saintly Norwegian King Óláfr Haraldssonar again demonstrates the ambiguity associated with Saami ritual performers in Norse narration and help showcase a multitude of positions in-between. The king is usually associated with Saami ritual performance through his portrayed death at the battle of Stiklastaðir, as recited in the previously mentioned *Erfridrápa Óláfs helga* and repeated in *Heimskringla* and *Helgisaga Óláfs konungs Haraldssonar*. Here, the cloak that protected the antagonist Þórir hundr, which reportedly lead to the king's death, was made by the Saami with 'great magic'.[57] This event is often assumed to be representative of negative medieval attitudes toward the Saami, since the king's death is associated with pre-Christian Saami performance of magic. However, another incident in *Helgisaga* depicts the king as listening to the prophetic vision of a

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[56] Martin Nakata, *Disciplining the Savages: Savaging the Disciplines* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2007).

[57] 'Mikill fjölkyngi'. *Olafs saga hins helga*, p. 69.

Saami man in his retinue prior to a battle, which results in success.[58] Likewise, King Óláfr Tryggvason is also portrayed as having both positive and negative experiences with Saami ritual performance. In Oddr Snorrason's version of the king's saga from the 1190s, Óláfr is portrayed as asking a Saami man dwelling in the mountains somewhere along the fjord of Trondheim for magical help against the text's antagonists.[59] The king is not portrayed as actively seeking out the Saami on this occasion; however, later in the same text the king does actively seek out the same Saami man for healing the royal dog.

In the majority of instances incorporating Saami ritual performance, the common denominator is that the protagonists actively seek it out. Such transgressive activity, according to the law codes mentioned above, seems then to have been quite normative in real life. In the aforementioned drum-ritual instigated by the Saami performer in *Historia Norwegie*, the performance seems to be strongly opposed by the author, but the motif of Christian people attending the performance is normalised,[60] again showcasing a multitude of positions in-between both for the Saami ritual performers and its observers. Additionally, it should be emphasised that the texts never problematise the Saami themselves, but rather the paganism of pre-Christian rituals. This problematisation, and again ambiguity, is reflected in King Hákon V's 1313 law amendment for Hálogaland which, among other things, intended to make

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[58] *Olafs saga hins helga*, pp. iv–viii, 16.
[59] *Óláfs saga Odds*, pp, 187–90.
[60] *Historia Norwegie*, pp. 62–3.

life easier for newly-converted Saami people in the region by granting converts reduced fines for offences in the first twenty years following conversion.[61]

NEGOTIATING IDENTITY AND THE NORSE-SAAMI COMMON GROUND

It has been suggested in sociological theory that when finding themselves in comparable situations, people come to think alike. This cognitive similarity in turn allows for the possibility of the blending of religious fields following cultural meetings.[62] Numerous scholars have therefore emphasised that a substantial foundation for the close connections between Norse and Saami peoples in the medieval period was rooted in the sharing of central religious features that allowed for mutuality and respect.[63] Aspects like spirit journeys, shapeshifting, personification of nature and animal spirits, weather magic, magical clothing and weapons, as well as ecstatic ritual performance, are visible in both Saami and Norse archaeological material as well as in the texts.[64] If we assume this collected material

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[61] *Norges Gamle Love: Lovgivningen efter Kong Magnus Håkonssons Död 1280 indtil 1387*, ed. by Rudolf Keyser and Peter Andreas Munch, vol. 3 (Christiania: Chr. Gröndahl, 1849), p. 107.

[62] Tine Jeanette Bierning, 'The Concept of Shamanism in Old Norse Religion from a Sociological Perspective', in *Old Norse Religion in Long-Term Perspectives: Origins, Changes and Interactions*, ed. by Anders Andrén, Kristina Jennbert and Catharina Raudvere (Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2006), pp. 171–8 (p. 172).

[63] Svestad, Asgeir, 'Svøpt i myra: Synspunkter på Skjoldehamnfunnets etniske og kulturelle tilknytning', in *Viking: Norsk arkeologisk årbok*, ed. by Herdis Hølleland and others, vol. 80 (Oslo: Norsk Arkeologisk Selskap, 2017), pp. 129–56; Hansen and Olsen, *Hunters*, pp. 50–1; Mundal, 'Sieidis', pp. 11–13.

[64] For the archaeology of some of these features, see Neil Price, *The Viking Way: Magic and Mind in Late Iron Age Scandinavia*, 2nd edn (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2019), pp. 217–71.

consists of reflections of actual ritual performance, significant common ground will have existed during different types of interactions.

One such shared ritual aspect might be traceable in a Norse loan word into the Saami languages. In North Saami, the term 'skeaŋka' refers to a gift, whereas the term 'skenkja' in Norse refers to the serving of a drink or to pour.[65] As has been documented in both early and later medieval texts, in skaldic poetry, as well as in the archaeological material, ceremonial drinking via the pouring or sharing of drinks and symbolic gift-exchange played a significant role in Norse rituals and specifically in the creation and upholding of alliances.[66] Consequently, Audhild Schanche has proposed that the language loan from 'pouring a drink' in Norse to 'gift' in North Saami indicates that ceremonial drinking was an important factor in the formal exchanges between the groups.[67] As I have argued previously, I find Schanche's interpretation convincing as several meetings between Norse and Saami characters across medieval texts revolve around the sharing of a drink. For example, when King Haraldr hárfagri is first introduced to the Saami woman Snæfríðr, she offers him a cup of mead (following the typical Norse protocol of greeting a guest), and in the stories about the throne-pretender Sigurðr Slembidjákn's stay with a Saami boat-

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[65] Hansen and Olsen, *Hunters*, p. 76.

[66] Lisa Turberfield, 'Intoxicating Women: Old Norse Drinking Culture and the Role of Women' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Aberdeen, 2016), pp. 31, 99–100; Marte Spangen and Johan Eilertsen Arntzen, 'Sticky Structures and Opportunistic Builders: The Construction and Social Role of Longhouses in Northern Norway', in *Re-Imagining Periphery: Archaeology and Text in Northern Europe from Iron Age to Viking and Early Medieval Periods*, ed. by Charlotta Hillerdal and Kristin Ilves (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2020), pp. 11–32 (pp. 28–9).

[67] Audhild Schanche, *Graver i ur og berg: Samisk gravskikk og religion fra forhistorisk til nyere tid* (Karasjok: Davvi Girji: 2000), p. 305.

builder in Hálogaland, the fact that they share beer together is highlighted.[68] While these are instances from texts, ceremonial drinking may have been a contributing factor to the consolidation of personal relationships or as a solidifier of a common ground before a shared ritual performance.

Following the large-scale conversion to Christianity in the early medieval period onwards, however, such a common ground was increasingly lost as the Saami were traditionally not subjected to large-scale conversion until the early modern period (although some regional variation certainly existed).[69] Archaeologists have therefore suggested that archaeological material with mixed Norse-Saami identity markers represent the strategies of cross-cultural societies or blended Norse-Saami families that chose to reclaim their pre-Christian identities and associate themselves more intimately with Saami culture rather than converting.[70] The conversion was associated with the employment of new social structures connected with centralisation and growth of the nation-state under individual rule. Marte Spangen highlights that the harsh measures to obtains these changes were predominantly directed at the Norse, while conversion of the Saami was typically not intensified until after the Reformation period.[71] Converted Norwegians or people otherwise unwilling to convert may therefore have wanted to associate themselves

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[68] *Ágrip*, p. 5; Snorri Sturluson, *Heimskringla* 3, ed. by Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, Íslenzk fornrit 28 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1950), p. 311.

[69] Mundal, 'Sieidis', p. 18.

[70] Marte Spangen, 'Silver Hoards in Sámi Areas', in *Recent Perspectives on Sámi Archaeology in Fennoscandia and North-West Russia*, ed. by Petri Halinen and others (Helsinki: Finnish Antiquarian Society, 2009), pp. 94–106 (p. 103); Svestad, 'Skjoldehamnfunnet', p. 134.

[71] Spangen, 'Hoards', p. 103.

more intimately with the Saami to reclaim their pre-Christian identities. The ambiguous portrayal of Saami ritual in the textual material could therefore also be connected to such a reclaiming of pre-Christian identity.[72]

The negotiation of identity and cultural belonging is especially clear in the stories about the conception of Eyvindr kinnrifa. Here, a childless Norse couple seeks help from Saami ritual performers outside Niðarós, as described in Oddr Snorrason's *Óláfs saga*:

> My [Eyvindr's] father and mother spent a long time together in lawful wedlock and had no children. When they grew old, they were much grieved that they might have to die with no heir. They then visited the [Saami] with a great deal of money and asked that they grant them an heir with the exercise of magic. The [Saami] then called on the chief of their spirits, who dwell in the sky, for the sky is as full of unclean spirits as the earth. This spirit sent an unclean spirit into the dark dungeon that in fact may be called my mother's womb. That same spirit am I, and I was incarnated in this way and then appeared in human form. That was the manner of my birth […] I cannot be baptized for the reason that I am not a man.[73]

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[72] See Wang, *Decolonising Medieval Fennoscandia*.

[73] 'Faðir minn ok móðir váur saman langa hríð með lǫligum hjúskap ok áttu ekki barn. Ok er þau eldusk, þá hǫrmuðu þau þat mjǫk ef þau dœi erfingjalaus. Fóru þau siðan til Finna með miki fé ok báðu þá gefa sér nǫkkvorn erfingja af fjǫlkynngis íþrótt. Finnar kǫlluðu þá til hǫfðingja þeira anda er loptit byggja, fyrir því at jafnfullt er loptit af óhreinum ǫndum sem jǫrðin. Ok sjá andi sendi einn óhreinan anda í þessa hina døkku myrkvastofu er at sǫnnu má kallask minnar móður kviðr. Ok sá hinn sami andi em ek, ok holdguðumk ek svá með þessum hætti, ok síðan sýndumk ek með mannligri ásjá, ok var ek svá borinn í heim [. . .] ok fyrir því má ek eigi skírask at ek em eigi maðr'. *Óláfs saga Odds*, p. 257; *Oddr Snorrason, The Saga of Olaf Tryggvason, trans. by Theodore M. Andersson (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000), p. 96.*

In an elaboration of the story in the probably-early-fourteenth century *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta*, the Saami characters agree to help the childless couple only after they have sworn with an oath that 'the child shall serve Thor and Odin till the day of its death, and that we may have him when he is old enough'.[74] It is not necessary the demand that Eyvindr had to devote himself to the Norse gods that is unique in this context, but rather the requirement that he should return to Saami society upon reaching adulthood. Perhaps this requirement helps illuminate the possibilities awarded to bi-cultural people to emphasise their Saami identities rather than their Norse as a way of maintaining their pre-Christian identities.

CONCLUSION

The Norse and the Saami shared central religious features that allowed for a common understanding, which in turn enabled the participation in and contribution to each other's respective ritual performances and ceremonies. Although the general interpretation of Saami ritual performance, or *finnvitka*, as it is portrayed in medieval texts, tends to be specifically negative in contemporary scholarship, the ambiguity associated with such performance in the primary sources demonstrates its dynamic aspects. Saami ritual performance is not portrayed as static, and it occurs (or is presented as occurring) regularly, in different contexts and with a variety of different

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[74] 'Sá maðr skal alt til dauðadags þjóna Þór ok Óðni, ef vér megum öðlast þat barn er líf ok aldr hafi til'. *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta*, in *Fornmannasögur eptir gömlum handritum*, ed. By Peter Andreas Munch, vol. 2 (Copenhagen: Kongelige Nordiske oldsskriftselskab, 1826), p. 168.

outcomes. Similarly, the delineations between normative and transgressive activity are also not sharp considering the portrayal of Saami ritual performance, which is exemplified in the contrast between the eastern Norwegian law codes that prohibit seeking out the Saami for participation in such performance and the abundant material across other texts showcasing exactly this participation. By employing Martin Nakata's proposed cultural interface, the ambiguity associated with Saami ritual performance may be compared to the space of tension that enables the possibilities for multitude positions in-between for postcolonial subjects. Within such an *ambiguous interface* of identity and culture, new and more inclusive interpretations of Saami ritual performance, as well as the role of the Saami in medieval society more generally, emerge, where social boundaries are not clear-cut and the Saami emerge as significant social and political players. Furthermore, using methodologies suggested in the so-called 'Indigenous Turn' of Medieval Studies which aims to provide more dynamic representations of Indigenous peoples in historical source material, the colonial roots our field continues to perpetuate can be confronted and the episteme re-adjusted. By employing reparative readings in the investigation of Saami ritual performance across medieval texts, the many alternative opportunities for Saami characters are visualised beyond the stereotypes of the field as static, simple, peripheral, and far-northern sorcerers. Instead, Saami ritual performers emerge as diverse and dynamic political and social players, functioning in multi-faceted ways across the different texts. These portrayals

demonstrate, once again, the normalised, long-standing, spatially wide-ranging, varied, and significant presence of Saami peoples in medieval Fennoscandia.

The *Eriksgata* in Medieval Sweden *c*.800–1300: A Political Ritual, a Legal Necessity, or an Identity Marker?

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This article is about the eriksgata, *a journey undertaken by a Swedish king-elect across the realm to be confirmed as new leader by the local provincial assemblies. The focus is on the centuries between 800 and 1300, which saw a period of state formation, and important socio-economic and religious developments. The aim of the article is to look at the* eriksgata *from several perspectives, including as a ritual, but also as a political and diplomatic act. It seeks to answer several questions about the intent behind the tradition, and its practical consequences. In a first section, further details about the* eriksgata *will be given. Its history and development will be explained, and comparisons will be made with similar traditions in other Germanic kingdoms during the same period. In a second instance, the question of whether the* eriksgata *should be seen as a ritual and/or religious act, as medieval coronation ceremonies often were, will be addressed. The journey's legal aspect and necessity in enabling a smooth power transition will be scrutinised too. The third part will look at the more concrete role that the* eriksgata *played in enabling the political minority to have a say in the election of their leader. Following a brief overview of the ancient rules governing the election of kings in medieval Sweden, it will also be suggested that the* eriksgata *allowed the people outside of Svealand to reaffirm their own ethnic identity. It will be concluded that rather than being a diplomatic effort to unite the realm, the journey could also have served to accentuate regional differences.*

Rituality is a much-discussed aspect of medieval society. The regal traditions and coronation rituals of well-documented kingdoms such as France and England have been studied at length, and their intricacies much explored, analysed, and interpreted.

But while it is less often the subject of scholarly study (mainly owing to the lack of sources), medieval Sweden also had a monarchy, the Church also greatly influenced politics, and society was just as stratified and codified as any other. The election of kings in early and later medieval Sweden followed complex rules which were not based on agnatic primogeniture. Indeed, until the late sixteenth century, Sweden's monarchy was elective, and the king was chosen by local assemblies representing the provincial elites.[1] These assemblies consisted of powerful landowners who administered local affairs following the guidance and authority of a lawspeaker. They also had the power to veto a king's election, as will be shown in this article. Upon election, medieval Swedish kings had to embark on a journey throughout the kingdom – a fluid concept in the medieval period when borders were not fixed yet, and the population could be subjected to several different overlords – to present himself to the provincial assemblymen for them to confirm his election and cement his claim to power.[2] This trip was called the *eriksgata* and is Sweden's most distinctive regal ritual. A crowned king touring the realm to introduce himself to the population and assert his authority after coronation was common across the medieval world. Such royal tours often allowed the king to install trusted friends in local positions of power and tighten his grip over local affairs.

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[1] A thirteenth century legal text describing the process is quoted on p. 4.

[2] The whole process is described in Olof Sundqvist, 'Features of Pre-Christian Inauguration Rituals in the Medieval Swedish Laws', in *Kontinuitäten und Brüche in der Religionsgeschichte: Festschrift für Anders Hultgård zu seinem 65. Geburtstag*, ed. by Michael Stausberg (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2001), pp. 620–50 (pp. 622–5).

Similarly, regal processions were also very common, and coronations were often preceded by a procession through a city or region, leading to the place of coronation.[3] This kind of parade is not the object of the current article. Instead, as will be shown in this article, the *eriksgata* functioned as a requirement for a newly elected king's position to be confirmed. This paper will thus study the *eriksgata* as a political ritual and investigate its broader symbolic meaning and practical implications for the holding, sharing, and purpose of royal power.

The first part of this essay will provide background information concerning the *eriksgata*. It will give an overview of the primary sources in which the practice is discussed and will also look to the rest of Europe to try and find contemporary equivalents. The second section will focus on whether the *eriksgata*, as practiced until the late thirteenth century, should be understood as a ritual in medieval Scandinavia. This same section will question whether it had any real legal value or only served to legitimise one's claim to power. An alternative interpretation of the eriksgata will be given in the last part. Rather than looking at it from a purely symbolic perspective, the journey's actual implications on the negotiation of power in Sweden will be investigated. It will be shown that the *eriksgata* may have served as an identity marker for the Götar and, rather than unifying the population behind one king, may have played a role in cementing distinct regional identities and reaffirming the province's

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[3] Björn Weiler, *Paths to Kingship and Medieval Latin Europe, c. 950–1200* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), p. 361.

power and influence in political affairs. The article will conclude that while there might have been a ritualistic aspect behind it, the *eriksgata* served a very practical purpose first and foremost and helped the general population uphold its ancient rights and power in the face of an increasingly centralised monarchy.

WHAT IS THE *ERIKSGATA*?

Firstly, it is necessary to explain what the *eriksgata* is. Medieval Swedish kings did not inherit kingship. Instead, they were chosen by a small group of noblemen. We know from several sources, including multiple law texts, that of all the different tribes inhabiting medieval Sweden, the Svear chose the king who was to rule the entirety of the Swedish kingdom. The oldest source making this claim is Saxo's twelfth-century *Gesta Danorum*, in which he writes that it was the 'old privilege of their race' for the Swedes to elect the king.[4] The ethnonym 'Swedes' (in this paper, the modern Swedish 'Svear' is used instead) refers to the inhabitants of Svealand, of which the most populous region was Uppland. The Svear had long been considered superior to their southern neighbours, the Götar, by numerous authors, including Adam of Bremen, who considered the Götar to be subjected to the Svear.

There is ample literature about whether this interpretation of ethnic dynamics is accurate – not least the present author's recent PhD thesis about identity in medieval

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[4] Saxo Grammaticus, *Gesta Danorum: The History of the Danes*, ed. by Karsten Friis-Jensen, trans. by Peter Fisher, vol. 2 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2015), p. 919.

Sweden – and therefore, this paper will not delve into this subject.[5] But the understanding, as shown in legal texts and contemporary outside sources, is that the Götar answered to the Svear. And this is where the relevance of *eriksgata* lies. The *eriksgata* allowed the new king to travel his kingdom and seek confirmation from its different provincial assemblies. *Upplandslagen*, written down in the late thirteenth century or early fourteenth century, explains that the king needed the approval of the 'Thing of All Götar' in Skara (Västergötland) to truly become king of both Swedes and Götar.[6] The practice thus allowed the Götar some form of agency and gave them a say in the election of their new ruler. This crucial aspect of the 'ritual' – the power-sharing element – will be discussed in the third part of this paper. The word's etymology is debated. Those familiar with modern Swedish will recognise that '*gata*' today means road or street, and, likely, it is also what it means in '*eriksgata*'.

On the one hand, some scholars have posited that the journey began on Saint Erik's feast day, which would make the invention of the term relatively late, considering that Saint Eric only died in 1160 and was sanctified many years later. On the other hand, it has also been suggested that '*erik*' in this case is to be taken literally as Old Norse *eíríkr* for 'strong ruler'. Thus, the *eriksgata* may be translated as 'the strong ruler's route'. An Old Norse origin would confirm the presumption that the *eriksgata* may have pre-Christian origins. Olof Sundqvist gives a thorough overview of the

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[5] Caroline Wilhelmsson, 'The Concept of Swedish Identity, 800–1288' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Aberdeen, 2022).

[6] A full quote from *Upplandslagen* is given below.

philological reasoning behind the latter conclusion in 'Features of Pre-Christian Inauguration Rituals'.[7]

As suggested above, it is unclear how old the practice is. None of the sources which mention it discuss its origins. Scholars such as Sundqvist have identified possible links between the Swedish kings' coronation ceremony and pagan traditions. By extension, it has been suggested that the *eriksgata*, which *Upplandslagen* says preceded the actual coronation, was likely to have been practiced in pre-Christian times too.[8] In medieval Sweden, however, this rough dating is not particularly helpful. Indeed, the kingdom remained pagan much longer than its other Scandinavian neighbours. There is evidence of a strong pagan influence in Uppland as late as the eleventh or twelfth century.[9] The *eriksgata* being pagan in origin, may thus still place it anywhere between the Migration Period (or earlier) and the High Middle Ages. The latter option is what some legal scholars have argued, especially Elsa Sjöholm, who rejected the possibility that thirteenth-century law texts from Sweden could be used as sources for pagan times.[10] Historians of the Viking Age in Sweden, such as Stefan Brink, have led credence to the hypothesis that the *eriksgata* may be an ancient practice. Indeed, the principle of having a king travel across different provinces to seek his

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[7] Sundqvist, 'Features of Pre-Christian Inauguration Rituals', pp. 634–5.

[8] *Ibid*, pp. 625–8.

[9] Nora Berend, 'Introduction', in *Christianization and the Rise of Christian Monarchy: Scandinavia, Central Europe and Rus' c. 900–1200*, ed. by Nora Berend (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 1–46 (p. 25).

[10] Elsa Sjöholm, *Sveriges Medeltidslagar. Europeisk Rättstradition i Politisk Omvandling* (Stockholm: Institutet för Rättshistorisk Forskning, *1988*).

people's approval mirrors the network of *husaby*-sites found across Sweden. Locations

named *husaby* are widely considered to be ancient royal farms used to supply the

kings with food and other resources whenever they visited his realm.[11] This network

of royal farms is thought to date back at least to the Viking Age and possibly earlier.[12]

Medieval Sweden was fragmented and could not be considered a single political unit

until at least the 1290s.[13] Therefore, it is unlikely that any single king – especially

unilaterally elected by the Svear – commanded genuine respect across all provinces

until then. Instead, travelling throughout the realm regularly may have allowed a king

to maintain good relations with his countrymen. It is unclear who owned these royal

farms. Brink has suggested that they belonged to a sort of Crown estate (the 'Uppsala

Öd'), which was disconnected from provincial rivalries and belonged to the current

elected monarch regardless of his ethnic origins.[14] It is in this context of itinerant

kingship and travelling courts that the *eriksgata* may have developed.

The *eriksgata* is briefly mentioned in *Västgötalagen* (Sweden's oldest surviving

medieval law written down around 1220) in connection with King Ragnvald

Knaphövde, whose unfortunate fate will be studied in the next section of this article.

But apart from this short mention and later legal texts such as *Upplandslagen* and

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[11] See Stefan Brink, 'Political and Social Structures in Early Scandinavia: A Settlement-Historical Pre-Study of the Central Place', *Tor*, 28 (1996), 235–82, and more recently Johan Runer, 'The Husabyar in the Unification Process of the Kingdom of Sweden', in *Husebyer: Status Quo, Open Questions and Perspectives*, ed. by Lisbeth Eilersgaard Christensen, Thorsten Lemm and Anne Pedersen (Copenhagen: National Museum, 2016), pp. 165–72.

[12] Runer, 'Husabyar', p. 166.

[13] Philip Line, *Kingship and State Formation in Sweden: 1130–1290* (Leiden: Brill, 2007).

[14] Runer, 'Husabyar', p. 166.

Södermannalagen (written down in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, respectively), few medieval sources tell us about the *eriksgata*. It is discussed in Magnus Eriksson's law from the mid-fourteenth century. Still, it is unclear whether this version of the *eriksgata* is a good representation of the practice's earlier incarnations. Nevertheless, thirteenth-century laws still give us glimpses of what the journey would have entailed. *Upplandslagen*, written down around 1296, provides the most thorough description of the ritual. It tells us that:

I. Now, the lands need to elect a king. Then should the three folk lands first take the king. That is Tiundaland and Attundaland and Fjädrundaland. The lawman of Uppland shall first deem him king, at Uppsala. Thereafter the other lawmen [should deem him king] one after another: Södermännen's, Ostgötar's, Tiohärad's, Västgötar's, Närkingar's and Västmännen's. They have the right to deem him to crown and kingdom, to reign the lands and rule the realm, to strengthen the law and maintain the peace. Then he is deemed to Uppsala Öd [the Crown estate].

II. Now, he shall ride the Eriksgata. They shall follow him and give him hostages and swear him oaths. And he shall promise to hold their law and swear them peace. From Uppsala, they shall follow him to Strängnäs. ... Svintuna ... Holaved ... Junabäck... Ramundeboda... Uppbåga bro ... Östens bro ... back to Uppsala. Then this king has legally obtained the land and realm at Uppsvear and Södermän, Götar and Gutar, and all Smållänningar. Then he has ridden the right Eriksgata.

III. The archbishop and folk bishops shall then consecrate him to the crown at Uppsala

Church. Then he has full right to be king and wear the crown. Then he has right to Uppsala

Öd and to *dulgadråp* and *danaarv*. Then he shall give fiefs to those who do him service.[15]

This extract shows that the *eriksgata*, as codified in the laws, had several aspects. It was

meant to have legal value, as the law explicitly enunciates, but it was also just one of

several steps in choosing a king. Indeed, the *eriksgata* had no impact as long as the

king-elect was still to be crowned by the bishops, thus adding a religious value to the

whole process. This leads one to question whether the *eriksgata* was a strict ritual, a

loose tradition, or a customary practice that followed the king's election. The

ceremony is known to have been much more codified and was undoubtedly a ritual.

But interestingly, while this thorough description was written down in the late

thirteenth century, there are no records of an *eriksgata* undertaken by Magnus Ladulås

upon his accession to the throne in 1275, nor for his son Birger Magnusson who was

crowned in 1290.[16] These two kings, belonging to the illustrious Folkung dynasty (also

known as the House of Bjälbo), notably spearheaded by Birger Jarl – Sweden's

foremost medieval statesman – was also the first to adopt a more openly centralist

stance on power. This will be discussed below.

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[15] Translated in Olof Sundqvist, 'Features of Pre-Christian Inauguration Rituals', pp. 622–3. The standard edition is Åke Holmbäck and Elias Wessén, *Svenska Landskapslagar: Tolkade och Förklarade för Nutidens Svenskar. Ser. 1, Östgötalagen och Upplandslagen* (Stockholm: Geber, 1979).
[16] Line, *Kingship and State Formation*, p. 203.

It is worth noting that there are similar traditions elsewhere in medieval Europe, especially in Germanic contexts. For example, it was common for early medieval Frankish kings to travel around their kingdom to maintain amicable relations with their subjects. Several scholars of medieval Sweden have drawn this parallel, including Sundqvist and Philip Line.[17] Medieval polities across Europe faced many of the same logistical and political challenges as early Sweden. Namely a fragmented realm and nascent state apparatus, it is thus to be expected that similar strategies – itinerant kingship and consultative leadership – were employed to the same ends. In France, there is evidence that Merovingian rulers also travelled within their realm and visited several royal residences (perhaps akin to *husaby* farms). However, this was much more limited than later Scandinavian kings and eventually stopped after the unification of a single Merovingian kingdom.[18] This development echoes that of the *eriksgata*, which, as will be discussed later, became obsolete after the consolidation of the kingdom of Sweden in the late thirteenth century. The Capetian kings, who exercised power in a less stable political context than their Merovingian predecessors, travelled much more widely. Robert the Pious (who reigned between 996 and 1031), for instance, visited most parts of his kingdom, venturing far outside his capital, and maintained amicable relations with the local elites, which ensured the

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[17] Sundqvist, 'Features of Pre-Christian Inauguration Rituals', p. 634.

[18] Yitzhak Hen, 'The Merovingian Polity: A Network of Courts and Courtiers', in *The Oxford Handbook of the Merovingian World*, ed. by Bonnie Effros and Isabel Moreira (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), pp. 217–37 (pp. 224–31).

stability of his kingship. His actual power was weak, much like that of contemporary Swedish kings, but he was nevertheless recognised as symbolically superior by the kingdom's foremost princes.[19]

The closest equivalent to the *eriksgata* can be found in Germany, where until 1273, newly elected kings toured their empire to gain the population's support. This is called the *Königsumritt*. Several German kings are recorded as having undertaken such a tour. In his *Chronicle*, Thietmar of Merseburg narrates a tour that a newly crowned Holy Roman Emperor, Henry II, undertook across his realm, encountering praise and resistance. He was by then, however, already formally king, having been crowned by Archbishop Willigis of Mainz in 1002.[20] His successor, Conrad II, elected in 1027, faced opposition and unrest after he was elected king. The situation was particularly dire in Italy, where local princes wished to sever ties with the empire. In Conrad's case, his kingship only gained acceptance after he visited his reluctant subjects, and his journey was marred by violent rebellions which required quashing.[21] His tour, more than being a diplomatic exercise, essentially became a peace-keeping mission. However, Conrad's son Henry III (d. 1056) did not face such a challenging ascent to kingship. Accordingly, upon his appointment as Emperor in 1046, he did not

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[19] Elizabeth M. Hallam and Charles West, *Capetian France 987–1328* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2020), pp. 87–8.

[20] *Ottonian Germany: The Chronicon of Thietmar of Merseburg*, trans. by David Warner (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), pp. 213–25.

[21] Herbert Schutz, *The Medieval Empire in Central Europe: Dynastic Continuity in the Post-Carolingian Frankish Realm, 900-1300* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), pp. 115–20.

immediately travel to Italy (a volatile part of the empire), unlike his predecessors. However, he later visited Italy for his formal coronation.[22] This suggests that the *Königsumritt* could take on a slightly different form and meaning depending on the circumstances of each king undertaking it.

These similar practices all took place in other Germanic kingdoms, suggests a common origin for the *eriksgata* and its continental equivalents and deserves further research. But while it shares common points with them, the *eriksgata* remains different from the practices mentioned above in that it was not the public performance of itinerant kingship seen with the Frankish and Salian kings but a steppingstone towards establishing one's legitimacy to kingship. It was at once a tool to preserve (or build) national identity but also a legal requirement among others in the election process. At least, this is true for the early Middle Ages. Indeed, the practice of the *eriksgata* (in its medieval form) continued until the early modern period, when it was last recorded in connection with Charles IX, who became king in 1604.[23] However, scholars of early modern Sweden have interpreted the early modern *eriksgata* as an attempt to revive medieval traditions and bolster the Crown's image as a long-established, stable, and ancient institution in the context of turbulent state formation

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[22] *Die Urkunden der die Deutschen Könige und Kaiser, Herausgegeben von der Gesellschaft für Ältere Deutsche Geschichtskunde. Fünfter Band 5: Die Urkunden Heinrichs II*, ed. by H. Bresslau and P. Kehr (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1931), pp. 22–3.

[23] Cathleen Sarti, 'Sigismund of Sweden as Foreigner in His Own Kingdom: How the King of Sweden was Made an Alien', in *Dynastic Change: Legitimacy and Gender in Medieval and Early Modern Monarch*, ed. by Ana Maria S. A. Rodrigues, Manuela Santos Silva and Jonathan Spangler (London: Routledge, 2020), pp. 86–102 (p. 97).

and the Reformation.[24] Therefore, it is unknown whether the practice had the same

meaning, at a personal level, to early modern kings as it had to their medieval

counterparts. It is also unclear whether the crowds reacted to it similarly. This late use

of the *eriksgata* is nevertheless a telling sign of the inherently political dimension of

this tradition and how it could be used as a tool for propaganda even long after the

kingdom had been formally united.

THE *ERIKSGATA* AS RITUAL

Gerd Althoff defines ritual as 'chains of actions of a complex nature [that] are repeated

by actors in certain circumstances in the same or similar ways, and, if this happens

deliberately, with the conscious goal of familiarity'.[25] Indeed, it is widely

acknowledged that rituals contribute to a community's sense of identity and shared

culture. But while rituals are systemised actions, it has been mentioned that the

eriksgata did not happen with every king despite its codification in law. This raises the

following question: how necessary was it? In the absence of sources clearly answering

this question, several criteria may be studied to gauge the importance of the *eriksgata*.

Firstly, its religious aspect should be investigated. Sundqvist has identified a possible

remnant of the magico-pagan ritual in the legal stipulation that the *eriksgata* should be

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[24] *Ibid*.

[25] Gerd Althoff, 'The Variability of Rituals in the Middle Ages', in *Medieval Concepts of the Past: Ritual, Memory, Historiography*, ed. by Gerd Althoff, Johannes Fried, and Patrick Geary (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 71–88 (p. 71).

undertaken clockwise.[26] He does not elaborate on why this direction of travel should be automatically seen as a magical feature of the journey. The stipulation seems odd and arbitrary to the modern eye, which may signify that it is rooted in ancient rituals. Still, it may also have reflected that this would have allowed the king to visit the realm's most populous areas first (Östergötaland and Västergötaland) before moving inland to less densely populated regions such as Närke on his way back to Uppsala. As such, this element cannot be considered indicative of a religious focus. Other scholars, including Alex Sanmark and Triin Laidoner, have connected the monuments and places alongside the *eriksgata* route with ancestor worship, thus underlying the journey's symbolic importance. However, the few sources mentioning the *eriksgata* do not highlight this aspect of the tour or mention any cultic considerations. It is, therefore, unclear whether the *eriksgata* travelled past funerary monuments because this was a conscious attempt to give the journey a religious dimension or because anything public needed to take place on the main road for both symbolic and practical reasons.

As mentioned, many well-established medieval kingdoms had coronation ceremonies, including France, England, Sicily, Germany and Jerusalem. Still, they were not necessary everywhere and could change from one ruler to another, even within the same kingdom.[27] Medieval Iberian kingdoms, for instance, had fluid

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[26] Sundqvist, 'Features of Pre-Christian Inauguration Rituals', p. 637.
[27] Weiler, *Paths to Kingship*, pp. 310–11.

coronation practices that changed from one generation to another, with some kings skipping the ritual without impacting their legitimacy.[28] A similar situation may develop in Sweden, and it remains unclear how significant the *eriksgata* truly was. As mentioned, it is even vague when the practice began. The *husaby*-farms suggest it could be as old as the Viking Age and earlier, but we also know that Sweden was far from being united during the Viking Age. Several kings could compete at any given time, and sometimes multiple leaders co-ruled.[29] Did they all embark on an *eriksgata*? Were all these petty kings subjected to the same complex process outlined in *Upplandslagen*? It seems very unlikely, especially as there are no mentions anywhere, not even in oral history, of any *eriksgata* undertaken during the Viking Age.

The *eriksgata*, by definition, only makes sense in the context of a kingdom where only one king would be elected but whose realm was still fragile enough to require a confirmation from his subjects. This period in Swedish history corresponds to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries approximately. An *eriksgata* in pre-Christian Sweden, when the different provinces were independent, and kingship was ill-defined and highly unstable, would not have worked. *Västgötalagen* gives a list of kings from tenth-century Olof Skötkonung to King John, who died in 1222.[30] The *eriksgata* is mentioned (although the term itself is not used) in connection with only one of these kings: the

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[28] *Ibid*.

[29] Line, *Kingship and State Formation*, p. 273.

[30] *Yngre Västgötalagen*, 'Vidhemsprästens Anteckningar', <https://project2.sol.lu.se/> [accessed 25 May 2022], (para. 15 of 21).

ill-fated Rognvald Knaphövde, who, the law says, was killed for not respecting the traditional taking of hostages during his journey.[31] The fact that no other king's personal experience of the *eriksgata* was mentioned in the list may reflect the fact that they all took place without any issue. Still, it also makes it unclear whether every single king completed one. It is, therefore, challenging to gauge the *eriksgata*'s rituality, and it seems to the present author that the practice was too loosely enforced to count as a systematic chain of actions.

Another way to determine how crucial the *eriksgata* was and whether it was important enough to be considered a ritual is to decide whether it had any real legal value. However, the legal significance of rituals, traditions, and other symbolic behaviours is difficult to assess because these processes are often older than the laws themselves. In the case of Sweden, all surviving laws were written down in the thirteenth century at the earliest, but it is clear in several cases that they may have incorporated much older elements. For example, we may mention the clause in *Västötalagen* relating to emigrants to Byzantium, which is completely anachronistic for a thirteenth-century law text and clearly references a Viking Age phenomenon.[32] Medieval Nordic laws were also not exhaustive, and entire topics, which may have been considered obvious or natural to all, may have been skipped. Indeed, a few Swedish provincial laws are severely lacking in some categories. *Gutalagen*, which is

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[31] *Ibid*.

[32] *Äldre Västgötalagen*, 'Ærfþær Bolkær', < https://project2.sol.lu.se/fornsvenska/> [accessed 25 May 2022], (para. 12 of 25).

the law of Gotland (written down in the thirteenth century), does not discuss the king

at all, and it is, therefore, impossible to know whether the Gotlanders expected their

island to be part of an *eriksgata* or whether they ultimately rejected the Swedish

king(s). Thus, the fact that the *eriksgata* was codified does not tell us whether it was

practiced as stipulated in the law, and likewise, its absence from earlier records does

not mean that it did not exist at all.

    Nevertheless, Magnus Ladulås, who may be considered the first king of

Sweden following his incorporation of Gotland into the realm and consolidation of

the central authorities and aristocracy, did not need an *eriksgata*, seems to point to it

being a custom rather than an actual legal requirement. Following dynastic unrest,

King Valdemar passed on the kingdom to his brother Magnus.[33] This smooth

transition was enabled thanks to the Church's support, itself secured by the brothers'

father, Birger Jarl, whose vast influence on the consolidation of the kingdom will be

discussed in the next section of this paper. Magnus reigned as king from July 1275,

although it must be noted that he was not formally crowned in the cathedral of

Uppsala until May 1276.[34] King Magnus did not follow the normal process in his

ascent to the throne. He was not elected by the people but chosen by the previous

monarch. He did not tour the kingdom and reigned long before his coronation. The

present author's interpretation is that all three elements, codified in the laws, were

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[33] Svenskt Diplomatariums huvudkartotek (SDHK) nr 984, <https://sok.riksarkivet.se/SDHK> [accessed 24 May 2022].
[34] SDHK nr 1001.

meant to ensure trouble-free continuation in leadership. But King Magnus' new brand of centralist monarchy made proper procedure irrelevant.

Nonetheless, it would be wrong to assume that the *eriksgata* was solely for show. The murder of Ragnvald Knaphövde around 1120 proves that the practice was taken very seriously in earlier and less politically stable times. Regardless of how systematic it was, it had meaning and consequences. The taking of local hostages aimed to show that the king feared the inhabitants of the provinces he visited. Whether he genuinely feared them or not, this was a sign that he respected their input and that the local hostages could vouch for him as an adequate leader.[35] Ragnvald skipped this crucial part of the tradition and insulted the people whose approval he needed. But unlike in religious rituals, he was punished not by the wrath of a deity but by that of his fellow men. About Ragnvald, *Yngre Västgötalagen* says: 'The tenth (Christian king) was King Ragnvald, bold and proud. He rode to Karleby without hostages, and he received a shameful death for the offence that he caused all west Götar'.[36] As mentioned previously, a religious dimension was nevertheless suggested by Laidoner and Sanmark in the actual location of the *eriksgata* route. Indeed, they identified many important locales through which the route passed, including funerary

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[35] Stefan Olsson, *The Hostages of the Northmen: From the Viking Age to the Middle Ages* (Stockholm: Stockholm University Press, 2019), pp. 325–6.

[36] *Yngre Västgötalagen*, 'Vidhemsprästens Anteckningar' (para. 15 of 21).

monuments, thing sites, and other places of power.[37] According to the laws, the journey was not undertaken as communication between the king, a deity or his ancestors. It was merely to be witnessed by all, including ancestors and the dead. The religious element is therefore present but tangential to the journey itself. This emphasises the argument that the *eriksgata* was a political and diplomatic act rather than an actual religious ritual.

It is worth noting that there is no evidence, except for Ragnvald Knaphövde, of any failed *eriksgata* during which an elected king would have been eventually rejected by the Götar. It is possible that such short-lived 'kings' did not receive any coverage in the sources, and it is equally likely that the *eriksgata* was mostly symbolic and that most kings passed the test smoothly. The murder of Ragnvald, however, suggests that it was not simply a pageant. Still, it remains unclear through what mechanisms the provinces' assemblymen could reject a king-elect and how the Svear proceeded in such an event.

THE *ERIKSGATA* AS IDENTITY MARKER?

The notion that the *eriksgata* was a diplomatic exercise is essential in understanding the practice's more profound ramifications. As mentioned briefly at the beginning of

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[37] Alexandra Sanmark and Sarah Semple, 'Places of Assembly: New Discoveries in Sweden and England', *Fornvännen*, 103 (2008), 245–59 (pp. 250–5). Triin Laidoner, *Ancestor Worship and the Elite in Late Iron Age Scandinavia: A Grave Matter* (London: Routledge, 2020), p. 96.

this article, the Götar did not get to choose the king of Sweden. The exact reasons for this are unclear, but they likely have to do with the fact that the Svear were traditionally considered superior to the Götar. In the Viking Age, primary accounts of the geo-political situation in Sweden suggested that the Götar, as well as all other smaller tribes dwelling in the north and east of Sweden, were subjected to the Swedes. Adam of Bremen, for instance, described the Götar as being 'of these Swedish peoples'.[38] In Svealand, the great religious complex lying at the heart of Old Norse religions was located in Old Uppsala.[39] The Svear also held supremacy of the seas and controlled most nearby coastal areas as evidenced by contemporary observers such as traveller Wulfstan of Hedeby, who wrote in the ninth century: 'Blecingaeg and Meore and Eowland and Gotland on bæcbord, and þas land hyrað to Sweon'.[40] Religious, military, and financial power was therefore concentrated in Uppland. Thus, before Christianisation and Europeanisation shifted the centre of power from the north to the southern provinces from the late twelfth century onwards, the people of Svealand dominated Sweden's political landscape. Whether the Götar were truly legally, financially or politically tributary remains debated, but the Svear left their mark on Viking Age history and its records. It is still unknown exactly how and why it was

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[38] Adam of Bremen, *The History of the Archbishops of Hamburg-Bremen*, trans. by Francis Tschan (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), p. 204.

[39] Anne-Sofie Gräslund, 'The Material Culture of Old Norse Religion', in *The Viking World*, ed. by Stefan Brink and Neil Price (London: Routledge, 2007), pp. 249–56 (p. 250).

[40] *Old English History of the World: An Anglo-Saxon Rewriting of Orosius*, ed. and trans. by Malcolm Godden (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016), p. 45; 'Blekinge, Möre, Öland and Gotland on the port side, all belonging to the Swedes' (Godden's translation).

decided (and accepted) that the Svear would elect the king, but we know that it was considered a vital part of the Svea identity. Indeed, after Birger Jarl, through political manoeuvring, established himself as *de facto* ruler of Sweden around 1248 and positioned his son Valdemar as *de jure* king in 1250, the inhabitants of Uppland rebelled. The trigger may have been the introduction of taxes, but Matt Larsson posits that these uprisings may have reflected a deeper discontentment with a new political system that deprived the Svear of their ancestral rights.[41] Just like the right to choose the king was considered an intrinsic part of Svea's identity, it is likely that the right to reject the king was considered an inherent part of Göta identity.

Because of the king's obligation to promise the provincial leaders that he would uphold their laws and refrain from attacking them (as per *Upplandslagen* quoted above), the *eriksgata* can be interpreted as a peace negotiation. In medieval Sweden (pre-Magnus Ladulås), power was negotiated at all levels. First, the king needed to be elected by noblemen. Secondly, he had to be accepted by the provincial assemblies. Once crowned by religious men, medieval Swedish kings were still not free to reign as they pleased. Local assemblies retained significant power and influence well into the thirteenth century, and before the establishment of an aristocracy in 1280 by Magnus Ladulås, landed free farmers constituted a political and economic elite that could pressure and even rival the king.[42] The *eriksgata* was the

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[41] Mats Larsson, *Götarnas Riken: Upptäcktsfärder till Sveriges Enande* (Stockholm: Atlantis, 2002), p. 178.
[42] Line, *Kingship and State Formation*, p. 297.

physical manifestation of this fragmentation of power. Thus, the journey had the seemingly contradictory dual role of both uniting the kingdom in agreement about the new king and reaffirming the provinces' distinct identity and political independence.

Ragnvald's failed *eriksgata* is an excellent example of the fact that the tour indeed had value and could have serious consequences. It is also evidence of the Götar's struggle to get a share of the Svear's power. Certainly, it is worth looking into the unspoken reasons why Ragnvald was murdered. It is known that he rode into Västergötland without taking hostages, which, as seen previously in the law, was considered offensive by the local population.[43] But while that may have been enough to refuse him as king, it hardly justifies his murder, especially considering the significant diplomatic consequences this would have engendered. Instead, Ragnvald's demise inscribed itself in a broader dynastic struggle. While he was elected by the Svear, the Götar had chosen another king, Magnus, of Danish origin but who owned estates in Västergötland through his maternal line.[44] When Magnus' election was rejected by the Svear, it became necessary to kill Ragnvald to allow Magnus to ascend to the throne. Saxo writes:

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[43] *Yngre Västgötalagen*, 'Vidhemsprästens Anteckningar' (para. 15 of 21).

[44] Saxo, *Gesta Danorum*, pp. 918–19.

> Meanwhile, when the ruler of Swedish territories died, the Götar had the effrontery
>
> to confer supreme control on Magnus, even though this gift was wholly at the
>
> Swedes' discretion; the former sought to enhance their own status by meddling with
>
> the prerogative of others. Consequently, the Swedes rejected their authority, for they
>
> would not endure abandoning the old privilege of their race merely to satisfy the
>
> envy of a people rather little known. So, giving attention to the character of their
>
> ancient powers, they elected a new monarch to nullify the title which had been torn
>
> from them by wrongful conferment. But in a short time, the Götar murdered him,
>
> and the sovereignty reverted to Magnus.[45]

Therefore, under the pretence of offence, which is the official reason for Ragnvald's murder as given in *Västgötalagen*, the Götar used the *eriksgata* as an opportunity to assert their own will and rid themselves of a political rival. While an offence may genuinely have been caused – especially if the *eriksgata* was felt to have ritualistic and/or traditional value – the political manoeuvring that ensued is clear evidence of its broader role in balancing power between the Svear and the Götar.

In fact, the *eriksgata*'s itinerary itself tells a lot about the political situation in medieval Sweden. The sources which describe it enounce clearly that following a successful *eriksgata*, the king became king of all of Sweden. *Västgötalagen*, quoted above, gives a precise list of the king's new subjects: 'Uppsvear and Södermän, Götar and Gutar, and all Smållänningar'.[46] But the royal tour excluded most of these people.

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[45] *Ibid.*

[46] Translated in Olof Sundqvist, 'Features of Pre-Christian Inauguration Rituals', pp. 622–3.

The islands of Öland and Gotland, together with modern-day Småland, were utterly ignored. So were the regions directly north of Uppsala. The king-elect only visited a tiny part of his realm. Of course, there may have been practical reasons for this. Few long-distance roads existed in medieval Sweden, and it is understandable that the king only visited the most populous locations. Småland, for instance, has always been a sparsely populated region, which may explain its relative anonymity in medieval records. Similarly, travelling to the islands of Gotland or Öland would have probably required too much expense. The Salians mentioned previously also had to limit the amount of travel undertaken by their king because of the financial burden of the receiving parties.[47] But in the case of Sweden, this limited itinerary may also have reflected the political dynamics of the kingdom. Gotland maintained a significant political distance from the mainland until it was forcibly incorporated into the kingdom in 1288 by Magnus Ladulås following the Gotlandic civil war.[48] It also took until the end of the thirteenth century for Småland to truly integrate the kingdom, having been relatively isolated until then.[49] Northern regions such as Jämtland were disputed with the Norwegians for most of the period studied in this article.[50] Thus, the *eriksgata*'s itinerary suggests that the lands over which the 'King of Sweden' had

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[47] Schutz, *The Medieval Empire in Central Europe*, p. 15.

[48] The diplomatic and political aftermath of the civil war, including the Gotlanders' pledge of allegiance to the king, can be found in two charters from 1288. See SDHK nr 1414, nr 1415.

[49] Line, *Kingship and State Formation*, pp. 474–5.

[50] Alex Woolf, 'The Wood Beyond the World: Jämtland and the Norwegian Kings', in *West over Sea: Studies in Scandinavian Sea-Borne Expansion and Settlement Before 1300*, ed. by Beverley Ballin Smith and Simon Taylor (Leiden: Brill, 2007), pp. 153–66 (pp. 153–4).

any actual claim to power were concentrated in Svealand and Götaland. This observation is not new, but it is interesting to use the *eriksgata* as an illustration. This also suggests that the *eriksgata*'s route reflects a very early stage of Swedish politics, and while the kingdom grew, the route stayed the same, as it had become a tradition rather than an actual reflection of a king's territory.

It has already been discussed that several kings, most notably those from the Folkung dynasty (or House of Bjälbo), eventually exerted enough power to afford to entirely skip the *eriksgata*. The social and political context behind these kings' rise should be briefly explained. The Folkungs were a powerful landed family whose oldest known member was, according to *Gesta Danorum*, Folke den tjocke.[51] Their alternative name is a reference to their most important estate, the manor of Bjälbo in Östergötland. The family produced many prominent members of the Scandinavian elites, including several jarls such as Birger Brosa (between 1174 and 1202) and Birger Jarl (between 1248 and 1266). Birger Jarl is widely credited with accelerating the unification of the kingdom and enabling the consolidation of centralised royal power, notably through establishing new taxes, founding Stockholm and its fortress, securing the support of the Church, and weakening local noblemen.[52]

As mentioned, the Folkungs' ancestral estates were located in Götaland, and the family appeared in the historical record at a time of changing political and

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[51] Saxo, *Gesta Danorum*, pp. 858–9.
[52] Line, *Kingship and State Formation*, pp. 128–9.

religious dynamics. Indeed, following the Christianisation of Sweden and certainly after Olof Skötkonung's reign (c. 995–1022), Östergötland and Västergötland (as well as Småland) gained prominence on the political scene, as newly-introduced Christian institutions settled in these regions. The Diocese of Skara, initially suffragan to that of Hamburg-Bremen, and then Lund, had been founded around the year 1000. But the rapid spread of Christianity from the twelfth century saw the establishment of many other influential monastic institutions such as Vreta Abbey (1100), Nydala Abbey (1142), Alvastra Abbey (1154) and several others, together with the inauguration of Diocese of Linköping and that Växjö within a few years of each other in the mid-twelfth century.[53] The emergence of these new centres of power changed the kingdom's political balance, with the southern provinces now hosting new burgeoning centres of innovation, education, and institutional power. Thus, Birger Jarl's election as jarl in 1248, following his successful negotiations with the papal prelate William of Sabina to form an alliance between the Church and the Crown, inscribed itself in the context of Göta families increasingly exerting influence over the traditional seats of power in Uppland.[54] Birger Jarl's political ingenuity secured the throne for no less than two of his sons, kickstarting the progressive erosion of the elective nature of kingship in Sweden.

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[53] Catharina Andersson, 'Cistercian Monasteries in Medieval Sweden: Foundations and Recruitments, 1143–1420', *Religions*, 12 (2021), 1–18 (pp. 2–13).

[54] The political and diplomatic results of the Synod at Skänninge (tellingly located in Östergötland), where Birger Jarl met William of Sabina in 1278, and the prelate's wider influence on Swedish politics can be seen in a series of charters including SDHK nr: 610, 613, 621.

Therefore, the Folkung kings who avoided the *eriksgata* were Götar themselves and, as evidenced by the transmission of power between Valdemar and his brother in 1275, by the late thirteenth century, they were not elected by the Svear anymore. The *eriksgata*, whose route originated in Uppland and went clockwise through Götaland, would have made little sense in the case of a Göta king. The change of political regime engendered by Christianisation and the progressive concentration of power within the hands of families based in Götaland deprived the Svear of their ancient right to elect the king. It stripped them of whatever remaining privileges they claimed.[55] It also made the *eriksgata* completely redundant. Thus, the practice's loss of importance coincided with the progressive consolidation of a central monarchy that had the tools – not least through ecclesiastical support – to submit the population without requiring its approval.

In conclusion, this article has sought to introduce the *eriksgata*, a trip undertaken by the king-elect throughout his kingdom, as a diplomatic and political tool rather than solely as a ritual. Unlike similar tours undertaken elsewhere in Europe during the same period, the *eriksgata* was not simply meant to confirm the king's new powers. Instead, it was a necessary stage in the gaining of those powers. A poorly executed *eriksgata* could see the king lose his new status or worse – as evidenced by King Rognvald's murder following public outrage at his lack of respect for traditions. Yet, the tour was not systematic enough and not strictly enforced to count as a ritual

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[55] Schutz, *The Medieval Empire in Central Europe*, p. 15.

on par with religious practices. The *eriksgata* has been interpreted by some scholars as a peace-making process and by others as a stately display. While these two interpretations are valid to an extent, there is a more pragmatic, perhaps more dramatic, facet to this tradition. It was a reminder of the provinces' ancient legal powers and their defiance in the face of a new centralised monarchy that aimed to progressively erode provincial powers and unify the kingdom. This journey was the Götar's formal opportunity to counterbalance the Svear's powers. The latter were traditionally the ones to choose the king per ancient immemorial rules. The Götar, deprived of this critical right, may have used the *eriksgata* to remind their rivals of their authority. The journey's symbolic power probably fluctuated according to the kingdom's political circumstances, and all kings did not undertake the *eriksgata*. Magnus Ladulås, a member of the Folkung dynasty who is known to have consolidated the kingdom's borders in 1288, does not seem to have toured the kingdom, thus suggesting that he did not need to. The *eriksgata*'s complete disappearance coincides with the final stages of state formation in Sweden, following the ascent of the Vasa dynasty, which is further evidence that it had reflected and fostered regional independence, a now obsolete concept by the sixteenth century. Thus, this article has argued that the *eriksgata* is best not understood as a ritual but as a fluid political tool that served a dual, contradictory purpose: it meant to help consolidate the kingdom while allowing regional elites to push back against centralised power. But while the present author has chosen to remain prudent

regarding a supposed religious aspect to the tradition, the links between kingship, its legitimisation and Old Norse religions must be investigated further. Similarly, the question of the *eriksgata*'s origins, especially considering the similar practices witnessed elsewhere in the medieval Germanic world, deserves additional research, which is hoped this article will encourage.

'Song withoute song': Lyric Ritual and Commemorative Performance in the *Book of the Duchess*

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This article argues that, in Chaucer's fourteenth-century dream vision, the Book of the Duchess, *Chaucer's narrative framing of the elegiac lyric, in which a mysterious 'man in blak' divulges the death of his beloved, suggests that the best — and possibly the only — way to reflect on and record another person's experience of loss is, in fact, to meditate on another kind of loss: the ephemeral, original performance of lyric. The Chaucerian dreamer, by classifying the lyric as a 'song […] withoute song', performs a sort of mourning in language for the lyric's original performance, which he recalls and 'reherses' for us. In doing so, he reflects on the lyric's absences (particularly, song and color, and both of which are figured in material and also temporal terms) and prepares us for what will be missing from the lyric when it is turned into a textual record; these absences in turn reflect the absence around which the entire* Book *is built: the deceased lady White. In proffering what, to modern readers, may seem like a radical vision of sound and sight as having material properties (but which, I show, has a basis in medieval color theory, the medieval science of* perspectiva *[optics], and philosophical conceptions of* vox), *Chaucer pushes us to think carefully about the material conditions of textuality as closely allied with the physical experience and bodily expressions of grief — both visual and oral/aural. Urging us to contemplate loss in this material, corporeal way — as an experience of different forms of sound and sight, presence and absence, time and tense — he forges a sense of the conduciveness of lyric record in matters of private consolation and ritualized public commemoration, theorizing the elegiac lyric as a space able to be filled — quite literally — by anyone.*

Early in Chaucer's fourteenth-century dream vision, the *Book of the Duchess*, the Chaucerian narrator pauses in his narration to 'reherse' (rehearse) a short poem whose utterance he overhears in a wood. But before this rehearsal, the narrator provides a

perplexing prefatory description of the text we are about to hear (or read). Speaking

of the mysterious man in black, whose spontaneous performance we have stumbled

upon, Chaucer explains how

> […] with a deedly sorweful soune,
>
> He made of ryme ten vers or twelve
>
> Of a compleynt to himselve,
>
> The most pite, the moste rowthe,
>
> That ever I herde; for, by my trowthe,
>
> It was gret wonder that nature
>
> Might suffre any creature
>
> To have swich sorwe and be nat deed.
>
> Ful pitous, pale, and nothing reed,
>
> He seyde a lay, a maner song,
>
> Withoute note, withoute song.[1]

As a formal account, these lines do distressingly little to communicate with any

certainty what kind of text we are about to encounter. Its designation as a 'ryme' tells

us something of its composition, or at the very least, identifies it as poetry. The term

'compleynt' describes the content or subject matter of this 'ryme' with somewhat

greater specificity, and it also introduces a possible generic label, one which would

align the *Book of the Duchess* with the form and structure of its textual predecessors:

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[1] Geoffrey Chaucer, 'The Book of the Duchess' in *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. by Larry D. Benson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 330–48 (ll. 462–72).

French love *dits* like Guillaume Machaut's *Remede de Fortune* and Jean Froissart's *Fontaine Amoureuse*.[2] The *dits* follow a blueprint wherein a narrator, venturing into a dream landscape, comes upon a private performance of amatory complaint, which he then records, turning it into the poem we are reading.[3] While the identification of his inset poem as a 'compleynt' generically would seem to align Chaucer's poem with the *dits*, the brevity of this embedded 'ryme' — 'ten vers or twelve' versus the *dits*' long, poem-length complaints — signals an important structural difference. The narrator's ambivalence when it comes to estimating his text's length (is it ten lines or twelve?) further extends to questions of genre and classification. The line, 'He seyde a lay, a maner song', proposes two additional rubrics under which we might read the 'ryme' or 'compleynt' — a 'lay' and a 'song'. But those options are quickly complicated by the line that completes the couplet, while simultaneously leaving the genre question even more unresolved: 'He seyde a lay, a maner song | *Withoute note, withoute song*' (my emphasis).

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[2] Ardis Butterfield makes a direct comparison between the black knight's second spoken lyric in the *Book of the Duchess* and Machaut's *Remede de Fortune*. See 'Lyric and Elegy in *The Book of the Duchess*,' *Medium Ævum*, 60 (1991), 33–60. Susan Bianco discusses the French *dits* in 'A Black Monk in the Rose Garden: Lydgate and the *Dit Amoureux* Tradition,' *Chaucer Review*, 34 (1999), 60–8.

[3] The poem survives in only three manuscript witnesses: Oxford, Bodleian Library MSS Bodley 638, Fairfax 16, and Tanner 346. These comprise the so-called 'Oxford group' of manuscripts which all also contain John Lydgate's *Complaint of the Black Knight*, a poem that heavily draws on the *Book of the Duchess*. The unfailing proximity of the *Book of the Duchess* and the *Complaint of the Black Knight* in the manuscript record urges a concurrent reading of these two poems, which also appeared in close quarters in the first printed edition of Chaucer's poem. In this edition — William Thynne's 1532 edition of Chaucer's *Worke s*— 'The dreame of Chaucer' (as the *Book* is titled there) is followed just seven texts later by Lydgate's *Complaint*. The relative positioning of the *Book* and the *Complaint* within these print and manuscript contexts sheds light on the complaint-oriented formal and generic framework in which they were read.

Why does Chaucer worry so much about genre in this prefatory moment? How can we account for this fumbling description, which presents so many options without offering any final pronouncement on what, exactly, we are looking at — or listening to — when we read the text that follows? And what does Chaucer mean by that obscure, paradox-laden phrase: 'song […] withoute song'? What does it mean to utter a song without song?

In this article, I seek to answer these questions by examining the black knight's 'song […] withoute song' (or lyric, as I'll call it) in relation to the *Book of the Duchess*' overarching poetic concerns with the articulation of loss and the potential of poetry in matters of consolation and ritual commemoration. In particular, I am interested in what is missing from this lyric and its setting, framing, and performance. I will show how what the lyric lacks according to the narrator's prefatory account — song — becomes a shorthand for other kinds of absence, in addition to being a literal description of the formal absence of musicality. The absence of song, for Chaucer, extends to mean the absence of both musical and visual colour. I will contend that the lyric, in its musical and visual absences and in what remains, encourages us to read it alongside medieval theories of sound, including grammatical and philosophical theories of *vox* and Deschamps' 'natural music', as well as the science of optics, or *perspectiva*, as it was known in the Middle Ages. These theories prove germane to the overarching poetic project of the *Book of the Duchess*, which tries throughout to resolve the discrepancies between individual perception, linguistic quantification, and — especially—original performance and material records in order to account for the

experience of loss most accurately in language. In the end, it is Chaucer's transformation of the lyric into a powerful mnemonic repository which contains within itself plenitude and lack, presence, and absence, colour and colourlessness, sound and silence, that narrows the gap between grieving lyric subject, narrator, and reader. The lyric's refusal to commit to a single form or genre in both its textual and material history, its enigmatic status as a 'song without song', I will show, is precisely what makes it a form which can facilitate both private consolation and ritual public commemoration. What starts off as a private meditation on loss, in Chaucer's hands, turns the space originally occupied by the black knight into one able to be filled — quite literally — by anyone.

In what follows, I will first dwell on some of the ways that the lyric's prefatory account and the provocative descriptor 'song without song' foreshadow the questions of perception, perspective, quantification, and poetic mediation treated by the lyric and resurfacing throughout the *Book of the Duchess*. I will then turn to the lyric itself and examine how Chaucer uses temporal effects to develop a phenomenology of loss that revolves around both sonic and visual absence, responding to Suzanne Akbari's earlier claim that Chaucer's incorporation of the medieval science of *perspectiva* remains limited to visual phenomena until later poems like the *House of Fame*.[4] I will suggest some of the ways that a more capacious understanding of how Chaucer incorporates medieval theories of optics and sound in the *Book of the Duchess* can

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[4] Suzanne Conklin Akbari, *Seeing Through the Veil: Optical Theory and Medieval Allegory* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), pp. 178ff.

complicate our reading of the poem as a meditation not only on loss, but also on poetry itself. As I mean to show, the black knight's lyric in the *Book of the Duchess* is for Chaucer as much a reflection on the ephemerality of lyric performance and the precarious nature of lyric transmission as on the fleeting nature of human life and the power of poetry to give lasting voice—without song—to the reality of grief.

Before proceeding, it's worth quickly recounting the historical circumstances for the composition of the larger poem within which the black knight's lyric is contained. It is now widely assumed that Chaucer composed the *Book of the Duchess* for his patron and noble contemporary, John of Gaunt, whose wife, Blanche, Duchess of Lancaster, is thought to have died of the plague in September of 1368. John of Gaunt conducted extravagant annual commemorative activities in response to Blanche's death for the rest of his life, beginning with an elaborate funeral cortege, followed, in 1374, by the building of a joint tomb and funeral monument in St. Pauls' Cathedral, and culminating in a joint chantry foundation upon his death in 1399. Historically, scholars have attempted to date and lend occasional significance to the *Book of the Duchess* on the basis of John of Gaunt's commemorative activities and extant Chaucerian life records, which identify the poet as the recipient of an annuity from John of Gaunt starting in 1374 — the same year Blanche's funeral monument was commissioned.

The coincidence of the life annuity and the construction of Blanche's tomb, as some have pointed out, is not strong enough evidence in itself to confirm the poem's dating (on the occasion of Blanche's death or at the time of the tomb's construction—

or at some earlier, unrelated time), or whether John of Gaunt specifically commissioned Chaucer for a commemorative work. However, we do know that some early readers of Chaucer's poetry identified the poem and its composition with that historical couple. In the fifteenth-century Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Fairfax 16, a note in the hand of the early sixteenth-century antiquary John Stow appears next to the poem's title (folio 130r): 'made by Geffrey | Chawcyer at þe request of þe duke of lancastar: pitously | complaynynge the deathe of þe sayde dowchesse | blanche'. What's more, in two manuscript versions of the Prologue to the *Legend of Good Women*, the *Book of the Duchess* is included among lists of Chaucer's works as 'the Deeth of Blaunche the Duchesse'.[5]

Whether or not Chaucer meant for us to read the black knight in the *Book of the Duchess* as a poetic avatar for John of Gaunt and the Lady White as Blanche, the premise of the poem remains the same: Chaucer is attempting a project of putting into words — of linguistically quantifying — someone else's loss. It comes as no surprise, then, that throughout the poem he should remain preoccupied with the issue of discrepancies in perspective. How can you possibly describe another person's

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[5] Scholars have sought internal evidence for biographical allusion within the poem on this basis, but, as Julia Boffey and A. S. G. Edwards have shown, '[t]here are no forms of external evidence concerning [the poem's] date or occasion of composition, and much weight has to had to be placed on cryptic internal allusions in order to reconstruct a plausible occasional significance: the death from the plague of John of Gaunt's first wife, Blanche'. The poem, they go on to say, 'makes no explicit allusion to her death, and only the line 'And good faire White she het' (948), and a cluster of final gestures (1318–19) to Lancaster ('long castel'), 'St John', and 'Richmond' ('ryche hil': John of Gaunt was earl of Richmond in Yorkshire until 1372) suggest its connections with the death of the duchess'. See: 'Codicology, Text, and the Book of the Duchess', in *Chaucer's Book of the Duchess: Contexts and Interpretations*, ed. by Jamie C. Fumo (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2018), pp. 11–27.

experience of loss if you have not felt that same loss yourself? How can language possibly hope to overcome what is, essentially, an insurmountable gap in experience?

Read with these considerations in mind, Chaucer's worrying over the form and genre of the black knight's lyric betrays itself as only partly focused on the lyric itself. Instead, his prefatory description is more a reflective foreshadowing of the interconnected issues of perception, perspectival difference, and the possibility of linguistic quantification. Chaucer, in proposing multiple labels or categories for the text he plans to rehearse, shows us multiple angles from which to perceive the lyric, thereby underscoring the instability and subjectivity inherent in textual interpretation, while also modelling description and classification as a trial-by-error thought process performed in language. In addition to presenting this range of generic perspectives (how to *interpret* the lyric) and linguistic possibilities (what to *call* the lyric), he draws attention to our own perspective — and his narrator's — by foregrounding the hypermediated nature of our reading of the lyric: this a textual performance occurring within a dream and now supposedly recited from the narrator's memory. The text's present transmission, he emphasizes, has little to do with that original performance. '*I* can | reherse *it*', the narrator asserts immediately after the formal account; 'right thus *it* began' (473–74, my emphases). Here, Chaucer knowingly skirts around actually letting the reader hear the voice of the man in black in real time. Our own perspective in approaching the text — now only a 'rehearsal', a repetition, a record, a medium somehow at a remove from the original — is

complicated by the presence of Chaucer's narrator, the absence of the man in black, the passage of time, and the mediation of whatever physical copy we're reading from.

Chaucer's choosing to neither definitively categorize the lyric, nor make claims for it as original performance, casts upon it an aura of instability and elusiveness that resonates with the poem's textual and material history.[6] According to the narrator's equivocal estimate, we should expect to find, in manuscripts of the *Book of the Duchess*, a short 'ryme' comprised of 'ten vers or twelve'. But turning to its three extant manuscript copies — all fifteenth-century productions posthumous to Chaucer — we encounter neither the promised 'ten' nor 'twelve' lines. Instead, we find an eleven-line textual object whose uneven edges and unusual rhyme scheme generate friction with the surrounding verse narrative. Whereas the narrative portions of the *Book of the Duchess* adhere to a strict template of rhyming octosyllabic couplets, these eleven lines deviate from the norm with their *aabbaccdccd* rhyme scheme; they further disrupt the poem's formal progression with the addition of a stray odd line. One figure in the poem's material history, the sixteenth-century editor William Thynne, found himself unable to countenance such structural deviance; in his 1532 edition of the *Book of the Duchess* — the poem's only other witness — he assimilated the lyric to the surrounding verse by incorporating an additional line in the first 'stanza' and reordering the lines of the second so as to maintain a pattern of rhyming couplets.[7]

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[6] Boffey and Edwards offer a comprehensive account of the textual-critical problems of the *Book of the Duchess* which includes a detailed analysis of the textual variants of the black knight's first lyric. See 'Codicology', pp. 21, 24.

[7] According to Boffey and Edwards, '[a]lthough none of the manuscripts leaves a gap here for the missing line, Thynne inserted one after 479 to complete the couplet: 'And thus in sorowe lefte me alone'

The lyric thus refuses to commit to a single form or genre both textually and materially. Its variable appearance as a textual artefact, the discrepancy between what we are told to expect and what we actually receive, and the multiple classificatory possibilities the narrator offers collectively point to the lyric as a locus of textual, material, and generic instability; these instabilities, in turn, trouble both how we encounter the lyric and how Chaucer attempts to describe it. Most, if not all, of these instabilities, I would argue, can be traced back to and explained by that mystifying and unwieldy formulation in the narrator's formal account: 'song […] withoute song'.

Chaucer is not one, except in very rare cases, to commit the poetic taboo of rhyming the same word with itself; and as this is not an example of *rime riche* (which allows the rhyming of the same word with itself, if used as different parts of speech), it should hint to us that Chaucer is up to something. Language in this formulation grinds to a halt and skips back on itself like a broken record, the rhyming of 'song' with 'song' playing out sonically the implicit classificatory conundrum—what *do* you call a 'song […] withoute song'? Is a song still a song without music?[8]

In one sense, for Chaucer to call the black knight's lyric a song without song is in fact to acknowledge how readers would have encountered the lyric as a material artefact in their reading of the *Book of the Duchess*. Even had the original performance

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(fol. CC.lxxiii^rb)'. See 'Codicology', p. 24. The deviation in the rhyme scheme presented by the second stanza [*aabccb*] provoked Thynne's intervention. His solution, they observe, 'was a logical extension of his insertion of the extra line: he ordered the six lines to produce orderly couplets.'

[8] Yolanda Plumley would suggest an affirmative answer to this. She shows precisely how 'even [medieval] lyrics composed without music in mind may carry a musical charge,' possessing what she terms a ''virtual' musicality.' See *The Art of Grafted Song: Citation and Allusion in the Age of Machaut* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 11.

been sung (and the narrator stresses it was *not*), in manuscript, the lyric would have been just what it says on the box: *without song*. Any form of music notation that hypothetically might have accompanied it in manuscript would have been, at best, an approximation at quantifying and recording that performance (like the narrator's own faltering attempts to give a name to the performance he overhears). Chaucer's formal account of the lyric is thus more complicated than it seems, for not only does it reflect on the when, where, and how of lyric performance, its perception and processing, it is also highly attentive to what the turning of lyric into material record does to lyric itself. The mysterious, ephemeral event of lyric performance, its visual and sonic qualities, through the process of record-making and reproduction, somehow get transformed into black and white graphemes on a page which, Chaucer suggests, will only ever be a partial, imperfect representation. That the black knight's lyric is, from the start, stripped of the possibility of song I think reveals Chaucer to be avoiding the chance of lyric diminishment by material record; if you take away song entirely from the original performance, what remains — text — is the part of performance that *can* translate more readily from aural to written medium, its memory less altered by the act of physical preservation than the rendering of songful song onto parchment.

I will return to this question of the materiality of lyric and the nature of lyric performance later in this article, but now I would like to turn to the lyric itself to see how Chaucer uses its space to develop a phenomenology of loss around precisely these questions of visual and auditory presence and absence. The sonic absence implied by the narrator's description of the lyric as a 'song without song' echoes

throughout the lyric in other song-related forms of absence. To fully experience the lyric's absences, however, we must retrace the narrator's steps through the woods.

Waking with the narrator, we open our eyes and ears to an environment filled with light, colour, and sound. Birds are singing, the horns of the hunt blowing, the sun bouncing off the luxe appointments of the bedchamber. Through the glazed glass windows of the room the 'bright bemes' and 'many glade gilde stremes' of the sun filter through; the sky is a brilliant blue ('Blew, bright, clere was the air'), the walls of the chamber '[f]ul wel depynted' 'with colours fine' and 'both the text and glose | Of al the Romaunce of the Rose' alongside 'holy all the story of Troye […] in the glasinge y-wrought' (321–43). Despite this visual splendor, the narrator's most effusive descriptions are devoted to the dream's soundscape: 'I was waked', he tells us, 'With smale foules a grete hepe | That had affrayed me out of my slepe | Thurgh noyse and swetnesse of hir songe' (294–97). He pictures these birds sitting together in a great crowd 'Upon [his] chamber-roof', 'songen everich in his wyse', and describes, at some length, the untellable sweetness, musicality, and variety of their song (298–319).

The dulcet, otherworldly harmonies of the birdsong compel the narrator up and out of his chamber, desirous of fresh air and participation in the hunt he assumes to be on because of the aural clues of 'men, hors, houndes, and other thinge' (349). Leaving his chamber, briefly coming in contact with the hunt (led by Octavian), and finally following a pup down a pathway into a wood, he passes through an environs bursting with colourful flora and fauna, with 'grene greves' and 'trees so ful of leves', with 'founes, sowres, bukkes, does […] And many squirels' (417–18, 429–31). There

are so many flowers, animals, and growing things stimulating the senses, he tells us,

that the most adept mathematician in the world could not reckon them:

> Shortly, it was so ful of bestes
>
> That though Argus, the noble countour,
>
> Sete to rekene with his fingures ten—
>
> For by tho figures mowe al ken,
>
> If they be crafty, rekene and noumbre,
>
> And telle of every thing the noumbre—
>
> Yet shulde he fail to reken even
>
> The wondres me mette in my sweven (434–42).

This arithmetical musing on the forest's visual and sonic plenitude concludes the

opening of the dream, and, abruptly, the narrative shifts, suddenly evacuated of

colour and sound as soon as the narrator becomes 'war of a man in blak | That sat and

had y-turned his bak | To an oke, an huge tree' (445–47). Wary of startling this solitary

figure, the narrator silently 'stalke[s]' up behind him (the language of the hunt still

firmly impressed in his mind) and 'ther [stondes] as stille as ought' (458–59). The

sudden stillness that descends on the narrator as he tries not to disturb the mysterious

man, a 'wonder wel-faringe knight', sharpens the disparity between the quietude of

the present scene and the dream's boisterous opening (452).

As the narrator draws closer, he again remarks upon the man's black clothes:

'And he was clothed al in blak' (457). The man's black garments cast a sobering,

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spectral pall over what has been, until now, a joyous vernal setting composed of light, colour, sound, and activity. The colour black, in clothing a symbol of mourning and suffering, enervates the poetic energy associated with the dream's early stimuli, literally stopping us, along with the narrator, in our tracks. A study in contrasts, the knight's pale appearance is set against the darkness of his garments. His face, 'pale' and 'nothing reed', is later explained as resulting from his blood rushing down to his heart during the lyric's utterance (470). The colourlessness of the knight's attire and complexion then seeps into the lyric itself, which goes like this:

> I have of sorwe so grete woon
>
> That joye gete I never noon,
>
> Now that I see my lady bright,
>
> Which I have loved with al my might,
>
> Is fro me deed and is agoon,
>
> [And thus in sorwe lefte me aloon.][9]
>
> Allas, Deeth, what aileth thee
>
> That thou noldest have taken me
>
> Whan thou took my lady swete
>
> That was so fair, so fresh, so free,
>
> So good that men may well y-see
>
> Of all goodnesse she had no mete (475–89).

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[9] The bracketed line is the one Thynne adds in his 1532 edition of the *Book of the Duchess*.

For all of the delays that Chaucer builds into the narrative leading up to the lyric (the outer frame with its account of the narrator's insomnia, the retelling of the story of Ceyx and Alcyone, the thickets of description in the forest scene, and the prefatory remarks on the black knight and his lyric), we might expect the lyric to be a highly artful, beautifully crafted, virtuosic performance. But when we finally hear (or read) the black knight's lyric, we encounter eleven barebones, fairly literal lines, stylistically muted but for one rhetorical flourish (an apostrophe to Death in the second stanza). Read one way, the language and sentiment feel overly simple and formulaic; of the eighty-one words that make up the lyric, all but eight are a single syllable long (and those eight are only two syllables). The lyric's totalizing colourlessness — its lack of musicality, of song, of linguistic or metrical colour — is as deafening as the deadening tolling of 'song…song' right before its rehearsal.

The lyric thus enters the world of the poem as a black and white space of words without song, in stark contrast to the narrative sequence, rich with colour and sound, with which it is prefaced. In a similar way to how, in his formal description of the lyric, the narrator manages to say both too much and too little, here, Chaucer plays with opposing concepts of excess and lack. By filling the space around the lyric with visual and sonic colour, he spotlights how very devoid of those same features, how very *empty*, the lyric is. This is a rather subtle structural means of helping readers conceptualize loss: to lose a loved one, Chaucer suggests, is as sudden and enervating an experience as the totalizing effect of sensory evacuation we experience in this scene

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in the shift from vibrant forest-life to private, songless mourning.[10] The muted quality

of the black knight's lyric, in this reading, poignantly reflects the psychological shock

of grief; it is shock which stills, deadens, numbs. And its effects are not only

psychological, but somatic, as reflected in the lyric's diction. The overwhelming

predominance of single-syllable words is not so much a marker of how good or bad a

poet the black knight is as it is a formal reflection on the extremity of grief and its

bodily affects. The choppy, disjointed sound of so many single-syllable, stressed

words mimics the lyric subject choking up, only able to vocalize a single sound at a

time in between sobs, or maybe speaking with great restraint, so as to avoid bursting

into tears. In either case, the resulting rhythm is both uncomplicated and

(importantly) reproducible. To read the black knight's lyric aloud, or to 'reherse' it as

the narrator finds himself doing, is to fall into the same patterns of breath and

breathlessness as the black knight in his original performance; reading the lyric is to

experience — in one's own body — the rhythm of grief.[11]

In these ways, Chaucer uses the lyric to figure a phenomenology of loss that

relies on structural as well as somatic effects. He further develops that

phenomenology via one more subtle lyric operation: the embedding of a barely-there

optical illusion in the lyric itself which suggests that we conceptualize the experience

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[10] As Louise O. Fradenburg reflects, '[a]ll writers on mourning remind us of how grief impoverishes the subject's world'. See '"Voice Memorial": Loss and Reparation in Chaucer's Poetry', *Exemplaria* 2:1 (1990), 169–202 (p. 185). My thanks to my second anonymous reviewer, who recommended this article.
[11] For another account of a songless medieval song that uses the reader's body to communicate affect and grief, see Anna Zayaruznaya, '"Sanz Note" & Sanz Mesure': Toward a Premodern Aesthetics of the Dirge,' in *Voice and Voicelessness in Medieval Europe*, ed. by Irit Ruth Kleiman (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), pp. 155–75.

of loss in visual and temporal terms. The lyric begins conventionally enough in the manner of an amatory complaint ('I have of sorwe so grete woon | That joye gete I never noon'), but the third line sets up the illusion by apparently situating us in the present tense: '*Now* that I *see* my lady bright' (my emphases). As those familiar with late medieval theories of falling in love will recall, the medieval science of optics, or *perspectiva*, provided a visually-based, biological explanation for the development of romantic emotional attachment. The optical theory of extramission, relying on a vector-based concept of 'eye beams', hypothesized that looking at the beloved entailed the entrance of a ray emanating from her eye into one's own.[12] That pleasurable, embodied experience of being pierced by his beloved's look, it turns out, is precisely what the knight lacks, but he withholds this knowledge (and herein lies the trick) until the fifth line of the lyric ('Is fro me deed and is agoon'). Until this point, we are meant to think that he is looking at and admiring his lady in the present moment of lyric performance, but the fifth line dissolves the illusion, revealing that it is not *seeing* his lady in the present which causes him pain (as the third line would have us suppose), but that he *cannot* see her anymore, because she is dead. Instead of physically seeing his lady, he can only 'see' figuratively to comprehend the fact of her absence.

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[12] As A.C. Spearing explains, '[b]ehind the idea of the looker wounded by a look may lie scientific theories, going back to Plato's Timaeus and Theaetetus, that understood sight itself as taking place through a combined extramission of rays or streams of light'. See *The Medieval Poet as Voyeur: Looking and Listening in Medieval Love-Narratives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 10. For an in-depth history of optical theory which traces the emergence and re-emergence of extramission as a scientific concept, see Robert Crone, *A History of Color: The Evolution of Theories of Lights and Color* (Dordrecht: Springer Academic, 1999), especially Chapter II, 'The Middle Ages', pp. 17–34.

For the black knight, what grieves him the most in the present moment of lyric composition — what causes him to fall into a swoon as soon as he finishes his performance — thus seems to be the gaps (visual, temporal, and linguistic) that pervade his lyric present, all of which remind him of White's absence and of the discrepancies in time and tense between when she was alive and now. He imagines himself, for half a breath, beholding his beloved as he used to in the third line of the lyric, but by the fifth line realizes that she — and that earlier time of love-looking and present-tense amatory lyric composition — is 'agoon'. The sixth line of the first stanza, added by Thynne (and so potentially not original to Chaucer), circles back to focus on what remains in White's absence: the black knight 'in sorwe' and 'aloon', composing elegiac lyric in a deserted wood in the present.

The lyric thus constructs the experience of loss as a sonic and visual, but also temporal and linguistic phenomenon. Losing White, for the knight, primarily means losing sight of her, but with that loss comes others, which the lyric reflects upon. He loses the subject position or perspective in time and space that would have enabled him to say, 'Now that I see my lady bright', and mean an immediate reality, rather than a memory or imagination of past love. He loses the very possibility of language that can talk about White in the present tense, and in the simplicity of his diction, seems resigned to the fact that language is barely sufficient in describing either love or loss. And his grief is renewed — as in the lyric — each time he reflects on these losses and on the discrepancies between that earlier time of love-looking and possibilities for present-tense lyric composition, and the new reality where the

beloved is gone and all that is good (song, colour, present tense verbs) has gone with her. The lyric registers these losses in its sounds, silences, and sights, in what it stumbles to say and in what it leaves unspoken and unseeable.

Despite the importance of visual absence to Chaucer's project in the *Book of the Duchess*, few literary studies (apart from Suzanne Akbari's notable work in *Seeing Through the* Veil: *Optical Theory and Medieval Allegory*) have taken into account the *Book of the Duchess*' resonances with medieval optical theory, nor has optics played a major role in studies of the poem's richly suggestive colour semantics.[13] The medieval science of optics, or *perspectiva*, flourished in thirteenth-century England via the writings of scientist-theologians Robert Grosseteste, Albertus Magnus, Roger Bacon, and John Pecham. Their works were based on Latin translations of the optical treatises of Greek and Arabic philosophers and mathematicians, and largely grounded in both geometry and natural philosophy. As a science, optics boasted two primary areas of inquiry: perspective, based in geometry, and light, based in natural philosophy; as it does for modern scientists since Newton, the study of light

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[13] Examples of studies that have thought about Chaucer's poetry, optics, and/or colour do exist. Linda Tarte Holley, for instance, explores optical theory vis-à-vis *Troilus and Criseyde* in 'Medieval Optics and the Framed Narrative in Chaucer's "Troilus and Criseyde"', *The Chaucer Review*, 21.1 (1986), 26–44. Investigations of Colour semantics of the *Book of the Duchess* and Chaucer's other works have been fairly numerous, but I have yet to find an account which studies colour theory in the *Book of the Duchess* in relation to medieval optical science, which provided some of the most influential theories of colour in Chaucer's day. For examples of how colour theory has featured in extant readings, see, for instance: Stephen Manning, 'Chaucer's Good Fair White: Woman and Symbol,' *Comparative Literature*, 10.2 (1958), 97–105; Carolyn Merlo, 'Chaucer's "Broun" and Medieval Color Symbolism', *CLA Journal*, 25.2 (1981), 225–26. Also deserving mention: a relatively comprehensive account of Chaucer's colour lexicon by C. P. Biggam, 'Aspects of Chaucer's Adjectives of Hue,' *The Chaucer Review*, 28.1 (1993), 41–53.

encompassed the study of colour.[14] Medieval colour theory drew heavily on optical

discourse in its own understanding of what colour was, and how it might be

measured, described, and quantified; in turn, colour theory had a bearing on a wide

range of learned and craft-oriented areas of knowledge, making it a particularly fertile

field for Chaucer's poem to access, however obliquely.[15] These included: period

colour semantics (both religious and secular, going back to antiquity); theories of

complexion and physiognomy (with roots in humoral theory and Galenic medicine);[16]

heraldic colour theory and principles of *blazon* (which, like optics, grounds itself in

natural philosophy);[17] book-making (particularly, illumination, illustration, and ink

production), cloth-making, and the arts; rhetorical theory (specifically, the *colores*

rhetorici); alchemical treatises; and lapidaries. Interestingly, most if not all of these

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[14] See David C. Lindberg, *Studies in the History of Medieval Optics* (London: Variorum, 1983) and David C. Lindberg, *Roger Bacon and the Origins of* Perspectiva *in the Middle Ages: A Critical Edition and English Translation of Bacon's* Perspectiva *with Introduction and Notes* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996). Crone also offers a good overview of the history of optics in his *History of Color*.

[15] Art historians unsurprisingly have brought the most to the table when it comes to offering histories of colour and colour semantics. Particularly notable recent accounts include those by John Gage (*Color and Meaning Color and Meaning: Art, Science, and Symbolism* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999]) and Michel Pastoureau, who has written book-length, illustrated histories of individual colours; particularly relevant to the present study is his volume, *Black: The History of a Color* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008). Pastoureau's colour histories devote considerable space to the Middle Ages and its colour semantics, touching on everything from the liturgy to the arts. A shorter, but still ambitious theoretical account of medieval colour is Heather Pulliam, 'Color,' *Studies in Iconography*, 33 (2012), 3–14. Finally, the materiality of colour receives especial emphasis in Diana Young, 'The Colours of Things,' in *Handbook of Material Culture*, ed. by Christopher Tilley, Michael Rowlands, and Patricia Spyer (London: SAGE, 2006), pp. 173–85.

[16] For an application of complexion theory to Chaucer's poetry, see Elspeth Whitney, 'What's Wrong with the Pardoner?: Complexion Theory, the Phlegmatic Man, and Effeminacy,' *The Chaucer Review*, 45.4 (2011), 357–89.

[17] For an account of medieval *blazon* and its significance in medieval literature, see Michael J. Huxtable, 'Aspects of Armorial Colours and Their Perception in Medieval Literature,' in *New Directions in Color Studies*, ed. by Carole P. Biggam (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2011), pp. 191–203.

areas of knowledge upheld a conception of colour as intrinsically material.[18] Colour

was less a matter of hue for medieval people than it is for modern societies, and more

a matter of brightness, luminosity, and depth.[19] This included what we sometimes

think of as non-colours, white and black, those same colours that dominate the black

knight's lyric and its setting and performance.

Returning to medieval optics, in *Seeing Through the Veil*, Akbari argues that it is

not until later works like the *House of Fame* that Chaucer complicates his incorporation

of *perspectiva* into his poetics to include the science of sound as well as sight; the *Book*

of the Duchess, she suggests, remains limited to offering sight as a metaphor for

knowing, whereas later on, Chaucer comes to experiment with sound as an

epistemological tool.[20] While I agree with Akbari that sound has far greater stakes in

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[18] Pulliam suggests that the medieval 'materialistic conceptualization of color' is supported by the wide range of medieval writings and fields of knowledge which touched on colour. For example, '[e]xegetical tracts that refer to color are usually bound to biblical descriptions of precious gems and metals and so describe color in terms of brightness, hardness, purity, dappled effects, and intensity. Unsurprisingly, in scientific texts, such as Pliny's *Natural History* and Isidore of Seville's *Etymylogies*, color is also discussed in relation to material objects such as gemstones, metals, and medicinal plants. Recipes for color, which are dated to the ninth and centuries but draw upon earlier sources […] demonstrate the visceral materiality of medieval color as does the better known, twelfth-century *De Diversis Artibus* by Theophilus'. See 'Color', p. 4. Going on to explain some implications of the materiality of medieval colour, Pulliam describes how 'the materials of medieval art are diverse and were often considered the sole component of a color. Blank vellum and areas of unpainted ivory, for instance, may represent flesh, whiteness, or teeth, while gold might portray a king's crown or the sun. Because of the absence of a transformative layer of pigment, in such cases the border between illusion and reality is permeable and porous'. See 'Color', pp. 4–5.

[19] *COLOUR: The Art and Science of Illuminated Manuscripts*. Accessed 4 April 2020. https://www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/colour/explore/14. See especially subsections 'The Illuminator's Palette' and 'Colour Theory, Optics and Manuscript Illumination'.

[20] As Akbari argues, 'there is a distinct progression in Chaucer's use of faculty psychology, particularly in his use of vision as a metaphor for knowing'. See *Seeing through the Veil*, p. 178. 'In several of his early works,' she goes on to say, 'especially the *Book of the Duchess* […] Chaucer represents vision as the highest of the senses, one which accurately conveys reality, seamlessly mediating between the seer and the object.' However, '[i]n his subsequent allegories […] the *Parlement of Fowls* and the *House of Fame*, Chaucer abandons vision as a potential mediator between subject and object, and instead turns to the role of hearing.'

Chaucer's poetic project in the *House of Fame*, I hope to show that the absence of sound — particularly, the absence of *song* — in the *Book of the Duchess* is just as important — and indeed intertwined with — the visual as an epistemological tool which helps Chaucer meditate not only on loss, but also on poetry; that importance obtains at the nexus of medieval optics, geometry, colour theory, grammatical and philosophical accounts of *vox*, and modern theories of musical performance.

In one of the early moments in the narrator's conversation with the black knight, the latter describes losing White as losing his queen in a metaphorical game of chess with Fortune. Strangely, he laments his ignorance of geometry as the reason for his misstep: 'By God', he tells the narrator, 'wolde I had ones or twyes | Y-coud and knowe the jeupardyes | That coude the Greke Pictagores, | I shulde have pleyd the bet at ches | And kept my fers the bet therby' (665–69). The knight clearly thinks that being well-versed in Pythagorean geometry (one of the foundations of *perspectiva*) would have made him a more competitive opponent against Fortune; he would have known to keep his queen, the lady White, close by, preventing her capture and keeping her within sight.

If the knight is bad at one branch of mathematical reckoning in a metaphorical chess game, is it reasonable for him to expect to be any better when it comes to linguistic forms of quantification, especially those that attempt something so difficult as quantifying his lost beloved, a lady who becomes overwritten as the colour white? It's unlikely that he would succeed, especially knowing what we do of the complex visuality and materiality of medieval colour. That understanding of colour tells us

that when the black knight mourns White, it's very much not 'white' in the abstract, despite the layers of language and metaphor through which he attempts to express his grief. White's loss, as we have seen, is both a structural and a somatic, embodied experience; her luminosity and intensity make her exceed both linguistic representation and mathematical quantification. Lyric can only attempt and self-consciously, deliberately fail at both in order to say anything about White's whiteness, the black knight's love for her, and the profundity of his grief. Hence the knight's hyperbolic, yet underwhelming description of White's surpassing qualities at the lyric's conclusion: she was 'so fair, so fresh, so free | So good'. That is to say, his 'lady bright' shone which such a brightness that even now, at the present temporal remove, it can only be articulated with blundering, insistent repetition.

The black knight's mathematical metaphor for losing his lady thus also becomes a way of talking about the impossibilities of converting the memory of the beloved into language. This movement from internal perception to external representation, from the immaterial medium of memory to the material mediums of words and sound, reflects the complexities of sound as it was understood in the Middle Ages. In the black knight's emphasis on the mathematical side of such remediations we find a ready link to these theories which return us once again to the question of what it means not only to utter, but also to attempt to record, as Chaucer does, a 'song without song' — to reckon or account for, that is, music and memory in material record.

Music, from Plato onwards, was conceived of primarily in mathematical terms. The movements of the heavenly bodies or planets, for medieval philosophers and cosmologists, exemplified the perfect mathematical ordering of the universe, and it was through calculations and models that attempted to apprehend the so-called 'music of the spheres' that they sought to understand music and the cosmos. But in theorizing earthly music, medieval philosophers and grammarians alike repeatedly turned to the question of *vox*, or voice. Referring to medieval conceptions of *vox* thus promises to add another dimension to our reading of the different forms of remediation at play throughout the *Book of the Duchess*: in the previous example, the black knight's conversion of visual memory into *verba* and sound (which, in turn, create his 'song without song'; and Chaucer's conversion of that vocalized 'song' into a written record we can read.

Medieval grammarians articulated two distinct categories of *vox*, distinctions made on the basis of whether the vocal production was capable of being transposed in writing (*vox discreta*) or not (*vox confusa*). The idea that voice may or may not be able to recorded in a physical form, in words, may or may not be helpful to our understanding of how Chaucer goes about recording the black knight's lyric, for he does technically succeed in writing it down and enclosing it within his poem. This would suggest that the lyric's original performance belongs to the category of *vox discreta* in terms of its vocal production. Yet the ambiguities in the dreamer's confusing and possibly confused description of the lyric (the fact that he cannot reckon its length, or decide on its form, or even make clear what he means by 'song without song')—as

well as in the lyric's variant forms in its material history, suggest that this categorization may not be so ready. There is something about the *vox* behind the black knight's lyric which makes its transcription difficult, but not impossible.

Indeed, the *vox discreta/confusa* paradigm was only one of several ways medieval grammarians and philosophers theorized *vox*. As Andrew Hicks elucidates, medieval authorities on *vox* rarely agreed as to what, exactly it was, how it was produced, and whether it was a material or immaterial phenomenon (or both). William of Conches devotes a considerable portion of his *Philosophia Mundi* discussing *vox*, which he sees as entailing both material and immaterial processes. As Hicks explains, for William,

> the imagined journey of the human *uox* is [...] cyclical, from the natural interiority of the corporeal life-process (physiology), through the medial conduit of the exterior world (physics), and back into the body via the ear (physiology again) and onward to the soul (psychology). The *uox*, however, is not merely an objective, material entity that conforms to natural law. It is also a subjective, meaning-bearing entity that connects the intention of the speaker (*uoluntas loquentis*) to the perception of the perceiving soul. That perception, however, is grounded in a relationship of *similitudo* (similarity) between the form of the air thus struck and the form assumed by the airy substance (*aeria substantia*) that the soul deputizes as its external *medium*, the point of transition between the *external* material *res* (thing) and the *internal* immaterial perception, on the part of the soul, of a will or intention. The movement from external to internal is guaranteed not just by the similarity of form

(*similis forma*) but by the similarity of *media* involved: the *similis forma* is transferred from the external *aer* to the internal *aeria substantia*.[21]

Hicks' gloss on William's *vox* projects an understanding of voice as a multimedia phenomenon — physiological, physical, and psychological — that traverses territory both corporeal and incorporeal, substantial and insubstantial, material and immaterial. 'Sense-perceptible' conceptions of *vox* and *musica* like William's, Hicks shows, coexisted with those that saw music and sound as numerical, 'incorporeal', and 'bodiless' phenomena.[22]

The ambiguous status of medieval *vox*, which, as Hicks contends, fluidly traverses these corporeal/incorporeal and material/immaterial binaries, mirrors the uncertain status of the black knight's lyric but also offers one explanation as to why we can in fact have a 'song without song' in the first place, and how it makes its way into material record. Applying William's understanding of *vox* to the lyric gives us a picture of the lyric's performance as a kind of exchange and transfer of sound and sense from immaterial, internal perception (the black knight's memory of White) to external *materia* or *res* (the lyric's sounding, through *verba*) and its immaterial, internal apprehension by the dreamer. The airy medium of sound undergoes a process of conversion and remediation at each of these stages; no wonder, then, that Chaucer

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[21] Andrew Hicks, *Composing World: Harmony in the Medieval Platonic Cosmos* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), p. 153).
[22] Hicks, *Composing World*, p. 154.

should find a means of converting the lyric, internally perceived, into a fourth form: writing.

Thus, the black knight's lyric both is and is not 'songful' because of the way the black knight's *vox* negotiates between sounding, songful, material mediums and the insubstantial internal media of memory and perception. In calling the lyric a 'song without song', then, I would argue that Chaucer is suggesting that the black knight's *materia* — his memory of White as converted into song — is *not* ephemeral, even though the lyric's performance might seem to suggest otherwise. It persists and never diminishes precisely because of the intrinsic materiality of *vox* and its ability to move and reside in various locales: within one or more souls or within in the world and its words — as a lingering sonic materiality in the mind of the dreamer or as a physical text on the manuscript page.

Sarah Elliott Novacich, like William of Conches, writes about musical performance in a manner that emphasizes the vibrant interactions between sound, instrument, and body, but she stresses the impossibility of mediating those complex interactions in written record, and here we have another means of understanding why, or in what ways, Chaucer scripts the black knight's lyric as songless. Novacich uses performance theory to think through absent song in a medieval literary work which precedes the *Book of the Duchess* by a century or so: the Ovidian-derived romance, *Sir Orfeo*.[23] Zeroing in on Orfeo's harping and song (which is mentioned but

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[23] Sarah Elliott Novacich, 'Inaudible Music,' in *The Medieval Literary: Beyond Form*, ed. by Robert J. Meyer-Lee and Catherine Sanok (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2018), pp. 141–58.

neither disclosed nor described), she notes that '[f]requently [...] records of music —

or performance records in general — invite discussion of that which *fails* to be

retained. Sound might be imprinted upon the memory but inscribed upon the page

it is thought to undergo a measure of diminishment'.[24] In a similar vein, another

performance theorist, Peggy Phelan, observes that 'recording always threatens the

ontology of performance: once performance is recorded, it loses its status as

performance. It becomes something else'.[25]

In such views, records of performance — particularly sonic performance —

always operate in a mode of negative capability. Applied to the black knight's lyric

and its poetic record, Novacich's theory of the radical absences implicit to records of

performance elucidates Chaucer's songless song as offering a poignant, performance-

centric, and notably material conception of poetry. This is a poetics which

acknowledges the gaps — temporal and medial — between lyric performance and its

record precisely by refusing to have song (i.e., music) rendered in an imperfect

medium (language, manuscript, musical notation), even if that means eliminating

music and tone colour entirely. It is also a poetics that reminds us once more of the

temporariness of people as well as lyric performance. And if, as Novacich argues, the

performance record most often gestures not to performance, but rather to the lost

status of that performance, then we can understand the knight's 'song without song'

as a self-referential memorial record which reminds us what has really been lost: not

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[24] Novacich, 'Inaudible Music,' p. 147.
[25] *Ibid*.

the performance of the lyric as heard by the narrator (which, I have shown, is not quite

so completely irrecoverable as we might think, if we consult medieval theories of *vox*),

but rather, the time when the lyric subject could sing and be heard by his beloved

rather than some interloping narrator; we know that time to have existed from the

knight's later account of his origins as an amateur maker of song.

The songlessness of the knight's lyric thus mourns the foreclosed possibility of

the performance of amatory lyric with the beloved as an audience, with her body the

one which internalizes the *vox* of her lover and converts the perception of lyric into an

understanding of love. The lyric's commemoration of this type of loss, as I will show

next, Chaucer manages to put to broader commemorative purposes, thus ensuring

that the memory of White — or rather, her real-life counterpart — lasts long after the

lyric has finished sounding.

In addition to the grammatical, philosophical, and musical considerations

outlined above, Chaucer's choice of a songless song reflects a wider, concurrent

historical shift in the making and performance of lyric in late-medieval England, and

the specific (perhaps aspirational) poet-patron interactions suggested by the *Book of

the Duchess*. As Richard Firth Greene details, by the time Chaucer was writing and

active in the English royal court (though not as a professional poet there), the nature

of poetry and poetic performance, and their social valence, had undergone a

significant transition. Formerly the purvey mainly of minstrels (a quasi-professional

class of musically-skilled composers and performers), poetic making by Chaucer's

time was becoming a hobby of the nobility — those who passed through the *camera*

regis and contributed to the king's entertainment. This new class of amateur poets

displaced the song-singing, instrument-playing minstrel. Poetic composition became

a class-specific, skillful, learned (albeit largely nonmusical) pastime for both the

nobility and aspiring members of the gentry. In such contexts, poetry was something

being made not, at least initially, for material reward (like the earlier minstrels), but

rather for other forms of social gain and recognition. Simultaneously, it was becoming

an art form much less readily tied to musical accompaniment or sung performance;

that is, poetry began looking and sounding more like the logocentric lyric of

modernity.[26]

The fact that Chaucer writes the *Book of the Duchess* on the coattails of a time

when the culture surrounding the production of courtly literature was undergoing

such changes suggests some compelling evidence for how to interpret the narrator's

engagement with the black knight and his lyric. Taking into account these contexts,

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[26] By Green's account, 'The minstrel of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries differs in many respects from the amateur court poet of the fourteenth and fifteenth', but 'both filled a similar niche in the social life of the [royal] household, and it is no coincidence that the early fourteenth century witnessed at once the demise of one (at least as a literary exponent) and the emergence of the other; obviously they found themselves in some degree of competition'. See *Poets and Princepleasers: Literature and the English Court in the Late Middle Ages* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), p. 103. Green goes on to describe how, by the end of the fourteenth century, 'the minstrel had virtually lost whatever claim he had once had to share in the literary life of the court. As a musician, however, he remained in great demand, and he appears frequently in household records throughout our period' (p. 105). At the same time, the nobleman, or the gentleman aspiring to noble status, took greater ownership of the literary culture of the court. 'Almost certainly,' Green writes, 'a degree of literary expertise became recognized as one of the marks of a gentleman, and practice in handling the forms of light, social poetry, came to be included within the scope of a genteel education' (p. 109). For historians of literature, the shift from the literary eminence of the minstrel to that of the genteel amateur 'had a marked effect upon the kind of literature produced for courtly entertainment' (p. 110). Not only was the new literature less likely to be set to music and performed by author as in the minstrel days of old, but it also resulted in what Firth calls 'a radical change in the relationship between the author and his audience.' As he puts it, '[i]f the old minstrel literature was a literature of performance, the new courtly verse might be characterized as a literature of participation' (p. 111).

it becomes clear that, at this time, Chaucer's poetic ability might well have been in nominal competition with that of his powerful noble contemporary. Accordingly — whether or not John of Gaunt actually dabbled in poetic composition — within the dream-world of the *Book*, the Gauntian black knight comes to model a version of poetic making and performance distinct from that of the Chaucerian narrator. Where the narrator's language and persona are curious, exuberant, and well-suited to the noisy, colourful space of the dream's opening, the black knight, quietly seated beneath his tree, offers a far more restrained poetic sensibility characterized by simplicity, reticence, and precision. This sensibility extends to the songless performance of his lyric; were we to classify the knight and the narrator as belonging to either the outmoded, songful minstrels or the rising class of amateur courtly poets, it's clear to which group the knight would belong.

The French poet Eustache Deschamps' (1346–1406) theory of natural music in his 1392 *Art de dictier* seems to be alluded to in this emphasis on the nobility implied by the knight's performance of lyric. For Deschamps, as James Wimsatt explains, poetry was classified under the rubric of 'music'. More specifically, verse was conceived of as 'natural music' (*paroules metrifées*), while musical notation was 'the mark of "artificial music"'.[27] Connected to these distinctions was the wider medieval sense of the relationship between nobility, the experience of love, and the ability to

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[27] James Wimsatt, 'Chaucer and Deschamps' "Natural Music"', in *The Union of Words and Music in Medieval Poetry*, ed. by Rebecca A. Baltzer, Thomas Cable, and James I. Wimsatt (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1991), pp. 132–50 (p. 132). See also Philip Jeserich, *Musica Naturlis: Speculative Music Theory and Poetics, from Saint Augustine to the Late Middle Ages in France*, trans. by Michael J. Curley and Steven Rendall (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013), pp. 14–30.

compose music in the former sense. As Wimsatt writes, the 'medieval way' of understanding poetry as music was related to an

> idea […] that only the noble heart was capable of truly loving. Love being the subject of poetry, clearly only the gentle few — like Deschamps' patron — would be capable of understanding or composing genuine love poetry. At the same time, knowledge of music probably would have been understood as a mastery of abstract rules rather than an ability to perform. The basic rules could be seen as accessible to all. By this view, the essence of poetry was instinctive, music learned; poetry natural to the few, music a matter of artifice.[28]

Taking Wimsatt's sketch of medieval attitudes to poetry and music into account, we can read the songless, black-and-white setting of the black knight's performance as a marker of his nobility, and by extension, his sophisticated ability to love truly and to compose verse or song in the 'natural music' sense. Accordingly, we can conclude that the narrator's emphasis on the knight 'saying' rather than 'singing' his lyric represents a clever, class-conscious, deferential move on Chaucer's part. Not only does he indirectly acknowledge his eventual patron's nobility and superior social status, but he also affirms his excellence and skill as both lover and as a modern courtly poet, while denying the possibility of artifice in the making of the lyric. By not singing, John of Gaunt's avatar remains separate and distinct from the narrator,

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[28] Wimsatt, 'Chaucer and Deschamps' "Natural Music"', p. 133.

cordoned off socially and maybe, to a degree, emotionally; but that the emotion contained within the lyric, and which inspires the lyric's production in the first place is genuine and true is something not left to doubt.[29]

And yet, these very qualities which make him distinct is also, I would suggest, something which draws the black knight closer not only to the narrator, but to any reader of his lyric. For the historical shift from the minstrel to the amateur courtly poet suggested by the black knight's songless lyric also denotes a transition from a literature of performance to a literature of participation. Lyric, crafted by amateurs and unsung, is something to participate and be involved with, something to pass around in physical booklets, to copy, edit, and share (as opposed to a sung performance one must listen to in silence).[30] In this world, lyric is delimited from a class of performers and made available to a much wider community, a community like John of Gaunt's social milieu — friends, relatives, colleagues, and underlings who would have found themselves participating in his actual, ritual-like commemorative activities for Blanche — or the broader literary-historical community, which included the likes of John Lydgate, Chaucer's self-styled, fifteenth-century literary successor.

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[29] As Wimsatt observes, it was in fact 'only in the Renaissance that music generally was seen as directly representing ideas and embodying emotion'. See 'Chaucer and Deschamps' "Natural Music"', p. 134. That 'mimetic and expressive properties were not commonly attributed to music,' he explains, was an 'important consequence of [the] mathematical conception of music' (discussed earlier in this article).

[30] Boffey and Edwards in fact offer the provocative suggestion that the *Book of the Duchess* may once have circulated in its earliest appearance in fragile booklet form (likely lost due to the fragility of that unbound, unprotected medium). They point out that the *Book*'s '1334 lines would probably have fitted, if a little snugly, into two eight-leaf quires or gatherings, constituting a short pamphlet of leaves. If it were bound it would have been likely to have only a vellum wrapper rather than boards, and its chances of long survival would have been limited'. See 'Codicology', p. 14. They follow this suggestion with the observation that Chaucer possibly 'circulated a number of his earlier works in this relatively fragile form, but none now survives outside the more protective form of a larger anthology.'

While I haven't the space to expand here on how Lydgate steps into the communal commemorative space opened by Chaucer's lyric, it's worth noting that in his imitative dream vision, *The Complaint of the Black Knight*, Lydgate's titular mourner performs his elegiac complaint annually; in his hands, that is, lyric performance and the associated acts of mourning and commemoration literally become ritualized — within the space of a single poem and across the broad sweep of literary history.

And so, in its songlessness, in its lack of colour, the lyric becomes a feeling, fertile vehicle for Chaucer's musing on not only on lyric and loss, but also on communal, participatory commemoration, and for his reflections on what it means to experience, reexperience, and record loss in lyric. Commemoration, like lyric, disrupts temporality in order to articulate simultaneous, overlapping presence and absence not permitted by a strictly linear concept of time. Acts of commemoration — particularly those with material instantiations, like medieval funeral monuments or legal provisions like chantry endowments — remind us of the former presence of departed loved ones in the process of acknowledging their present unavailability. Lyric, as we have seen, works in a similar way, disrupting both narrative and historical time in order to allow the grieving lyric subject imaginative space in which to re-member the lost beloved. The commemorative lyric, however, with its incorporation of a temporally-grounded, performance-centric, songless, perspectival material poetics, opens the lyric for occupation by multiple lyric subjects. The lyric's perspective becomes a perspective made to be shared.

It is perhaps for all of these reasons that the narrator struggles, early in the poem, to find the right words to categorize the black knight's lyric. Because Chaucer means, with the lyric, to say something complicated and genuine about loss and to have it resonate — with readers, with John of Gaunt — the lyric must become the locus of sensory, sonic, temporal, and linguistic complications I have described. Just one of those complications is the sonic paradox encapsulated in the phrase 'song […] withoute song' where this article began. It is with each new reading, with the making of each new record of its performance, that Chaucer's 'song…withoute song' continues to resonate — in time and text, in manuscript and memory — and this is how, to this day, the *Book of the Duchess* persists in the commemorative project it first undertook some seven centuries ago.

Rituals as Performative Tools for Persuasion: Henry II's 1174 Pilgrimage to the Shrine of St Thomas in Canterbury

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In 1174, Henry II, king of England, undertook a pilgrimage to visit the shrine of St Thomas at Canterbury. This act was widely acknowledged as an additional penance by the king in expiation for his perceived guilt in the 1170 murder of Archbishop Thomas Becket of Canterbury, who had since been canonised as the aforesaid St Thomas. With some notable exceptions, the king's visit to this shrine has garnered little scholarly attention and been dismissed either as superficial and politically expedient or as wholly propagandist in intent. This article aims to explore the use of medieval pilgrimage as a performative tool for persuasion. It examines the king's pilgrimage and compares it with contemporary expectations of penance and penitential pilgrimage. While doing so, it references persuasion as a framework to re-visit and reassess the king's motivations for embarking on a pilgrimage to this particular location. It argues that the personal and the political dimensions cannot be considered mutually exclusive for medieval kings and that we can use religious rituals as an additional way of understanding how they managed their public personas and personal aspirations. Pilgrimage as performative ritual was a highly effective tool for persuasion that could be employed in the service of medieval politics and public relations. It thus offers additional entry points into our understanding of twelfth century politics and public relations, and the tools that could be used for their management.

On 29 December 1170, Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury, and former Chancellor of England, was murdered in his cathedral by four knights of the

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household of King Henry II of England. Popular cultural tradition has it that Henry, in anger and frustration following years of sustained quarrelling with Becket, had bellowed the phrase 'Will no one rid me of this turbulent priest?', thus setting in motion an event that ended with the archbishop's death.[1] A widespread perception that the king was to blame either directly or indirectly for Becket's killing meant that it was broadly held that Henry could not be free of his guilt until he had performed appropriate penances.[2] A settlement was eventually agreed upon between the king and the papacy, which included a set of conditions that had to be fulfilled for the king to be absolved and reconciled to the church. Two public ceremonies were held at Avranches and Caen a few days apart in May 1172 to publicise the king's acknowledgement of his guilt and his acceptance of the conditions laid upon him. Two years later, in July 1174, Henry undertook a pilgrimage to Canterbury to visit the tomb of St Thomas, the now-canonised Becket. This journey has commonly been regarded as additional expiation for the king's part in the archbishop's murder and for some scholars, this event marks the end of Becket's story in relation to Henry.[3]

Neither the imposed penances of 1172 nor the king's pilgrimage in 1174 has been interrogated in detail in any biographical works on Thomas Becket and Henry

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[1] Elizabeth Knowles, trans., *Oxford Dictionary of Quotations*, 7th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009). See Frank Barlow, *Thomas Becket* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1986), p. 235 for the contemporary words said to have been uttered by Henry.

[2] John T. Appleby, *Henry II, the Vanquished King* (London: Bell, 1962), p. 183; Anne J. Duggan, *Thomas Becket* (London: Arnold, 2004), p. 221; W. L. Warren, *Henry II* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), p. 519.

[3] Barlow, *Thomas Becket*, p. 270. For an overview of Thomas Becket's life, see Frank Barlow, 'Becket, Thomas (1120?–1170)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

II. For instance, Frank Barlow's and John Guy's well-regarded biographies of Becket consider the settlement at Avranches to be evidence of the king's political ability to extricate himself from difficult situations and the penitential pilgrimage as no more than a hypocritical, even duplicitous, gesture.[4] Likewise, W. L. Warren's voluminous study of Henry II deals with the penances in a single sentence each, a clear indication that he viewed them as events that were either insignificant or closed cases.[5] The underlying subtext in these non-treatments is that Henry's motivations in participating in these events could only have been underscored with propagandist intent.

Nevertheless, there have been key exceptions, such as Anne Duggan's work examining the king's penances within the context of his conscience, and Thomas Keefe's discussion of Henry's many pilgrimages to Canterbury beginning with the first in 1174.[6] In contrast to those scholars who regarded the penances as purely political propaganda exercises, Duggan argues that the penances should instead be read as evolutions of Henry's conscience. While not wholly discounting the diplomatic aspects, she saw the differences in the king's actions during the events of 1172 and 1174 as manifestations of the king's spiritual journey, one that resulted in

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[4] Barlow, *Thomas Becket*, pp. 260–2, 269–70; John Guy, *Thomas Becket: Warrior, Priest, Rebel: A Nine-Hundred-Year-Old Story Retold* (New York: Random House, 2012), pp. 336–8.

[5] Warren, *Henry II*, pp. 135, 531. Warren called Henry's actions at Canterbury in 1174 'unusual' and 'out of character' but did not include any further analysis.

[6] Anne J. Duggan, 'Diplomacy, Status and Conscience: Henry II's Penance for Becket's Murder', reprinted with original pagination in *Thomas Becket: Friends, Networks, Texts and Cult* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), pp. 265–90; Thomas K. Keefe, 'Shrine Time: King Henry II's Visits to Thomas Becket's Tomb', *The Haskins Society Journal: Studies in Medieval History*, 11 (1998), 115–22.

'conscientious acknowledgement of guilt'.[7] Keefe's work deals with the king's pilgrimage in 1174 within the context of the many pilgrimages that Henry made throughout his life. He leaves open the question of the king's religious conviction in deciding to undertake this first pilgrimage to Canterbury even as he suggests that Henry was 'practiced at manipulating popular religious belief for political purposes'. He does, however, agree with Duggan that by the end of his sojourn in the cathedral the king was convinced that his actions had found favour with God and that God's grace was with him.[8] Two other noteworthy points related to the 1174 pilgrimage were made by Timothy Reuter and Matthew Strickland. As a very short aside to his exploration of symbolic acts in the Becket dispute, Reuter drew attention to the symbolic significance of the king's pilgrimage in 1174 in providing closure to the feud between the king and the late archbishop.[9] Strickland, on other hand, also considered it to be an act of 'political theatre' but accompanied by a military purpose, namely, a review of the defences of the Kentish coast.[10]

The purpose of this article is to re-examine the king's pilgrimage to the shrine of St Thomas in 1174 with the aim of re-assessing the motivations behind this visit using persuasion as a frame of reference. As opposed to propaganda, which is a

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[7] Duggan, 'Diplomacy, Status and Conscience', p. 290.
[8] Keefe, 'Shrine Time', pp. 116–17.
[9] Timothy Reuter, *Medieval Polities and Modern Mentalities*, ed. by Janet L. Nelson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 189–90.
[10] Matthew Strickland, *Henry the Young King, 1155-1183* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), p. 194.

concept that often evokes negative connotations arising from the modern political contexts within which it tends to be analysed, persuasion has been defined as 'a communicative process to influence others'.[11] Persuasion allows the question of the conviction of the persuader to remain open and perhaps more neutral in a way that propaganda does not. It suggests an interactive process from which both persuader and persuadee stand to benefit, allowing for a degree of agency on the part of the persuadee.[12] Notwithstanding the size and immediacy of any target audience, the focus is on the attempt by the persuader to evoke a change in attitude or behaviour in said audience, albeit it must be admitted that the efficacy and success of the approach cannot always be ascertained. In essence the performative aspects of an act of persuasion are important features that aid us in contextualisation and help extend our understanding of the act itself.

This article compares the 1174 pilgrimage with contemporary general expectations of penitential pilgrimage, whilst examining the different elements and their symbolic significance. It re-considers both the personal and political motivations behind the pilgrimage by setting them against the historical context of the period without strictly demarcating them. In doing so, it demonstrates how the king's pilgrimage can be viewed as an efficacious performative tool, not only as a means toward personal ends but also for the management of image and public persona.

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[11] Garth S. Jowett and Victoria O'Donnell, *Propaganda and Persuasion*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1999), p. 27.
[12] *Ibid*., p. 28.

Using persuasion as the framework shifts the focus on the king's motivations ever so slightly, allowing us to see how those motivations could have influenced or impacted his actions and yet retain the quality of not necessarily being malicious or involving a high degree of overt planning and audience manipulation. It also allows for a range of objectives from public to private. To a certain extent, Emma Mason's examination of an earlier pilgrimage undertaken by Henry II, this time to Rocamadour in Quercy, arrived at a similarly multi-faceted view of Henry's motivations for going on pilgrimage, notably without expressly attributing either propagandist or duplicitous intent to the king.[13] This article aims to extend that exploration of the purposes behind the king's pilgrimages, this time focused on the 1174 pilgrimage, to provide additional entry points into our understanding of twelfth-century politics and public relations, and the tools used for their management. It can thus be placed among other studies that examine the exercise of medieval politics involving religious rituals.

King Henry II's pilgrimage to the shrine of St Thomas at Canterbury in 1174 was recorded in varying amounts of detail by many contemporaries, some of whom produced biographical works on Thomas' life.[14] Of Becket's biographers, William of Canterbury, Edward Grim, Garnier (or Guernes) of Pont-Sainte-Maxence, and Herbert

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[13] Emma Mason, '"Rocamadour in Quercy Above All Other Churches": The Healing of Henry II', in *The Church and Healing* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1982), pp. 39–54.

[14] See Michael Staunton, *Thomas Becket and His Biographers* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2006) for an extensive examination of ten biographers of the most complete extant Lives of Thomas.

of Bosham wrote the most detailed accounts of this pilgrimage.[15] But, as Reuter noted,

the event was highly significant during this period[16] and was at least mentioned by

many other chroniclers including Gervase of Canterbury, William of Newburgh,

Ralph de Diceto, Roger of Howden, and Jordan Fantosme.[17] Although there are slight

differences in specifics in these accounts, especially the longer ones, many are

remarkably similar in essentials, and they assist in both re-constructing an image of

the king's visit in 1174 (at least as it has been recorded) and gauging how the

chroniclers' interpretations might influence our understanding.

By conflating the information contained in the different accounts and bearing

in mind the possibility that some details were incorrect, or others omitted, a picture of

the event in Canterbury can be formed. To begin with, William of Canterbury has it

that the king dismounted at the leprosarium of St Nicholas. Henry then walked

through the town to the tomb of the saint at Christchurch cathedral, pausing at the

chapel of St Dunstan to shed his footwear and finish the remainder of the journey

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[15] Edward Grim, '*Vita S. Thomae, Cantuarensis Archiepiscopi*', in *Materials for the History of Thomas Becket, archbishop of Canterbury*, ed. by J. C. Robertson and J. B. Sheppard, 7 vols. (London: Royal Society, 1875–85) (hereafter MTB), ii, pp. 445–7; Herbert of Bosham, '*Vita Sancti Thomae, Archiepiscopi et Martyris*', MTB, iii, pp. 544–51; Janet Shirley, *Garnier's Becket: translated from the 12th-century Vie Saint Thomas Le Martyr De Catorbire of Garnier of Pont-Sainte-Maxence* (London: Phillimore, 1975), pp. 157–62; William of Canterbury, '*De adventu regis ad tumulum martyris Thomae*', MTB, i, pp. 487–9.

[16] Reuter, *Medieval Polities*, p. 189.

[17] Gervase of Canterbury, *The Historical Works of Gervase of Canterbury*, ed. by W. Stubbs, 2 vols. (London: Royal Society, 1879–80), i, pp. 248–9; R. C. Johnston, ed., trans., *Jordan Fantosme's Chronicle* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), pp. 140–3 (lines 1905–15); Ralph de Diceto, *Ymagines Historiarum, Historical Works*, ed. by W. Stubbs, 2 vols. (London: Royal Society, 1876), i, pp. 383–4; Roger of Howden, *Chronica*, ed. by W. Stubbs, 4 vols. (London: Royal Society, 1868–71), ii, pp. 61–2; William of Newburgh, *Historia Rerum Anglicarum*, in *Chronicles and Memorials of the Reigns of Stephen, Henry II, and Richard I*, ed. by R. Howlett, 4 vols, (London: Royal Society, 1884–90) (hereafter *Chronicles and Memorials*), i, pp. 187–9.

barefoot. Edward Grim stated that the king took the harshest path through the town.[18]

He was said to have worn the ordinary clothes of a layperson and had prohibited all

the usual festivities and acclamations attached to royal pilgrimages and visits to

Canterbury. Concerning this last point, Grim claimed that the monks of Canterbury

were sternly told by the king to refrain from both greeting him on his arrival in the

city and escorting him to the cathedral.[19] On reaching the cathedral, Henry prostrated

himself before the church door and again when he was taken before the tomb of the

saint. All the while shedding tears, he made a public confession of culpability and

undertook to make material amends, both in his own words and through the bishop

of London. He also begged the monks for their prayers and accepted discipline at their

hands. The accounts by Edward Grim and Gervase of Canterbury asserted that such

discipline took the form of whipping or flogging by the bishops, abbots, and lesser

monks of Canterbury; Grim going so far as to outline that the king removed his outer

clothing to receive five blows from each bishop and three blows from each of the

eighty monks.[20] It is not known, of course, how much enthusiasm the bishops and

monks displayed for the task at hand. After making offerings, Henry then spent the

rest of the day and the night in prayer and fasting and attended mass the following

morning before leaving the town. Interestingly, William of Canterbury listed in some

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[18] 'ubicunque asperior apparauit via' in Edward Grim, MTB, ii, p. 445.

[19] Edward Grim, MTB, ii, p. 445. See also Nicholas Vincent, 'The Pilgrimages of the Angevin Kings of England, 1154–1272', in *Pilgrimage: The English Experience from Becket to Bunyan*, ed. by Colin Morris and Peter Roberts (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 12–45 (p. 16).

[20] Edward Grim, MTB, ii, p. 447; Gervase of Canterbury, p. 248.

detail the offerings made by Henry — four marks of gold and one silk covering for the tomb. In addition, the king assigned £40 *per annum* to the monastery, 'restored all that had been taken away', and promised to build a new monastery in honour of St Thomas.[21] Other offerings were mentioned by Garnier who stated that Henry granted 20 marks to the leprosarium where he first dismounted (named Harbledown) and 100 shillings *per annum* to a hospital for poor people further along from Harbledown.[22] William also added that Henry obtained a badge of a Canterbury pilgrim and visited other relics within Christchurch cathedral, details that are not included in the other accounts.[23] Gervase of Canterbury, on the other hand, had the king drinking water of the holy martyr (perhaps from a well) and receiving a gift of a flask that might have contained consecrated oil.[24] The king then went on his way, leaving Canterbury and returning to London.

This reconstructed depiction should not necessarily be taken wholly at face value. The sources I have mentioned here all portray a fairly elaborate display of contrition and humility on the king's part, and it is noteworthy that Garnier's version does not differ significantly from those of Becket's other biographers even though he was French born, unlike the other biographers, and wrote his life of Becket in French

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[21] 'restuitque ei omnia quae sui juris errant' in William of Canterbury, MTB, i, p. 488. This part of the offering possibly refers to the following stipulation outlined in Warren, *Henry II*, p. 531: 'That the church of Canterbury should be put in full possession of all the property it enjoyed a year before Archbishop Thomas incurred his anger, and that all who suffered in the archbishop's cause should be restored to property and favour'.

[22] Shirley, *Garnier's Becket*, p. 158.

[23] William of Canterbury, MTB, i, pp. 488–9.

[24] Gervase of Canterbury, p. 248.

verse. Michael Staunton and Janet Shirley, among others, have shown that while Garnier had never met Becket, he was meticulous in his research. He depended heavily on Edward Grim's and William of Canterbury's work, but his interpretations of events and issues come through in his life of Thomas.[25] The crux of the matter is that in these different records of the king's pilgrimage, the inclusion or non-inclusion of details reflect to a certain extent the chronicler's understanding and interpretation of their symbolic value and importance. Alice Taylor's work on homage in the Latin chronicles of eleventh- and twelfth-century Normandy established that rituals and ceremonies could be understood and interpreted in different ways by different observers, depending on their worldview, attitudes and, likely, their affinities. Taylor also noted that these interpretations thus influenced how such rituals and ceremonies were recorded, reflecting at the same time the objectives of the writers and how they wished their readers to view and understand what was being recorded.[26] An example of this possible ambiguity in interpretation can be found in the juxtaposition in many of the chroniclers' accounts of the pilgrimage in 1174 with the king's military successes against his rebel sons and their supporters. Garnier, for instance, summed up Henry's predicament as follows: 'In very pressing need, he went to the baron for help.'[27] Ultimately, the defeat and capture of the king of Scots, William the Lion, by the king's

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[25] Shirley, *Garnier's Becket*, pp. x–xi; Staunton, *Thomas Becket and His Biographers*, pp. 32–4.

[26] Alice Taylor, 'Homage in the Latin Chronicles of Eleventh- and Twelfth-Century Normandy', in *People, Texts and Artefacts: Cultural Transmission in the Medieval Norman Worlds*, ed. by David Bates, Edoardo D'Angelo and Elisabeth van Houts (London: University of London Press, 2018), pp. 231–52.

[27] Shirley, *Garnier's Becket*, p. 157.

forces was an important precursor to Henry's eventual military triumph over the rebels.[28] The fact that Garnier and so many other chroniclers wrote of the king's penitential pilgrimage and positioned it side by side with William's military loss reflects the chroniclers' belief in a direct relationship between the two and supports a contention that they intended to tie the events inextricably together.[29] Yet, even though we can see that the chronological closeness was highlighted and harnessed to press the case for interconnectedness for their readers, it is still possible to read each chronicler differently. Those who were partial towards the king, such as Jordan Fantosme, framed their accounts to emphasise the king's willingness to humble himself and reconcile with Becket posthumously while the same details were evidence for the Becket partisans of the saint's benevolence and extension of God's grace even to those who wished him ill in life.

Returning to the pilgrimage in 1174, if we accept the veracity of specific details in the accounts despite the underlying problems of source interpretation, how did these details compare with the accepted critical elements of penitential pilgrimage in the twelfth century? To answer that question, we must first acknowledge that pilgrimage need not necessarily entail penance or penitential elements since there are

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[28] See Strickland, *Henry the Young King*, pp. 197–205 for further details.
[29] Some writers, such as Roger of Howden, did not specifically mention the defeat of William the Lion but alluded generally to the military victories that fell to Henry and his forces soon after his pilgrimage to Canterbury in 1174.

different types of pilgrimage and it is not confined to the Christian tradition.[30] Yet

pilgrimage, it is generally agreed, is essentially a journey undertaken as an act of

religious devotion to a sacred place. According to Victor and Edith Turner, a

pilgrimage is an act of veneration that should be considered a 'liminal' rite of passage,

one that is figured as a large, bustling event in one's lifetime.[31] This idea of pilgrimage

tends to conjure images of long, difficult journeys; in the case of English pilgrims

perhaps overseas to the continent to visit shrines such as that of St James of

Compostela. However, other scholars such as Eamon Duffy and Colin Morris assert

that a significant number, perhaps even most pilgrimages at least in medieval

England, were local affairs that were more akin to commonplace trips such as going

to the markets.[32] Pilgrimages could become recurrent events, not unlike an annual

outing home for Christmas, or a regular family tradition. The most common

destinations were shrines and religious sites of significance, often those possessing a

relic of some sort. As Morris affirmed, relics were viewed as *memoria* and were closely

tied to a strong belief in the efficacy of miracles.[33] This alternative image is of a

pilgrimage that was much less arduous an undertaking, involving perhaps a

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[30] For a discussion of anthropological classification of pilgrimages, see Victor Turner and Edith Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture: Anthropological Perspectives* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1978), pp. 17–20.

[31] See Turner and Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage*, chapter 1.

[32] Eamon Duffy, 'The Dynamics of Pilgrimage in Late Medieval England', in *Pilgrimage: The English Experience from Becket to Bunyan*, pp. 164–77 (pp. 165–6); Colin Morris, 'Introduction', in *Pilgrimage: The English Experience from Becket to Bunyan*, pp. 1–11 (p. 6).

[33] Morris, 'Introduction', pp. 4–5. The mortal remains of St Thomas were the relics at his shrine in Canterbury Cathedral in the medieval period.

fortnight's excursion to a local important shrine or one in a slightly further part of the country. Scholars such as Diana Webb have queried how long a journey had to be before it could qualify as a pilgrimage, but I would suggest that the length did not matter as much as the objectives of the trip and its destination.[34]

Pilgrimages could be undertaken either voluntarily or on instruction by the church. Theoretically, a pilgrimage that was undertaken because it was imposed on the individual by church authorities as a penance qualified as a penitential pilgrimage because it had to include a level of rigour and difficulty sufficient to warrant redemption from sin.[35] This would differentiate it from voluntary pilgrimage since there was no compulsion on the voluntary pilgrim to endure additional harsh conditions or struggles as a sign of repentance and for the remission of sins. Nonetheless, Jonathan Sumption suggested that such a distinction did not truly exist in medieval Europe. Whether or not a pilgrimage had been mandated, the fact is that the medieval mind possessed a characteristic belief in the automatic remission of sins by the making of formal visits to particular shrines.[36] Indeed, a voluntary pilgrimage was motivated primarily by an inward movement of the heart, making it just as likely that the voluntary pilgrim was seeking religious redemption as much as the imposed-upon pilgrim. Given the degree of physical hardship involved, pilgrimage could be

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[34] Diana Webb, *Pilgrimage in Medieval England* (London: Hambledon, 2000), p. xiii.

[35] Garry G. Crites, 'Penitential Practices', in *Encyclopedia of Medieval Pilgrimage* ed. by Larissa J. Taylor (Leiden: Brill, 2010), https://dx.doi.org/10.1163/2213-2139_emc_SIM_00062 [accessed 17 February 2022].

[36] Jonathan Sumption, *Pilgrimage: An Image of Mediaeval Religion* (London: Faber & Faber, 1975), p. 103.

viewed as an *imitatio Christi*, a re-enactment of the sufferings of Christ that was believed to deliver personal redemption.[37] The pilgrim could, therefore, expect or hope for a substantial benefit to the self, whether it be healing, a sign of God's pleasure or His forgiveness for past sins and wrongdoing. Viewed this way, the very act of pilgrimage itself can be viewed as an act of persuasion, directed at and seeking to convince both God and society of the sincerity of the pilgrims and their motives.

What, then, were the elements expected of a pilgrim or from the act of undertaking a penitential pilgrimage? A key element was austerity. In keeping with the view that a pilgrimage was a solemn and serious event analogous to a re-enactment of Christ's sufferings, a pilgrim would have been expected to dress and behave in an austere and sober manner. Naturally, however, as pilgrims came from many different walks of life, there were likely to be differing degrees of austerity adopted by pilgrims with such different life statuses. Everyday dress and mode of travel of a peasant or someone from the lower socio-economic parts of society were likely to already be sober and ascetic to a large degree. On the other hand, a member of the nobility or a person of royal stature would be accustomed to dressing well and travelling in a leisurely and sumptuous manner. Austerity for the noble or royal pilgrim was much more of a step down in the world. A pilgrim of high status had more to give up in terms of materiality and, hence, adopting more sober clothing and more modest means of transportation was much more symbolic for such a person.

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[37] *Ibid.*, pp. 92–3.

Their adoption of a humble stance would stand out even more in comparison with their usual status, even as their appearance of humility and austerity ostensibly resulted in their being indistinguishable from their fellow pilgrims.

Denial of the body in a variety of ways was another typical element in pilgrimages, especially pilgrimages of a penitential nature. This could take many forms, including fasting, flagellation, walking barefoot and the wearing of abrasive clothing (especially directly next to the skin). Pilgrimages conducted on foot, therefore, were very common.[38] Indeed, it could even be said that it was obligatory for sincere pilgrims to undertake the journey on foot since walking was considered the most virtuous method of travelling. Seen in this light, sombrely dressed pilgrims who made their journey on foot and even barefoot at least part of the way would have been especially esteemed. Fasting and flagellation, in addition, were important and common components of penance from the earliest days of Christianity.[39] They added to the rigour of pilgrimage while providing spiritual benefit. Again, pilgrims who viewed themselves as reliving Christ's experiences were more likely to adopt such practices in the hope of further ensuring personal redemption.

Another element of a pilgrimage that was usually considered essential was the giving of offerings, with votive offerings being the most well received.[40] Sarah Blick pointed out that votives were part and parcel of medieval pilgrimage and made it

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[38] *Ibid*., p. 127.

[39] Crites, 'Penitential Practices'.

[40] Votive offerings were offerings made in fulfilment of a vow.

interactive.[41] That the pilgrim was seeking a spiritual benefit is not contested but the votive offering was the physical manifestation of the pilgrim's promises in return for the benefits bestowed on them. Such offerings signified that an 'agreement' was being put into place, a contract of sorts between the pilgrim and the devotional deity. It created a relationship between the two that was summed up by Blick as a 'help me and I will do this for you' transaction.[42] In general, the value of one's offerings tended to be commensurate with one's status. Money was the most common offering and jewellery was usually the most valuable.[43] However, candles, images and tokens would also have been proffered. Not all offerings were votive in their intent, and it was not a mandated requirement of pilgrimage. Moreover, not every pilgrim was in a financial position to make offerings and no one, least of all the monks at any shrine, would have been crass enough to directly mandate that a pilgrim had to make an offering. On the other hand, if a pilgrim neglected to make any offering at all, no matter how small, such an omission would certainly have been frowned upon and said pilgrim was certain to experience a chilly reception from the resident clergy.

King Henry's pilgrimage appears to have borne all the hallmarks of being one that entirely conformed to and possibly exceeded contemporary expectations. Duggan

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[41] Sarah Blick, 'Votives, Images, Interaction and Pilgrimage to the Tomb and Shrine of St. Thomas Becket, Canterbury Cathedral', in *Push Me, Pull You: Art and Devotional Interaction in Late Medieval and Renaissance Art*, ed. by S. Blick and L. Gelfand (Leiden: Brill Academic Press, 2011), pp. 21–58 (p. 21).
[42] *Ibid.*, p. 25.
[43] Ben Nilson, 'The Medieval Experience at the Shrine', in *Pilgrimage Explored*, ed. by J. Stopford (Woodbridge: York Medieval Press, 1999), pp. 95–122 (p. 109).

was in no doubt that the reasons behind this penitential pilgrimage were predominantly personal, stating that 'popular opinion could have been appeased by a formal visit to the tomb and the distribution of alms'.[44] For her, many of the penitential elements were over and above what was needed for a public gesture. Nevertheless, the presence of other elements in the king's pilgrimage such as Henry arriving barefoot and participating in the rite of flagellation is striking. The barefooted arrival, the scourging of the king's body and fasting added a heightened penitential note that publicly and more emphatically signalled the king's sincere intentions and wishes for redemption and the forgiveness of his sins. By assenting to the visitation of acts of desecration on his body, the king used these rituals to persuade onlookers of his humility and willingness to go above and beyond to gain redemption, or at least to be seen as being so willing. Similarly, the king's offerings were further tangible tokens of his sincerity and self-effacement while being necessarily commensurate with his worldly rank and status. Offerings made by the typical Becket devotee were tendered in return for help with mundane everyday problems including illness, business affairs and love lives. Many of those gifts and offerings, especially the votive ones, would not have been considered of great monetary value.[45] The richness of the king's offerings was, therefore, not just indicative of his royal status, they exemplified the prominence of the king's concerns and the importance of the affairs he sought

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[44] Duggan, 'Diplomacy, Status and Conscience', p. 282.
[45] Blick, 'Votives, Images, Interaction and Pilgrimage', p. 25.

divine guidance and assistance for. Henry's assignment of £40 *per annum* to the monastery and his promises concerning a future monastic establishment in the saint's honour speaks to his acknowledgement of the wrongs he had done to Becket. So did his offering of gold marks and a silk covering for the saint's tomb. That he was facing domestic unrest and rebellion from several quarters (an issue I will return to shortly) was widely known and surely would have factored as the pre-eminent issue of significance in the king's frame of mind during his trip to Canterbury.

The fact that the king was taken before the actual tomb of St Thomas is another significant element in the story of this pilgrimage. Insofar as it is mentioned in the different contemporary accounts, the writers agreed that the king prostrated himself before the tomb in the crypt, confessed and asked pardon of the monks and was then flogged in that same location. Such proximity to the tomb of Thomas Becket appears to have been a typical occurrence for pilgrims to Canterbury. Anne Bailey notes that miracle accounts record many instances of pilgrims placing offerings on Becket's tomb, spending the night beside it and more besides. Such descriptions, Bailey asserts, have led historians to assume that such freedom of access was typical across all English shrines in the twelfth century, especially when compared to the later medieval period.[46] However, her work on pilgrimage practices in eleventh- and twelfth-century England suggests that a more nuanced view of the twelfth-century pilgrim's

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[46] Anne E. Bailey, 'Reconsidering the Medieval Experience at the Shrine in High Medieval England', *Journal of Medieval History*, 47.2 (2021), 203–29 (pp. 1–2).

experience at English shrines may be more appropriate. The Canterbury pilgrim's free and easy access to the centre of the shrine, if one may so regard the saint's tomb, was not necessarily the norm at all or even many other pilgrimage destinations of the time.[47] If that is so, the king's access to the tomb of Becket takes on additional consequence and importance. It becomes an event of even more symbolic value, particularly to those of the king's subjects who had not made any pilgrimages to Canterbury and experienced such unfettered access for themselves. Being able to attain such proximity to Becket's tomb would, in his subjects' eyes, have elevated the king's pilgrimage, making it even more remarkable.

The elements discussed so far speak to the existence of a particular symbolic framework that underpinned how audiences understood royal pilgrimages. Timothy Reuter's examination of medieval politics posits the existence of a symbolic meta-language that underpinned how it was exercised, what forms of symbolic expression were used and how it was communicated and understood by its different audiences.[48] The features that I have examined thus far establish that a similar symbolic meta-language exists for penitential rituals. Austerity, denial of the body, the giving of offerings, and the freedom (or lack of it) of closeness to the centre of a holy shrine are some of the key elements of a pilgrimage in this period. But the expectations for a royal pilgrimage were likely to be higher than for the average penitent. A king, more

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[47] *Ibid.*, pp. 20–1.

[48] See Reuter, *Medieval Polities*, chapter 10 '*Velle sibi fieri in forma hac*: Symbolic Acts in the Becket Dispute'.

than an average pilgrim of lower or more modest means, needed to demonstrate his sincerity by doing more than others did. He had to be more outwardly austere, undergo greater denials of his body, and make much richer offerings to be seen to be as sincere. Henry's 1174 pilgrimage to Canterbury did just that and in doing so, he harnessed the symbolism to his advantage. Ritual can be a performance that encapsulates beliefs and gives expression to commitment. But it only works because of the existence of this meta-language.

Moreover, rituals can be polysemic.[49] A ritual is, as Geoffrey Koziol asserted, 'capable of multiple readings' and the fact that people can understand and draw upon and from rituals in so many ways is a testament to this characteristic.[50] The meta-language and symbolic framework provide the necessary for shared discourse and it cannot be dispensed with. Nonetheless, different meanings can be attributed to the same ritual by different audiences. The ambiguity in meanings is rooted in the situational context and the differing perceptions of the different audiences. These audiences draw diverse meanings from the ritual to satisfy what they need and desire from the event being witnessed. This does not mean that it does not matter how the ritual is conducted or that certain elements can be omitted from it without any consequences or changes in impact. This means that the language of the ritual can be understood in slightly different ways. Hence, this is why Henry's 1174 pilgrimage can

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[49] Sarah Hamilton, *The Practice of Penance, 900–1050* (London: Royal Historical Society, 2001), p. 181.
[50] Geoffrey Koziol, *Begging Pardon and Favor: Ritual and Political Order in Early Medieval France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), pp. 307–11.

be perceived as ambiguous in its motivations and why the significance of the elements in this event, as recorded in different accounts, is worth debating.

Why might Henry have turned to this type of penance and what did he hope to achieve in undertaking such a journey? I have stated previously that both Duggan and Keefe were convinced that personal belief of the need to seek expiation for his guilt in the death of Thomas Becket lay behind the king's decision to go to Canterbury. Yet Henry could not have known conclusively that his journey and abasement before the shrine of St Thomas would find favour in God's eyes. Moreover, while personal conviction of his need for redemption may have been a primary driver, this need not mean that there were no other co-existing reasons, especially considering the political upheaval occurring during this period.

One of the most significant political challenges that Henry faced in the early 1170s was the great rebellion of 1173–74 involving many of his family members and subjects as well as key foreign rulers. As the source of major political upheaval in his dominions, it was his primary focus during that period, occupying much of his energy and attention. The rebellion began with the outbreak of a quarrel between the king and his eldest son, known to us now as Henry the Young King, over the latter's discontent at possessing nothing more than titular control over Normandy, England and Anjou, despite having been crowned. Henry's refusal to accede to his son's demands for actual rule in at least one of those dominions fomented an uprising in which the major antagonists were the younger Henry and his brother Richard,

supported by their mother Queen Eleanor, King Louis of France and William the Lion,

king of Scotland. They were joined by a great many nobles, including the counts of

Boulogne and Flanders, Count Theobald of Blois and several English earls. William of

Newburgh noted that while many great magnates openly joined the rebellion, some

of those who remained on the king's side were also suspected of wavering in their

allegiance to him.[51]

The Battle Abbey chronicler and Edward Grim were among those

contemporary writers who believed that the rebellion was God's vengeance on the

king for his part in the saint's death.[52] This view was echoed more publicly during the

first celebration of the canonised archbishop's feast day on 29 December 1173.[53] The

Office composed for the public readings narrated the events in the life of the saint

including his martyrdom and described the current situation as a time when 'people

rose up against people and kingdom against kingdom; even the realm was divided

against itself'.[54] This phrase may well have directly alluded to the conditions of the

times, being, as it were, some months after the outbreak of hostilities between the king

and the rebels. Hence, it is likely that the king was still strongly associated with

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[51] William of Newburgh, *Chronicles and Memorials*, i, pp. 171–2; Warren, *Henry II*, p. 123. See Strickland, *Henry the Young King*, chapters 8 and 9 for a detailed examination of the 1173–74 rebellion.

[52] *The Chronicle of Battle Abbey*, ed. by Eleanor Searle (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), pp. 275–7; Edward Grim, MTB, ii, p. 445.

[53] Pope Alexander had canonised Becket on 21 February 1173. 'Bull of Pope Alexander III, dated 12 March 1173', *English Historical Documents Volume II 1042–1189*, ed. by David C. Douglas and G. W. Greenaway (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1953) (hereafter EHD II), pp. 774–5.

[54] As quoted in Anne J. Duggan, 'The Cult of St Thomas Becket in the Thirteenth Century', reprinted with original pagination in *Thomas Becket: Friends, Networks, Texts and Cult*, p. 34.

Becket's murder despite previous restitution in the form of the penances imposed in May 1172. Certainly, Henry the Young King appears to have believed that this perception still lingered. He had undertaken a pilgrimage to the increasingly popular shrine of the late archbishop in the latter half of 1172, a visit that was recorded by an anonymous chronicler who asserted that 'St Thomas had remitted all his anger and vengefulness … towards the new king.'[55] His confidence in the saint's favour and, conversely, his belief that his father lacked that same favour, is demonstrated by how he disputed several episcopal elections, some of which involved loyal servants of Henry II. Richard of Ilchester and Geoffrey Ridel were two of these men, and in accusing them of being involved in Becket's murder the young Henry was, by imputation, reviving and reinforcing his father's perceived role in the same murder.[56] Henry II's role in the death of Becket was not the primary cause for the rebellion of 1173 but it was undoubtedly used by the rebels as a justifying factor.

Besides the domestic and political troubles facing Henry, there was the issue of the cult of St Thomas. This cult had progressively grown in the aftermath of Becket's murder and it presents an additional perspective through which to view Henry's decision to go on a pilgrimage to St Thomas' shrine in Canterbury.[57] Contemporaries

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[55] Strickland, *Henry the Young King*, pp. 117–18.

[56] Strickland, *Henry the Young King*, pp. 155–6.

[57] For a comprehensive treatment of the historiography of this cult, see Kay Brainerd Slocum, *The Cult of Thomas Becket: History and Historiography through Eight Centuries* (London: Routledge, 2019). For the development of the cult and its impact within the Plantagenet orbit of the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, see *The Cult of St Thomas Becket in the Plantagenet World, c.1170–c.1220*, ed. by Marie-Pierre Gelin and Paul Webster (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2016).

such as William Fitzstephen and John of Salisbury noted the occurrence of miracles early on following the murder.[58] Other writings such as the collections of miracles compiled by Benedict of Peterborough and William of Canterbury point to the cult's rapid growth in popularity, with people coming from all corners of England and even from lands abroad to visit the tomb of the blessed St Thomas.[59] Becket's canonisation also added to the growing perception of him as a figure of saintly justice whose resistance to his king had led him to political sainthood. He was canonised in 1173, only a little more than two years after he had been killed, and Duggan called it one of the most rapid canonisations in medieval church history.[60] For the faithful, Becket's new status as a saint and the fame of the cult was a sure sign that Becket and his cause had found favour in the sight of God. To the king, it may well have begun to look as if divine judgement had been delivered against him so that on both personal and political levels, he needed to re-situate himself and his kingship. Naturally, Henry the Young King and his fellow rebels would have viewed the rise of the cult as an irresistible opportunity to harness divine support by claiming it as their own. They proceeded to do so, as evidenced by instances such as the earl of Leicester's invoking of St Thomas' aid for his military assault against the castle of Haughley and a song

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[58] William Fitzstephen, MTB, iii, pp. 149–50, 151–2; Letter 305 'To John of Canterbury, bishop of Poitiers', *The Letters of John of Salisbury, Volume Two: The Later Letters (1163–1180),* ed. by W. J. Millor and C. N. L. Brooke (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), pp. 724–39 (pp. 736–7).

[59] Benedict of Peterborough, MTB, ii, pp. 156–7, 224–5; The Lambeth Anonymous, '*Quomodo vere martyr apparvit*', MTB, iv, pp. 140–1; William of Canterbury, '*De puero quem paries obruit*', MTB, i, pp. 206–7; William of Canterbury, '*De Hiberniensi furante ampullam*', MTB, i, pp. 308–9.

[60] Duggan, 'The Cult of St Thomas Becket', p. 22, note 1.

written for the earl presenting St Thomas as supporting the young Henry as the new king.[61]

Given the disturbing events of this time, it is unsurprising that the king should have felt the need to take direct action in appealing to the divine. A pilgrimage to a shrine at this time, and particularly to the shrine of St Thomas himself, would surely have appealed to Henry in terms of countering lingering perceptions of his role in the archbishop's murder. Duggan refers to the king's pilgrimage as a 'willing performance of the full penitential ritual', an indication that she viewed the king's journey as one made voluntarily and primarily focused on his personal needs.[62] Political necessity does not figure as a key reason for Duggan but, conversely, Barlow regarded Henry's pilgrimage as entirely political in its objectives. Nevertheless, for him too, the king's decision was a freely made one, albeit focused on repairing his reputation.[63] Yet it is possible to view Henry's decision to go on a pilgrimage to Canterbury as being not entirely voluntary. Only two years had passed since 1172 when the king had acknowledged his guilt publicly and accepted the set of conditions laid upon him by the pope. The rise of the rebellion had resulted in persistent public and political pressure on the king to atone further for Becket's murder, not only because it was viewed as God's continuing anger towards Henry for Becket's death but also for the possibility that the rebels would claim St Thomas for themselves and

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[61] Strickland, *Henry the Young King*, pp. 173–4.

[62] Duggan, 'Diplomacy, Status and Conscience', p. 283.

[63] Barlow, *Thomas Becket*, p. 269.

their cause, a possibility that came to pass as it happened. As such, the king had very little choice but to act and embrace the cult of St Thomas sooner rather than later.[64] To neglect to do so would have been to risk being dangerously placed in opposition to its popularity. In essence, the king needed to gain divine support in his struggle against the rebels and he also needed to come to terms with the burgeoning cult of his erstwhile archbishop. One method of doing so was to associate himself and his kingship with Becket's cult in a more positive manner. A pilgrimage was the perfect vehicle to show that he shared his people's devotion to their home-grown martyr and saint and persuade them that he had been forgiven by the same. It not only gave the king an opportunity to lay to rest once and for all the notion that there was any remaining animosity on his part towards Becket but also enabled him to strengthen anew the bonds between himself and his people in the face of possible fissures because of the Becket killing.

Henry was not alone among medieval kings in seeking to accrue benefits to his kingship through such an association. J. W. McKenna's study of the cult of Archbishop Scrope in the fifteenth century located the beginnings of intentions to use popular religious cults for political purposes before the fourteenth century. He suggested that the manipulation of popular religious fervour for political gain could be traced as far back as Angevin England and became a tradition of sorts, that is, that such political saints could be called upon by opponents of the crown because of what they stood

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[64] Sumption, *Pilgrimage*, p. 99.

for.[65] In addition, Gabrielle Spiegel's investigation into how the French Capetian kings worked to identify their house and the French national persona with the cult of Saint Denis confirms that such an association could bolster the image of the king positively and buttress his legitimacy.[66] One could argue, as Martin Aurell did, that Henry's efforts to associate himself and his kingship with the cult of St Thomas were wholly in keeping with his *modus operandi* concerning the cultivation of good public relations. Aurell demonstrates, as an example, Henry's efforts to obtain the canonisation of Edward the Confessor (with whom the Plantagenets had a dynastic link) and later the translation of St Edward's relics to Westminster to enhance the standing of his dynasty and family.[67] Hence, similarly, it was political persuasion of the highest order that Henry was undertaking in the case of the cult of Thomas Becket. He harnessed the widespread enthusiasm generated by the cult and joined his piety to it in a public demonstration of personal rehabilitation, which would further boost his status and the legitimacy of his kingship. The fact that he continued to undertake regular pilgrimages after 1174 serves to bolster the argument that he recognised the possibilities of the use of pilgrimage as a tool for sustained political persuasion. His gesture of piety and humility at Canterbury enhanced his standing as king and

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[65] J. W. McKenna, 'Popular Canonization as Political Propaganda: The Cult of Archbishop Scrope', *Speculum*, 45.4 (1970), 608–23 (pp. 608–9).

[66] Gabrielle M. Spiegel, 'The Cult of Saint Denis and Capetian Kingship', *Journal of Medieval History* 1.1 (1975), 43–69 (pp. 61–3).

[67] Martin Aurell, *The Plantagenet Empire 1154–1224*, trans. David Crouch (New York: Pearson/Longman, 2007), pp. 83–94, 135–6.

providence in the form of military victory culminating in triumph over his opponents gave Henry the support he needed to complete the persuasion.

At the same time, Henry's general attitudes towards pilgrimage may also have played a part in his decision. Alan Forey's study of Henry's crusading penances concluded that the king's failure to wholly implement the penances imposed on him in 1172 indicated a lack of genuine penitence on his part, all the more so since crusaders considered themselves pilgrims seeking a shrine.[68] In addition, contemporary writers such as Gerald of Wales tell us that the pope, in response to Henry's request, allowed him to substitute the founding of three monasteries for his vow to go on crusade as included in the settlement of Avranches.[69] However, Elizabeth Hallam pointed out that the three foundations made in substitution for his crusade vow did not constitute the total of royal foundations financed by Henry.[70] She suggested that the records showed that his generosity in this respect was in line with typical patterns of royal patronage.[71] This implies that while the king's founding of monasteries as a substitute is indicative of a lack of enthusiasm for the crusading penances, Henry was not unmindful of the need to fulfil his penitential vows and may simply not have been in a position to undertake a crusade of the magnitude originally

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[68] Morris, 'Introduction', pp. 1–2.

[69] As discussed in John T. Appleby, 'The Ecclesiastical Foundations of Henry II', *Catholic Historical Review*, 48.2 (1962), 205–15 (pp. 205–6).

[70] Elizabeth Hallam, 'Henry II as a Founder of Monasteries', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 28.2 (1977), 113–32 (p. 114).

[71] *Ibid*., pp. 115, 132.

required of him. Furthermore, pilgrimage was a family tradition on all sides for Henry. Both his Angevin grandfather Count Fulk and his Norman great-grandfather Duke Robert undertook penitential pilgrimages to Jerusalem at some point in their lives, and Henry himself was no stranger to pilgrimages.[72] Nicholas Vincent cited several such visits made by Henry to various shrines in his dominions; for example, a journey made to Reading immediately before starting a campaign against the Welsh in 1163 and another in 1166 to Mont-St-Michel to give thanks for victory against the Bretons.[73] He also travelled in 1170 to Rocamadour to offer thanks to the Virgin for his recovery from illness. After 1174, his pattern of pilgrimages continued with yearly visits to Canterbury, an occurrence that further validates his adherence to and continuation of a family tradition.

It is also worth bearing in mind that Henry almost certainly contemplated how he and his reign would be remembered in history. In about 1160, Henry commissioned a history of his ancestors to be written by Wace, a Norman cleric, in Old French. Wace was later replaced by Benoît de Sainte-Maure in 1174. It was the first time that a medieval European monarch had commissioned such a work in the vernacular rather than Latin, which was the language typically used in chronicles and historical writings until then.[74] This commission suggests two significant points. The first is that Henry

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[72] Vincent, 'The Pilgrimages of the Angevin Kings', p. 13.

[73] *Ibid*., pp. 22–5.

[74] Charity Urbanski, *Writing History for the King: Henry II and the Politics of Vernacular Historiography* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013), pp. 1–2.

was surely aware of historical writing and the fact that they could influence how he and his dynasty might be remembered in the future. Staunton outlined how Henry's genealogical credentials were keenly investigated and his career followed by the chroniclers and writers of the age, firstly as duke of Normandy and later, after he became king of England in 1154, having amassed a slew of territories under his rule. For example, Osbert of Clare, prior of Westminster, set out Henry's genealogical record as a ruler of many peoples at the head of a ninety-line poem. Within this poem, Osbert urged the soon-to-be king of England to live up to his promise as the scion of past kings of England and Jerusalem.[75] Similarly, Aelred, abbot of Rievaulx, prefaced a lament to King David of Scotland with an epistle to Duke Henry, which, among other things, hailed the nobility of his bloodlines. Given the laudatory tone of such works, their authors surely meant for them to be read by the duke himself. The second point is that Henry commissioned the work in the vernacular. Such a break with tradition indicates that Henry had in mind not just a learned audience of clerics and the literate in high culture but also those who might have been literate but been more comfortable with the common patois. He had an eye for history and the public image and representation of himself and his family, to be sure, but he intended to reach a wider audience than before and that is an important point to remember about Henry's pilgrimage to Canterbury.

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[75] Michael Staunton, *The Historians of Angevin England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 30–1.

Seen against the backdrop of the political situation and the rise of St Thomas'
cult, it is completely logical that Henry should have embarked upon a pilgrimage to
Canterbury on his arrival back on English soil in the summer of 1174 and the publicity
inherent in royal pilgrimages was crucial in this scenario. The reality was that royal
pilgrimages generally were much more ostentatious events than those performed by
ordinary laypersons.[76] The fact that Henry took the trouble to ban the usual fanfare
shows that he was conscious of the possible impact of his visit to Canterbury at that
time. The prohibition may even have been an attempt (sincere or otherwise) on
Henry's part to appear more humble and to add a further note of remorse and
sincerity to his pilgrimage. Yet despite this apparent attempt at keeping a low profile,
there could not but exist a high degree of publicity attached to this occasion. William
of Canterbury related how the king 'made his way on foot from the chapel of Saint
Nicholas which was two stades from the city'.[77] Such a distance would have afforded
the townspeople ample opportunity to witness the approach of the king and word
must have spread quickly of so momentous an occurrence even without the pomp that
commonly announced the visits of illustrious persons. The popularity of St Thomas'
cult was such that large numbers of pilgrims were also likely to have been found in
the city. It was therefore almost certain that many pilgrims as well as local

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[76] Vincent, 'The Pilgrimages of the Angevin Kings', pp. 16–17.

[77] William of Canterbury, MTB, i, p. 488: '*Nam ab aedicule beati Nicholai, quae stadiis duobus distat ab urbe, pedestre iter aggressus est*'. The word 'stade' originated from the Greek 'stadion' and is equivalent to the modern length of approximately 160m to 200m.

townspeople, were on hand to witness the king's approach to Canterbury. People took note of the king's actions and given that it conformed in many ways with the actions of a devoted and reverent pilgrim, the king's pilgrimage to Canterbury can only have enhanced his reputation and his image. Henry's pilgrimage may have been ostentatiously penitential, but its performative aspects were the very reason it worked in a public setting.

As to who the audience of this performative ritual was, there are many possibilities. Henry was undoubtedly aware that a pilgrimage could have many audiences, although a pilgrimage to Canterbury might be expected to have attracted an overwhelmingly domestic (relative to the king's dominions) audience. His English subjects were a key component of this audience but, given the growing presence of Canterbury on the pilgrimage stage, so too were his subjects and other pilgrims from continental Europe. Naturally, historical writers and chroniclers of the age were important spectators, as were the papacy and other political observers, especially in light of the Becket dispute that culminated with the archbishop's murder. In the personal sense, Henry would have had God on his mind as well. If it is true that Henry was motivated primarily by his personal need for redemption and reconciliation with his Maker, as Duggan maintains, then God may well have been his primary audience. Yet whether the king was motivated primarily by political or personal reasons is, to some extent, a moot point in this examination of the use of pilgrimage as a performative tool for persuasion. The key point here is how different audiences

perceived and read the publicity and possible intent behind it in the king's pilgrimage and what factors this depended on.

By analysing pilgrimage as a performative ritual against the framework of persuasion, this article has demonstrated that it is possible to reconcile both personal motives with secular and political reasons. Henry's personal motives were not necessarily strictly distinct from his political motives. Henry the man might have sought to further show the extent of his penitence both to God and to the church. But as the king, he could not have failed to take more secular and down-to-earth reasons into consideration. The penitential pilgrimage to Canterbury in 1174 was directed at a wide audience. Consideration of the specifics of this penance has enabled us to observe that publicity was a vital aspect. The visual display was a performance to the extent that it was designed, possibly unconsciously, to impress upon its audience the idea of humility and persuade it to believe in the continued and genuine contrition on the king's part, assisted this time by additional significant touches of self-effacement such as volunteering to be flogged. By presenting a humble and contrite image in the performance of this penance, he also more closely associated his kingship with a popular and prestigious cult. In doing so, he furthered his aim of enhancing his status and entrenching the legitimacy of his kingship, not just in the eyes of his subjects, but also in the eyes of God. The performance of the pilgrimage to St Thomas' shrine at Canterbury was meant to signal that Henry shared his people's reverence and respect for the saint. Furthermore, if chronicle accounts of the 1173–74 rebellion can be read

as suggestive of possible fractures in the bond between the king and his people, it can be argued that Henry employed the use of pilgrimage to strengthen or perhaps repair this same bond. In doing so, he also strove to demonstrate both to his subjects and the wider European world that he was a truly Catholic king and that he had the Church and God on his side. As a ritual that fitted into the societal fabric of the age, the penitential pilgrimage was used by the king to 'converse' with a multi-layered audience. It was also used as a communication tool to manage his image and reshape his representation. His good fortune to be presented with the coincidence of the defeat of the king of Scots with the end of his pilgrimage cemented the results of embarking on this ritual.

Performing Marriage Rituals: The Iconography of North Italian *Cassoni* 1480–1520

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This essay examines the role played by Northern cassoni, *or wedding chest, produced between the 1480s and 1520s in the ritual celebrations of dynastic weddings that cemented the alliances between the Este family in Ferrara and the rulers of neighbouring states. The detailed account of Sabadino degli Arienti of the nuptial celebrations for Lucrezia d'Este and the son of the ruler of Bologna Annibale Bentivoglio in 1487 sheds light on the ritualistic aspects of these celebrations. These included triumphal arches that personified the cardinal virtues and concluded with a pantomime in which the nymph Lucretia, the protagonist and bride's alter-ego, ended up choosing marital love over lust and chastity. It is argued that rather than elicit sentiments of wifely submission in the bride, the tales of heroines that possessed inherently manly virtues depicted on the* cassoni *aimed at empowering the young elite brides and prepared them to acquire the agency required to exercise political power in their husband's absence.*

Cassoni, or wedding chests, formed part of the wedding gifts for the bride-to-be, containing her trousseau. Traditionally, they were paraded along the streets during the ritual procession or *deductio a domo* that accompanied the newly-wed from her

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father's house to that of the groom and often served as a practical and discreet receptacle for the dowry.

Florentine *cassoni* have received considerable scholarly attention. Art historical studies, including catalogues from dedicated exhibitions held at Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in 2008 and the Galleria dell'Accademia in Florence in 2010, have examined their iconography and determined their symbolic role as part of an elaborate ritual of gift exchange that sanctioned the passage of the bride's *potestas* from her father to the groom and reminded the bride of her wifely obligations.[1]

This study defies the traditional Florentine-centred approach to *cassoni* to examine Northern Italian artefacts. It explores the intersection between the iconography of *cassoni* and the ritual celebrations of the dynastic weddings that are described in contemporary accounts and encomiastic writings. It will be argued that the *cassoni* were an integral part of the performance rituals associated with the bride's entry into the city and her arrival at the groom's palace, complementing the theatrical performances that took place during the procession, as well as at the bride's arrival at her new abode.

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[1] Among the vast scholarship on Florentine *cassoni*, I shall mention a selection of works, which contain further bibliographic references: Cristelle Baskins, Adrian W.B. Randolph, Jacqueline Marie Musacchio and Alan Chong, *The Triumph of Marriage: Painted Cassoni of the Renaissance* (Boston: Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, 2008); *Virtù d'amore: pittura nuziale nel Quattrocento fiorentino*, ed. by Claudio Paolini, Daniela Parenti, Ludovica Sebregondi (Florence: Giunti, 2010); Andrea de Marchi, *Le opere e i giorni: exempla virtutis, favole antiche e vita quotidiana nel racconto dei cassoni rinascimentali* (Signa: Masso delle Fate Edizioni, 2015); *Art and Love in Renaissance Italy*, ed. by Andrea Bayer (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2008); Ellen Callmann, *Apollonio di Giovanni* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974).

In Verona, *cassoni* workshops thrived from the last quarter of the fifteenth century until the late sixteenth century, servicing a wealthy clientele from Northern cities such as Bologna, Mantua and Venice. In the first dedicated catalogue of Veronese *cassoni*, Matteo Vinco has classified artefacts that predominantly date between the 1480s and the 1520s, thus suggesting a peak in their production. This period coincided with a series of dynastic weddings celebrated between 1487 and 1502 that cemented alliances between the Este house in Ferrara and the rulers of Bologna, Milan and Mantua, as well as the Papal state.

Renaissance marriage ceremonies had a strong ritual aspect, as studied extensively by cultural historian Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, whose remarks about the middle echelons of Florentine society are partly applicable to Northern cities. Rituals associated with the bride's physical separation from her familial household, the bridal procession until her arrival at the bridegroom's house, and the consummation of the marriage followed a repeated pattern. In the dynastic marriages described in this paper, these rituals were amplified and complemented by theatrical spectacles, jousts and banquets. The bride-to-be's symbolic entrance into the city and her procession to the princely palace were not dissimilar from royal entrances.[2]

The crucial aspect of these rituals was their public dimension, as the bride was exposed to the scrutiny of the whole community, and the transition to

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[2] As discussed by Diane Y. Ghirardo, 'Festival Bridal Entries in Renaissance Ferrara', in *Festival Architecture*, ed. by Sarah Bonnemaison and Christine Macy (London: Taylor & Francis, 2007), pp. 43–73.

adulthood.[3] As I will demonstrate, the performative acts in the form of tableaux vivants, choirs and pantomimes were reinforced by the pictorial narrative of the mythological scenes depicted on the *cassoni*. My analysis is underpinned by Cristelle Baskins's study of narratives of mythological heroines represented on Florentine *cassoni*. Baskins champions a number of heroines from the ancient mythical past, which she estimates account for one-third to a half of the extant *cassoni*.[4] These heroines embody different models of femininity and antagonism towards their male counterparts, which in some cases result in suicide (Dido, Lucretia/Virginia) while in others guarantee their transitioning into 'normative femininity' (Amazons and Sabine Women).[5] These masculine traits enable them to transgress into the quintessentially male realms in which 'the victimhood implied by adversity always operates in dynamic tension with feminine heroic agency'.[6]

In the marriage rituals of Northern Italian courts, these coming-of-age rituals were re-enacted and amplified by the pictorial narratives that decorated the bridal apparatuses, including chariots, *bucintori*, *cassoni* and smaller decorative objects that complemented the theatrical spectacle during and immediately after the procession. The mythological tales depicted on Northern *cassoni* aimed to elicit in the bride not

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[3] Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, *Women, Family and Ritual in Renaissance Italy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), p. 187.

[4] Cristelle L. Baskins, *Cassone Painting, Humanism and Gender in Early Modern Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 11. These include the Amazons, Dido, Camilla, the Sabine women, Lucretia and Virginia.

[5] Baskins, *Cassone Painting*, pp. 28, 49. On the popularity of Lucretia's rape in the iconography of Florentine *cassoni* see Jerzy Miziolek, 'Florentine Marriage Chests Depicting the Story of Lucretia and the War with Giangaleazzo Visconti', in *Art and Politics: Proceedings of the Third Joint Conference of Polish and English Art Historians*, ed. by Francis Ames-Lewis and Piotr Paszkiewicz (Warsaw: Instytut Sztuki Polskiej Akademii Nauk, 1999), pp. 31–43.

[6] Baskins, *Cassone Painting*, p. 11.

only the sentiments of chastity and propriety but also qualities such as prudence and fortitude that were considered inherently masculine. These rituals and the level of community participation were intended to reinforce her newly acquired status and agency to equip her for her new role. This aspect would have been essential for women of the high nobility who needed to achieve an authoritative status that would enable them to take the regency of the state in their husband's stead when needed.[7]

'UNPACKING THE *CASSONI*'[8]

The practice of providing the bride with a painted *cassone* was already popular in the fourteenth century but reached its peak in the fifteenth century and gradually waned in the sixteenth century, when relief-carved *cassoni* replaced painted ones.[9] From the first quarter of the fifteenth century, the iconography of *cassoni* became more elaborate. Simple images of couples in amorous poses were replaced by group scenes painted on the front panels that were often also gilded with gesso, according to a technique known as *a pastiglia*.[10] The popularity of painted *cassoni*, which were produced in great numbers to satisfy the demands of the ascending mercantile

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[7] Virginia Cox, *A Short History of the Italian Renaissance* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2016), p. 172.

[8] The title of this section echoes Adrian W. B. Randolph, 'Unpacking *Cassoni*: Marriage, Ritual, Memory', in *The Triumph of Marriage*, pp. 15–30 (p. 15).

[9] Cristelle Baskins, 'Triumph: An Introduction', in *The Triumph of Marriage*, pp. 1–14 (p. 1). On the growing demand of domestic furniture by Florentine elite classes in the fifteenth century, see Richard Goldthwaite, *Wealth and the Demand for Art in Italy, 1300-1600* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1993), pp. 224–30.

[10] Brucia Witthoft, 'Marriage Rituals and Marriage Chests in Quattrocento Florence', *Artibus et Historiae*, 3, no. 5 (1982), 43–59 (p. 43).

classes in Florence and Siena, was already declining at the end of the fifteenth century. In 1568, Giorgio Vasari alluded to the vogue of commissioning painted *cassoni* as long gone. In contrast, in Northern Italy, the production of *cassoni* peaked in the late fifteenth and the first two decades of the sixteenth century.

Vinco's catalogue of Veronese *cassoni* features 159 artefacts produced between 1440 and the 1520s, with most dating from the 1490s until the 1520s.[11] Their attribution to a particular artist or workshop is often uncertain, and not all the artefacts listed in the catalogue were produced in Verona. The documentary records suggest that the wedding chests commissioned on the occasion of the lavish dynastic weddings of the offspring of Duke of Ferrara Ercole I d'Este were built and painted in situ by court artists. While attribution to specific artists is often debated by art historians, in this paper, I will make specific references to *cassoni* considered by scholarly consensus to be Ferrarese to demonstrate the inherently performative nature of their iconography. These characteristics reflect the theatricalised rituals that were part of the bride's triumphal entry and were further amplified by theatrical performances staged during the marriage festivities. Northern *cassoni* present many common features, and Veronese artists with well-established workshops, such as Domenico Morone, also worked in other Italian centres. Artist mobility, particularly within neighbouring courts, became increasingly common in the late fifteenth century. Ferrarese *cassoni*, incombination with chronicles and

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[11] Mattia Vinco, *Cassoni: Pittura profana del Rinascimento a Verona* (Milan: Officina Libraria, 2018).

encomiastic writings, provide a unique insight into the complex theatrical rituals that surrounded the wedding celebrations of the elites.

In the last decade of the fifteenth century, the expansionist threats from France and Venice to the North and the Papal state to the South compelled Northern courts to forge mutually convenient alliances through dynastic marriages. In 1487, Annibale Bentivoglio, son of Giovanni II, the ruler of Bologna, married Lucrezia d'Este, daughter of Ercole I d'Este. The alliance between Milan and Ferrara was strengthened by the weddings of Anna Sforza and Alfonso d'Este (1491) and of Beatrice d'Este to Ludovico Sforza (1492). In 1490, the alliance between Ferrara and neighbouring Mantua was sealed through the marriage of Isabella d'Este and Francesco II Gonzaga, Marquis of Mantua. Lastly, following Anna Sforza's death in childbirth, Alfonso married Lucrezia Borgia, the illegitimate daughter of Pope Alexander VI, in 1502.

The nuptials of three of the legitimate daughters of Ercole I d'Este between 1487 and 1492 represented an intense period of preparation of bridal paraphernalia, including *cassoni*. Court artists were commissioned to craft a variety of objects for the wedding celebrations. These included small objects such as jewellery boxes, but also carriages, triumphal arches for the bridal procession and *bucintori*, decorated barges fitted with several rooms that allowed the bride to travel by waterways.

The construction and decoration of the wedding paraphernalia, including *cassoni*, was commissioned to Ercole de' Roberti who, following the death of Cosmè

Tura, had become the first artist at the Este court.[12] In 1479, de' Roberti had opened his own workshop with his brother Polidoro and the goldsmith Giovanni di Giuliano da Piacenza. The presence of a goldsmith is likely to be related to the production of *cassoni*, which were often gilded, and the preparation of bridal jewellery. The *munitioni* register records the expenses incurred for these, along with the names of the artists hired for these occasions. To build and decorate thirteen *cassoni*, the triumphal carriage and the nuptial bed for the wedding of Francesco Gonzaga and Isabella d'Este in 1490, De' Roberti had in his employ the painters Nicoletto del Cuoco, Sigismondo Fiorini and Bongiovanni di Geminiano, the sculptors Domenico di Paris and Stefano and Bernardino di Donna Bona. The iconography of a pair of these *cassoni* has been reconstructed through the information provided by the 1638 inventory of Roman art collector Vincenzo Giustiniani. The *cassoni* depicted the adventures of the Argonauts, including the scene of the Argonauts fleeing Colchis on board the ship *Argo*, that has been attributed to Ercole de' Roberti and is currently part of the Collection of the Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum in Madrid.[13] For the wedding procession of Anna Sforza, who married Alfonso d'Este in 1491, de' Roberti hired the painters Romano di Bonaccorso, Fino Marsigli, Sigismondo Fiorini and Gabrielletto Bonaccioli and the engravers Ludovico Giandusi, Stefano di Donna Bona, Giacomo di Giuseppe,

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[12] On Ercole de' Roberti see Joseph Manca, *The Art of Ercole de' Roberti* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Paola Tosetti Grandi, '"Favole tolte da Ovidio e da altri poeti": per tre coppie di cassoni nuziali bolognesi', *Bollettino del Museo Civico di Padova*, 79 (1990), 223–54.

[13] Madrid, Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum, The Argonauts leaving Colchis, inv. No. 344 (1934.41), *c*.1480.

Ludovico Castellani, Bartolomeo dall'Olio and Giovanni da Modena.[14] For the occasion, four triumphal gates were carved in the guise of Roman deities and horses.[15]

The sculptor Domenico di Paris, who had decorated the bridal carriages for Eleonora of Aragon, who married Ercole I d'Este in 1473, played a prominent role in the design of the triumphal arches that marked Anna Sforza's entrance into Ferrara.

He also decorated the thirteen wedding *cassoni* that Eleonora d'Este donated to her daughter Isabella, whose wedding to the Duke of Mantua, Francesco Gonzaga, was celebrated a few months later. De' Roberti acted again as chief designer on the occasion of the wedding of another legitimate daughter of Duke Ercole, Beatrice d'Este, who married Lodovico Sforza in 1492. De' Roberti is said to have partly restored six *cassoni* and the bridal triumphal chariot that had been partially damaged while stored at Castelvecchio. It is likely that the cassoni in question had been prepared for Isabella's wedding and were now revamped for Beatrice. His last documented commissions were the carvings of a bull and two giants for the theatrical apparatuses for the 1502 wedding celebrations of Alfonso d'Este and Lucrezia Borgia.[16]

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[14] For a detailed treatment of artists in the service of Ercole d'Este complemented by documentary sources, see Marcello Toffanello, *Le arti a Ferrara nel Quattrocento. Gli artisti e la corte* (Ferrara: Edizioni Edisai, 2010).

[15] Toffanello, *Le arti a Ferrara nel Quattrocento*, p. 111.

[16] On Domenico di Paris, see Toffanello, *Le arti a Ferrara nel Quattrocento*, pp. 307–10; Massimo Ferretti, 'Domenico di Paris', *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, 40 (1991).

FERRARESE *CASSONI*

Cassoni produced in Northern Italy in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries usually had the bride's and bridegroom's coats of arms painted in the middle of the main panel, while the painted story appeared within two round frames placed on the left-and right-hand sides. The iconography of these *cassoni* privileged episodes from Roman history and mythological tales, especially those from Livy and the exemplar stories of Valerius Maximus as well as Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Stories of chaste and virtuous women like Penelope, Lucretia and Virginia, as well as of women capable of acts of heroism, such as Clelia, a Roman maiden who was taken hostage by the Etruscans and managed to escape by crossing the Tiber, were common. Other stories that revolved around a male protagonist, such as the Justice of Trajan and Coriolanus, featured paradigmatic examples of motherly love and women's soothing power in taming man's rage, respectively. Ovid's *Metamorphoses* was another rich iconographic source for the *cassoni*. While his tales of transformation also inspired *cassoni* produced in Florence and Siena in the early fifteenth century, as far as one can tell, North Italian artists showed a particular predilection for these stories. Besides the abduction of Europa, *cassoni* artists depicted the myth of Daphne, Atalanta, Ariadne and Medea.

Among the small group of *cassoni* attributed to Ferrarese artists are artefacts that provide exemplary case studies of the celebration of manly qualities in mythical heroines. The first example comes from the story of the Roman general Coriolanus,

who decided to side with the enemy and threatened to destroy Rome. The story was recounted by Valerius Maximus, Dionysius of Alicarnassus and Plutarch. It narrates how, after the unsuccessful attempt by Roman dignitaries, a convoy of matrons headed by Coriolanus's mother, Veturia, and his wife, Volumnia, travelled to Volscian military camp to entreat Coriolanus. These two episodes are illustrated in two tondi that belonged to the front panel of a *cassone* produced c. 1490–1500 now in the Museum der bildenden Künste in Leipzig (inv. I. 1372–73).[17] According to ancient sources, Veturia berated her son and convinced him to withdraw the Volscian troops. To honour the women for saving Rome from likely destruction, a temple dedicated to Female Fortune (*Fortuna Muliebris*) was erected on the spot where Coriolanus yielded to his mother's requests. Valerius Maximus placed this episode among *exempla* for piety (*pietas*). This Roman virtue, which encompasses filial love but also reverence for one's fatherland and religion, will later be incorporated into the cardinal virtue of justice.[18]

The episode narrated by Valerius Maximus and depicted on the *cassone* panel is an exemplary case of women's temperance and pacifying power, which are achieved through rhetorical skills traditionally associated with the masculine sphere. Similar accounts that exalt women's rhetorical and negotiation skills and that appear to be equally conspicuous in the iconography of Renaissance *cassoni* are those of the

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[17] Vinco, 'Catalogo della "pittura di cassone"', 132–3 (cat. no. 66); Vinco, *Cassoni: Pittura profana*, pp. 161–4 (cat. no. 39.1–39.2).

[18] On the intermittent presence of *pietas* in classical sources, see Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, 'The Emperor and his Virtues', *Historia: Zeitschrift für alte Geschichte*, 30, no. 3 (1981), 298–323.

abduction of the Sabine Women and the Justice of Trajan. Central to the episode of the Sabine Women is their fundamental role as pacifiers, whose unifying actions led to the establishment of the Roman republic.[19] The Justice of Trajan appears conspicuously on Northern painted *cassoni*. Salvatore Settis argues that one of these artefacts was decorated in Ferrara as part of the wedding gifts for Polissena d'Este and Giovanni Romei in 1468.[20] In the Justice of Trajan, a mother whose son has been killed by the son of Trajan faces the Emperor to exact justice. In one version of the story, Trajan compensates her for her loss by allowing her to adopt his own son. This story would have been a suitable subject for a wedding in which the bride was to marry into a family with children from previous unions as a lesson in temperance, acceptance and self-sacrifice.

Manly traits also characterise Atalanta, a mythological heroine whose tales are a popular subject in Northern *cassoni*. As narrated in the tenth book of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Atalanta is an accomplished huntress who has grown up in the wilderness. Confident in her abilities, she agrees to marry the suitor who beats her in a foot race. She dominates the race until she pauses to collect the golden apples that Venus has thrown on her path, allowing Hippomenes to win the race. Unlike many other heroines of the *Metamorphoses*, Atalanta is not the hunted prey but the huntress, and she is associated with Artemis/Diana. Like the Amazons, she is endowed with traditionally male attributes, such as strength, precision and speed.

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[19] As argued by Baskins, *Cassone Painting*, pp. 103–27.

[20] Salvatore Settis, 'Traiano a Hearst Castle: Due cassoni estensi', *I Tatti Studies in the Italian Renaissance*, 6 (1995), 31–82.

Her pausing the race to collect the apples signifies her preparedness to accept marital love and her societal role, as in antiquity apples were considered a symbol of fertility and commonly used as wedding gifts.[21]

Episodes from the myth of Atalanta are depicted on what was likely the front panel of a *cassone*, now in the Gemäldegalerie in Mainz (Figure 1), which has almost unanimously been attributed to an anonymous Ferrarese artist of the circle of Ercole de' Roberti. The front panel of the Mainz *cassone* depicts two scenes: the triumph of Chastity, and Atalanta and her companions preparing to hunt the Caledonian boar.[22] In the first tondo, the personified Chastity is enthroned on a triumphal chariot. Personifications of the seven cardinal virtues were an integral part of wedding rituals, in tableaux vivants that populated bridal procession to the bridegroom's palace, as well as in pantomimes. Sitting humbly in front of her on a low slab is Cupid, who is blindfolded and has his hands tied behind his back to represent voluptuous love.[23]

The myth of Hippomenes and Atalanta illustrates five other Northern *cassoni*, which feature the popular episode of the race ultimately won by Hippomenes with the help of Venus, who provided him with golden apples from the garden of the Hesperides as a ruse to distract Atalanta. The first scene in a *cassone* from the

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[21] For the importance of apples in ancient wedding rituals, see Evangelia Anagnostou-Laoutides, *Eros and Ritual in Ancient Literature: Singing of Atalanta, Daphnis, and Orpheus* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2013), pp. 46–67 and pp. 1–46 for a detailed analysis of the ancient sources of the myth of Atalanta, including Ovid.

[22] Mainz, Gemäldegalerie, inv. 230–231. Vinco, 'Catalogo della "pittura di cassone"', pp. 91–2 (cat. no. 38); Vinco, *Cassoni: Pittura Profana*, pp. 165–7 with bibliography (cat. no. 40). Against the scholarly consensus, Vinco attributes the *cassone* to an artist from the workshop of Domenico Morone.

[23] See, by way of comparison, Titian's *Venus blindfolding Cupid* at Galleria Borghese.

Jacquemart André Museum in Paris (Figure 2) depicts Atalanta and her maids watching the beheading of one of her suitors. The female figures have both arms extended, pointing to the right, where a pile of severed heads of unsuccessful suitors rests on a column. The second scene on the front panel details the popular episode of the race between Atalanta and Hippomenes. It also features a subsidiary scene; in the background, a scantily clad Venus offers Hippomenes the golden apples. These scenes are divided by the coat of arms of the Monselice family. The *cassone* has been attributed to a Veronese artist on the grounds that the Monselice coat of arms is also documented in Verona.[24]

The Monselices were a family of wealthy bankers who had established branches in Ferrara, Mantua and Bologna. They had a strong presence in Ferrara where they appear among the signatories for the establishment of a voluntary association aimed at assisting Jewish families.[25] A striking aspect of the Jacquemart André *cassone* is the dynamic representation of the action and, particularly in the first tondo, the artist's attention to gestures that can be likened to theatrical gestures depicted in coeval illustrated editions of the plays of the Roman dramatist Terence, particularly those at the press of the Venetian-based printer Lazzaro de' Soardi, who exerted a monopoly until the last reprint in 1515. The similarities between these gestures and the ones depicted on the *cassoni* are not only limited to hand gestures

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[24] Vinco, 'Catalogo della "pittura di cassone"', p. 93 (cat. no. 39); Vinco, *Cassoni: Pittura Profana*, pp. 270–2 (cat. no. 86).

[25] David B. Ruderman, 'The Founding of a Gemilut Ḥasadim Society in Ferrara in 1515', *AJS Review*, 1 (1976), 233–67 (p. 241).

but also apply to bodily posture.[26] These notable correspondences connect the iconography of the *cassoni* to performances that accompanied the bride in the procession, as documented by contemporary accounts of dynastic marriages.

Figure 1: The triumph of Chastity; Atalanta and her maids prepare for the Calydonian boar hunt Gemäldegalerie, inv. 230, 231 GDKE RLP, Landesmuseum Mainz, Photo by U. Rudischer

Figure 2: Atalanta and Hippomenes Paris, Musée Jacquemart-André – Institut de France, inv. MJAP-M 1780 © Studio Sébert Photographes

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[26] For a detailed study of the iconography of printed editions of Terence see Giulia Torello-Hill and Andrew J. Turner, *The Lyon Terence: Its Tradition and Legacy* (Leiden: Brill, 2020), pp. 196–221.

Art historical studies dedicated to Northern *cassoni* have shown correspondences both in imagery and execution that can easily be explained by the intercultural exchanges between the Este court and the neighbouring cities of Mantua, Bologna, Padua and Verona, as well as by the mobility of artists in search of patronage.[27] Nevertheless, Ferrara offers a unique case study due to the five dynastic weddings of Ercole I d'Este's legitimate offspring between 1487 and 1502, as well as to the fact that all the objects built for the bridal procession were decorated by the court artists. These artists were involved in ducal commissions of various kinds, including painting the backdrop of the temporary theatrical buildings that were set up in the ducal palaces and gardens and in the cathedral to stage a wide array of plays, such as adaptations of classical Roman comedy in vernacular, pastoral and religious dramas.

The exemplary mythical tales that decorate Northern wedding *cassoni* present different paradigms of femininity. Certainly, these stories can partly be viewed as cautionary tales to remind the bride-to-be of the importance of chastity and demureness. More importantly, however, images of these virago heroines would have been an empowering experience for these young brides.

The visual representation of classical heroines depicted on *cassoni* resonates with the female warriors of Matteo Maria Boiardo's *Orlando Innamorato*, which was composed in Ferrara between 1476 and 1490. In the epic poem, Bradamante and Marfisa incarnate the paradigm of the female warrior, who possesses manly prowess

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[27] Settis, 'Traiano a Hearst Castle', p. 75.

and courage and can rival her male counterparts. These qualities are counterbalanced by feminine traits and delicate beauty, as masterfully described in the fourth canto of the third book of *Orlando Innamorato*, in which Bradamante falls in love with Ruggiero. However, Bradamante's embrace of her female does not contradict her warrior nature. In marrying Ruggiero, as narrated in the *Orlando Furioso,* she does not relent to wifely submission, as she is celebrated as the forebear of the glorious Este progeny.[28] Her societal role demands that she is equipped with manly traits, courage, prudence and the rhetorical skills that will allow her to exercise power. At the Ferrara court, Bradamante, albeit a fictional character, would set a powerful example for the new generations of elite brides to aspire to. Boiardo and later Ariosto read parts of their poems to a select courtly audience. Documentary sources reveal the anticipation surrounding these readings and the writing of Book III of *Orlando Innamorato*, particularly from Isabella d'Este, who had recently become the Marchioness of Mantua.[29]

To give a sense of the centrality of viragos in Northern Italian courts, it is worth remembering that in 1492, Sabadino degli Arienti, an intellectual in the service of the Bentivoglio family, completed his *Gynevera or On Famous Women*, a

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[28] Margaret Tomalin, 'Bradamante and Marfisa: An Analysis of the *Guerriere* of the *Orlando Furioso*', *The Modern Language Review*, 71 (1976), 540–52, remarks that 'she is a contradiction in terms, an oxymoron: the *guerriera/donna gentile*' (p. 540); Eleonora Stoppino, *Genealogies of Fiction Women Warriors and the Dynastic Imagination in the Orlando Furioso* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012); Carolyn James, 'In Praise of Women: Giovanni Sabadino Degli Arienti's Gynevera de le clare donne', in *The Intellectual Dynamism of the High Middle Ages*, ed. by Clare Monagle (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2021) pp. 297–316, whom I thank for supplying a copy of this work.

[29] Maria Lettiero, *Le ottave di Boiardo nella cultura musicale del Cinquecento* (Rome: Edicampus, 2011), 19.

catalogue of thirty-one medieval and Renaissance women. The dedicatee of the work, Ginevra Sforza, was the influential spouse of Giovanni II Bentivoglio, the de facto ruler of Bologna and mother of Annibale, whose wedding celebrations with Lucrezia d'Este are discussed later in this paper. Many of the noble women portrayed by Sabadino came from the Northern courts of the Este, Gonzaga, Visconti and Montefeltro dynasties, or from the Aragonese court in Naples that had dynastic bonds with them. This work had a precedent in Boccaccio's *Famous Women* but took a novel approach in presenting contemporary or near contemporary women endowed with both feminine and male attributes. Sabadino specifically discusses the pivotal role of these elite women in policy making and warfare as possessing the cardinal virtues of prudence, fortitude, justice and temperance that are often associated with male rulers.[30] The association of these manly qualities with women is unprecedented and is reflected in the theatricalised rituals that surrounded elite weddings in Northern courts.

MARRIAGE RITUALS: A CASE STUDY

The wedding of Lucrezia d'Este, daughter of the Duke of Ferrara, Ercole I d'Este, and Annibale Bentivoglio, the son of Giovanni II, ruler of neighbouring Bologna, provides an ideal case study to tease out correspondences between marriage rituals and *cassoni* iconography. Celebrated at the end of January 1487, this wedding is

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[30] James, 'In Praise of Women', p. 300.

amply documented. Besides the official account, *Nuptiae Bentiuolorum*, written by Filippo Beroaldo, descriptions of the wedding celebrations survive in Giovanni Sabadino degli Arienti's *Hymeneus Bentivolus* in the vernacular, in two works in Latin verse written by Florentine intellectuals in the circle of Lorenzo de' Medici – *Epithalamium* by Angelo Michele Salimbeni and the *Nuptiae Carmen* by Naldo Naldi – and an account by an anonymous Ferrarese author.[31]

The wedding celebrations involved the journey to retrieve the bride from her father's house, the bride's triumphal entry into the city, the presentation of gifts, the religious ceremony, the wedding banquet, an open air ball game, a tourney of the glove, jousts and theatrical performances. Of particular significance for the present discussion are the bride's triumphal entry and the performance of an allegorical play that followed the wedding banquet. Bridal triumphal entries were inaugurated in 1473 in Ferrara on the occasion of the wedding of Ercole I d'Este and Eleonora of Aragon and continued to be performed at increasing cost until well into the sixteenth century.[32]

Lucrezia's triumphal entry is described in detail by Sabadino degli Arienti. According to his account, Lucrezia had to pass through seven temporary doors that were erected for the occasion after hearing the words of seven women who were seated on a platform mounted on top of each door and represented the seven virtues

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[31] The celebratory texts, with the exception of the *Narratione*, which is mentioned in Francesca Bortoletti, 'An Allegorical Fabula for the Bentivoglio-d'Este Marriage of 1487', *Dance Chronicle*, 25, no. 3 (2002), 321–42 (p. 324), have been edited in *Le nozze dei Bentivoglio (1487). Cronisti e poeti*, ed. by Bruno Basile and Stefano Scioli (Naples: La scuola di Pitagora editrice, 2014).

[32] Ghirardo, 'Festival Bridal Entries', pp. 43–73.

of Hope, Charity, Temperance, Justice, Prudence, Faith and Fortitude. The procession that accompanied Lucrezia to Palazzo Bentivoglio followed a route until her arrival to Palazzo Bentivoglio that took her from Porta Galliera (the north gate to the city of Bologna) to the Reno bridge, the Bentivoglio place of cult (the Church of the Madonna of the Galliera), the site of civic political power (Piazza Maggiore) and the commercial hub (Piazza della Mercanzia) to enter the Bentivoglio quarters near the Church of San Giacomo.[33] The itinerary had been carefully planned, and for the occasion Giovanni II Bentivoglio had demolished the buildings in front of the family palace to create a large square that would accommodate games and jousts. The political significance of a procession that took the distinguished guests through the centres of power of the Bentivoglios has been discussed at length by critics.[34] The bride's entry into the city and her going through seven doors can be compared to the jubilant reception of a victorious general.

Triumphal arches did not form part of the display for the wedding of Eleonora of Aragon in 1473, but became a customary feature of the bridal display from the late fifteenth century until well into the sixteenth century.[35] Positioned at strategic points of the city, they displayed public and private buildings patronised

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[33] Annalisa Maurizzi, 'Bologna, 27 gennaio/2 febbraio 1487. Il corteo trionfale e la fabula mitologica nelle nozze tra Annibale Bentivoglio e Lucrezia d'Este', *La Rivista di Engramma*, 86 (2010), 63–88 has mapped the wedding procession's itinerary.

[34] See Sergio Bettini, 'Politica e architettura al tempo di Giovanni II Bentivoglio', in *Palazzo Ghisilardi. Il sogno rinascimentale di un notaio bolognese*, ed. by Sergio Bettini (Ferrara: Edisai), pp. 11–32, who discusses at length the Bentivoglios' urban interventions, including the grandiose Palazzo Bentivoglio, equated by Beroaldo to Nero's *domus aurea*, which was destroyed in 1507 by Pope Julius II.

[35] Ghirardo, 'Festival Bridal Entries', p. 56.

by the Bentivoglios to the neighbouring court as a tangible legitimation of their power. Similarly, triumphal arches designed by Leonardo da Vinci were erected at Sforza Castle in Milan on the occasion of the wedding of Isabella of Aragon to Gian Galeazzo Sforza in 1490.[36] These temporary architectural structures were often adorned by ornamental vegetation, and they were characterised by tableaux vivants of allegorical characters reciting poetry, which created a performance that involved the bridal cortege as much as the onlookers. Thomas Tuhoy rightly remarks that the poetry recited by the performers would have hardly been heard by the public; the music and the cheering coming from the cortege, as well as from the spectators, would have made the visual display the central element of these performances.[37] The visual spectacle included not only the tableaux vivants and the triumphal arches but also the wedding procession itself comprising the decorated wedding chariot, the costumes of the accompanying cortege, tailored using the finest fabrics, the cloth canopy (*baldachino*) that provided shade and shelter to the bride during the procession and lastly the *cassoni* carrying the dowry that would be paraded on the street.

Triumphal entries of Roman generals are a recurrent iconographic theme of painted *cassoni*, to the point that Brucia Witthoft remarked that they appear to be

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[36] Giuliana Ferrari, 'Gli spettacoli all'epoca dei Visconti e degli Sforza: dalla festa cittadina alla festa celebrativa', in Anna Antoniazzi Villa et al., *La Lombardia delle signorie* (Milan: Electa, 1986), pp. 218–43.

[37] Thomas Tuhoy, *Herculean Ferrara: Ercole d'Este (1471-1505) and the Invention of a Ducal Capital* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 268; as noted by Ghirardo, 'Festival Bridal Entries', p. 59.

'martial rather than marital' scenes.[38] These scenes of classical triumphal entries mirrored the bridal procession. As Diane Ghirardo has shown, bridal triumphal entries incorporated the classical tradition of Roman victorious generals, medieval royal entries and the decorated floats paraded during civic celebrations.[39] Just as Roman triumphant generals used to parade the spoils of war, bridal chariots were followed by mule carts carrying their dowry. For example, Lucrezia Borgia, who entered Ferrara in 1502 as the bride of Alfonso I d'Este, had seventy-two mules to carry her belongings.[40]

The festivities for the Este–Bentivoglio wedding culminated on 29 January 1487, with the staging of an allegorical play described with unusual precision by Sabadino degli Arienti.[41] The storyline is rather simple; a nymph whose name, Lucretia, suggests that she is the bride's alter ego, is being discouraged from getting married by the promiscuous Venus, who is accompanied by Cupid, Infamy and Jealousy on the one hand and the chaste Diana, who promotes celibacy on the other hand. In the end, the nymph/Lucrezia follows Juno's advice and accepts marrying Annibale. Just like many mythical heroines whose tales were depicted on *cassoni* and bridal apparatuses, the bride's alter ego, the nymph Lucretia, transitions into adulthood by choosing marital love over celibacy.

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[38] Witthoft, 'Marriage Rituals', p. 43.
[39] Ghirardo, 'Festival Bridal Entries', p. 44.
[40] Tuhoy, *Herculean Ferrara*, p. 269.
[41] For a discussion of the allegorical play with particular emphasis on the dance choreography, see Bortoletti, 'An allegorical fabula', pp. 327–35.

Despite the conventional nature of the plotline, the performance would have engaged the audience aurally, but especially visually, through a combination of lavish costumes, dance choreography and moveable stage machinery. The allegorical *fabula* revolved around the bride, who significantly assisted to the performance being seated on a raised wooden platform positioned in the centre of the hall while watching her impersonation embrace marital love, as advocated by Juno, whose epithet Lucina recognised her in antiquity as the goddess of childbirth. The symbolism of the allegorical *fabula* also permeated the dance choreography, including a *moresca* dance in which a young woman holding a flower and a quince (*pomarança*), a symbol of female fertility, danced with eight male dancers. Within the mythical-allegorical setting, the contemporary world was also present in the moveable stage machinery. The scenes were presented in the guise of towers suggestive of the Bologna skyline, which were in turn wheeled towards the spectators 'as if they were dancing'.[42] As the performance progressed, the fictional character in the allegorical play and the contemporary reality of court life gradually aligned, while the rhythm and pace of music and dance accelerated. This culminated in the final dance, which involved all the spectators who suddenly turned into performers.[43] The bride's identification with the nymph and her facing the challenge of choosing or rebutting love were deliberately triggered by the nymph's name. Her immersion into a pastoral setting and the themes of the *fabula* had already begun

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[42] Basile and Scioli, *Le nozze dei Bentivoglio*, p. 81; Bettini, 'Politica e architettura', p. 18.

[43] Bortoletti, 'An allegorical fabula', pp. 333-4.

upon her arrival at the Bentivoglio palace when she rested in a room decorated with tapestries with depictions of nymphs and 'celestial and terrestrial animal creatures'.[44] This immersive experience and the increasing pace of the music and dance would have culminated in the consummation of the marriage. Throughout the performance of the pantomime, the bride sat on an elevated platform in a liminal space between the performers and the audience, enthroned and dignified like the personified virtues depicted on *cassoni* and echoed in the tableaux vivants placed along the bridal procession. Her alter ego, nymph Lucretia, is not a victim of abduction but rather chooses marital love over carnal passion or chastity. Her choice to follow Juno's advice is intellectually pondered and a sign of her agency rather than a display of wifely submission.

CONCLUSION

The dynastic marriages that cemented the alliances between the Este House and their neighbouring city states between 1487 and 1502 comprised a series of immersive rituals. As documented in Sabadino's detailed account of the celebrations for the Este-Bentivoglio wedding, during the procession the bride was exposed to different paradigms of femininity and cautionary tales of heroines who had either rejected male advances or embraced their 'normative femininity'.[45] These included personifications of the cardinal virtues and visual representations of heroines of

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[44] Basile and Scioli, *Le nozze dei Bentivoglio*, p. 47.
[45] Baskins, *Cassone Painting*, p. 28.

antiquity who encompassed these virtues and were reiterated through a theatrical performance. These immersive experiences, amplified by the decoration of the *cassoni*, the chariots and the bridal room, as well as by the music and the cheering crowds, had elements typical of initiation rituals of separation and the journey culminating in the bride's reincorporation into society. The bride's level of participation gradually increased, and the passage through the triumphal arches symbolised her transition from liminality to full integration. In the case of Lucrezia d'Este, her full incorporation into her newly acquired status coincided with her embracing her new identity, symbolised by her stage-double nymph Lucretia. During this initiatory experience, the bride was exposed to exemplary tales of heroines who not only displayed the female virtues of chastity and demureness but also the masculine qualities of courage and fortitude that were essential to successful leadership.

Almanacs Illustrating Extraordinary Embassies During the Reign of the Sun King

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Almanacs produced in eighteenth-century France were inexpensive, large, broadside calendars squarely aimed at the developing literate middle-class. They were both functional and aesthetic, generally consisting of a large single image depicting the key state event of the previous year with a smaller section at the bottom of the page including the months of the year and working days. While they were issued through the reign of Louis XIII, almanacs reached an apogee during the reign of Louis XIV, as more than five hundred were produced over the course of sixty years. Working separately to the propaganda machine that manufactured the public image of Louis XIV, these almanacs were an effective tool in disseminating knowledge of important events of the Sun King's reign. This is particularly evident in the grand depictions of extraordinary non-European embassies, where I argue there was a conscious continuity of visual motifs employed in the almanacs. The deliberate manipulation of imagery served to enhance the legibility of the depicted diplomatic exchanges, reinforcing the public demonstration and expression of Louis XIV's magnificence – or gloire. By placing the illustrations of extraordinary embassies that arrived at the court of Louis XIV in a chronological sequence, I establish patterns of representation suggestive of an established and conventionalised visual vocabulary. Beginning with standards of representation established with the 1668 reception for the Muscovy ambassadors, I analyse almanacs depicting welcoming receptions of embassies from Morocco, Algeria, Genoa, and Siam, demonstrating references to earlier calendars to create a system of legibility. This article emphasises the importance of almanacs as a burgeoning form of news media during late-seventeenth- and early-eighteenth-century France.

During the reign of Louis XIV (r. 1662–1715), there was a concerted effort by the

King and his advisors to create and control his royal image.[*] In 1663, the Académie

Royale des Inscriptions – later known as the Petite Académie – was assembled for

the first time under the recommendation of First Minister of State, Jean-Bapiste

Colbert.[1] Secretary of the Petite Académie, Charles Perrault (1628–1703) wrote in his

'Histoire de ma vie' ('Story of my Life') that the five men forming the first iteration

of the society were addressed by Louis XIV, who stated: 'I entrust to you the thing in

the world that is most precious to me, which is my glory. I am sure you will do

wonders'.[2] They were given a broad remit, influencing many major royal

commissions in France through the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.

The Petite Académie's responsibilities were myriad, although their focus was to

perpetuate and enhance the royal magnificence – also known as gloire.[3] Each of their

projects – from the production of the medallic history of Louis XIV to the decorative

scheme and art programs at the Palace of Versailles and its immediate surrounds –

was targeted at guaranteeing the loyalty and obedience of the French nobility and

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[*] The images discussed in this article, labelled Figures 1–18, have been reproduced on pages 191–206.

[1] Jean-Pierre Babelon, 'La Petite Académie, Une Commission d'experts Pour La Mémoire de La Monarchie', *Comptes Rendus Des Séances de l'Académie Des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres*, 157.4 (2013), 1631–37 <https://doi.org/10.3406/crai.2013.95144>; Antonin Fabre, *Chapelain et Nos Deux Premières Académies : Études Littéraires Sur Le XVIIe Siècle* (Paris: Perrin, 1890); Gérard Sabatier, 'La gloire du roi. Iconographie de Louis XIV de 1661 à 1672', *Histoire, économie et société*, 19.4 (2000), 527–60 <https://doi.org/10.3406/hes.2000.2134>.

[2] 'Je vous confie la chose au monde qui m'est la plus précieuse qui est ma gloire. Je suis sûr que vous ferez des merveilles', Charles Perrault, *Histoire de ma vie*, cited in Josèphe Jacquiot, *Médailles et jetons de Louis XIV, d'après le manuscrit de Londres ADD 31-908* (Paris : Imprimerie Nationale-Klincksieck, 1968), vol. 4, p. xcvii.

[3] Robert Wellington, *Antiquarianism and the Visual Histories of Louis XIV: Artifacts for a Future Past* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2015), p. 9.

projecting the power of the king beyond the borders of France, to other European courts.

The production and dissemination of almanacs ran parallel to the official projects of the Petite Académie, although was not endorsed by the society. Aimed at a wider domestic audience beyond the nobility, almanacs were produced by Parisian printmakers over whom the level of control exerted by the Académie is a matter of debate. While almanacs were issued throughout the reign of Louis XIII, they reached an apogee during the reign of Louis XIV, with over five hundred being produced over the course of sixty years.[4] Depicting the most significant events of the year prior to their publication, their ephemeral nature ensured that many have since been lost to time. This has resulted in a relative dearth of studies interrogating these publications and their modes of representing the activities of the king and the court. The lack of scholarship is particularly evident when analysing the almanacs portraying the arrival of ambassadors at the Court at Versailles and their receptions with Louis XIV.

This paper will explore the visual vocabulary employed in depictions of diplomatic receptions published in the almanacs, where a repeating repertoire of images becomes apparent. I argue there was a conscious continuity of visual motifs employed in the almanacs which served to enhance the legibility of the depicted diplomatic exchanges, reinforcing the public demonstration and expression of Louis

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[4] Audrey Adamczak, 'Les almanachs gravés sous Louis XIV : une mise en images des actions remarquables du roi', *Litteratures classiques*, 76.3 (2011), 63–70 (p. 64).

XIV's gloire.[5] Much of this is evident in the grand depictions of 'Oriental' embassies – a term used by French administrative officials to refer to a vast geographic area North Africa to Siam (Thailand) to Muscovy (Russia).[6] These depictions often formed the primary image in each almanac and the repetition of motifs and tropes across these images suggests a print tradition that transcends individual print artists and printsellers. I consider these patterns, highlighting their use in the almanacs, and suggest the potential of these images as a type of news media.

Although briefly mentioned by Marianne Grivel in her 1986 study of seventeenth-century French prints, much of the scholarship on Louis XIV-era almanacs is found in a 1995 exhibition at the Louvre, entitled 'Les Effets du Soleil: Almanachs du règne de Louis XIV'.[7] Highlighting the temporary nature of broadside calendars, this survey of almanacs was later expanded upon by art historians like Gérard Sabatier, Audrey Adamczak, and Rebecca Zorach.[8] The subjects of the imagery found in the almanacs have been used as visual evidence in the ever-expanding body of work addressing the special embassies to Versailles during the

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[5] For more information on the creation and manipulation of Louis XIV's image, see Peter Burke, *The Fabrication of Louis XIV* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992); Louis Marin, *Portrait of the King*, trans. by Martha Houle (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988).

[6] Stéphane Castelluccio, 'La galerie des Glaces. Les réceptions d'ambassadeurs', *Versalia. Revue de la Société des Amis de Versailles*, 9.1 (2006), 24–52 (p. 24) <https://doi.org/10.3406/versa.2006.859>; Nicholas Dew, *Orientalism in Louis XIV's France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 103.

[7] Marianne Grivel, *Le Commerce de l'estampe à Paris Au XVIIe Siècle* (Geneva: Droz, 1986); Maxime Préaud, *Les Effets Du Soleil: Almanachs Du Règne de Louis XIV* (Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux, 1995).

[8] Sabatier, 'La gloire du roi'; Adamczak, 'Les almanachs gravés'; Rebecca Zorach, 'An Idolatry of the Letter: Time, Devotion, and Siam in the Almanacs of the Sun King', in *Ut Pictura Meditatio: The Meditative Image in Northern Art, 1500–1700*, ed. by Walter S Melion, Ralph Dekoninck and Agnes Guiderdoni-Brusle (Turnhout: Brepols, 2012); Carl Goldstein, *Print Culture in Early Modern France: Abraham Bosse and the Purposes of Print* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

reign of Louis XIV and as illustrative aids in more recent exhibitions.[9] There is yet to be a more complete review of the conventionalised nature of the depictions found in these documents, and the role of the almanac – both as an item of consumption and as shaping public perception of important events in the king's reign – has not been analysed. In writing and scholarship, these calendar images are often used in conjunction with more conventional prints as evidence for royal control of the king's image, and for the rapid dissemination of such images, the commercial motivations and intended audiences behind their productions not being considered.[10]

After discussing the elements that make up an almanac, I briefly look at the tensions between the printmaker artist and the publisher, considering the potential role of the government official or overseer in prescribing the annual subject matter. Through briefly surveying the relevant edicts, decrees, and legislations surrounding the regulation of the print industry in the seventeenth and early eighteenth century, I suggest that the subject matter of an almanac was not prescribed and was instead determined by the individual printseller. I then turn to the almanac images themselves, presenting a systematic, chronological analysis of depictions of Oriental embassies to demonstrate the existence of patterns of images and repeated motifs.

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[9] Meredith Martin, 'Mirror Reflections: Louis XIV, Phra Narai, and the Material Culture of Kingship', *Art History*, 38.4 (2015), 652–67; *A Kingdom of Images: French Prints in the Age of Louis XIV, 1660–1715*, ed. by Peter Fuhring and others (Los Angeles: The Getty Research Institute, 2015); *Visitors to Versailles: From Louis XIV to the French Revolution*, ed. by Kisluk-Grosheide Daniëlle and Rondot Bertrant (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018); Giorgio Riello, '"With Great Pomp and Magnificence": Royal Gifts and the Embassies between Siam and France in the Late Seventeenth Century', in *Global Gifts: The Material Culture of Diplomacy in Early Modern Eurasia*, ed. by Zoltán Biedermann, Anne Gerritsen and Giorgio Riello (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp. 235–62.

[10] Martin, 'Mirror Reflections'; Ashley Bruckbauer, 'Ambassadors and Missionaries, Converts and Infidels: Visualizing the 1686 Siamese Embassy to Versailles', *Proceedings of the Western Society for French History*, 43 (2015) <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.0642292.0043.003>.

Standards of representation established with the 1668 reception for the Muscovy ambassadors reference imagery from earlier almanacs and prints in order to create a system of legibility. This language of representation continued in use through to depictions of the submission of the Doge of Genoa in 1685, and of the arrival of the Siamese ambassadors in 1686. I demonstrate that these images of historical events and embassies were constructed and inspired by their precedents, suggesting the almanacs of extraordinary embassies drew from a French tradition of representing the king's gloire. This alternative point of view differs from the one outlined by Meredith Martin, who claims that almanacs issued in the wake of the Siamese embassy contained deliberate manipulations of imagery on the part of the engraver in order to create parallels between the French king and his Siamese counterpart with the aim of increasing the legibility of Louis XIV's image in Asia.[11] This repetition of form and style based on historical precedents, as seen in the almanacs during the reign of Louis XIV, suggests the importance of conveying a legible and easy-to-read message using a medium that was vital to the working class.

WHAT IS AN ALMANAC?

Before looking at the modes of representation found in the almanacs, it is important that we examine the forms and functions of almanacs issued in France during the reign of Louis XIV. As I have noted, there is much that remains unknown about

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[11] Martin, 'Mirror Reflections'; Ronald S. Love, 'Rituals of Majesty: France, Siam, and Court Spectacle in Royal Image-Building at Versailles in 1685 and 1686', *Canadian Journal of History*, 31.2 (1996), 171–98.

almanacs, and there are very few archival documents that discuss these prints.[12]

They were employed in France during the reign of Louis XIII to mould public

opinion, although their distribution and variety grew throughout the seventeenth

century.[13] During the reign of Louis XIV, almanacs were produced annually by

Parisian printmakers, many of whom were located on the Rue St. Jacques in Paris.

Each almanac was approximately 90 cm high and 60 cm wide and was a large

format document created from two equal-sized, superimposed plates that were

joined together in the middle. Generally consisting of a single large image depicting

the key state event of the previous year – often involving the king – they also

included smaller, bordered medallions that illustrated other scenes. The engraver

completed the imagery, leaving a comparatively small, rectangular blank space at

the bottom of the page. This blank space facilitated the functional purpose of the

almanac, and was filled in by the printmaker, who printed the months of the year,

lunar cycles, religious holidays, and working days. Each almanac had a relatively

large print run, with publishers each issuing approximately two thousand copies,

and they were priced at an inexpensive six sols each – the cost of a ticket to the

Comédie Française.[14] Occasionally, almanacs were coloured, illuminated with gold,

varnished, or printed on silk to elevate their value, although simple monochromatic

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[12] Maxime Preaud, 'Printmaking under Louis XIV', in *A Kingdom of Images: French Prints in the Age of Louis XIV, 1660–1715*, ed. by Peter Fuhring and others (Los Angeles: The Getty Research Institute, 2015), pp. 9–14.

[13] Goldstein in particular outlines the role of the almanacs in proclaiming the virtuous nature of Louis XIII and Anne of Austria, see Goldstein, *Print Culture in Early Modern France*, p. 107.

[14] Préaud, *Les Effets Du Soleil*, p. 13.

engravings on a cheap paper were the most common form.[15]

These characteristics suggest that almanacs were produced largely for the literate and semi-literate working inhabitants of Paris and not for the nobility, although they were occasionally acquired by members of the elite.[16] The inclusion of working days and holidays suggests they were for daily use, and their price ensured they were relatively accessible, indicating they were intended for broad dissemination. They could be hung on a wall in private houses or taverns, and they were often discarded at the end of each year.[17]

The main image in the almanac usually depicted what was accounted to be the most significant occurrence in France from the preceding year, and this nearly always involved Louis XIV. One notable exception to this is an almanac published in 1710 by Gerard Jollain that depicts a new year's tradition and does not include the king at all.[18] This large image overshadows the calendar dates of the upcoming year and creates a peculiar, disjointed temporality. Publishers were often not very inventive in the choice of subject depicted, and it was common for different publishers to portray the same event – the arrival of the Siamese embassy was used as by at least seven different printsellers. This has led to a persistent debate about who was responsible for the selection and the execution of the illustrations, with some scholars suggesting that there must have been influences external to the

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[15] Adamczak, 'Les almanachs gravés', p. 66.

[16] *Ibid*.

[17] Préaud, *Les Effets Du Soleil*, p. 13.

[18] Nicolas IV de Larmessin, engraver. Chez Gerard Jollain, publisher. *Almanach de 1710 Les Souhaits inutiles ou les Agréables Chimères*, 1710. Engraving and etching. 87.5cm x 53.5cm. Musée du Louvre, Arts graphiques, coll. Edmond de Rothschild, 27228L.R. Cl 94 CN 59959.

publishers at play. Both Roger-Armand Weigert and Maxime Préaud suggest the subject matter was prescribed by a French government official, or a member from the Petite Académie.[19] Meredith Martin continues this argument, using the imprisonment of Nicolas de Larmessin in 1704 to support her contention that the almanac's imagery may have been prescribed by royal officials acting on behalf of the Crown.[20] However, on closer inspection, this does not seem to have been the case. Larmessin was jailed for the production and distribution of a satirical print of Louis XIV and his mistress Madame de Maintenon, entitled 'La Decadénce de France'.[21] Contrary to Martin's arguments, this episode merely demonstrates that a printseller and publisher were not permitted to produce prints that insulted the king, and has very little to do with the selection of the images on the almanacs. The suggestion of official oversight for the selection of almanac images is countered by Nicolas Milovanovic, who draws attention to examples of almanacs issued in the same year that depict different subjects.[22] Additionally, he suggests that the fact that these almanacs can focus on both major episodes in the official history of Louis XIV's reign as well as those which are considered of less significance implies that

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[19] Roger-Armand Weigert, 'Les Almanachs Royaux', *Médecine de France*, 215 (1970), 25–40; Préaud, *Les Effets Du Soleil*, p. 21.

[20] This idea is also mentioned in Grivel, *Le Commerce*, p. 244; Meredith Martin and Gillian Weiss, '"Turks" on Display during the Reign of Louis XIV', *L'Esprit Créateur*, 53.4 (2013), 98–112 (p. 107) <https://doi.org/10.1353/esp.2013.0049>; L'abbé La Ruelle, *Inventaire du Fonds Français, Graveurs du XVIIe Siècle*, vol. 6 (Paris: Bibliothèque nationale de France, 1973), pp. 544, 565 <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k42275422> [accessed 15 March 2022].

[21] Martin and Weiss, '"Turks" on Display', p. 107; Grivel, *Le Commerce*, p. 244; La Ruelle, *Inventaire du Fonds*, pp. 544, 565.

[22] Nicolas Milovanovic, 'Les Almanachs de Louis XIV', in *Louis XIV : L'homme et Le Roi, Catalogue de l'exposition de Versailles (Octobre 2009–Février 2010)* (Paris: Skira/Flammarion, 2009), pp. 370–4.

there was no official oversight of the image selection.[23]

The surveillance and regulation of the print industry during the reign of Louis XIV has been well detailed in Grivel's 'La Commerce de l'Estampe' and provides further support for the relative independence of the publishers of almanacs.[24] The edict of Saint-Jean-de-Luz, issued on 26 May 1660 and ratified in 1662, recognised engraving as an art and enabled the engravers and printsellers to work separate to the guilds and trade laws that constrained 'crafts' in the seventeenth century.[25] This regulation did not enshrine the freedom of printmakers, as censorship and control was exerted by the Crown over prints that were considered to be religious or political in nature. This was achieved through the expansion of general laws and through powers given to the police, in particular to control the engravers and merchants. A decision made by the Conseil d'Etat on 22 December 1667 limited the depiction of certain subjects to the Sûrintendant des Bâtiments du Roi – primarily engravings of plans and elevations of the royal houses, antique statues, plants, and animals.[26]

Statutes and regulations issued in August 1686 were directed at the booksellers and printsellers of Paris and defined the relationship between the

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[23] *Ibid.*, p. 374.

[24] Grivel, *Le Commerce*.

[25] Maxime Préaud, 'Les portraits de mode à la fin du règne de Louis XIV.', *Cahiers Saint-Simon*, 18.1 (1990), 31–35 <https://doi.org/10.3406/simon.1990.1139>. Bibliothèque Nationale de France, collection Delamarre, ms.fr. 21558, fol.114V, in Grivel, *Le Commerce*, p. 99.

[26] Archives Nationale. O1 1050 fols 96–98, in Grivel, *Le Commerce*, p. 100. This restriction was probably introduced in anticipation of the development of the Cabinet du Roi – an ambitious publishing and propaganda project in which French printmakers were commissioned to produce hundreds of large and detailed engravings of the royal collections and accomplishments. Each of the limited subject matters formed a volume in the Cabinet du Roi. See Anne Sauvy, *L'Art Du Livre à l'Imprimerie Nationale* (Paris: L'imprimerie Nationale, 1973).

engravers and syndics of booksellers.[27] This stratification and organisation of the profession enabled the introduction of regulations that set out the process of surveillance of the publishers and printmakers. Once a month, the syndics – and their assistants – of the Chambre de la Librairie were required to visit the engraver's house and the printseller's store in order to ensure no unacceptable material was published. This information was collected from the syndics twice a week at the Rue du Plâtre by the Inspectors of the Police. Printsellers or engravers who were determined to breach the unwritten subject rules were subject to raids and seizure of materials.[28] Arrests and raids were relatively rare, indicating the enforcement may have been sporadic or the criteria for what constituted a libellous image was quite permissive.[29] Although this system was designed to impose pressure on the printsellers and engravers, there was no prescription of subject matter – it was more a method of surveillance.

Separate to this process was the development of the privilège du roi (king's privilege) which protected the respective image against pirated copies.[30] It was necessary for individual images to be shown to a magistrate prior to their publication, with permission for their production being granted on the basis of whether or not they were potentially libellous, or could be read as critical of the

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[27] Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Archives de la Chambre syndicale de la Librairie, ms.fr. 21814, fol 56.

[28] Grivel, *Le Commerce*, p. 102.

[29] A notable example is the imprisonment of Nicolas de Larmessin in 1704 after producing and distributing a satirical print of Louis XIV and his mistress Madame de Maintenon, entitled 'La Decadénce de France'. See Martin and Weiss, '"Turks" on Display', p. 107; Grivel, *Le Commerce*, p. 244; La Ruelle, *Inventaire du Fonds*, pp. 544, 565.

[30] See Peter Fuhring, 'The Print Privilege', *Print Quarterly Publications*, 2.3 (1985), 175–93.

monarchy.[31] The applicant who wished to take out a permit applied to the Chancellor or to the Keeper of the Seals. Then, the royal censor provided their initial judgement before passing the petition to the Secrétaire d'Etat along with a copy of the manuscript, drawing, or print. At this point, the seal was either given or refused, with a specification of the duration of the privilege – a variable period from six to thirty years.[32] The state charged for privileges, with the only exceptions being engravers who were members of the Royal Academy, and those who used workshops in the Louvre Galleries. There was also a requirement for at least one copy of the engraving to be handed over to the Office of the Community of Book Publishers and Book Printers, to be stored in the Royal Library, although this was sporadically enforced.[33] While this system of privilège was partially successful in ensuring the administrative oversight of the printed image, it was not compulsory for all Parisian printmakers. Its effectiveness has been debated as well, as the lack of organisation by both the engravers and the printsellers, as well as the lack of an intermediary body and lack of enforcement, meant it did not have the effect that may have been intended.[34] In addition, the process of obtaining privilège did not mean that the Crown – or the Chancellor – endorsed or favoured the printmaker or the publication of the print under consideration.[35]

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[31] Peter Fuhring, 'Publishers, Sellers, and the Market', in *A Kingdom of Images: French Prints in the Age of Louis XIV, 1660–1715*, ed. by Peter Fuhring and others (Los Angeles: The Getty Research Institute, 2015), pp. 30–5 (p. 30).

[32] Grivel, *Le Commerce*, p. 106.

[33] Fuhring, 'Publishers, Sellers, and the Market', p. 31.

[34] Fuhring, 'The Print Privilege', p. 178.

[35] Fuhring, 'Publishers, Sellers, and the Market', p. 31.

The creation and implementation of these edicts along with the system of privilège is telling in that it explains the requisite royal permissions that were necessary for a Parisian printmaker. These regulations detail a pattern of oversight and external pressure, although – for almanacs – it is doubtful that the censors or the syndics were responsible for dictating the subject matter depicted in the almanacs. As noted by Maxime Préaud in 'Les effets du soleil', self-censorship undoubtedly occurred, and it was not 'fashionable' to criticise or doubt the sacred nature of the king in the seventeenth century.[36] The printsellers were also aware, as Préaud argues, that their independence as an art was guaranteed by the same king whom they were depicting, so there was a delicate balancing act that occurred.[37] The subject matter of the almanacs, therefore, was not dictated by the relevant authorities, although a more flattering perspective was undoubtedly taken by the engravers and publishers.

As mentioned, almanacs were produced by printmakers and publishers, who used the services of two or three engravers and artists for the images before inserting their own calendar and text in the lower cartouches. Because of their inexpensive price, almanacs needed to be released in larger print runs to make a profit for the publishers. This pursuit of commercial viability also depended on advertisements and complimentary descriptions in gazettes and *Mercure Galant.* In November 1706, the gossipy publication *Mercure Galant* described an almanac

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[36] Préaud, *Les Effets Du Soleil*, p. 21.
[37] *Ibid.*, p. 22.

released by Nicolas Langlois for the following year, praising its depiction of the

Hôtel des Invalides as being very curious and detailed, and showing multiple views

of the interior.[38] This was far from isolated, as in November and December of each

year, *Mercure Galant* would highlight one recently released almanac for the

following year, endorsing the printmaker's technical skill and representation of an

event.[39] The inclusion of these descriptions highlights the purpose of the almanacs as

being more than just a calendar – they are an accessible source of visual information

about an occasion or an event. They were also clearly aimed at more than just the

working classes of Paris; *Mercure Galant* was primarily concerned with commentary

on the court at Versailles. This multiplicity of functions and audiences explains the

variety of events depicted; the need for publishers to distinguish their work from the

competition – whether in quality of representation or variety of subject matter – was

also a consideration.

The majority of almanacs were designed to be immediately legible, often

drawing upon well-known print sources in their depictions of people and places.

Depictions of important people were often directly copied from well-known and

widely disseminated images, indicating the desire for instant recognisability. In the

almanac for 1664 (Figure 1), the medallion of Anne of Austria at the top right is

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[38] *Mercure Galant*, November 1706, p. 311. The almanac to which Donneau de Vizé refers was released by Nicolas Langlois, *Le Roi accompagné de sa Cour visite l'Hotel des Invalides et sa Nouvelle Église,* Almanac for 1707. Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Hennin 7115 <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ ark:/12148/btv1b6947250q/f1>.

[39] For example, *Mercure Galant*, December 1709, p. 201 refers to an upcoming almanac published by Jollain. See also, *Mercure Galant*, December 1692, pp. 276, 278; *Mercure Galant* December 1695, p. 140; *Mercure Galant* November 1699, p. 226.

copied from an engraving by Robert Nanteuil (Figure 2), possibly copied from an original oil painting by Pierre Mignard that was well known and widely distributed.[40] The desire for important figures to be readily recognisable can be seen in the use of standardised depictions of Louis XIV, where his expression, features, and clothing are similar across much of the print media released at that time. An example can be seen when comparing the depiction of Louis XIV in the same 1664 almanac (Figure 1) with the frontispiece from a book released in 1668 (Figure 3). Almanacs were not produced to be scrutinised closely for long periods of time – they were like modern advertising imagery where content is conveyed via a clear, striking image that can be read in a fleeting glance. They were documents that were ever-present in French households and were referred to briefly but regularly.[41] Sabatier described almanacs as tools of communication, and their inclusion in contemporary periodicals supports the idea that they functioned to illustrate and draw attention to key events discussed in the press.[42] This made them valuable as inexpensive and easily disseminated visual tools for news distribution. In the case of depictions of embassies, there needed to be a commonly understood series of visual conventions - a visual vocabulary that gave readily legible signposts concerning the nature of the political event being depicted - that were carried across the almanac.

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[40] Goldstein, *Print Culture in Early Modern France*, p. 106.

[41] This is alluded to in both Zorach, 'An Idolatry of the Letter', p. 458, and Adamczak, 'Les almanachs gravés', p. 66.

[42] Sabatier, 'La gloire du roi', p. 536.

AMBASSADORIAL DEPICTIONS IN ALMANACS

The gloire of Louis XIV and, by extension, France, was persistently reinforced by the annual almanacs, and this was most evident in the depictions of ambassadorial receptions and the arrivals of non-European embassies. While there was a complicated set of diplomatic protocols and corresponding official events that applied to the reception of European ambassadors at the French court, these diplomats usually maintained permanent residences in Paris and Versailles. This meant they were more visible at court and, therefore, were a more familiar presence, making them less attractive as a main image in an almanac for the coming year. By contrast, the arrival of embassies from Asia and Africa were rare, so magnificent receptions were staged by the court to showcase the perceived exoticism of the ambassadors.[43] This ostentatious display was as much for the European audience as it was for the representatives of the visiting nation, and it was deemed necessary by the Crown to impress upon all observers the magnificence and power of France.[44] The initial reception and the ceremonial route taken by the ambassadors through Versailles also served to explicitly present the French monarchy as the superior power and worthy of being paid tribute to by representatives of foreign lands.[45] These motivations can be clearly seen in the almanac illustrations.

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[43] Meredith Martin, 'Special Embassies and Overseas Visitors', in *Visitors to Versailles: From Louis XIV to the French Revolution*, ed. by Kisluk-Grosheide Daniëlle and Rondot Bertrant (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), pp. 108–21 (p. 108).

[44] Ellen Welch, *A Theatre of Diplomacy: International Relations and the Performing Arts in Early Modern France* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017).

[45] For a description of the ceremonial elements of the receptions for some of these embassies, see Castelluccio, 'La galerie des Glaces'.

During the seventy-two-year reign of Louis XIV, there were only a few non-European embassies that were welcomed to the court, including those from the Ottoman Empire in 1669; Muscovy in 1668, 1681, and 1688; Morocco in 1681; Algeria in 1684; Siam in 1684 and 1686; and Persia in 1715.[46] Each arrived in France to petition Louis XIV for different reasons, ranging from the desire to agree upon peace treaties to the establishment of trade relations. Their visits, however, were all depicted in very similar fashion by the print artists, and almost all were to be found illustrated in almanacs for the following year. The only exception was the arrival of Persian ambassador Mohammed Reza Beg in 1715, whose reception was overshadowed by the death of Louis XIV and the coronation of Louis XV. In the following paragraphs, I examine some of the almanacs illustrating the receptions of these non-European embassies, analysing how different engravers and printmakers nevertheless replicated imagery recording gestural language, the positioning of ambassadors' entourages and French dignitaries at the receptions, and the illustration of tribute gifts. I discuss the development of this tradition of almanac imagery from the arrival of the Muscovy ambassadors in 1668 until the Siamese embassy in 1686. I also include an examination of almanacs depicting the submission of the Doge of Genoa in 1685. Although this was not an ambassadorial reception but a ritualised humiliation of a foreign ruler, the visual tropes found in

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[46] The arrival of Ottoman ambassador Soliman Aga was problematic and plagued with diplomatic troubles and will not form part of this paper. For more information, see Garrit Van Dyk, 'The Embassy Of Soliman Aga to Louis XIV: Diplomacy, Dress, and Diamonds', *Electronic Melbourne Art Journal* (2017) <https://doi.org/10.38030/emaj.2017.special.3>.

the non-European embassies are repeated in the depiction of the Genoese embassy. This indicates similar messages about French domination and superiority were intended to be conveyed to the viewers of the almanacs. By proposing a continuum of representation designed to facilitate legibility and understanding by French consumers, I present an alternative explanation for arguments made about almanacs of the Siamese embassy in 1686. Problematising attempts to see deliberate links with existing Chinese and Siamese imagery, I argue that the almanacs depicting the Siamese embassy fit neatly in the scheme of standardised representations seen in the depictions of other 'eastern' embassies.

The arrival of the Muscovy ambassadors at the Palace at Saint-Germain-en-Laye in September 1668 was one of the earliest non-European receptions held by Louis XIV and featured in a 1669 almanac by engraver François Jollain (Figure 4). Up until this point, ambassadors had been welcomed into the king's bedchamber, where Louis XIV sat in an armchair behind the balustrade and against the lavish bed. The effect was simultaneously to display the richness of the textiles and to indicate the respect in which the ambassador was held.[47] Symbolically, the presence of the royal bed was viewed as representative of dynastic continuity and monarchical authority.[48] This effect was thought to have been lost on non-European ambassadors. Therefore, the reception for the Muscovy ambassadors was held in the Chambre du

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[47] Helen Jacobson, 'Magnificent Display: European Ambassadorial Visitors', in *Visitors to Versailles: From Louis XIV to the French Revolution*, ed. by Kisluk-Grosheide Daniëlle and Bertrant Rondot (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), pp. 94–107 (p. 99).

[48] Alexandre Maral, 'Grande Galerie et Appartement Du Roi à Versailles: Sens et Usages Sous Louis XIV', *Versalia. Revue de La Société Des Amis de Versailles*, 12 (2009), 121–33 (p. 123) <https://doi.org/10.3406/versa.2009.897>.

Roy ('King's Chamber') where a magnificent throne was placed on a dais approached by four stairs.[49] In this case, the *Gazette* does not specify whether the throne was used in addition to, or instead of, the royal bed. The style and the imagery used by Jollain is similar to another almanac issued in the same year by Pierre Bertrand and published by Nicolas I de Larmessin, depicting 'L'audience royale donnée aux nations étrangères' (The royal audience given to foreign nations) in Figure 5.

In both almanacs, Louis XIV sits under a canopy wearing his royal ermine robes, holding a sceptre topped with the fleur-de-lys, and wearing a laurel wreath. Each of these elements convey his status as king, his victory over his enemies, and his supremacy. The wreath is a nod to victorious Roman generals celebrating a triumph and was often donned by Louis XIV in prints and paintings to denote his military victories and provide links to antiquity.[50] The king is seated beside the queen, Maria Theresa, and the young dauphin and the Duc d'Orléans are both prominent. The depiction of the king in majesty is encountered frequently, and such imagery persisted in official paintings and busts throughout his reign. In 'La gloire du roi: Iconographie de Louis XIV de 1661 à 1672', Gérard Sabatier outlines the

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[49] '…entrènent en la Chambre du Roy, qui estait sur un trône magnifiquement paré et élévé de 4 degrez, sous un dais aussi superbe..', *Gazette de France*, 7 September 1668, no. 105, p. 938.

[50] The laurel crown was referred to many times during the seventeenth century, where it was seen as an important element in drawing from classical precedents. See Robert Wellington, 'The Petite Académie and the Histoire Métallique of Louis XIV', in *Antiquarianism and the Visual Histories of Louis XIV: Artifacts for a Future Past* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2015), pp. 39–78 (p. 64). The persistent depiction of Louis XIV as a hero of antiquity or mythology is discussed in Jean-Pierre Néraudeau, *L'Olympe Du Roi-Soleil. Mythologie et Idéologie Royale Au Grand Siècle* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1986); Sabatier, 'La gloire du roi'.

methodical program that was pursued to mythicise the king.[51] The proclamation of the royal majesty of Louis XIV and his family was a recurring theme throughout the almanacs of 1660–1670, when there was a desire to demonstrate the security of the reign.[52] The ambassadorial almanacs were no exception to this convention, although the depiction of the king in majesty was adopted by the printmakers in order to create a continuity of representation, unintentionally serving as a persistent reminder of the legitimacy and majesty of Louis XIV and the royal family to the consumer of the calendars.

 In the almanac by F. Jollain in Figure 4, the Russian ambassador Pyotr Potemkin, his son Stefan Potemkin, and the Chancellor Simeon Rumjancev have been depicted paying homage to the king and queen. They hold their hats in their hands, and Pyotr is seen bowing slightly towards Louis XIV, whose hand is outstretched benevolently, receiving the supplication. The use of empty of space emphasises this moment of encounter, minimising visual distractions. Witnesses, members of the Cent-Suisses (the royal guard), the dauphin, and the Duc d'Orléans are shown in the background, with the only foreground figures being two bare-headed men offering tributes and gifts to the French king. This is in dramatic contrast to Bertrand's almanac (Figure 5), in which the members of the titular 'foreign nations' (including an Ottoman emissary, an Indigenous American, a South American representative, and a Muscovy ambassador) are sidelined and identifiable

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[51] Sabatier, 'La gloire du roi'.
[52] This is discussed extensively in Sabatier, 'La gloire du roi', pp. 535–40.

only through their headwear, forming a cluttered and busy composition. The title of the almanac appears at odds with the visual depictions, which indicate that the most prominent element of the calendar is the presence of the king and the allegorical figures of the attributes and virtues of France in the foreground. The inclusion of the gifts in the lower register of the foreground of Figure 4 establishes another important trope of the diplomatic almanac. The sabre wrapped in pearls and the platter holding precious stones – perhaps more pearls – by two kneeling men wearing clearly non-European clothing has been shown as an offering from a state less important than France. It is framed as a tribute and, combined with the deference of the lead ambassador, creates an atmosphere of subservience and recognition of the superiority of Louis XIV.

The presence of the Muscovy ambassador was also acknowledged in a second almanac by F. Jollain (Figure 6), entitled 'La Magnifique et Royalle Feste de Versailles' ('The Magnificent and Royal Party at Versailles'). The vignette in the lower right corner of the image depicts the same encounter as Figure 4. Although the king is wearing the contemporary fashion as seen in the primary image, he is elevated above the bowing Potemkin. Again, in the foreground, a kneeling child offers Louis XIV a sabre, reinforcing the perception of tribute and of France's superiority. At this point in time, the number of almanacs released each year was significantly smaller than a decade later. Jollain's release of two different almanacs with two different images in the same year that each highlighted different moments in the reign of Louis XIV suggests that market forces – an assessment of what might

be an image popular with the public and how this might aid the selling of almanacs – played an important role in the selection of images.

A similar image of the elevated king together with an ambassador offering tribute can be seen again in an almanac released for the year 1682, showing the second audience held for the Muscovy envoys in 1681 (Figure 7). This was the first non-European embassy held at Versailles and was extensively reported in *Mercure Galant*.[53] Ambassadors Potemkin and Volkov were led to the appartements du Roi (King's apartments) by climbing the newly constructed Escalier des Ambassadeurs (Ambassador's Staircase).[54] They were led to the Salon d'Apollon (Apollo Salon) which was usually the place of the King's ceremonial bed, although it was transformed into a throne room for the occasion. The almanac shows the king and queen in the centre of the frame, receiving the bare-headed ambassador whose hat is tucked under his arm. The dauphin and his wife, Maria Anna Victoria of Bavaria, stand to the right of the throne, with the Muscovy embassy to the queen's left. Like the previous almanacs, this image highlights the importance of the point of encounter between the ambassador and the king, leaving space in the foreground for emphasis and placing the crowds of onlookers and guards in the background. Louis XIV wears contemporary clothing, although a draped ermine cloak has been

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[53] *Mercure Galant*, May 1681, pp. 228–342.

[54] The medallion in the lower portion of the almanac names the ambassadors as PotemKin and PolsKow, although O'Brien identifies the second as Volkov, a difference which may be attributed to transliteration issues and misunderstandings. C. B. O'Brien, 'Russian Envoys at the Court of Louis XIV, 1681–1687', *The Historian*, 4.1 (1941), 34–42. See also Marianne Seydoux, 'Les ambassades russes a la Cour de Louis XIV, d'après les documents des Archives du ministère des Affaires étrangères', *Cahiers du Monde russe et soviétique*, 9.1 (1968), 235–44.

included in the foreground. This departure from the laurel wreaths and royal ermine cloaks, replacing them with a more recognisable and fashionable clothing style aligns with the more general reduction in allegorical and mythical representations in Louis XIV's iconographical program.[55] This may be attributed to a recognition of the need to create imagery that could be better understood by a wider French audience who may not have been well-educated in Classical mythology.[56] The quest for increased legibility resulted in an imagery lacking in some of the former subtlety, often avoiding the use of metaphor and allegory (as seen in Figures 1 and 5 for example), and it is this we see reflected in this almanac.

The importance of Versailles as a place of reception is emphasised through the inclusion of a fictitious view of the gardens to the king's left, where an allée leads to a fountain. This imagery is similar to engravings included in the Cabinet du Roi by Sébastien Leclerc, including the 'Fontaine de la Renomée', completed in 1682, and references the diplomatic tours through the gardens – an essential part of the formal visit.[57] Tribute is still being paid to Louis XIV by the Muscovy ambassador, although this does not take the form of gifts. Potemkin stands below the elevated, seated king, offering him a letter from the Russian Czar, Fyodor Alekseyvich, a gesture of respect and deference. An oval vignette at the bottom centre of the almanac highlights the entrance of the embassy into Versailles in an image that places the Palace on a level

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[55] Sabatier, 'La gloire du roi', pp. 559–61.
[56] *Ibid.*, p. 560.
[57] Robert Berger and Thomas Hedin, *Diplomatic Tours in the Gardens of Versailles Under Louis XIV* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008).

of importance equal to the embassy itself. The medallions at the top depict the arrival of the Ambassador of Morocco – whose inclusion in the almanac for 1683 was overshadowed by the birth of the Duc de Bourgogne – and the departure of the ill-fated Siamese ambassador, whose ship was to be wrecked before it reached France.[58] These two events occurred late in 1681 and were, therefore, probably hasty last minute additions to the almanac before its release and distribution.

The repetition of a formula for depicting these embassies is significant enough that it also occurs in illustrations of the 'minor' embassies that took place between the receptions for the Muscovy ambassadors and the arrival of the Siamese envoys in 1686. The arrival of the Ambassador of Algeria on 4 July 1684 could not supersede the king's taking of Luxembourg in significance that year, so it was included as one of two medallions in an almanac issued by Langlois for 1685 (Figure 8). Likewise, the embassy was depicted as a small vignette in Nicolas II de Larmessin's almanac for 1685 (Figure 9), who chose for the main image to focus on the Truce of Ratisbon that concluded the War of the Reunions between Spain and France. These two vignettes are small compared to the main engraving, so there is an economy in depiction where only the most important elements have been retained. As with the earlier Muscovy embassies, Louis XIV receives the ambassadors while seated on an elevated throne, reaching his hand out benevolently to acknowledge the subservient embassy. Both compositions include

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[58] The Moroccan embassy is described in the January and February issues of the *Mercure Galant,* 1682.

the presence of witnesses in the background and a relatively empty foreground, emphasising the significance of the moment of encounter.

The power imbalance between Algerian ambassador Hajj Ja'far Agha and Louis XIV in Figures 8 and 9 is more pronounced than in earlier almanac depictions of embassies, which reflects the circumstances surrounding the visit. As is suggested by the inscription in the ribbon on Langlois' almanac, this is not a diplomatic reception or royal audience, but a 'Satisfaction'. Algeria was required to apologise to Louis XIV for executing Lazariste missionary and French consul to Algeria, Jean Le Vacher.[59] This was not a diplomatic visit in which a treaty would be negotiated. This was a moment for France to publicly signal Algeria's defeat and humiliation, demonstrating that they were utterly at the mercy of Louis XIV. Langlois' depiction presents an image of the embassy's complete subservience, with the ambassadors kneeling on the carpeted floor. Larmessin, however, does not give an image of a diplomatic humiliation and instead reverts to a representation of the encounter that shows continuity with the formulae seen in the diplomatic almanacs issued in previous years for other non-European embassies, as the bowing diplomat hands the seated Louis XIV a sealed letter. The inscription around the border of this medallion suggests it was an audience for the Peace signed in 1684, which is not the entire truth. The Algerian supplication was used by the French Crown to construe the embassy as a demonstration of France's dominance over Muslim 'infidels', something made explicit by Langlois's image. Larmessin's conventional

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[59] *Gazette de France*, 1684, p. 406

representation of the reception of the Algerian emissaries may be the result of misinformation and confused stories, but there is another possible explanation that is more plausible: the need to create a readily legible almanac image led to a choice in which established visual tropes for diplomatic visits were repeated, rather than creating new designs that specifically reflected the special nature of the embassy concerned.

THE GENOESE AND SIAMESE EMBASSIES

The Genoese embassy in 1685 was the most opulent reception held at Versailles to that point in the reign of Louis XIV, forming an integral element of the glorification of France, and its depiction appeared in almanacs for the following year. The representations of this event provided a model for the deluge of calendars that were issued for the following year to glorify the arrival of the Siamese ambassadors in 1686. This section will consider depictions of the two events in tandem, comparing the almanacs to demonstrate the continuity in formulae of representation, and argue for the need for greater nuance in analysing the Siamese embassy almanacs. Departing from the work of Meredith Martin and Ronald Love, I suggest that modes of depiction employed in the Siamese embassy almanacs were a continuation of models which were developed more fully for the Genoese embassy.[60] They are not simply a manifestation of Louis XIV's efforts to adopt Asian iconographic

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[60] Martin, 'Special Embassies and Overseas Visitors'; Love, 'Rituals of Majesty'; Susan Mokhberi, *The Persian Mirror: Reflections of the Safavid Empire in Early Modern France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), pp. 112–32.

conventions associated with the depiction of kingship in order to render his status legible to a broadening Asian audience – they evidence significant continuity with an iconographic tradition already developed in the almanacs.

Staged in the Hall of Mirrors on 15 May 1685, the reception of the Doge Francesco Maria Imperiale Lercari saw the ruler forced to break with Genoese law after a devastating French bombardment and leave the city borders to make his apologies to the French king for supplying galleys to Spain. This ritualised humiliation marked the apex of Louis XIV's victories, as it was a highly visible act of subservience from a powerful maritime nation. Details of the episode were extensively disseminated, with newspapers, journals, tapestries, medals, paintings, and prints issued in order to support the claim that Louis XIV was the greatest monarch in the world.[61] At the end of the year, the almanacs that were released were split between commemorating this event and the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes – an event that was celebrated in the calendars with iconographical representations of the king's triumph over heresies and infidels.[62] The two surviving almanacs depicting the Submission of the Doge of Genoa (Figures 10 and 11) both use the same motifs to achieve a different effect to that seen in earlier depictions of non-

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[61] Peter Burke, 'Self-Assertion', in *The Fabrication of Louis XIV* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1992), pp. 61–70 (p. 98).

[62] For almanacs depicting the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, see N. Bonnart, *Le Consistoire de l'erreur desolé*, Almanac for 1686, engraving, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Hennin 5479 <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b6945504w.r>; Gérard Jollain (published), *La Destruction de l'Heresie Par la Piété et le Zele de Louis Le Grand*, Almanac for 1686, engraving Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Hennin 5477 <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b69455022.r>; and Landry (published), *Le Triomphe des Chrestiennes sur l'Empire des Turcs par les Armées Imperiales et Polonoise,* Almanac for 1686, engraving, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, RESERVE FOL-QB-201 (62) <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b55002401b.r>.

European embassies: where France is invariably depicted as the more powerful state in the 'Oriental' embassies, the power imbalance between these two European states are significantly underplayed.[63] Langlois' almanac (Figure 10) depicts Louis XIV standing upright on an elevated platform, benevolently outstretching his hand towards the slightly bowed Genoese Doge and his embassy. The Doge does not present a gift or a letter, and this difference creates an air of concordance and of a meeting as opposed to an act of subservience. As with the other almanacs, the crowd presses in in the background, and there is space between the various members of the embassy, allowing the scene to be read quickly and easily.

The second almanac published by Bertrand's widow and engraved by Nicolas de Larmessin (Figure 11) is more in line with representations of other non-European embassies. As with the earlier Muscovy reception (Figure 7) and the almanac for the year 1669 ('L'audience Royale Donnée Aux Nations Étrangères' in Figure 5, also released by Bertrand), Louis XIV is seated on his elevated throne in the centre of the print. Dressed in contemporary clothing, he receives the line of Genoese who – with the exception of the Doge – have removed their hats. Although he is on a dais reached by two stairs, as with all previous ambassadorial almanac images included in this paper, the perspective has been skewed to create an illusion of greater elevation. This was probably manipulated to maintain the king's height as Bertrand chose to not show the Genoese bowing or expressing servility. A

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[63] An earlier proof of the Langlois almanac with a slightly different lower plate can be seen in the Louvre. Nicolas Langlois (published), *La Soumission de Gennes [sic]*, Almanac for 1686, engraving and etching.

separation has been created between the king and his courtiers, where Louis XIV sits alone, flanked by the dauphin, other observers, and the Cent-Suisses.

Together, these two almanacs provide a more forgiving depiction of the reception and submission of the Doge of Genoa. Although the circumstances were very similar to the arrival of the Algerian ambassador (as depicted in the small roundels in Figures 8 and 9), the imagery was tempered to communicate a less humiliating power imbalance. This is achieved primarily through the positioning of the participants. Langlois depicts Louis XIV standing to receive the ambassadors, a signal of respect, while Larmessin depicted the Genoese standing upright. This latter representation resulted in a change of perspective, where the frontal position of Louis XIV needed to be skewed in order to reinforce his superiority. The variation created a more balanced composition, where the French king was still elevated above the submissive – and therefore visibly apologetic – Genoese embassy, who are nevertheless not shown as prostrate and subservient, as were the Algerian or Muscovite envoys. This hierarchy is immediately recognisable in the visual vocabulary of the almanac.

The engraving by Larmessin stands in an important intermediate position between depictions of the earlier embassies and the ones memorialising the arrival of the Siamese embassy in 1686, and it was included in at least seven almanacs for the following year.[64] There are five that show the reception held for the ambassadors

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[64] These are discussed more extensively in Bruckbauer, 'Ambassadors and Missionaries'; Zorach, 'An Idolatry of the Letter'.

at Versailles (Figures 12–17, and in the small roundel in Figure 18). They are all very similar to each other and to the previous almanacs, with the seated king on an elevated dais, hand extended benevolently to the bowing or prostrate Siamese embassy, who are bearing gifts as tribute. The exceptions to this are the small roundels in Figure 17 and 18, in which the king stands to receive the ambassadors, drawing parallels with the Genoese embassy almanac in Figure 10. The pressing crowd is shown in the background and, in Figure 12, the central axis of the gardens of Versailles have been engraved to the king's left to emphasise the location of the reception (recalling the fountain in Figure 7). According to *Mercure Galant*, Louis XIV's throne was placed on a platform reached by nine stairs, though the Marquis de Sourches wrote there were only eight.[65] This discrepancy in the number of steps is echoed in the prints; however, they all appear to be elevated to a more dramatic height than previous embassies, creating a difference similar to Larmessin's engraving of the Genoese embassy (Figure 11). This change in height is reflected in many of the prints, although Langlois chooses to minimise the difference in the detail of Figure 17 to emphasise the relationship between peers that he conveys.

The 1686 Siamese embassy in Versailles was a magnificent and ostentatious event, with most almanacs published the following year selecting the point of encounter between the ambassadors and Louis XIV in the Hall of Mirrors as their

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[65] *Mercure Galant,* September 1686, vol. 2, pp. 193–5. Sourches (Louis-François du Bouchet, marquis de*)*, *Mémoires du marquis de Sourches sur le règne de Louis XIV*, published by the Cte. de Cosnac et Arthur Bertrand, Paris, Hachette et Cie., 1882–93, 13 vols, vol. 1, p. 436.

primary image.[66] The almanac in Figure 15 was engraved by Pierre Paul Sevin and released by F. Jollain; it formed a central image of the embassy, referred to by many academics, and has been seen as an image with more Oriental connotations.[67] Placed in the context of the other diplomatic almanacs examined in this paper, the almanac illustration created by Sevin falls neatly into an established pattern of diplomatic imagery where there are precedents for each of the elements found in this calendar illustration. Further, when considering a preparatory design for the published almanac (Figure 16), I argue that the final image was adjusted in order to adhere to the established tradition of almanac embassy illustration, departing even further from an 'Asian' composition. While the ceremonial elements of this reception at Versailles in 1686 may have drawn from Siamese protocols, the resultant almanac images were compositionally similar to those created for the other non-European embassies.[68]

The formal elements in Jollain's almanac are replicated and drawn from earlier images, reinforcing the continuity of representation that has been evident throughout the extraordinary embassies. Louis XIV's elevation, his isolation from his other courtiers and members of the royal family, and his frontal position have precedents in the earlier almanacs. The position of Louis XIV in majesty has its origins in Bertrand's print, 'L'Audience Royale Donnée Aux Nations Étrangères'

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[66] A notable exception to this is the almanac published by Moncornet in Figure 18.

[67] For example, see Martin, 'Mirror Reflections'; Love, 'Rituals of Majesty'; Zorach, 'An Idolatry of the Letter'; Adamczak, 'Les almanachs gravés'.

[68] Castelluccio, 'La galerie des Glaces'.

(Figure 5) in 1669. The almanac for the year 1686 (Figure 11) is the clearest analogue

to the seated and central position of the French king. As with Sevin's almanac, Louis

XIV is seated under a baldachin, in the central axis of the print, facing directly

towards the observer. There is space between him and the arriving ambassadors, as

the foreground in both almanacs has been left relatively bare, emphasising the point

of encounter. The separation of Louis XIV from his courtiers and family is seen in

the earlier almanac by Jollain from 1669 (Figure 4) depicting the Muscovy embassy,

and the medallion in Figure 8 (for the Algerian submission). Jollain's calendar shows

the queen seated with Louis XIV, and the pair are removed from the dauphin and

the Duc d'Orléans who are firmly placed in the background of the scene.[69] In the

roundel for the Algerian embassy, Louis XIV sits alone on the platform. This

distinction seems to be based on the status of the embassy – it is a non-European one

of 'first' significant contact – and is not related to a Siamese visual vocabulary.

The prominent display of the tributes and gifts in Jollain's almanac (Figure

15) to showcase the domination of Louis XIV – and, by extension, France – was a

standard established in depictions of the earlier Muscovy embassies (Figures 4 and

6) and alluded to in the presentation of the letters from the foreign ruler in Muscovy

(Figure 7) and Algerian (Figure 8) embassies. In the preparatory design for the

almanac image of the Siamese embassy (Figure 16), Sevin has included the gifts in

the lower portion of the scene, completely separate from the main image and

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[69] Louis XIV's queen, Maria Theresa of Spain, died in 1683, and was therefore not depicted in any almanacs after that point.

therefore Louis XIV. This disassociation has been removed in the final print, as the presents have been artfully arranged to suggest they are lying at the feet of the king. The change suggests Sevin was deliberately working within a more established tradition of almanac representation, unifying the image to ensure it was still recognisable to the consumers. The emphasis placed on the gifts is not unique to Sevin's print, as other almanacs released in the same year also draw attention to their lavish and exotic nature. Figure 13, published by Landry, show a large assortment of weighty porcelains and vessels in the foreground, while Larmessin's engraving in Figure 14 depicts the lead ambassador with a gift in his hand, offering it to Louis XIV.

The almanac engraved by Sevin and released in 1687 (Figure 15) is different to most of the other calendars distributed that year. Many of these depicted the arrival of the Siamese ambassadors with Louis XIV positioned to the left side of the image, surrounded by his family, and the embassy standing and bowing at his feet. Sevin's image does not, however, depart from the established tradition of ambassadorial almanacs, where a formula of motifs and conventions of depiction were created and then repeated across Louis XIV's reign. There is a variety in depiction in the almanacs; however, each contains similarities which enable legibility.

CONCLUSION

Placing the almanac illustrations of ambassadorial receptions in a chronological sequence highlights some striking parallels in their patterns of representation, indicating an established and conventionalised visual vocabulary that was employed on the part of engravers and printmakers to depict these events. Such consistency helped to ensure legibility of the images, reflecting the day-to-day, domestic context of these images. I argue that changes in the style of almanac illustrations were a linear evolution, where references to earlier representations were made. Part of the difficulty presented by the default argument that imagery in an almanac was manipulated consciously lies in the uncertainties about the degree of official oversight of the production of the almanacs. Through a brief overview of the edicts and regulations that governed the printmakers in France during the reign of Louis XIV, I suggest that the selection of the primary image in an almanac was left to the individual printmakers and publishers. Although there was some oversight and censorship of images of a sensitive religious or political nature, there was no prescription of the subject matter. Printmakers responded to market forces in order to sell more copies, choosing to depict events that were the most spectacular and visually appealing.

Even as an unofficial arm of the propaganda machine that manufactured the public image of Louis XIV, these almanacs were an effective tool in disseminating knowledge of important events of the Sun King's reign. They also form part of the

early modern news media, with clear and striking imagery that conveyed information about the previous year. There was clearly a demand for almanacs, supported by the explosion of Parisian printmakers throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries who subsequently issued them.[70] Almanacs were inexpensive, large, broadside calendars that were squarely aimed at the developing literate middle-class. Hung on walls, they were intended for daily use, and while some were iconographically dense, the diplomatic embassies were deliberately simple. Non-European embassies were political spectacles, whose image and reception were manipulated by the royal government as much for the domestic French audience as for the government of the visiting nation. They were extensively reported on and discussed, and they formed the object of much speculation; therefore, their selection as the main image on an almanac corresponds with them often being the most significant event of the previous year, as perceived by the printmaker. There was a continuity of representation between them, where visual motifs were repeated consistently in order to ensure immediate legibility. This is particularly seen in the elevation of Louis XIV and his separation from his courtiers and family members, the relative position of the ambassadorial party, and the inclusion of gifts from the arriving embassy to suggest tribute. These patterns are immediately apparent when the prints are placed in a chronological sequence, where they interact to perpetuate and enhance the glory of Louis XIV.

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[70] Milovanovic, 'Les Almanachs de Louis XIV'; Préaud, *Les Effets Du Soleil*; Adamczak, 'Les almanachs gravés'.

FIGURES

Figure 1: Jean Lepautre, published by Gerard Jollain. *La Reunion des Villes d'Avignon et Marsal à la France.* 1663. Etching and engraving. RESERVE QB-201. Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

Figure 2: Robert Nanteuil. *Anne of Austria*. 1660. Engraving, fourth state. 32.4 x 24.8cm. 60.58.40. Metropolitan museum of art.

Figure 3 Pierre Landry. *Louis XIV*. 1668. Engraving. From Mézeray, François Eudes de. *Abrégé Chronologique, Ou Extraict de l'histoire de France*, 3 vols, vol. 1 (Paris: Chez Thomas Jolly, 1668).

Figure 4: François-Gérard Jollain, *Almanach royal de 1669.* 1668. Engraving and etching. FOLAA66P-

T1-page 38. Bibliothèque de l'Institut de France. Photo © RMN-Grand Palais (Institut de France) /

Gérard Blot

Figure 5: Pierre Bertrand, and Nicolas I de Larmessin (published by). *L'audience Royale Donnée Aux Nations Étrangères, Almanach 1669*. 1668. Engraving and etching, 84.8cm x 52.8cm. 2635LR. Rothschild Collection, Louvre Museum, Paris. Photo © RMN-Grand Palais (musée du Louvre) / Michèle Bellot

Figure 6: François Jollain. *La Magnifique et Royalle Feste de Versailles*. 1668. Engraving. RESERVE QB-20 (171)-FT 5. Bibliotheque nationale de France, departement Estampes et photographie.

Figure 6 (detail)

Figure 7: Jean Moncornet. *L'AUDIANCE DONÈE PAR LOÜIS LE GRAND / Aux Ambassadeurs Du Grand Duc de Moscovie / Le Neufieme May 1681*. 1681. Engraving. RESERVE QB-201 (171)-FT 5 [Hennin, 5223]. Bibliotheque nationale de France, departement Estampes et photographie.

Figure 8: Langlois. *Prise de Luxembourg Par Le Maréchal de Créquy Le 4 Juin 1684. Almanac for 1685*. 1684. Engraving and etching. 87 x 56cm. INV.GRAV 1652. Chateaux de Versailles et Trianon. Photo © RMN-Grand Palais (Château de Versailles) / Franck Raux

Figure 8 (detail)

Figure 9: Nicolas II de Larmessin. *Almanach Royal Pour l'année 1685*. 1684. Engraving and etching. Invgravures1653. Chateaux de Versailles et de Trianon. Photo © RMN-Grand Palais (Château de Versailles) / Franck Raux

Figure 9 (detail)

Figure 10: Nicolas Langlois (publisher). *Louis le Grand le terreur et l'admiration de l'univers : la soumission de la République de Gennes [sic] faite à sa maiesté.* 1685. Engraving and etching 88.1cm x 56.6cm. RESERVE QB-201 (171)-FT5 [Hennin, 5473]. Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

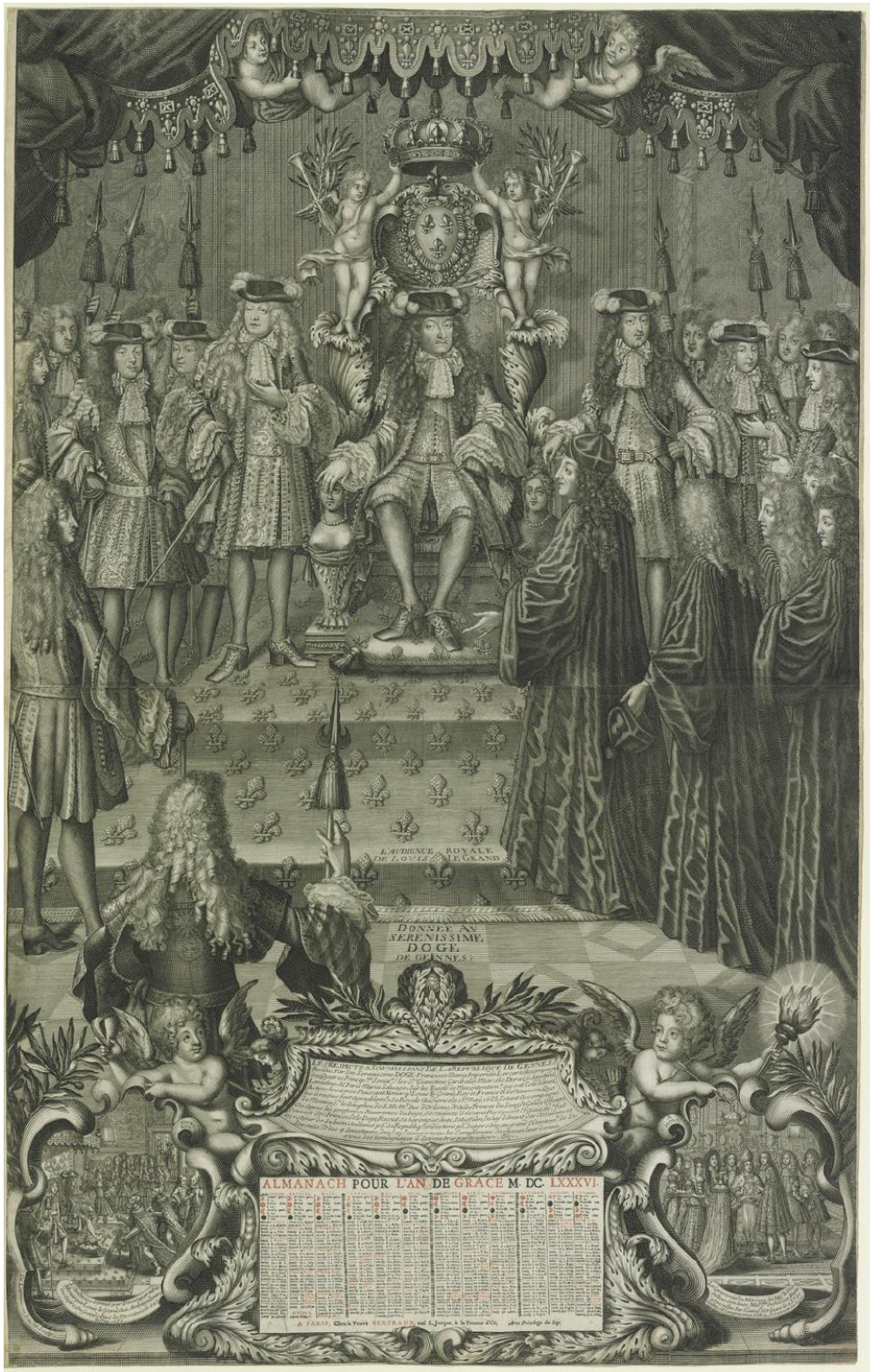**Figure 11:** Nicolas II de Larmessin (engraver), Bertrand's widow (publisher). *L'audience Royale de Louis le Grand Donnée au Serenissime Doge de Gennes.* 1685. Engraving. Hennin 5475. Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

Figure 12: Langlois. *L'audience Donné Aux Ambassadeurs Extraordinaires Du Roy de Siam Le I Septembre 1686 Dans Le Château de Versailles.* 1686. Estampe. Hennin 5549. Bibliotheque nationale de France.

Figure 13: Pierre Landry (Published by). *Almanach Pour 1687 : Ambassade Du Siam à Versailles Le 1er Septembre 1686*. 1686. Estampe, 87.5cm x 54cm. INV.GRAV 4703. Chateaux de Versailles et de Trianon. Photo © RMN-Grand Palais (Château de Versailles) / Gérard Blot
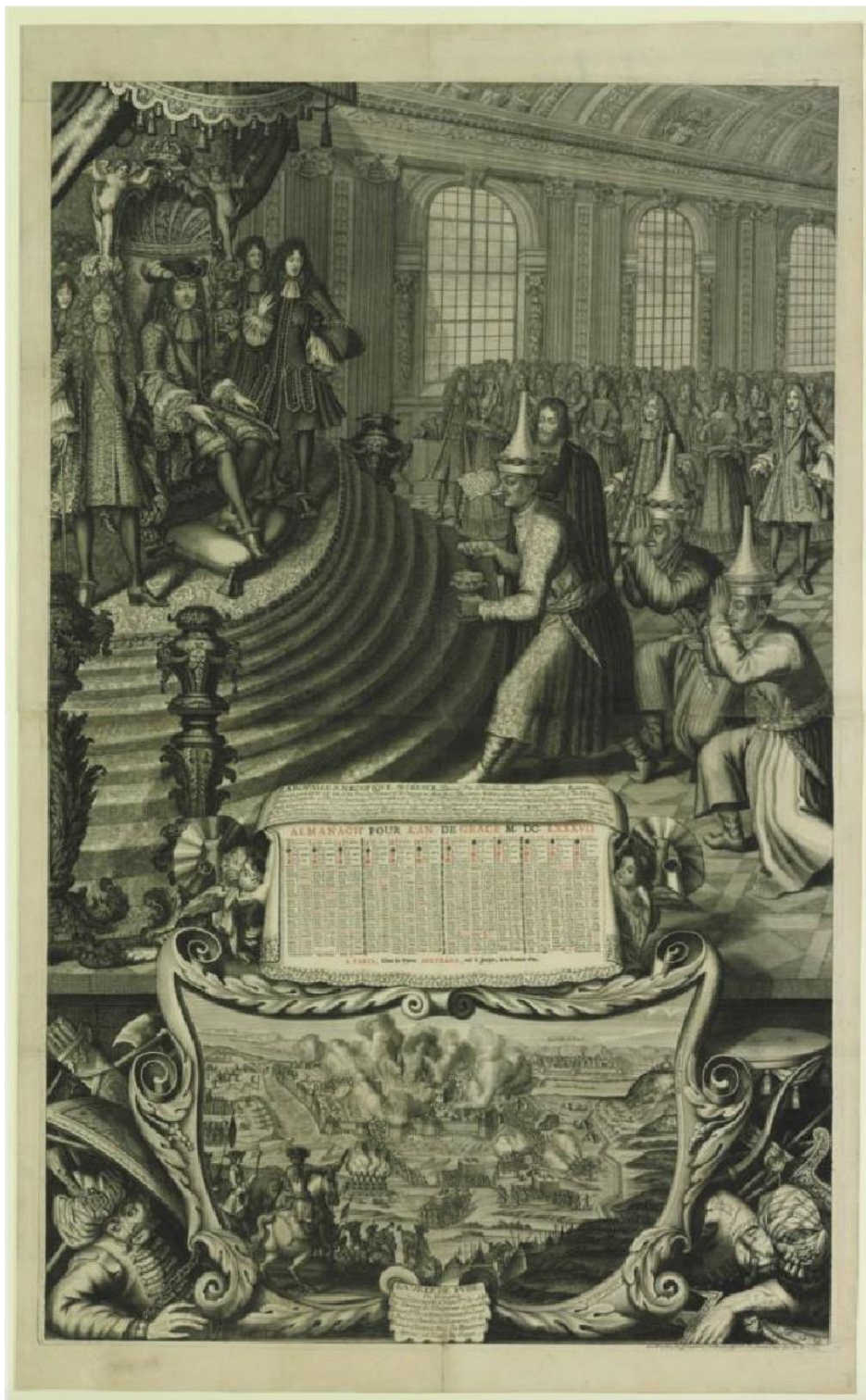
Figure 14: Nicolas II de Larmessin II, and the widow Bertrand (publisher). *La Royalle et Magnifique Audience Donné Par[…]Louis le Grand, Roy de France et de Navarre, aux très Illustres Ambassadeurs du Magnifique Roy de Siam[…]*. 1686. Engraving and etching, 90 x 56.2cm. Hennin 5550. Bibliotheque nationale de France.

Figure 15: François Jollain. *Audience Aux Ambassadeurs de Siam, Almanach*. 1686. Engraving and etching. 68 x 50.3cm. 2685LR. Rothschild Collection, Louvre Museum, Paris. Photo © RMN-Grand Palais (musée du Louvre) / Jean-Gilles Berizzi

Figure 16: Paul Sévin (designer), Design for the *Almanach pour l'an de grâce 1687*. 1686. Drawing. Hennin 5552, Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

Figure 17: Nicolas Langlois. *L'ambassade de Siam Reçue à Versailles, Le 4 Septembre 1686 (Almanach Royal Pour l'année 1687*. 1686. Engraving and etching. Invgravures 4704. Chateaux de Versailles et de Trianon. Photo © RMN-Grand Palais (Château de Versailles) / Gérard Blot


Figure 17 (detail)

Figure 18: Jean Moncornet (publisher). Statüe à la gloire du Roy dans la Place des Victoires. 1686. Engraving. Hennin 5542. Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

Figure 18 (detail)

Theological Elaboration, Portable Altars and their Ritualised use on Maundy Easter Days

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This article focuses on the medieval ritualistic use of portable altars during the three days preceding Easter Sunday. In the eleventh and twelfth centuries, following the Maundy Thursday evening service, the priest removed the liturgical objects and the linen tablecloth from the altar. After being stripped, the altar structure was left uncovered for three days. On these days, the ritual was elaborated in a different way than it was for the rest of the liturgical year. The mass on the Maundy days served to commemorate the suffering, death, and resurrection of Christ through a medieval allegorical interpretation. Scholars have shown that the staging and usage of liturgical artifacts in the Easter observances were understood as emblems of Christ's life. This specific theological elaboration influences the conceptualisation, perception, and use of the liturgical object. The purpose of this investigation is to examine the extent to which the use of portable altars relates to this reasoning. After assessing their use inside the church, the intended meaning of their distinctive features throughout medieval liturgical commentaries will be analysed. To close, this article turns to the meaning of portable altars as emblems of the Universal Church as promoted by the papacy.

A portable altar from the twelfth century is preserved in the church of St. Maria im Kapitol in Cologne.[1] Due to a lack of supporting documentation, it is impossible to know the church for which it was originally commissioned.[2] Studies conducted on the rectangular-shaped liturgical object have already examined its iconographic program and inscriptions.[3] This research acknowledged two iconographic characteristics germane to the Cologne goldsmith tradition of the eleventh and twelfth centuries. The four evangelists placed around the stone on the upper side of the liturgical object constitute the first feature. Michael Budde refers to the four figures as the *Majestas Group*, which was placed next to the central stone because of the latter's association with Christ.[4] The second iconographic feature shows the apostles and prophets on the four lateral sides of the liturgical object.

Despite the iconography of the Cologne portable altar sharing common features with local medieval goldsmith production, the portrayal of the prophet

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[1] Portable Altar, Cologne, Germany, St. Maria im Kapitol, 1160-1180, green porphyry, oak core, pit enamel, copper, stamped and gilded, brown varnish. The Portable Altar was on loan at the Museum Schnütgen for a long time, yet has been returned to St. Maria im Kapitol. High resolution images of this liturgical object can be found in Rheinische Bildarchiv, <https://www.kulturelles-erbe-koeln.de/documents/obj/05070724> [accessed 12 October 2022].

[2] Michael Budde, *Altare portatile, Kompendium der Tragaltäre des Mittelalters (600-1600)*, 3 vols (published doctoral thesis, Münster, 1999), iii, pp. 44–51.

[3] The main publications on portable altars include, Joseph Braun, *Der Christliche Altar in seiner geschichtlichen Entwicklung*, 2 vols (Munich: Alte Meister Guenther Koch & Co, 1924); Budde, *Altare portatile*; Robert Favreau, 'Les autels portatifs et leurs inscriptions', *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale*, 46, 2003, 327–52; Eric Palazzo, *L'Espace rituel et le sacré dans le christianisme: La liturgie de l'autel portatif dans l'Antiquité et au Moyen Âge* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2008); Cynthia Hahn, 'Portable Altars (and their Rationale): Liturgical Objects and Personal Devotion', in *Image and Altar 800–1300*, ed. by Poul Grinder-Hansen (Copenhagen: National Museum of Denmark, 2014), pp. 45–64; Sarah Luginbill, 'The Medieval Portable Altar Database' <https://medievalportablealtars.com> [accessed 19 January 2023].

[4] Budde, *Altare portatile*, iii, pp. 45–56.

Jonah on the lateral edge is unique and demands special attention.[5] He is represented bald and almost completely naked. Dietrich Kötzsche claims that this iconography alludes to the moment Jonah emerged from the whale.[6] According to the Bible, the prophet was swallowed by a whale, languishing three days and three nights within the creature, praying for help. God finally listened to his prayer and made the whale regurgitate the prophet. In addition to considering Jonah as a symbol of Jesus, Christian theologians interpreted the narrative as a story of rebirth and redemption. The reemerging from the whale was associated with the return of the Messiah on the third day after his death, with the swallowing being linked to his crucifixion. The rebirth of Christ was envisioned in the story of Jonah and served as a reference to the rite of baptism. On the Cologne portable altar, the prophet Jonah is depicted in poor condition as a reference to the three days he spent inside the whale. The specific iconography used on the portable altar of Cologne alludes to the theme of virtuous devotion.[7] Theologians compared the spiritual renewal of Jonah to the condition of the neophytes, who were undressed and immersed in the baptismal basin during the rite. When emerging from the holy water, they would be given a linen garment like the one Jonah wears on the portable altar of Cologne. [8]

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[5] Depicted on the small lateral side of the portable altar facing the King Solomon. For the detail see Budde, *Altare portatile*, iii, IMG. AP061ABB/2.

[6] Dietriche Kötzsche, *Fragmente eines romanischen Emailwerkes*, in *Intuition und Kunstwissenschaft, Festschrift für Hanns Swarzenski*, ed. by Peter Bloch and others (Berlin, 1973), pp. 151–70.

[7] *Ibid*.

[8] '*Adam und Eva*', in *Lexikon der Christlichen Ikonographie*, ed. by Engelbert Kirschbaum, 8 vols (Rome, Freiburg, Basel, Wien: Herder, 1994), i, pp. 43–4.

Full of religious significance, linen fabrics were used in rites throughout the liturgical year. Perceived as a reference to the vestment used to wrap the corpse of Christ in his burial, linen was also used to dress the priest and to drape sacred objects inside churches. However, during the liturgical year, the use of linen was not constant, especially on altars. [9] A linen tablecloth was placed on the altar during most of the liturgical year to cover the part where the chalice and paten stand during Mass, except for the time between Maundy Thursday until Maundy Saturday night. The linen cloth was removed from the altar after the Maundy Thursday night service, and the stone underneath washed and blessed by the priest with holy water and oil, recalling the consecration rite of the altar. The three days before Easter honor eternal life by recalling the agony, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Therefore, no transubstantiation happens on those days, and so the altar is not covered. The uncovered altar appears as the theological elaboration of the three Maundy days, commemorating through its visual staging the awaiting time between the death of Christ and his second coming.

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[9] Marcel Metzger, 'La place des liturges à l'autel', *Revue des Sciences Religieuses*, 45 (1971), 113–45; Alain Rauwel, 'L'autel chrétien médiéval III (compte rendu)', *Bulletin du centre d'études médiévales d'Auxerre*, 10 (2006) <http://journals.openedition.org/cem/778> [Accessed 03 October 2022]; Alain Rauwel, 'Les espaces de la liturgie au Moyen Âge Latin', *Bulletin du centre d'études médiévales d'Auxerre*, Hors-série n. 2 (2008) <https://doi.org/10.4000/cem.4392> [Accessed 13 October 2022] ; Jerome Baschet, *L'iconographei médiévale* (Paris: Gallimard, 2008); Paolo Piva, *Art médiéval: les voies de l'espace liturgique* (Paris: Picard, 2010); Marcello Angheben, 'Les reliquaires mosans et l'exaltation des fonctions dévotionnelles et eucharistiques de l'autel', *Codex aquilarensis: Cuadernos de investigación del Monasterio de Santa María la Real*, 32 (2016), 171–208 <https://shs.hal.science/halshs-02376306> [Accessed 13 October 2022].

On Maundy Thursday, liturgical items[10] mentioned in the inscription on the Cologne portable altar were removed:[11] 'The altar symbolises the cross, the chalice the grave, the paten the gravestone, the white linen the burial cloths'[12]. This inscription, together with a second which discloses the ontological ambiguity of the portable altar, gives promising insight regarding the use and perception of liturgical objects in the rite: 'Everything that is touched on the spiritual altar [of the heart] is completed on the material altar'[13]. The omission of transubstantiation and the removal of liturgical objects for the three days leading up to Easter Sunday have strong Christological associations. Liturgy is performed in the name of the resurrected Christ, and the inscriptions enhance this theological fact by associating the portable altar and all the objects it bears with the Passion and Resurrection. The liturgical implications of the Cologne portable altar and of the objects placed on it for the rite – the cross, chalice, paten, and linen cloth create a functional and theological relation between altars and portable altars. The form of the object and the content of

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[10] On the use of cult-images in the West, see Hans Belting, *Bild und Kult: Eine Geschichte des Bildes vor dem Zeitalter der Kunst* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1990); Frank Fehrenbach, *Die goldene Madonna im Essner Münster – Der Körper der Königin* (Ostfilden: KunstOrt Ruhrgebiet, 1996); Beate Fricke, *Ecce fides: Die Statue von Conques, Götzendienst und Bildkultur im Westen* (Munich, 2007). For a more liturgical-objects oriented approach, see Cynthia Hahn, *Strange Beauty: Issues in the Making and Meaning of Reliquaries, 400-circa 1204* (Pennsylvania: Penn State University Press, 2012); Philippe Cordez, *Schatz, Gedächtnis, Wunder: die Objekte der Kirchen im Mittelalter* (Regensburg: Schnell + Steiner, 2015), p. 121.

[11] Selected publications on the staging and liturgical involvement of relics and reliquaries include Peter Brown, *Society and the Holy in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1938), pp. 222–50; Edina Bozóky, *La politique des reliques de Constantin à Saint-Louis: protection collective et 211egitimation du pouvoir* (Paris: Beauchesne Ed., 2006); Cynthia Hahn, 'What Do Reliquaries Do for Relics?', *Numen*, 57 (2010), 284–316; Thomas Lentes, '*Ereignis und Repräsentation. Ein Diskussionsbeitrag zum Verhältnis von Liturgie und Bild im Mittelalter*', in *Die Bildlichkeit Simbolischer Akte*, ed. by Barbara Stollbergrilinger and Thomas Weißbrich (Münster: Rhema, 2010), pp. 155–84.

[12] Budde, *Altare portatile*, ii, pp. 44–51. Translated from German by the author. Latin original: 'ara crvcis · tvmvli·q(ve) calix l | apidisq(ve) pate | na·sindonis·officivm·candida | bissvs habet'.

[13] Budde, *Altare portatile*, ii, pp. 44–51. Translated from German by the author. Latin original:'qvicqvid in altari pvnct | atvr spiritvali | illvd in altari comple | tvr materiali'.

the inscription show that the Eucharist was celebrated on both types of altars.[14] In fact, and according to the ecumenical canons, both liturgical objects share the same consecration rite, with the consequent deposition of relics, as well as their role during the celebrations. One notable distinction between portable and permanent altars is that the first type allows the celebration of the Eucharist both inside and outside the church.[15]

While previous research has been conducted on permanent altars, this contribution focuses for the first time on the ritualistic involvement of portable altars during the three days before Easter Sunday. According to anthropological and sociological studies published since the late 1990s, rituals are a source of social meaning.[16] Environmental stimuli, individual and collective behaviors, the staging and use of objects with all their properties, have an impact on the social perception of rituals. Working from this perspective, this article investigates how the ritual on the three days before Easter Sunday was conceived to suggest an emerging awareness of the divine presence on portable altars. Aside from the diverse portable altar conceptions, the symbolic value of their components will be explored through medieval allegorical interpretations of Easter rituals and their theological

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[14] Braun, *Der Christiliche Altar*, i, pp. 731–2.

[15] On the custom of veiling and unveiling, see *Weaving, Veiling, and Dressing, Textile and their Metaphors in the Late Middle Ages*, ed. by K.M. Rudy and Barbara Baert (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007); Nadège Bavoux, 'Sacralité, pouvoir, identité: Une histoire du vêtement d'autel (XIIIe - XVIe siècles)' (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Université de Grenoble, 2012); Vincent Debiais, Eric Palazzo, and Lucien-Jean Bord, *Le rideau, le voile et le dévoilement du Proche-Orient ancien à l'Occident médiéval* (Paris: Geuthner, 2019).

[16] Celene Reynolds and Emily Erikson, 'Agency, Identity, and the Emergence of Ritual Experience', *Socius*, 3 (2017). For the perceptual experience, see Meyer Schapiro, *Romanesque Art: Selected Papers* (New York: George Braziller, 1977), pp. 1–27; Alain Rauwel, 'Théologie de l'Eucharistie et valorisation de l'autel à l' âge roman', *Hortus Artium Medievalium*, 11 (2005), 177–82.

elaboration. This contribution aims to apply a phenomenologically oriented approach to these liturgical objects and to consider portable altars both as a medium for the sacramental effects of the liturgy and as an object of remembrance enhancing the symbolism of the Easter rite.

PORTABLE ALTARS

Since the seventh century, in Christian tradition, liturgical celebrations have taken place both inside and outside of churches.[17] The Roman Church only canonised the practice of celebrating the liturgy outside in the ninth century. However, since the times of the early church, portable altars have been used for final benedictions, military and missionary campaigns, and crusades.[18] It must be kept in mind that portable altars were never used exclusively outside, they could also be used for liturgical celebration within a church in combination with or in substitution of a consecrated, permanent altar.[19] Textual evidence points out shared and simultaneous uses of both portable and permanent altars, which raises questions regarding the nature of their dissimilarities.

Philological research conducted by Joseph Braun on the terms used to define permanent and portable altars draws attention to their ambiguity in the

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[17] Charles Rohault De Fleury, *La Messe: études archéologiques sur ses monuments*, 7 vols (Paris: Ve A. Morel et Cie, 1883) i, p. 164; Jules Corblet, *Histoire Dogmatique, Liturgique et Archéologique Du Sacrement de l'Eucharistie*, 2 vols (Paris: 1885), i, p. 78; Braun, *Der Christliche Altar*; Budde, *Altare portatile*; Sarah Luginbill, 'The Medieval Portable Altar Database'.

[18] Daniel Rock, *The Church of Our Fathers as Seen in St. Osmund's Rite for the Cathedral of Salisbury*, 3 vols (London: C. Dolman, 1849), i, p. 249.

[19] Braun, *Der Christliche Altar*, i, pp. 20–30.

nomenclature. In sources, portable altars are commonly referred to as *tabulae*; permanent altars are more rarely termed as such. *Tabula altaris*, *tabula consecrate*, *tabula fabrefacta*, *tabula itineraria*, and *tabula portatilis* are other expressions used for portable altars.[20] Braun hypothesises that these variations may have been employed to stress the portability of the liturgical object as well as to distinguish them from the *tabula*, a term that usually designates the stone centrally positioned on the upper side of permanent altars.

An illustration of how portable altars would have been staged inside the church in medieval liturgy is documented for the Lateran Basilica in the *Decreta* of Bonizo of Sutri, dated 1088. According to the source, a combined Eucharistic use of a portable and a permanent altar was frequent for that time in Roman churches.[21] It is therefore assumed that portable altars were positioned on top of the central stone (the *tabula*) of permanent altars when used together in the liturgy. This location may explain why the term *tabula* was adopted as a term for portable altars. Although portable altars enabled the celebration of the Eucharist both inside and outside the ecclesiastical building, the Church encouraged the rite to be administered inside, to avoid immorality or the attendance of non-believers. Eric Palazzo assumed that the use of permanent altars was promoted by the Church since ecclesiastical sources tend to mention permanent, not portable altars.[22] This tendency, however, might also attest to the medieval inclination to identify portable with permanent altars; an

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[20] *Ibid*, p. 38.
[21] The source is mentioned in Braun, *Der Christliche Altar*, i, p. 57.
[22] Palazzo, *L'espace,* chapter 4.

aspect which would also explain the above-mentioned sources that highlight the possibility of using the same nomenclature (*tabula*) for both liturgical objects.[23]

From the seventh to the ninth century, canonical restrictions alternatively authorised and forbade celebrating the liturgy outside. However, even if such was temporarily forbidden, there is no mention that transubstantiation performed outside was dogmatically different from the one happening inside the church. This similarity allowed the canons of the Council of Mainz, from the late ninth century, to ultimately standardise the outside use of portable altars. Although the text also stipulates that outdoor rites must be held in tents, there is no mention of a variation either in the liturgical use or in the staging of portable altars. [24] Magnificent box-shaped portable altars are then created, with extensive visual programs of images and inscriptions, as is the case with the remarkable portable altar from Cologne.[25] As a result, and regardless of the medieval limitations of the Eucharistic celebration, portable altars acted as a medium for the sacramental effect of the liturgy.

The context of celebration (inside/outside) does not seem to modify the understanding of the theological conceptions regarding portable altars, and

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[23] Rock, *The Church*, p. 249; *Missale Romanum*, V, pp. 35–6 <http://textosparalaliturgia.blogspot.com/2014/03/missale-romanum-ad-missam-vespertinam.html> [accessed 03 October 2022]; *Pontificale Romanum Clementis VIII. et Urbani PP. VIII*, (Brussels: Typis Georgii Fricx, 1735), viii. Rupert of Deutz' allegorical writings on the liturgy are summarised in Helmut Deutz and Ilse Deutz, *Liber de divinis officiis: lateinisch/deutsch. Auf der Textgrundlage der Ed. von Hrabanus Haacke*, 4 vols (Freiburg im Breisgau, Wien: Herder, 1999), i, pp. 58–124.

[24] Giovanni Vignoli, *Liber pontificalis seu de gestis Romanorum pontificum*, 1. 1. (Rome: Bernabo, 1724); Paolo Maria Paciaudi, *De cultu S. Johannis Baptistae antiquitates christianae accedit in veterem ejusdem ordinis liturgiam commentarius* (Roma: Frates Palearini, 1829). The staging without linen seems to be acknowledged in Palazzo, *L'espace*, chapter 4 and Hahn, 'Portable altars', pp. 45–54.

[25] Reference is made to two publications dealing with the medieval contextualisation of ecclesiastical space: Braun, *Der Christliche Altar*, i, p. 419 and Dominique Iogna-Prat, *La Maison Dieu. Une histoire monumentale de l'Église au Moyen Âge (v. 800-v. 1200)* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2006).

significant sources attest to their staging and use outside the church. According to

Hincmar of Reims (806–82), in his *Miracula S. Dionysii*, the Monks of St. Denis

celebrated the daily office on a portable altar while accompanying Charles the Bald

(823–77) on a military expedition. To celebrate properly on the portable altar, they

used to light a candle. Tragically, the source records that one day the candle slipped

and started to burn the wooden parts of the portable altar and the covering linen.[26]

Although there is no legislation mandating the use of linen cloth on portable altars,

this source seems to attest to this practice. The use of linen as covering cloth was

made mandatory on permanent altars by Pope Bonifacius in the seventh century,

and Hicmar's text shows that this practice extended to portable altars.[27] The alleged

use of linen cloth on portable altars might also be confirmed in the above-mentioned

inscription on the portable altar of Cologne, where together with the chalice and the

paten, linen is mentioned as an object of the rite.

Although textual sources document the use of linen on portable altars, no

medieval image is known confirming this practice. The earliest depiction is found in

a fresco by Raphael of the coronation of Charlemagne in the year 800. [28] On the left

side of the painting, one sees a permanent altar with several candlesticks and a

tablecloth. The viewer might also see an oblong object beneath the linen tablecloth,

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[26] Braun, *Der Christliche Altar*, i, p. 424.

[27] Thomas M Izbicki, 'Lineamenta Altaria: The Care of Altar Linens in the Medieval Church', *Medieval Clothing and Textiles*, 12 (2016), 41–60.

[28] Rock, *The Church*, pp. 249–50. The Coronation of Charlemagne, Raphael, 1517, Raphael Rooms, Musei Vaticani, Rome. The fresco can be seen on the website of the Musei Vaticani <https://www.museivaticani.va/content/museivaticani/en/collezioni/musei/stanze-di-raffaello/stanza-dell-incendio-di-borgo/incoronazione-di-carlo-magno.html> [accessed 19 January 2022]

which, according to Rock, was the silver portable altar given by Charlemagne to the Lateran Basilica on the day of his coronation.[29] Consequently, the fresco by Raphael, although of a later date, might attest to the medieval ceremonial staging of portable altars. If covered by a linen cloth, portable altars would not be discernible from permanent altars, and this might explain the almost complete lack of these liturgical objects in medieval representations. For the eleventh and twelfth centuries, only two images of such are known. One is painted on folio 16ᵛ of the Bernward Gospel, and the other is incised on the upper slab of the Paderborn portable altar given by Henry II.[30] Both images represent the consecration of a portable altar; altars in general were covered only after the rite, so the images would depict a moment earlier in the ceremony.

THEOLOGICAL ELABORATION

The written sources state that linen cloth was used to cover portable altars for almost the entire liturgical year. Consequently, like permanent altars, portable altars would be uncovered on Maundy Thursday and be visible until Easter Sunday. While scholars have studied the habits of Easter week and their relation to the symbolism of permanent altars, comparable studies on portable altars are lacking. The liturgical

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[29] Alfred Darcel, *Trésor de l'Église de Conques, dessiné et décrit* (Paris: Librairie Archéologique de Victor Didron, 1861) pp. 1–13.

[30] The Bernward Gospel is held at the Hildesheim Dom Museum, Domschatz 18, Bernward Gospel, dedication opening, fol. 16ᵛ. The miniature can be seen in Jennifer P. Kingsley, '*Picturing the Treasury: The Power of Objects and the Art of Memory in the Bernward Gospels*', *Gesta*, 50 (2011), 19–39 (p. 20). The niello on the upper side of Henry II's portable altar can be found in Budde, *Altare portatile*, ii, p. 212.

elaboration of portable altars, their use, and staging, on the three days before Easter

Sunday, must now be addressed.

Easter is the most significant set of Christian celebrations and has received

relevant theological commentary and consideration since the Early Church.[31] At each

Mass, the priest celebrates the Eucharist as the commemoration of the last supper

and a metaphor of devotional unity. On Maundy Thursday, the Eucharist is held to

reconcile the relationship between the earthly church and God. On this day only, the

transubstantiation is performed twice, and it will not take place on the following two

days. This suspension recalls and refers to the awaiting for Christ's resurrection.

Therefore, the transubstantiation is not performed on Maundy Friday; on this day,

the consecrated hosts from Maundy Thursday are distributed. No ritual at all is

performed on Maundy Saturday as a symbol of the agony of damnation. Finally, the

full service is held again on Easter Sunday.

The various parts of the medieval Maundy Thursday celebration refer to the

Last Supper, the Tenebrae service, and the unveiling of the altar.[32] Since the ninth

century, the three-day liturgical display preceding Easter Sunday has begun with the

Tenebrae celebration during *Matines* and *Lauds*, when Christ's passion and death are

emphasised.[33] In a completely dark church, fourteen candles are lit, along with a

central one indicating Christ, all are then gradually extinguished following the

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[31] *Missale Romanum*, V, *Cena Domini;* and Deutz and Deutz, *Liber de divinis officiis,* ii, 33.2.

[32] Giulio Cesare Paribeni, 'Ufficio delle Tènebre', in *Enciclopedia Italiana* (Roma: Treccani, 1937) <https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/ufficio-delle-tenebre> [accessed 03 October 2022].

[33] *Missale Romanum*, V, *Cena Domini;* and Deutz and Deutz, *Liber de divinis officiis,* ii, 33.2.

communal reading of the life of Jesus from the Gospel of John. In the final,

profoundly evocative state of darkness, an abrupt noise was produced as an allusion

to the earthquake that took place as Christ died. To emphasise the significance of the

moment, the *Tenebrae* observances were conceived to end at the time of Jesus'

death.[34] Liturgical objects, such as a chalice, paten, and linen cloth, were then

removed from the altar. Rupert of Deutz provides a descriptive illustration of the

Maundy Thursday evening ceremony in his fifth book of the *Liber De Divinis*

Officiis[35]: 'Therefore, since the altar symbolically represents Christ, it is rightly

deprived of all His clothing and adornment because of the memory of the same'.[36]

Rupert of Deutz describes the uncovering ceremony and names the liturgical objects

which are mentioned in the inscriptions on the Cologne portable altar.[37] The

elaborated ritual of the obscuring darkness of the church, and the act of unveiling

the altar, were meant to symbolise the passion of Christ, his humiliation, death,

rising from the dead, as well as the announcement of his second coming.[38]

Truth, belief, and justification are three epistemological conditions necessary

to understanding the conceptualisation of the liturgical staging of portable altars as

medium of the sacramental effect and memory. Interpretations of time as defining

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[34] Sylvia Elizabeth Mullins, *Myroblytes: Miraculous Oil In Medieval Europe* (unpublished doctoral thesis, Georgetown University, 2016), pp. 110–14.

[35] Deutz & Deutz, *Liber de divinis officiis*, i, pp. 24–5.

[36] *Ibid*, pp. 10, 30 with translation at pp. 766–7. Translated from German by the author. Latin original: 'Cum ergo altare Christum significet, recte ob commemorationem horum vestitu et ornatu suo spoliatum est'.

[37] Budde, *Altare portatile*, ii, pp. 44–51. Translated from German by the author. Latin original: 'ara crvcis · tvmvli·q(ve) calix l | apidisq(ve) pate | na·sindonis·officivm·candida | bissvs habet'.

[38] Deutz and Deutz, *Liber de divinis officiis*, ii, 5.24–5; *Missale Romanum*, V, *Cena Domini*; Deutz and Deutz, *Liber de divinis officiis*, ii, 33.2.

memory and commemoration are ubiquitous to medieval Church thought. Scriptures delineate the beginning and the end of times, and in the liturgy, allusion is made to past events which were ritualised, to reinforce their memory and dogmatic unity, but every rite is conceived and performed with consideration given to earthly time and its cyclicality. The physical involvement in the rite, and a theological understanding of it, allow the believer to at once participate in earthly cyclical time and be elevated towards the celestial one. The perception of the sacrament was enhanced in the daily liturgy, as well as in celebrations throughout the ecclesiastical year, which were intended to foster the awareness of the divine presence in this earthly time. The conception of liturgical objects such as portable altars and their dedicated use and staging are essential to mediating this conjunction of times during the rite.

Scholars have already studied the impact of all the components of portable altars on their perception.[39] The formulation and use of these liturgical objects were meant to visualise the divine through the enhancement of their liturgical function and theological conceptions. The medieval Easter tradition of unveiling the altar renews its consecration and establishes the promise of true belief. Uncovered from linen, the altar stone was washed and anointed with sanctified oil to recall the

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[39] Anouk Cohen and Damien Mottier, 'Pour une anthropologie des matérialités religieuses', *Archives de sciences sociales des religions*, 174 (2016), 349–68 (p. 350); Song of Songs 5:14; Hebrews 4:15; Matthew 21:12; Hahn, *Strange Beauty*, chapters 2 and 3.

consecration rite.[40] Comparably, portable altars were uncovered, washed, oiled, and left visible for three days. This aspect invites the investigation of the conception and perception of portable altars in the specific context of Easter ceremonies.[41]

The Cologne portable altar inscriptions, enclosed in proximity to the four quadrangular-shaped enamels depicting the evangelical animals, trace the differentiation between the physical-literal and spiritual-figurative altar.[42] Christ is metaphorically present in many parts of the rite, such as in the chants, sacraments, holy readings, inscriptions, and in the iconographic cycles. Yet, his presence is real in the consecrated bread and wine. The inscription on the Cologne portable altar refers to both presences, and by doing so, the ontological ambiguity of the liturgical object is revealed. The divine, existing independently from space and time, is envisioned in the materials, inscriptions, and figurative cycles which are, for most of the year imagined only, for it is obscured by a linen cloth.[43] The divine presence is then enhanced during the transubstantiation and found in the chalice and paten positioned on the central stone of portable altars. The unveiling and its theological meaning are described by Rupert of Deutz when referring to the symbolism of the

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[40] Deutz and Deutz, *Liber de divinis officiis*, ii, p. 681. Reference is made to the implication of the holy week as the week of creation, where the salvation of mankind is seen.

[41] Pamela Nourrigeon, 'Voiler l'autel De l'usage Du Rideau Au Canon de La Messe', in *Le Rideau, Le Voile et Le Dévoilement. Du Proche-Orient Ancien à l'Occident Médiéval*, ed. by Vincent Debiais, Eric Palazzo, and Lucien-Jean Bord (Paris: Geuthner, 2019), pp. 91–100 (p. 93).

[42] Budde, *Altare portatile*, ii, pp. 44–51. Translated from German by the author: 'Everything that is touched on the spiritual altar [of the heart] is completed on the material altar'. Latin original:' qvicqvid in altari pvnct|atvr spiritvali | illvd in altari comple|tvr materiali'.

[43] Gerardo Boto Varela, 'Vélum Lapideo, Lapides Veligera Dans Des Cloîtres Romans Castillans Révéler l'invisibilité de Dieu', in *Le Rideau, Le Voile et Le Dévoilement. Du Proche-Orient Ancien à l'Occident Médiéval*, ed. by Vincent Debiais, Eric Palazzo, and Lucien-Jean Bord (Geuthner, 2019), pp. 233–68.

Easter ritual. In the absence of the linen cloth and other liturgical materials, the meaning of the object is linked only, allegorically, to a stone, described as follows:

> Of new fires | Due to the absence of fire, which is extinguished at Matutin (sc. Lauds), as has been said, on these three days we resort to a stone, either to elicit the hidden fire from its hidden veins by striking a stone, or, in clear skies, to hold out a clear crystal stone to the sun and, with the help of this small crystal disc, to capture the ray thrown down by it in the tinder placed under it in a way that is wonderful to behold.[44]

Because of described fire that develops between scratches and burns, stones mentioned in the Easter rite are identified as knowledge keepers. These can be simple or crystal stones. While a literal interpretation might deduce that the text refers to a fire being lit with stones, the conception of the celebration might clarify its emblematic meaning.

The Council of Epaone (517) mandated that every portable altar should have a stone slab, either crystal or marble, on the upper side.[45] Canons state that the chalice and paten must be placed on this stone for the Eucharist. Christ is represented through these stone slabs upon portable altars, and the uncovering

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[44] For the translation see Deutz and Deutz, *Liber de divinis officiis*, ii, pp. 754–5. Latin original:' De novo igne | Amisso igne, qui ad matutinos, ut dictum est, exstinguitur, ad lapidem per eosdem tres dies confugimus, ut vel lapidem percutientes ex abstrusis eius venis ignem occultum eliciamus vel liquidum crystalli lapidem sereno caelo soli obicientes radium eius traiectum per eiusdem crystalli orbiculum spectabili miraculo in subiectam suscipiamus escam'.

[45] Deutz and Deutz, *Liber de divinis officiis*, ii, 5.25-30.

would allow his visualisation.[46] The passage quoted above adds interpretations

regarding the stone: 'The lights you show us, the ones that come out of the rock,

these we look for',[47] and: 'That man may know, that the hope of light is founded for

him, in the strong body of Christ, which has been called a solid stone, from which

came the battle of our weak fire'.[48] The text identifies Christ in Easter stones in the

same manner in which all portable altars stone slabs have already been defined.

Therefore, one could consider that central stones on uncovered portable altars were

perceived as the Easter stones mentioned by Rupert of Deutz. The distinct grains of

the stone on the upper side of portable altars outline darker and lighter sections and

remind one of the cracklings and swirling of the fire, which can also be noticed on

the portable altar of Cologne. The perception of the portable altar changes with a

crystal stone due to its transparent nature. Rupert specifies that knowledge emerges

from below the crystal stones through the refraction of sunlight, bringing the object a

celestial dimension. A crystal stone is placed on top of the Stavelot portable altar

(Liège, Belgium, 1160–70).[49] The parchment located and made visible underneath the

crystal shows three contracted versions of *Sanctus* (SCS, SCS, SCS) associated with

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[46] Palazzo, *L'espace*, chapter 2.

[47] Deutz and Deutz, *Liber de divinis officiis*, ii, pp. 7545. Translated from German by the author. Latin original: '[…] lumina no stamen, Monstras saxigeno semine quaerere'.

[48] *Ibid*, ii, pp. 754–6. Translated from German by the author. Latin original: 'Ne nesciret homo spem sibi luminis, In Christi solido corpore conditam, Qui dici stabilem se voluit petram, Nostris igniculis unde genus venit'.

[49] Stavelot Portable Altar, Art And History Museum (Bruxelles), 1590, Meuse region (Stablo?), 1140-1165, rock crystal; wood core, pit enamel; copper, stamped and gilded; brass, cast, chased and gilded; brown varnish; Parchment, height 10 cm, width 17 cm, depth 27.5 cm, altar form; Budde, *Altare portatile*, ii, 1998, pp. 127–43.

liturgical chants for the Eucharist.[50]

On Maundy Thursday, the uncovering, washing, and oiling of the central stone took place on both permanent and portable altars. The ceremony shifts the attention from the liturgical objects to the stone, and that is the reason why the text from Rupert of Deutz describes only the stone. Central stones of portable altars are noted as being easily liftable, an aspect that would facilitate the association between stones and the divine and celestial dimension. Rupert's text continues by quoting the 2 Corinthians 4:6, 'For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness" made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ'. This quote's presence beside the description of central stones makes obvious that the metaphorical light emanating from the stone and made visible during the Easter rite is linked to the presence of Christ.[51] The ceremony of washing and oiling the stone not only renews the rite of consecration but also enhanced Christ's presence, the symbolic light of Easter stones. Certainly, there would have been no miraculously rising fire, yet it would be perceived as such in the allegorical understanding of the rite. Similarly, Christ did not reveal himself in the Eucharist suspended before Easter Sunday, but he was envisioned in the stone underneath the linen cloth. The removal of the piece of fabric is the theological

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[50] Susanne Wittekind, *Altar-Reliquiar-Retabel. Kunst und Liturgie bei Wibald von Stablo* (Köln, Weimar, Wien: Böhlau, 2003); Hahn, 'Portable Altars'; Patrick Henriet, 'Relire l'autel portatif de stavelot', in *Orfèvrerie septentrionale (xiie et xiiie siècle)*, ed. Nigel Morgan (Liège: Trésor de la Cathedrale, 2016) pp. 179–208; Didier Mehu, 'L'évidement de l'image ou la figuration de l'invisible corps du Christ (IX-XI siècle)', *Images Re-vues,* 11 (2013) <https://journals.openedition.org/imagesrevues/3384> [accessed 13 October 2022].

[51] Deutz and Deutz, *Liber de Divinis Officiis*, 5.31–3.

elaboration allowing the perception of the divine.

As mentioned earlier, Easter festivities, through the remembrance of the death of Christ, celebrate the salvation of humankind. Redemption is conceded to everyone belonging to the Christian religion, conferred through the rite of baptism, and reiterated via recurrent allusions. The Maundy Thursday rite serves as an illustration of this, the washing and anointing of the central stones recalling not just the consecration rite, but also the baptismal ceremony. On the portal altar from Cologne, the image of the prophet Jonah in his linen vestment is a further allusion to the ceremony of baptism, and of the inexorability of spiritual renewal. As a result, stones on portable altars can be considered as conceived for both their ceremonial use throughout the ecclesiastical year, when covered by linen, and for the specificity of Easter rite, when their involvement, as described by Rupert of Deutz, concentrates on the theological idea of belonging and redemption, which are conceptually part of the rite. This then raises the question as to whether there is a distinction between the Easter staging of permanent and portable altars.

PORTABLE ALTARS AS THE ARK OF THE BODY OF CHRIST

On Maundy Thursday, after the second ceremony, all the candles were blown out, submerging the church into darkness while the altar was uncovered. An exception was made for the light was used to relocate the host into a shrine that served as a

tabernacle.[52] Here it was safely kept until Easter Sunday.[53] In Rome, after the Maundy Thursday evening mass, pilgrims were led to the seven pilgrim churches of San Giovanni in Laterano, San Pietro in Vaticano, San Paolo Fuori le Mura, Santa Maria Maggiore, San Lorenzo Fuori le Mura, Santa Croce in Gerusalemme, and San Sebastiano Fuori le Mura.[54] As a practice that emphasises the unity and centrality of the Church of Rome, this ritual dates at least from the Carolingian era when it takes place throughout the empire.[55] To serve as the focal point of the devotion, altars were set up inside the seven churches. These altars were identified as tabernacles for their function of the safekeeping of the consecrated host.[56] This practice is documented in the writings of Bonzio for the Lateran Basilica. According to the citation provided by Braun, he reports:

> On Maundy Thursday, he says, the priests remove the mensa from the altar after the end of the Mass and the Pope consecrates the holy oil and chrism in the hollow of the altar (…) In the altar there was a box which was considered to be the Old Testament Ark of the Covenant, and on this, not on the ordinary mensa of the altar, the Pope celebrated Mass on Holy Thursday, that is, as it were, within the main altar.[57]

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[52] Christophe Vuillaume and D. Hurst, *SC 475 Le Tabernacle de Bède le Vénérable, collection sources chrétiennes* (Paris: Les éditions du cerf, 2003); Deutz and Deutz, *Liber de divinis officiis*, 5.24-5.

[53] 'Tabernacle (Christian)', in *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, ed. F. L. Cross and E.A. Livingstone, 3rd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 1065, 1330 and 1394.

[54] Francesco Fornari, 'Repositorio', in *Enciclopedia Italiana* (Treccani, 1936) <https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/repositorio> [accessed 03 October 2022].

[55] Reynolds and Erikson, 'Agency'.

[56] Exodus 25: 10–40; Deutz and Deutz, *Liber de divinis officiis*, 5.25-30; Fornari, 'Repositorio'.

[57] Braun, *Der Christliche Altar*, i, p. 58. Translated from German by the author. Original: 'In dem Altar befand sich ein Kasten, der als die alttestamentliche Bundeslade galt, und auf diesem, nicht auf der

Braun claims that Bonzio misunderstood the meaning of the procedure, and by quoting the *Ordo Romano*, he clarifies that the so-called Ark of the Covenant is the portable wooden altar that was documented in the Lateran Basilica from at least the eleventh century.[58] The celebrations were performed on it during the three Maundy days, and the host was kept therein, as if it were a tabernacle. This rite was conceived as an allusion to the Old Testament practice during which the high priest entered the Holy of Holies alone to perform the reconciliation between God and his people.[59] The practice is not far, in its conception at least, from the washing and oiling of the altar stones as a reminder of dogmatic unity with the divine. The wooden portable altar of the Lateran Basilica was, at some point, permanently integrated into the main altar, where Braun still observed its presence in the nineteenth century, as a way to preserve the practice for all time. Similar findings have been observed in other churches, like the Hildesheim portable altar integrated into the main altar of the Cathedral.[60]

The medieval etymology of tabernacle refers to the 'living place' of the Ark of

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gewöhnlichen Mensa des Altares, feierte der Papst am Gründonnerstag die Messe, also gleichsam innerhalb des Hauptaltares'.

[58] Braun, *Der Christliche Altar*, i, pp. 57–8.

[59] Bernard of Porto, *Bernhardi Cardinalis et Lateranensis Ecclesiae Prioris Ordo Officiorum Ecclesiae Lateranensis*, ed. Ludwig Fischer (Munich: Datterer, 1916), pp. 157 (301), Ordo 10.

[60] Michael Brandt, 'Tragaltäre im Hochaltar. Ein Reliquienfund im Hildesheimer Dom', in *Ars et Ecclesia* ed. by Hans-Walter Stork, Christoph Gerhardt, and Alois Thomas (Trier: Veröffentlichungen des Bistumsarchivs, 1989) pp. 69–77

the Covenant.[61] According to sources from the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the

term refers to the 'portable sanctuary brought by the Israelites in the desert'.[62] In the

New Testament, the tabernacle-Ark of the Covenant is described as the shrine for the

body of Christ, as well as a synonym for the regenerated Church of Israel, therefore,

for the Universal Church.[63] However, the same term has been documented to be

used to refer to an object used in the military campaigns of Constantine as follows:

> Whenever they went to war, they were in the habit of carrying around a tabernacle built
>
> in the likeness of a church, so that even being in the wilderness, both he and his army
>
> lacked the Sacred Temple, in which they could praise God, pour out prayers and perceive
>
> the sacred mysteries. For they followed the priests and deacons seated at the tabernacle,
>
> who, according to the rite of the Church, were to perform such services.[64]

Scholars have identified the described object, reported as having been used in

military campaigns to celebrate mass, as a portable altar.[65] Any additional

consecrated host was presumably stored inside of the portable altar, and so the term

tabernacle was chosen so as to refer to this use. However, on the three days before

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[61] Exodus 19–40.

[62] Such reference to the use of reliquaries is found in in Henriet, 'Relire l'autel', p. 208 and Exodus 25: the Ark of the Covenant.

[63] Honorius Augustodunensis, *de Gemma Animae*, in *Documenta Catholica Omnia*, ed. J. P. Migne, 1080-1137, chapter 161.

[64] The text is translated by the author from Thomas Jerome Welsh, *The use of portable altars; a historical synopsis and commentary* (Washington D.C.: Unpublished PhD Thesis, Catholic University of America, 1950) p. 7 based on the original from: Sozomen, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, lib. I, cap. 8, LXVII, 880: 'Quoties ad bellum proficisceretur tabernaculum ad Ecclesiae similitudinem fabricatum circumferre consuevarant, ita ut ne quidem in solitudine constitutus tam Ipse, quam Exercitus ejus Sacra Aede carret in qua Deum laudare, ac preces fundere, et Sacra Mysteria percipere possent. Sequebant enim Sacerdotes et Diaconi tabernaculo assidentes, qui juxta Ecclesiae ritum ejusmodi officia obirent'.

[65] Braun, *Der Christliche Altar*, i, pp. 71–91; ii, pp. 419–517.

Easter Sunday, why should portable altars be named as tabernacle-Ark of the Covenant? The additional consecrated host of Maundy Thursday permitted the celebration of the Eucharist on Maundy Friday and, as a result, proved the divine presence despite the uncovering of the altar. As already mentioned, after removing the linen and liturgical objects from the altar, new receptacles for the sacramental bread needed to be provided. These are described in the rite of the Roman Maundy Thursday, as well as in Exodus 16:4–31 in the distribution of the Manna to Aaron, where the shrines used are referred to as the Ark of Covenant.[66]

On the exquisite altar of Klosterneuburg (Austria),[67] originally made up of forty-five pieces of champlevés, placed in three horizontal rows of seventeen pieces each, the relevant story is depicted.[68] Aaron is shown introducing the manna into the Ark of the Covenant, which figuratively is rendered as the altar shown inside the last champlevé of the ninth column. The inscription, running laterally along the trilobed edge of the enamel, states: 'The manna in the golden urn / the manna means you, Christ, hidden in a dark model'.[69] The inscription implies that the manna is a metaphor for the host and that its placement inside the Ark of Covenant recalls the inserting of the host into the tabernacle. The image of Aaron inserting the manna

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[66] See also Hebrews 7:11–19.

[67] Verduner Altar (originally Ambo) Leopold Chappelle, abbey of Klosterneuburg, Nicholas of Verdun, 45 enamels, completed 1181, with adding's from 1330. On the transition from ambo to altar, see Heike Schlie, 'Vom Ambonezum Retabel. Das Klosterneuburger Goldschmiedewerk von Nikolaus von Verdun', *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, 80 (2017), 247–72.

[68] Otto Demus, 'Neue Funde an den Emails des Nikolaus von Verdun in Klosterneuburg', *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Denkmalpflege*, 5 (1951), 13–22; Ernst Kitzinger, *The Art of Byzantium and the Medieval West* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976); Helmut Buschhausen,'The Klosterneuburg Altar of Nicholas of Verdun: Art, Theology and Politics', in *The Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 37 (1974), 1–32.

[69] Buschhausen, 'The Klosterneuburg Altar', pp. 1–32.

into the Ark of Covenant on the ambo of Klosterneuburg is related to the similar depiction of both the ceremony and of the altar whereon Melchizedek celebrates the Mass. These associations have been identified as *figura* following the definition of the concept by Erich Auerbach, as celebrating models in the Augustinian understanding of time.[70] The Old Testament figures depicted on the ambo would operate as a point of reference for the viewer, signalling that the use of the liturgical objects was intended to serve as a prefiguration of the rite and the priest. Furthermore, the liturgical objects used on the altar during the rite would not serve alone as symbols of those mentioned in the holy writings, but would be augmented by the iconography on the ambo. Their staging and liturgical involvement invest them with the aspect of the divine model, the *figura*. Therefore, such a complex correlation of objects through time invites us to understand the Easter usage of portable altars as *figura* of the Ark of the Covenant and, therefore, of the Universal Church.

Most portable altars from the eleventh and twelfth centuries depict illustrations of Old Testament figures celebrating on altars.[71] As an example, ten figurative enamelled plates were originally located around the central stone on the upper side of the Cologne portable altar. Only six remain showing the four evangelic animals, Melchizedek, and Abel. According to Psalm 115, associated with the conception of the whole iconographic program, they serve as archetypes of

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[70] Heike Schlie, 'Der Klosterneuburger Ambo des Nikolaus von Verdun. Das Kunstwerk als figura zwischen Inkarnation und Wiederkunft des Logos', in *Figura. Dynamiken der Zeichen und Zeiten im Mittelalter (Philologie der Kultur)*, ed. by Christian Kiening und Katharina Mertens Fleury (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2013) pp. 205–47. The inscription states: 'Man in urna aurea / Man notat obscura clausum te xpe figura'. Translated by the Author.

[71] Braun, *Der Christliche Altar*, i, pp. 462–76.

righteous priests.[72] On the Cologne portable altar, as on the ambo of Klosterneuburg, the priests celebrating the Eucharist would be able to perceive themselves as, and be perceived as, descendants of those represented in the images of the portable altar.

Another iconographic detail is worth mentioning: the presence of cherubins and the four evangelic animals in the representation of the Ark of Covenant (Exodus 25: 10–40).[73] The Ark of the Covenant is depicted as a rectangular object with two bars for transportation in the ninth-century oratory in Germigny-des-Prés (France).[74] The Ark is surmounted by two cherubs and flanked by two archangels, with the hand of God in the upper part of the mosaic. The cherubins, like the four creatures, are commonly represented on medieval portable altars, such as the one from Cologne.[75] The shared iconographic elements suggest that tabernacles and portable altars might have been perceived in a similar way or followed a model. This argument is supported by the Arnulf Ciborium, which has been documented to have served as an altar and a tabernacle.[76] Host has been found inside box-shaped portable altars from the eleventh and twelfth centuries.[77] The convenient opening of

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[72] Psalm 115:1–18.

[73] Ricciotti Giuseppe, 'Arca dell'Alleanza', in *Enciclopedia Italiana* (Roma: Treccani, 1929) <https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/arca-dell-alleanza_%28Enciclopedia-Italiana%29> [Acccessed 12 April 2022].

[74] A photo of the mosaic is found in Anne-Orange Poilpré, 'Le décor intérieur de l'oratoire de Germigny-des-Prés et son iconographie', *Bulletin du centre d'études médiévales d'Auxerre* Hors-série n. 11 (2019) <http://journals.openedition.org/cem/16158> [accessed 14 January 2023].

[75] Budde, *Altare Portatile*, ii, p. 33.

[76] Tragaltar mit Ziborium, so-called Arnulf-Ziborium, Munich (D), Schatzkammer der Residenz, inv. 5, West Frankish, Metz or Reims, around 870, gran porphyry, lime wood, gold plate, copper, gilded, chased, cellular enamel, 59x 31x24 cm. This object is accessible via the website of the Deutsche Digitale Bibliothek. <https://www.dieutsche-digitale-bibliothek.de/item/6VE2WSASTOF5UGS3ALJYH MBVAQYHBDVE> [accessed 20 January 2023].

[77] Henriet, 'Relire l'autel', p. 208.

box-shaped portable altars would have permitted worshippers to shelter the hosts beneath the central stone of the portable altar on Maundy Thursday.[78]

Furthermore, comparable to the bars depicted on the Ark of Germigny-des-Prés, various box-shaped portable altars, such as the Berlin K4183, feature four rings on their base. It is plausible that they were needed for transportation of the liturgical object with a bar passing through the rings, as described in Exodus 25:10–40.[79] Wooden boxes, like those listed in the Guelph treasure, were used to transport portable altars outside the church. Therefore, it is possible that the rings on portable altars were used to move the liturgical objects within the basilica during the three days prior to Easter Sunday.[80] A portable altar holding the consecrated body of Christ could have been handled safely using removable bars.[81]

Ultimately, portable altars were able to foster a communitarian sense of unity. This was evoked through their very conceptualisation. However, as this study of their ritual use in the three days preceding Easter Sunday has demonstrated, they were also conceived so as to manifest this unity in their liturgical involvement.

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[78] Martin Wangsgaard Jürgensen, 'In the Sphere of Sacrosanctity: Altars as Generators of Space in the Late Middle Ages, in *Ritual Dinamics and the Science of Ritual*, ed. by Gita Dharampal-Frick, Robert Langer, and Nils Holger Petersen (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2010), pp. 324–37.

[79] Portable Altar Berlin, Kunstgewerbemuseum der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin - Preußischer Kulturbesitz, K4183, 1170-1180, Pit enamel on copper gilded; silver stamped and gilded; bronze cast and chased; green porphyry; oak wood core, object size: 15,4 x 29,9 x 21,5 cm. This portable altar, as all the other ones from the Welfenschatz are digitised and accessible from the homepage of the Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz. <https://recherche.smb.museum/detail/896174/tragaltar-mit-engeln-und-cherubim> [accessed 20 January 2023].

[80] Otto von Falke, Robert Schmidt and Georg Swarzenski, *Der Welfenschatz. Der Reliquienschatz des Braunschweiger Domes aus dem Besitze des herzoglichen Hauses Braunschweig-Lüneburg* (Frankfurt am Main: Frankfurter Verlagsanstalt, 1930) Table 40.

[81] Wooden box Guelph treasure, twelfth century. Braun, *Der Christliche Altar*, i, pp. 42–100.

SUMMARY, FINAL POINTS, AND CONCLUSION

Although portable altars have been used outside churches since the early times, this study focused on their medieval involvement during the three days prior to Easter Sunday inside the church. Medieval theological elaborations on the practices for the Maundy days affected the liturgical display, and the Maundy Thursday uncovering of the altar, for example, changed the perception of the object as it suspended the celebration of the transubstantiation. The allegorical description Rupert of Deutz makes of the Easter ritual enables us to comprehend the religious degrees of significance of medieval portable altars. They reinforce the perceptual experience by enhancing memory and presence through the ceremony, iconography, inscriptions, and the symbolical meaning of the ritual materials. In anticipation of the end of times, the divine elements are consecrated day after day. God was already envisioned in the manna of the Ark of the Covenant by Aaron, but his bodily advent as the Messiah had yet to occur. After the uncovering on Maundy Thursday no transubstantiation is possible; however, the sacred host put inside the portable altar to convey the divine presence. The use of portable altars as a tabernacle during the Maundy days, reveal the altar's symbolism was ascribed to the meaning of its contents.

The Easter understanding of portable altars as tabernacles convert them into a historicised liturgical object of the Universal Church. Their composition and use function as evidence of theological, ceremonial unity, and devotional consistency. It

allows us to understand portable altars as fundamental objects for religious rituals, reinforcing the intellectual and physical participation of the believer. The historical vicissitudes of the eleventh and twelfth centuries raised questions regarding the role of the Church. Councils, synods, and theological treatises highlight the importance of having a doctrine sustained by rigor, universalism, regularity, and delegation of responsibility. Among other social manifestations and thoughts, the stability of faith is expressed through the theological elaboration of the Easter uncovering, staging, and use of portable altars. After the Maundy days, the altar is covered and the transubstantiation resumes. The ritualistic involvement of portable altars is based on the notion of *figura* and participates as such in the discourse of the reformed Universal Church.[82]

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[82] Arnaud Join-Lambert, 'Jeûne et Mystère pascal', *La Maison-Dieu*, 57 (2002), 97–107.

'Sunk in the…Gulf of Perdition'[1]: The 'Heretical' Paulician and Tondrakian Movements in the Periphery of the Medieval Byzantine Empire

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This article explores two 'heretical' movements, the Paulicians and Tondrakians, both of which originated in medieval Armenia and subsequently spread throughout the Byzantine Empire. These movements became the target of elites from both Armenian and Byzantine power structures and, as a result, acolytes were subject to excommunications, forced resettlements, and mass violence. This article investigates the ways in which church and imperial authorities represented and, by extension, marginalised these heretics, as both religious and political threats, which ultimately led to their persecution. This research further examines the way in which adherents of these peripheral heresies were perceived by ecclesiastical and political hierarchies throughout the Middle Ages, whether Byzantine, Armenian, or Islamic. How these heretics viewed themselves and their place within the universe will also be recreated from the historical literature. Although, this is somewhat difficult, as many of the scriptures, sermons, sacred sites, and religious artefacts of these heretical movements were consigned to the flame over centuries of hostilities. Through an examination of primary sources, predominantly from orthodox cleric-chroniclers hostile to the Paulician and Tondrakian movements, this article will explore the ways in which the marginalisation of these heretics led to their excommunication, dispossession, and death.

In 684 CE, heresiarch and founder of the Paulician movement, Constantine-Silvanus, was arrested by Byzantine Emperor Constantine IV, and sentenced to death for

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[1] Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians* (AD 870) 3, in *Christian Dualist Heresies in the Byzantine World c. 650–c. 1450*, ed. and trans. by Janet Hamilton and Bernard Hamilton, trans. by Yuri Stoyanov (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), pp. 66–7.

being 'led astray through ignorance'.[2] Constantine-Silvanus and his disciples were taken south of Koloneia, Cappadocia, and as Peter of Sicily wrote in his chronicle of the event in 870:

> There he [Constantine IV] made the wretch [Constantine-Silvanus] stand with his disciples facing him, and ordered them to stone him. They picked up the stones, and dropping their hands as if to their girdles, they threw the stones behind them, so as not to hit their teacher, whom they believed had been sent to them by God…On the orders from the imperial official, Justus picked up a stone, hit him like a second Goliath and killed him…Because of the stones thrown there, the place is called *Soros* ('Heap') to this day.[3]

Ironically, Justus who cast the fatal stone was Constantine-Silvanus' adopted son.[4] In 690, following his execution, Silvanus' successor and the remainder of his disciples were ordered by Emperor Justinian II to be burnt in 'a great pyre' near Soros.[5] This kind of brutality was not an unusual occurrence, as throughout the Middle Ages, so-called 'heretics' in the Byzantine Empire found themselves persecuted by both imperial and ecclesiastical elites. As a result, thousands of individuals became the victims of imperial edicts, ecclesiastical anathematisation, targeted executions, forced removals, and armed conflicts.

This article examines two groups of marginalised 'heretics' from a particular

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[2] Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians* 103, p. 78.

[3] Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians* 104, p. 78.

[4] Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians* 104, p. 78. Note: This is perhaps a rhetorical flourish, inspired by Caesar.

[5] Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians* 106, 111, pp. 79–80.

geographic and historic area: seventh to eleventh century Armenia. This is due to the unique geo-political phenomenon of Armenia being at the crossroads of multiple religious and ethnic groups. Whilst being a bastion of Monophysite Christianity on the Orthodox Byzantine Empire's periphery, Armenia also bordered imperial rivals such as the Sasanian Empire (seventh century) and Seljuk Turks (eleventh and twelfth centuries). Two Armenian heretical movements are at the centre of this study – the Paulicians and Tondrakians. This article focuses on how these 'heretics' were depicted and represented by both the Armenian Apostolic and Byzantine Orthodox Church, and how this led to their marginalisation by ecclesiastical and political elites. This article explores the fragmentary sources that these heretics and elites produced, in an effort to somewhat determine how they perceived themselves and how they were represented by orthodox cleric-chroniclers. It also briefly looks at the continuation of the persecution of these heresies in later forms, such as through the Bogomils and Cathars.

As a note, this article considers 'heretics' as those whose teachings, cosmologies, scriptures, or rites differed so greatly from the edicts of the centralised Church that they were 'anathematised', or excommunicated, by ecclesiastical councils. As shall be discussed, this anathematisation by Armenian and Byzantine ecclesiastical leaders would result in the marginalisation of a significant amount of the Armenian population, although not the majority. This vilification further led orthodox writers from across the Mediterranean and Middle East to condemn and distort the scriptures and theology of these heretical movements.

It is important to understand heresiological interpretations when discussing both heretics (and their self-perceptions) and those that 'categorised' others as heretics. Todd S. Berzon envisions heresiology as a form of ethnographic study and categorisation, stating that: 'For the heresiologists, heresy was a way of imagining and categorizing the world in overtly theological terms … it set parameters not only for what constituted heresy but also for how to study it'.[6] This article uses these heresiological ideas as a foundational theoretical intervention when analysing the Armenian heretics.

Heresiology as 'categorisation', ties to the idea of 'otherness' when exploring marginalised groups. Benveniste and Gaganakis noted the importance of writing the 'other', stating that:

> Silencing the 'others', voice legitimate claims that project to the past a coherence that has never existed outside a dominant ideology…'others', 'minorities', or 'marginal groups' do not make history on their own, nor do they simply react to history imposed on them. The frontiers separating various mental constructions are very likely permeable, and cultural exchanges may play an important role in the formation of 'identities'.[7]

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[6] Todd S. Berzon, *Classifying Christians: Ethnography, Heresiology, and the Limits of Knowledge in Late Antiquity* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2016), pp. 27–8. See also the following important studies: Averil Cameron, 'How to Read Heresiology', *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 33 (2003), 471–92; *Religious Diversity in Late Antiquity*, ed. by David M. Gwynn and Susanne Bangert (Leiden: Brill, 2010); *Late Medieval Heresy: New Perspectives: Studies in Honor of Robert E. Lerner*, ed. by Michael D. Bailey and Sean L. Field (York: York Medieval Press, 2018); Paul A. Hartog, *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Early Christian Contexts: Reconsidering the Bauer Thesis* (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co; Lutterworth Press, 2015); Lucy E. Bosworth, 'Perceptions of the Origins and Causes of Heresy in Medieval Heresiology' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1995).

[7] Henreitte-Rike Benveniste and Costas Gaganakis, 'Heterodoxies: Construction of Identities and Otherness in Medieval and Early Modern Europe', *Historein*, 2.7 (2001), 7–11 (pp. 7–8). See also: Anna Kolos, 'Imagining Otherness: The Pleasure of Curiosity in the Middle Ages', *Mirabilia*, 18 (2013), 137–

This is true when discussing both the Paulicians and Tondrakians, who existed in a space of segregation from mainstream Armenian and Byzantine society, while also being molded and influenced by the frontiers that they inhabited.

As Christianity spread from its geographical and historical birthplace of Roman-occupied Judaea during the first and second centuries, it synthesised with already existing local beliefs, rituals, and cosmologies.[8] As this occurred, councils of Christian ecclesiastical leaders, often representative of different geographical areas such as Rome, Byzantium, Antioch, Carthage, Alexandria, and Jerusalem, would debate and decide on nuanced theological aspects.[9] Subsequently, an eventual 'centralised' Christian ecclesiastic hierarchy grew in conjunction with increasingly varied, localised Christianity(s) that formed throughout the Mediterranean, Middle

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50; *Other Middles Ages: Witnesses at the Margins of Medieval Society*, ed. by Michael Goodich (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998); James T. Palmer, 'The Otherness of Non-Christians in the Early Middle Ages', *Studies in Church History*, 51 (2015), 33–52; Thomas A. Fudgé, *Medieval Religion and its Anxieties: History and Mystery in the Other Middle Ages* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

[8] For discussion of the spread and localisation of religions, particularly early Christianity, see: Joseph E. Early, *A History of Christianity: An Introductory Survey* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2015); *The Spread of Christianity in the First Four Centuries: Essays in Explanation*, ed. by William V. Harris (Leiden: Brill, 2005); Paul Kollman, 'Understanding the World-Christian Turn in the History of Christianity and Theology', *Theology Today*, 71 (2014), 164–77; Candida R. Moss, *Ancient Christian Martyrdom: Diverse Practices, Theologies, and Traditions* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012); Roderic L. Mullen, *The Expansion of Christianity: A Gazetteer of its First Three Centuries* (Lieden: Brill, 2004); D. E. Mungello, 'Historiographical Review: Reinterpreting the History of Christianity in China', *The Historical Journal*, 55 (2012), 533–52; Peter N. Stearns, *Cultures in Motion: Mapping Key Contacts and Their Imprints in World History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), pp. 36–43; Robert Louis Wilken, *The First Thousand Years: A Global History of Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012).

[9] Francois Decret, *Early Christianity in North Africa*, trans. by Edward Smither (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co., 2009); William Harmless, *Desert Christians: An Introduction to the Literature of Early Monasticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); F. J. E. Boddens Hosang, *Establishing Borders: Christian-Jewish Relations in Early Council Texts and the Writings of Church Fathers* (Leiden: Brill, 2010); Ramsay MacMullen, *Voting About God in Early Church Councils* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006); *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to World Christianity*, ed. by Lamin Sanneh & Michael J. McClymond (Oxford: John Wiley & Sons, 2016).

East, and Africa. One of the first major 'heresies' to confront the early Christian Churches was the expansion of Gnosticism. Thought by modern scholars to have first been conceived by first-century Christian-Jewish communities, Gnosticism emphasised the acquisition of knowledge (*gnosis*), obtainable through esoteric rituals or exegesis, as the ultimate human accomplishment.[10] Gnosticism posited that this world was created by a lesser-deity, the 'Demiurge', and that salvation could be attained through esoteric measures, revealed by Jesus Christ, to ensure the acquaintance of a higher, spiritual deity, called 'the Father'.[11] Interestingly, the rise of Christianity coincided with the growth of gnostic communities, and adherents to Gnosticism were found throughout the ancient world.[12] Therefore, as this centralised 'Christian Church' continued to expand, it came into conflict with both internal and external 'heretical' ideas.

After the fall of the Western Roman Empire in 476CE, it was heretical ideas outside of the urban centres of the centralised Church that caused the most concern

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[10] For more nuanced discussion on the development of Gnosticism, particularly in conjunction and competition with Christianity, please see: Giovanni Filoramo, *A History of Gnosticism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990); *'In Search of Truth': Augustine, Manichaeism, and Other Gnosticism: Studies for Johannes van Oort at Sixty*, ed. by Jacob Albert van den Berg and others (Leiden: Brill, 2011); *Histories of the Hidden God: Concealment and Revelation in Western Gnostic, Esoteric, and Mystical Traditions*, ed. by April D. DeConick and Grant Adamson (London: Routledge, 2013); Ismo Dunderberg, *Beyond Gnosticism: Myth, Lifestyle, and Society in the School of Valentinus* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008); Mark Edwards, *Christians, Gnostics, and Philosophers in Late Antiquity*, 2nd edn. (London: Routledge, 2016); Nicola Denzey Lewis, *Introduction to 'Gnosticism': Ancient Voices, Christian Worlds* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Alan F. Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven: Early Rabbinic Reports About Christianity and Gnosticism* (Leiden: Brill, 2002); *The Gnostic World*, ed. by Garry W. Trompf, Gunner B. Mikkelsen and Joy Johnston (London: Routledge, 2019); Michael Allen Williams, *Rethinking 'Gnosticism': An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).

[11] David Brakke, *The Gnostics: Myth, Ritual, and Diversity in Early Christianity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), pp. 53–7.

[12] Simone Petrement, *A Separate God: The Origins and Teachings of Gnosticism*, trans. by Carol Harrison (San Francisco: Harper Collins Publishers, 1984), pp. 271–4.

for imperial and ecclesiastical elites. By the sixth century, the focus transitioned

away from the internal debates of Rome, Alexandria, Constantinople, and Antioch,

and toward the peripheral regions of the Church and Empire.[13] As such, throughout

the first millennium, numerous Church writers compared both the Paulicians and

Tondrakians to earlier heretical movements, such as Marcionism, Arianism, and

Manichaeism. These comparisons have been heavily debated by scholars, although

the general consensus is that these various 'heresies' are just as distinct as they are

similar.[14] Thus, although it is important to discuss the evolution of how the

centralised Church reacted to heterodoxic doctrines and rites, it is just as important

to critique the claim of ancient cleric-chroniclers who argue that these sects were the

same continual heresy.[15] Nonetheless, the marginalisation of the Paulicians and

Tondrakians from the seventh century is undoubtedly rooted in the reaction of the

Christian Church to earlier 'heresies'. Furthermore, the way in which

anathematisation, dispossession, and violence enacted by ecclesiastical and political

authorities towards earlier heresies would influence later representation of the

Paulician and Tondrakian movements. That destruction of property, mass

displacements, and death were acceptable ways in which to maintain orthodox

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[13] Kenneth L. Campbell, *Western Civilization: A Global and Comparative Approach*, Vol. 1: *To 1715* (London: Routledge, 2012), p. 122.

[14] Seta B. Dadoyan, *The Fatimid Armenians: Cultural and Political Interaction in the Near East* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), pp. xi–xii; Vrej Nersessian, *The Tondrakian Movement* (Guildford: Pickwick, 1987), pp. 47–8; Anna Linden Weller, 'Byzantophilia in the Letters of Grigor Magistros?', *Byzanatine and Modern Greek Studies*, 4 (2017), 167–81 (pp. 167–9).

[15] Krikor Haleblian, 'Heresy and Orthodoxy in the Armenian Church', *Exchange*, 31 (2002), 51–80 (pp. 71–2); Seta B. Dadoyan, *The Armenians in the Medieval Islamic World: Paradigms of Interaction, Seventh to Fourteenth Centuries*, Vol. 1: *The Arab Period in Arminyah, Seventh to Eleventh Centuries* (London: Routledge, 2011), pp. 8–9.

doctrines and rituals would later play out in the lives of these medieval Armenian heretics.

As with many explorations of ancient and medieval peoples, there are limitations to this article that should be acknowledged. Firstly, neither author has the ability to translate classical Armenian or Byzantine texts; this article thus relies on English translations of fragmentary primary sources, reprinted throughout existent literature. As well as this, the actual primary sources are written almost exclusively by orthodox Armenian and Byzantine chronicler-clerics, who are immensely biased in their representation of peripheral heretics.

This issue is compounded by the fact that many of the scriptures, sacred sites, and artefacts of the Paulicians and Tondrakians were consigned to the flame over centuries of hostilities with Armenian and Byzantine elites. Subsequently, most available sources are written as distorted exegeses of Paulician and Tondrakian beliefs, and therefore embellish the beliefs and practices of these heretical groups in an overarching defence of 'Orthodox' theology.[16] It is thus difficult for modern researchers to recreate an accurate representation of the existence and beliefs of these Armenian heretics from their own perspective. Despite these inhibitions, this article explores the marginalisation and persecution of the Paulicians and Tondrakians by the centralised Church, and how this led to centuries of mass executions, destruction of property, military campaigns, and population deportations.

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[16] Note: In this article, 'Orthodox' or 'Orthodoxy' are defined as the doctrine of the centralised Byzantine church. The term 'orthodox' (lowercase) refers to traditionally held beliefs and modes of practice of the indicated church/region/people groups.

PAULICIANS

Unlike heresies that were born from the epicentres of the Christian Churches, the Paulicians were an Armenian heretical sect, whose resistance to orthodoxy eventuated into persecution, military campaigns, and population transfers.[17] There have been many studies of the sect in the context of the Byzantine Empire in the past, notably Rev. John T. Christian's article 'VII. The Paulician Churches' in 1910, Nina G. Garsoïan's 1967 *The Paulician Heresy* and Janet Hamilton and Bernard Hamilton's 1998 *Christian Dualist Heresies in the Byzantine World*, among others.[18]

All these studies have contributed greatly to the narrative of the Paulicians and have referred to some marginalisation within the Empire. However, there is a lack of literature that details the marginalisation of the Paulicians as both a geo-

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[17] Peter Charanis, 'The Transfer of Population as a Policy in the Byzantine Empire', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 3 (1961), 140–54 (pp. 145–6); Paul Stephenson, *Byzantium's Balkan Frontier: A Political Study of the Northern Balkans, 900–1204* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 100–1.

[18] John T. Christian, 'VII. The Paulician Churches', *The Review and Expositor*, 7 (1910), 414–33; Nina G. Garsoïan, *The Paulician Heresy: A Study of the Origin and Development of Paulicianism in Armenia and the Eastern Provinces of the Byzantine Empire* (Paris: Mouton & Co., 1967); Hamilton and Hamilton, eds, *Christian Dualist Heresies*. See also: Mariyana Tsibranska-Kostova, 'Paulicians between the Dogme and the Legend', *Studia Ceranea*, 7 (2017), 229–63; James M. George, 'The Dualistic-Gnostic Tradition in the Byzantine Commonwealth with Special Reference to the Paulician and Bogomil Movements' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Wayne State University, 1979); Paul Lemerle, *L'histoire des Pauliciens d'Asie Mineure d'après les sources grecques* (Paris: Centre de recherche d'histoire et civilisation de Byzance, 1973); Steven Runciman, *The Medieval Manichee: A Study of the Christian Dualist Heresy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982); Carl Dixon, 'Between East Rome and Armenia: Paulician Ethnogenesis c. 780–850', in *Transmitting and Circulating the Late Antique and Byzantine Worlds*, ed. by Mieral Ivanova and Hugh Jeffery (Leiden: Brill, 2020), pp. 251–73; *Armenia between Byzantium and the Orient: Celebrating the Memory of Karen Yuzbashian (1927–2009)*, ed. by Bernard Outtier, Cornelia B. Horn, Basil Lourie and Alexey Ostrovsky (Leiden: Brill, 2020); Hrach Bartikian, *Quellen zum Studium der Geschichte der paulikianischen Bewegung* (in Armenian) (Yerevan, 1961); Karen N. Yuzbashyan, 'L'administration byzantine en arménie aux Xe-XIe siècles', *Revue des études arméniennes*, 10 (1973–74), 139–83. There has also been some scholarly work on the Paulicians and their interactions with the Islamic World. See: Abed el-Rahman Tayyara, 'Muslim-Paulician Encounters and Early Islamic Anti-Christian Polemical Writings', *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, 27 (2016), 471–89; Dadoyan, *The Armenians in the Medieval Islamic World*.

political and religious peripheral group. By extension, Krikor Haleblian concluded

that Paulician doctrines, in the context of the Armenian Apostolic Church, were

viewed as attacks 'on the very nature of church as understood by the Armenian

ecclesiastical authorities'.[19] This interesting observation serves as a model for this

article's exploration of the marginalisation and representation of the Paulicians by

Orthodox writers.

It is speculated that the Paulicians originated in seventh-century Western

Armenia, but gained a foothold throughout Anatolia, Syria, Byzantium and even the

Balkans during the eighth to tenth centuries.[20] Their founder is thought to have been

a man named Constantine-Silvanus, who migrated to Samosata, Armenia, where he

supposedly learnt of Paulician doctrines from a Syrian deacon.[21] Silvanus was later

forcibly stoned by his own disciples, as ordered by Constantine IV, and his followers

burnt on a pyre.[22] However, some historians have acknowledged that Paulicianism

may have an apostolic origin from the first century.[23] It is unclear whether they

received the name 'Paulician' from St. Paul, or from the third-century Bishop Paul of

Samosata, as both are important figures in Paulician theology. Paul of Samosata

himself had been a divisive figure during his reign as Bishop of Antioch, during

which a constituency of bishops turned to the pagan Emperor Aurelian to request

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[19] Haleblian, 'Heresy and Orthodoxy', p. 70.

[20] Tsibranska-Kostova, 'Paulicians between the Dogme and the Legend', p. 230.

[21] Tayyara, 'Muslim-Paulician Encounters', p. 474; George, 'The Dualistic-Gnostic Tradition', p. 150; Garsoïan, *The Paulician Heresy*, pp. 116–7.

[22] Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians* 104, 106, 111, pp. 78–80.

[23] Christian, 'VII. The Paulician Churches', p. 415; Hamilton and Hamilton, *Christian Dualist Heresies in the Byzantine World*, pp. 10–2.

his removal.[24] However, what is clear is their status as 'heretical' was agreed upon by all surviving Byzantine writers who mentioned them.[25]

It is difficult to determine, however, whether the Paulicians can be considered traditionally 'Gnostic'. Haleblian noted that many scholars have termed Paulicians the same as Messalians, Marcionites or Manichaeans, despite the fact:

> the Paulicians regarded themselves as true Christians and the only difference they saw between them and the rest of Christians, (whom they called Romans,) is that they considered God to have no power in this world but that He will in the next.[26]

However, the Paulicians, like Paul of Samosata, did believe in a Dualist tradition, similar to the early Marcionites.[27] Garsoïan emphasised that there are difficulties in reconstructing the exact doctrine of the Paulicians due to surviving documents being 'hostile Orthodox sources'; Garsoïan further noted major disparities between Armenian and Greek sources.[28] However, some conclusions can be drawn, such as the denial of the unity of God by distinguishing between the Creator God and the Lord of the Future; the denial of the *Theotokos* and the perpetual virginity; as well as denying the sacrament of communion, the symbol of the cross, the Old Testament

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[24] Paul Stephenson, *Constantine: Unconquered Emperor, Christian Victor* (London: Quercus, 2011), p. 260.
[25] Tsibranska-Kostova, 'Paulicians between the Dogme and the Legend', pp. 235–6; George, 'The Dualistic-Gnostic Tradition', pp. 142–3; Tayyara, 'Muslim-Paulician Encounters', pp. 473–4.
[26] Haleblian, 'Heresy and Orthodoxy', p. 68.
[27] Christian, 'VII. The Paulician Churches', p. 415; Tayyara, 'Muslim-Paulician Encounters', p. 474.
[28] Garsoïan, *The Paulician Heresy*, p. 150.

prophets and Peter's epistles.[29]

The Paulicians may have been closest associated, however, with *adoptionism*, the belief that Jesus Christ became the adopted Son of God after his baptism.[30] In a surviving pseudo-historical document, *The Key of Truth*, which is ascribed to either the Paulicians or the later Tondrakians, the sect's adoptionist Christology is outlined:

> First was our Lord Jesus Christ baptized by the command of the heavenly Father, when thirty years old…So then it was in the season of his maturity that he received baptism; then it was that he received authority, received the high-priesthood, received the kingdom and the office of chief shepherd…It was then he became chief of beings heavenly and earthly, then he became light of the world, then he became the way, the truth, and the life. Then he became the door of heaven, then he became the rock impregnable at the gate of hell; then he became the foundation of our faith; then he became Saviour of us sinners; then he was filled with the Godhead; then he was sealed, then anointed; then was he called by the voice, then he became the loved one, then he came to be guarded by angels, then to be the lamb without blemish.[31]

Although not likely an accurate reconstruction, the *Key of Truth* can give a sense of what may have been believed by sects.

Around 870, Peter of Sicily wrote a *History of the Paulicians* on an imperial

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[29] Garsoïan, *The Paulician Heresy*, p. 169–71.

[30] Tayyara, 'Muslim-Paulician Encounters', p. 474; 'Adoptianism', in *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church,* ed. by F. L. Cross and E. A. Livingstone (3rd edn.) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 19–20.

[31] *The Key of Truth: A Manual of the Paulician Church of Armenia,* ed. and trans. by Fred C. Conybeare (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1898), ch. II, pp. 74–5.

commission from Basil I. Peter aligned the Paulicians with the earlier Manichaean heretics, claiming that:

> There are not two separate groups. The Paulicians are also Manichaeans, who have added the foul heresy they discovered to the heresy of their predecessors, and have sunk in the same gulf of perdition.[32]

Peter of Sicily, in a letter to the Archbishop of Bulgaria, further portrayed the Paulicians as 'like an octopus or a chameleon, they change both manner and appearance to suit the occasion' and that:

> 33. This filthy, darkened, divisive, foul and corrupting heresy of the Manichaeans is persecuted by all nations because it is poisonous and full of all kinds of filth, which they venerate and worship in the most profound silence ... A few years ago it gained force and was taught by the forces of rebellion, and confirmed under the errant guidance of Satan, the originator of evil; it conceived and gave birth to the apostasy which is his forerunner, revealing other incarnate demons together with their leader, the devil.
>
> 34. No one should doubt that they are demons: all those words and acts which demons do not dare to commit, they do and say against almighty God and all mankind, without shame or blushing. It is obvious that these corrupt hypocrites keep themselves from mixing with men because of their extremes of evil-doing, and live in lonely places as

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[32] Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians* 3, pp. 66–7.

demons do, and utter strange and exotic blasphemies, claiming that they have based

them on the words of the holy gospel and the Apostle.[33]

Peter then conveyed his own perception of the Paulician doctrine, hinting at

Dualism and the rejection of *Theotokos*, the perpetual virginity, the literal Eucharist,

the symbol of the cross and the Old Testament:

> 36. The first mark of identification is that they confess two principles, an evil one and a
> good one; one who is the maker of this world and has power over it, the other has power
> over the world to come.
>
> 39. Second, the glorious ever-virgin mother of God is not even counted (in their hostility)
> among the bare number of good human beings. They say that the Lord was not born of
> her, but brought His body from heaven, and that after the birth of the Lord she had other
> children from Joseph.
>
> 40. Third, they refuse to accept the divine and awe-inspiring mystery of the body and
> blood of the Lord.
>
> 41. Fourth, they do not accept the image, power and operation of the precious life-giving
> cross, but heap it with a thousand insults.
>
> 42. Fifth, they do not accept any book of the Old Testament, calling the prophets cheats
> and brigands.[34]

Peter of Sicily's view of the sect as blatantly heretical and demonic was certainly

shared by the imperial commissioner, Basil I, who conducted his own persecution of

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[33] Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians* 16, 33-4, pp. 68, 71.
[34] Peter of Sicily, *History of the Paulicians* 36–42, pp. 72–3.

the Paulicians.[35] Peter's description of the Paulicians is also somewhat reminiscent of the later Protestant movement, a connection that Walter F. Adeney and L. P. Brockett also acknowledge.[36] Leon Arpee even argued that resurgent nineteenth-century 'Paulicianism' developed into Protestantism, stating that, 'Khnus and Tchevirmé, those ancient strongholds of Armenian Paulicianism, were not the only places where Paulicianism became a feeder to modern Protestantism'.[37]

Along with theological opposition, the Paulicians were also as a militaristic threat that dwelt on the peripheral borderlands between the Byzantine and Sasanian Empires (until the end of the seventh century), as well as the later Caliphates.[38] Garsoïan noted that the Paulicians endured earlier imperial edicts, but under the persecution of Emperor Michael I in the early-ninth century, they began an open rebellion.[39] Michael I, in reaction to the increased power of the Paulicians, started to forcibly remove them from Asia Minor and resettle large numbers in the Balkans, a practice that became common in dealing with the sect.[40] By the mid-ninth century, under Empress Theodora and Michael III, another mass persecution of the Paulicians began. It is estimated that 100,000 Paulicians were massacred during the co-

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[35] Charanis, 'The Transfer of Population', p. 146.

[36] Walter F. Adeney, *The Greek and Eastern Churches*, (Charleston: BiblioLife, 2014), p. 219; L.P. Brockett, 'Were the Paulician and Bogomil churches Baptist Churches?', in *Bogomils of Bulgaria and Bosnia: The Early Protestants of the East: An Attempt to Restore Some Lost Leaves of Protestant History* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1879), appendix II.

[37] Leon Arpee, 'Armenian Paulicianism and the Key of Truth', *The American Journal of Theology*, 10 (1906), 267–85 (p. 274).

[38] George, 'The Dualistic-Gnostic', p. 122.

[39] Garsoïan, *The Paulician Heresy*, p. 125.

[40] Charanis, 'The Transfer of Population', p. 145.

regency.[41] Zonaras, who chronicled the event, recognised the maltreatment:

> In the East there was a large number of Manichaeans, who were called Paulicians in
>
> ignorance by the common people, who give them a name made up from Paul and John ...
>
> So then the empress [Theodora] intended to convert them from heresy to orthodoxy, and
>
> sent some men from the nobility to achieve this. They handled their commission clumsily
>
> and to no avail, and not merely wasted their labour but drove the entire people (who
>
> number many thousands) to apostasize. Joining the Ishmaelites [Muslims], they fought
>
> with them against the Romans and became the cause of many disasters for them.[42]

To escape the extreme persecution and separate from the central power in Constantinople, the Paulicians formed their own free state at Tephrike, and openly cooperated with the Islamic enemies of Byzantium.[43] Interestingly, the Caliphates became the most consistent ally of the Paulicians, and Tephrike fell under Islamic protection during the ninth century. Tayyara noted that early Islamic scholars depicted the Paulicians as a military and political group in addition to a religious movement, and used distinctive phrases to define these two aspects.[44] By the 870s, Michael III's successor, Basil I, continued the persecution; he defeated the Paulician army at Tephrike, razed their strongholds and dispersed them across the Empire.[45]

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[41] Christian, 'VII. The Paulician Churches', p. 421.

[42] Zonaras, *Epitome Historiarum*, in *Christian Dualist Heresies in the Byzantine World*, ed. by Hamilton and Hamilton, pp. 62–3.

[43] Garsoïan, *The Paulician Heresy*, p. 125; Charanis, 'The Transfer of Population', pp. 145–6; Christian, 'VII. The Paulician Churches', p. 421.

[44] Tayyara, 'Muslim-Paulician Encounters', p. 475.

[45] Charanis, 'The Transfer of Population', p. 146.

These radical measures testify to the very real threat the Paulicians posed to imperial and religious interests, as well as the continued resistance that spanned generations.

By 970 the Paulicians were again forcibly removed by Emperor John I Tzimiskes, who, as a solution to their peripheral threat in the East, resettled the Paulicians in Thrace and granted them religious liberty.[46] Dmitri Obolensky noted that emperors Diocletian, Heraclius, Constantine V and Leo IV had all previously used Thrace to resettle Eastern heretics, such as Syrian Monophysites and Syrian Jacobites.[47] John I Tzimiskes' resettlement of the Paulicians was further chronicled by Zonaras in the twelfth century:

> When [John Tzimisces] had been proclaimed in this way, since Antioch the Great was without an archbishop, he approached a certain monk Theodore, who had prophesied to him that he would be emperor, and that he should not be hasty nor snatch at it, but wait to be offered it by God. When he received the archbishopric, he made a request to John to remove the Manichaeans [Paulicians] from the East to the West, as they were destroying many with their foul heresy. The emperor fulfilled this request, transferring the race of the Manichaeans to Philippopolis.[48]

Through the removal of the Paulicians to Thrace, John did away with a recurrent political threat in the East, as well as appeased the new Archbishop of Antioch, to

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[46] Christian, 'VII. The Paulician Churches', p. 422; Hamilton and Hamilton, *Christian Dualist Heresies in the Byzantine World*, p. 23.

[47] Dmitri Obolensky, *The Bogomils: A Study in Balkan Neo-Manicheism* (Twickenham: Anthony C. Hall, 1948), pp. 60–1.

[48] Zonaras, *Epitome Historiarum* 17:1, ed. by L. Dindorf, (Lepizig: Teubner), pp. 92.26–93.4, in *Christian Dualist Heresies in the Byzantine World*, p. 114.

manufacture a type of self-serving 'peace' throughout the remainder of his reign.

The 'peace' caused by the Thracian resettlement may have lasted until the late-eleventh century, when the Paulicians again cooperated with Byzantine's enemies. Allied with the nomadic Pechenegs against Emperor Alexios I Komnenos, the Paulicians allowed them military access to Byzantine lands.[49] The Paulicians and Pechenegs, both marginalised on the peripheries of the Empire, shared common interests and identity. The Pechenegs themselves had been forcibly settled in northern Bulgaria from their semi-nomadic life in the South Russian Steppes, where they had been acting as Byzantine police, by Constantine IX in the mid-eleventh century.[50] A Paulician leader, Traulos, even married the daughter of a Pecheneg chieftain to maintain their alliance, symbolising a shared status on the Byzantine periphery.[51] Together, the Pechenegs and Paulicians led a revolt against Alexios, and seized the fortress of Belyatovo.[52] John Scylitzes chronicled the event: 'A certain Lacas, one of the Paulicians of Philippopolis, set out from Epigambria and deserted to the Patzinaks (Pechenegs), and plotting with them, seriously threatened the Roman state'.[53]

Not much is said of the Paulicians after the eleventh century, with only a mention of them during the Fourth Crusade in the thirteenth century, where

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[49] Stephenson, *Byzantium's Balkan Frontier*, pp. 100–1.

[50] Hamilton and Hamilton, eds, *Christian Dualist Heresies in the Byzantine World*, pp. 23–4; Michael Angold, *The Byzantine Empire, 1025–1204: A Political History*, 2nd edn. (London: Longman, 1997), pp. 37–40.

[51] Stephenson, *Byzantium's Balkan Frontier*, p. 101.

[52] Hamilton and Hamilton, eds, *Christian Dualist Heresies in the Byzantine World*, p. 24.

[53] John Scylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, in *Christian Dualist Heresies in the Byzantine World*, ed. by Hamilton and Hamilton, pp. 164–5.

Hamilton and Hamilton noted that they 'were as politically active as they had been in the time of the [K]omneni'.[54] A community of 'Paulians', who adhered to a similar doctrine, was also discovered in 1580, spread between seventeen villages from Philippopolis, Thrace to Nicopolis on the Danube.[55] Some, like Arpee, even argue that the Paulicians continued to exist on the Anatolian and Armenian border as a scattered remnant until the nineteenth century.[56] However, the mass maltreatment by Eastern Orthodoxy and the Byzantine Empire during the Middle Ages illustrates that marginalised heretical groups such as the Paulicians were represented and treated as both a spiritual and geo-political threat that was met with violence, forced removal, and condemnation.

TONDRAKIANS

By 840, a new heretical movement, born in the peripheral but autonomous Byzantine colonies of central Armenia, began to increase in popularity, much to the concern of elites within Armenia, Byzantium, and the Islamic Caliphates. Compared to Paulicianism by contemporary and later historians, but not of identical beliefs and practices, this Dualist sect was named by its enemies the Tondrakians (*T'ondrakec'is* in Armenian), after the town of T'ondrak in the Apahunik' District, from which it

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[54] Hamilton and Hamilton, eds, *Christian Dualist Heresies in the Byzantine World*, pp. 259–60.
[55] Hamilton and Hamilton, eds, *Christian Dualist Heresies in the Byzantine World*, p. 24.
[56] Arpee, 'Armenian Paulicianism and the Key of Truth', pp. 269–70.

apparently originated.[57] The movement was supposedly started by Smbat Zarehawanc'i, who came into conflict with the ninth-century Armenian Apostolic Church hierarchy due to his rejection of Orthodox doctrines.[58] Smbat was said to have had a similar cosmology to other heretics, and condemned the materialist nature of the Armenian Church, as well as that of the universe at large. Due to this belief, the Tondrakians rejected the theology, sacred sites, and religious rituals of the centralised Armenian and Byzantine Churches.[59] Grigor Magistros Pahlavuni, a local Armenian elite who was endorsed by the Byzantine State to put an end to the Tondrakians in the mid-eleventh century, wrote of their beliefs:

> [they] are not worshippers of matter but of God; [they] reckon the Cross and the Church
>
> and the Priestly Robes and the Sacrifices of the mass all for nothing, and only lay stress
>
> on their inner sense, and so forth.[60]

However, it was not just the Orthodox Churches that were concerned by the existence of a radical new religion, as in 835 Smbat was executed by the Qaysid Amir Abu l-Ward.[61] This was somewhat ironic, as later Church writers, such as Grigor of Narek, an Armenian cleric-chronicler born over a century after the death of Smbat,

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[57] Aristakes Lastivertc'i, *History Regarding the Sufferings Occasioned by Foreign Peoples Living Around Us*, trans. by Robert Bedrosian (New York: Sources of the Armenian Tradition, 1985), p. 149.

[58] Weller, 'Byzantophilia in the Letters of Grigor Magistros?', p. 180.

[59] Haleblian, 'Heresy and Orthodoxy', p. 71.

[60] As quoted in Haleblian, 'Heresy and Orthodoxy', pp. 71–2.

[61] Dadoyan, *The Armenians in the Medieval Islamic World*, p. 90.

would claim that the Tondrakians had adopted 'Persian customs' and Islamic beliefs.[62]

The first known treatise of the Tondrakians came from Ananias of Narek, Grigor's uncle, around 943-965.[63] Paul of Taron, another tenth-century Armenian cleric-chronicler, claimed that the Tondrakians 'declared cross and Church to be alien to the Godhead' as well as claimed that Tondrakians 'destroyed [the Cross] wherever they saw it, claiming that they were not worshippers of matter, but of God'.[64] Despite the fact that Tondrakians likely considered themselves Christians, Church writers resolutely rejected this for over two hundred years. As Grigor Magistros claimed:

> This sect drew not on two or three sources only, but embraced all that was ever heretical – soothsaying, palmistry, incantations and magical arts, infidelities, wicked poisons…they consented to that enemy of God…that diabolical madman, Smbat, giving them their laws.[65]

Whether or not the Tondrakians were in fact open to other ideas of spirituality that they encountered, or whether this was just the fears of the Church writers is unknown. However, it does seem as though the Tondrakians did have staunch beliefs that stood in opposition to the Orthodox Armenian and Byzantine Churches.

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[62] Dadoyan, *The Armenians in the Medieval Islamic World*, p. 92.
[63] Hamilton and Hamilton, eds, *Christian Dualist Heresies in the Byzantine World*, p. 293.
[64] Nersessian, *The Tondrakian Movement*, p. 58.
[65] Nersessian, *The Tondrakian Movement*, p. 41.

Although not an unbiased source, in his tenth-century *Letter to the Abbot of Kčaw*, Grigor of Narek outlined the main heretical teachings of this Armenian-Christian sect:

> The observances which we know to have been repudiated by them as neither apostolic nor divine:
>
> 1. Ordination, which the Apostles received from Christ.
>
> 2. The communion of His Body…before which we tremble, Smbat calls a common meal.
>
> 3. The birth through spiritual throes, of the water and spirit…he had taught them to be nothing but mere bath water.
>
> 4. And the blessed Lord's day, on which God the Word created the first light and perfected thereon the light of His rising (Resurrection)…he hath taught them as being on a level with other days.
>
> 5. Genuflexion in mysterious prayer, which Jesus Christ, Creator of all things, himself humbly observed.
>
> 6. The fount is denied by them, in which Christ himself was baptised.
>
> 7. The Communion of immortality, which the Lord of all things Himself tasted.
>
> 8. The filthy habit of lecherous promiscuity, where the Lord forbade so much as a look.
>
> 9. They deny the venerated sign (i.e. the Cross), which God, made man, raised and carried on his shoulder as his own glory and authority.
>
> 10. Their self-conferred contemptible priesthood, which is a likening of themselves to Satan.
>
> 11. Their deprecation of the sacrament of marriage…This they condemn and reckon the mere fact of union in love with one another to be perfect love, and from God and pleasing

to Christ; saying that God is love and desired the love union alone, and not the sacrament of marriage.

12. Their railing and cavilling at the first fruits, which Abel and Noah and Abraham and David and Solomon and Elias appointed to conciliate the Divine wrath.

13. We know how they dare to call the head of the abominable sect a Christ; of who Christ testified beforehand, saying 'There shall arise false prophets' and this is the meaning of the prophet's saying: 'The fool said in his heart, there is no God'.[66]

This list perhaps says more of the Armenian and Byzantine Churches' fear of heretics rather than explores the theology of this expansive religious movement. It is nonetheless the general consensus of current historical literature that this is a somewhat accurate, although embellished, summary of Tondrakian beliefs.[67]

Of further concern to the Byzantine and Armenian elites was the belief that the Tondrakian movement was a continuation of the earlier Paulician heresy.[68] Vrej Nersessian argues that although certainly historically, theologically, and geographically linked to the militant Paulicians of Western Armenian, the Tondrakian movement actually developed independently within central Armenia.[69] Twentieth-century Armenian-American historian Simon Payaslian further argued that the two movements may have joined after the military-colonies of the Paulicians

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[66] Nersessian, *The Tondrakian Movement*, pp. 57–8.

[67] Haleblian, 'Heresy and Orthodoxy', p. 72; Nersessian, *The Tondrakian Movement*, pp. 59–60; Weller, 'Byzantophilia in the Letters of Grigor Magistros?', p. 179.

[68] Dadoyan, *The Fatimid Armenians: Cultural and Political Interaction in the Near East* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), p. 58.

[69] Nersessian, *The Tondrakian Movement*, p. 52.

were defeated by Byzantium in 872.[70] Thus, whilst the Tondrakians began as an independent movement, it is conceivable that it absorbed large amounts of Paulician adherents. If so, the Tondrakian movement would have likely adopted several Paulician socio-political ideologies that had developed in conjunction with its theology for over two centuries. For example, the eleventh-century Armenian Apostolic Church historian Aristakes Lastivertc'i wrote about a rebellious region of Armenia, 'Apahunik' District, that residence of Satan, the assemblage of atheists, that lair of the beasts called T'ondrak', that had rebelled against the yoke of feudal hierarchies.[71]

Orthodox cleric-chroniclers further wrote at length about a significant socio-religious apprehension amongst the ruling elite: the apparent sexual improprieties of the Tondrakians. Aristakes cited the activities of a 'certain adulterous monk named Kuncik', whom he compared to Satan, as Kuncik had apparently seduced multiple men and women into sexual relations outside of the bonds of matrimony. This was an affront to the Orthodox Sacrament of Marriage, for which Grigor of Narek claimed Smbat Zarehawanc'i and the Tondrakians had no regard: '[that] evil beast of prey, this bloodthirsty, sodomitic, whoring, lustful, frenzied, loathsome Smbat'.[72] Even later historians, such as twentieth-century Armenian author Vahan M. Kurkjian, in his book *A History of Armenia*, accused the Tondrakians of 'detestable

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[70] Simon Payaslian, *The History of Armenia: From the Origins to the Present* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007), p. 80.
[71] Lastivertc'i, *History Regarding the Sufferings*, p. 149.
[72] Nersessian, *The Tondrakian Movement*, p. 61.

practices, such as devil-worship, evil nocturnal rites, and pagan customs'.[73] Kurkjian further quoted Grigor Magistros who called the town of T'ondrak 'Shnavank, "Monestary of Dogs", "where men dressed in clerical garb lived in company with a multitude of prostitutes"'.[74] Whether or not these claims are true is difficult to determine, as it was common for Church apologist writers to exaggerate the sexual activities of their theological enemies.

However, as well as sexual impropriety, another threat of the Tondrakian movement was the radical idea of gender equality:

> These are the crimes of these malefactors. No fasts are theirs, except out of fear; no differences do they observe between men and women, not even as regards the family, though they do not venture openly on this. They respect nothing, either of things divine, or of things created; but laugh all to scorn, the old law as well as the new.[75]

Although impossible to resolutely determine what the rituals and beliefs of the Tondrakians were, it is important to not outrightly believe the records of apologist cleric-chroniclers. This lewdness attributed to the sect is likely embellished, yet these medieval Christian writers reveal the fears that the Centralised Byzantine and Armenian Churches felt towards the radical Tondrakian ideas and activities. As well

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[73] Vahan M. Kurkjian, *A History of Armenia* (New York: The Armenian General Benevolent Union of America, 1958), p. 346.

[74] Kurkjian, *A History of Armenia,* pp. 346–7.

[75] Nersessian, *The Tondrakian Movement,* p. 63.

as this, it reveals the way in which the Tondrakians were marginalised by orthodox cleric-chroniclers throughout medieval Armenia.

The Tondrakian movement especially terrified existent power structures as it was born during the exploitation of the majority the Armenian population by feudal Armenian, Byzantine, and Muslim elites. Interestingly, several Armenian Church authors acknowledged the growth of this new religious movement as a resistance to the corruption and oppression meted out by Armenian rulers.[76] Aristakes, for example, argued that God had sent famine, death, and destruction as divine punishment due to the apostasy of the Armenian population.[77] For instance, in response to the Seljuk Turks' loot and destruction of the City of Ani in central Armenia, Aristakes wrote:

> Because of the excess of injustice which took place in it, a mighty and beautiful palace was burned down and all of its buildings were reduced to a heap of earth, and the licentiousness and evil which had occurred in it came to an end. This is the lot of unjust cities which are built on the blood of others and which grow rich at the expense of the homeless, of those who toil in the sweat of their brow; they build their houses on luxury and the infringement of rights, they seek for themselves pleasure and profit having no pity in their soul for the poor and the homeless, withdraw not from evil deeds, because they are possessed by their passions.[78]

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[76] Lastivertc'i, *History Regarding the Sufferings*, p. 3.
[77] Lastivertc'i, *History Regarding the Sufferings*, pp. 5–6.
[78] Nersessian, *The Tondrakian Movement*, p. 35.

Thus, even Church apologists believed that the exploitation of the lower classes during feudal Armenia had been punished through God's use of Turks, Arabs, and heretics.

Although difficult to determine how much influence the cosmological and socio-political ideas championed by the movement influenced uprisings in medieval Armenia, Church writers readily conflated the socio-political resistance of certain Armenians with the anathematised ideals of the Tondrakians. This is not to suggest, however, that all peasant uprisings within ninth-eleventh century Armenia were motivated by a Tondrakian cosmology. Nor is it to say that these rebellions were universal across Armenia or are evidence of a conscious class struggle.[79] This is particularly as Tondrakianism was not solely the realm of the laity and lower classes, as members of the Armenian clergy and aristocracy also converted.[80] However, there is evidence to suggest that there were Tondrakian elements and motivations within *some* peasant revolts,[81]Armenia in conjunction with the violence of serf rebellions.[82] As Nersessian stated, the Tondrakians 'rejection of matter as evil was but an expression of the heretics' hatred of worldly good and of the power of those who possessed them'.[83] Thus, the Tondrakian movement was not merely a religious one, but a socio-political and economic one; as such, like the Paulicians, the Tondrakians

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[79] Nersessian, *The Tondrakian Movement,* p. 78.
[80] Lastivertc'i, *History Regarding the Sufferings*, p. 142; Weller, 'Byzantophilia in the Letters of Grigor Magistros?', p. 179.
[81] Lastivertc'i, *History Regarding the Sufferings,* pp. 143–6.
[82] Lastivertc'i, *History Regarding the Sufferings*, pp. 143–6.
[83] Nersessian, *The Tondrakian Movement,* p. 78.

became a concern to the many elites that squabbled for land, wealth and power in medieval Armenia.

Due to Tondrakianism's rise in popularity, there were severe reprisals from both ecclesiastical and imperial elites. For example, Kurkjian wrote of a Bishop Hacob of Hark, who was brought before an Armenian Apostolic Church council due to his sympathy with the movement:

> After two trials and acquittals before the ecclesiastical court, [he was] degraded by the Katholikos Sarkis. At Kashi, a mob identified with the T'ondrakians destroyed the great cross of the village. The perpetuators of the sacrilege were severely punished and even tortured. In circumstances such as these, the Armenians followed the example of the Greeks in their harsh chastisement of fanatical sectarians.[84]

By the mid-eleventh century, the Tondrakian sect had all but been eradicated from the Armenian plateau. To end the Tondrakians, in 1053, the Byzantine State endorsed a campaign headed by Grigor Magistros Pahlavuni. Magistros, in his *Letter to the Tulaili*, stated that the:

> Holy Ghost and the prayer of my ancestor and progenitor, St. Grigor, led me forth And I came to Mesopotamia and encountered the deadly, stormy, muddy flood which, flowing forth from the cursed T'ondrakec'i Smbat, rolled death along its waves.[85]

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[84] Kurkjian, *A History of Armenia,* p. 348.
[85] Nersessian, *The Tondrakian Movement,* p. 62.

Magistros razed towns occupied by the Tondrakians and left them in ruins. He suggests that he did not put the people to the sword, although that had been the fate of countless other heretics throughout Christian history. Instead Magistros claimed that he allowed the Tondrakian adherents to recant their devotion and be re-baptised in the Armenian Apostolic Church.[86] Haleblian cites Grigor Magistros who suggested that over one thousand men and women renounced their heterodoxic cosmology, and swore fealty to the Armenian, and by extension Byzantine, Church and State.[87] After Magistros' campaigns, there were brief, albeit altered, resurgences of the movement, and a number of scholars suggest underground Tondrakian communities continued to exist in Armenian society until the nineteenth century.[88]

IN THE TWILIGHT OF THE UNITED CHURCH

Although arguably dispersed by imperial measures, the legacy of the Paulicians and Tondrakians materialised in new heretical groups that arose throughout the Byzantine Empire. For example, in the late-ninth or early-tenth century, followers of the Bulgarian priest Bogomil were seen as the heretical successors to the Paulicians, whose last stronghold in Thrace bordered modern-day Bulgaria.[89] Whether or not they were the successors or viewed themselves as such is both uncertain and

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[86] Haleblian, 'Heresy and Orthodoxy', p. 73.

[87] Haleblian, 'Heresy and Orthodoxy', p. 73.

[88] *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, vol. 3, ed. by Alexander P. Kazhdan and others (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 2093; Haleblian, 'Heresy and Orthodoxy', pp. 76–80; Nersessian, *The Tondrakian Movement*, pp. 90–6.

[89] Zdenko Zatar, 'Bogomils and Cathars', in *The Gnostic World*, ed. by Garry W. Trompf, Gunner B. Mikkelsen and Jay Johnston (London: Routledge, 2019), p. 383.

debatable. Like the Tondrakians, Hussey suggested the Bogomils' ideas 'appealed mainly to the lower classes, the poor and oppressed peasantry'.[90] Many scholars trace the Bogomils rise as directly related to the resettlement of the Paulicians in Thrace. Numerous scholars suggest that Peter of Sicily's tenth-century work *History of the Paulicians* was also in reaction to the appearance of the Bogomils in Bulgaria.[91] As with the Paulicians, and many other gnostic and marginal Christian sects, the Bogomils held to a Dualist theology; furthermore, they rejected the Old Testament, literal Eucharist, *Theotokos*, and the cross.[92] As with the Paulicians and Tondrakians, the Bogomils' rejection of mainstream religious symbols reverberated as a point of contention and marginalisation. In an anonymous thirteenth-century Orthodox sermon manuscript held at Mount Athos, which was intended to be read on the third Sunday of Lent, the author suggested, 'Three kinds of people hate the cross: Hagarenes, Bogomils, and Jews'.[93] The Bogomils, however, also differed with the Paulicians, and believed in a 'Docetic Christology', the belief that Christ had a 'phantom' body. Furthermore, the Bogomils practiced Marcionite-styled asceticism,

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[90] J. M. Hussey, *The Orthodox Church in the Byzantine Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 158.

[91] Hamilton and Hamilton, eds, *Christian Dualist Heresies in the Byzantine World*, p. 25; 'Bogomils', in *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, pp. 219–20; John V. A. Fine Jr., 'The Size and Significance of the Bulgarian Bogomil Movement', *East European Quarterly*, 11 (1977), 385–412 (pp. 385–6); R. J. Crampton, *A Concise History of Bulgaria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 17–9.

[92] Fine, 'The Size and Significance', pp. 385–6, 113; 'Bogomils', in *Encyclopedia of World Religions,* ed. by Michael Frassetto and Wendy Doniger (Encyclopaedia Britannica Inc., 2006), p. 136; 'Bogomils', in *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, p. 220; Jan Mikolaj Wolski, 'Autoproscoptae, Bogomils and Messalians in the 14th Century Bulgaria', *Studia Ceranea*, 4 (2014), 233–41 (p. 234).

[93] Marc De Groote, 'An Anonymous Sermon against the Hagarenes, the Bogomils, and the Jews', *Harvard Theological Review*, 97 (2004), 329–51 (p. 336).

avoided sexual intercourse, and forbade the consumption of meat and wine.[94]

Like previous heretics, the Bogomils suffered systemic persecution. In a tenth-century letter to Tsar Peter I of Bulgaria, Patriarch Theophylact Lecapenus condemned the Bogomils: 'For this impiety is a mixture of Manichaeanism and Paulianism. So for this reason their priesthood is to be set aside'.[95] Theophylact similarly called for the state to intervene:

> Let the leaders and teachers of this ancient heresy which has newly reappeared be anathema…for the apostle says, 'After one or two admonitions, denounce a heretic in the knowledge that such a man is perverse and sinful; he is self-condemned' – or to the legal punishment of the state.[96]

Just as the Nestorian Schism after Ephesus and Chalcedon emphasised the centralised Church's vehement stance toward heretics, the Great Schism (1054) between the Eastern and Western Churches solidified the East's non-tolerance of heretics.[97] During the eleventh and twelfth century, clauses about Bogomils were added to the *Synodikon of Orthodoxy*, which was read annually on the first Sunday of Lent. These clauses anathematised the Bogomil leaders by name and condemned

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[94] Hamilton and Hamilton, eds, *Christian Dualist Heresies in the Byzantine World*, p. 28.

[95] Theophylact Lecapenus, *To Peter, King of Bulgaria, from Theophylact the Patriarch, composed by John, Chartophylax of the Great Church (AD 933–56)*, in *Christian Dualist Heresies in the Byzantine World*, ed. by Hamilton and Hamilton, pp. 98–9.

[96] Theophylact Lecapenus, *To Peter, King of Bulgaria*, pp. 101–2.

[97] For more on the effects of the Schism see: Brett Whalen, 'Rethinking the Schism of 1054: Authority, Heresy, and the Latin Rite', *Traditio*, 62 (2007), 1–24.

their Christological and ascetic doctrines.[98] The inclusion of these clauses in the *Synodikon* would have annually reminded the Orthodox population of the heresy, further marginalising the Bogomils and garnering detest towards them.

The eleventh-century Patriarch Cosmas of Jerusalem, writing to the Metropolitan of Larissa, Thessaly, demanded that the community and clergy not tolerate the Bogomils:

> Let all who are like this be anathematized in this way. Do not yourselves be slack in your treatment of this matter ... Know that whoever is careless concerning such most salutary correction of the brethren, or has regard to appearance, or allows himself to be corrupted by bribes, incurs God's curse and ours. Farewell.[99]

Cosmas' warnings about the Bogomils echoed an anxiety of a threat to the centralised imperial power structures, which had been seen with both the Paulicians and Tondrakians. Ironically, a later Patriarch also named Cosmas was deposed for favouring the Bogomil monk Niphon, exemplifying the lack of tolerance for lapses in the priesthood.[100]

The anathematisation of the Bogomils, driven by the clergy's focus on heretics eventually transitioned into targeted executions of key believers by the Empire. In a

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[98] *Synodikon of Orthodoxy*, in *Christian Dualist Heresies in the Byzantine World*, ed. by Hamilton and Hamilton, pp. 134–9.

[99] Cosmas of Jerusalem, *Letter of Cosmas, our most Holy Lord and Ecumenical Patriarch, to the Metropolitan of Larissa, most beloved of God, concerning the atheist heretics* (1075–81), in *Christian Dualist Heresies in the Byzantine World*, ed. by Hamilton and Hamilton, pp. 165–6.

[100] Hamilton and Hamilton, eds, *Christian Dualist Heresies in the Byzantine World*, p. 222.

recount by Anna Komnena, the eleventh-century Bogomil monk Basil was imprisoned by Alexius I and executed on a fiery pyre for being, 'a heresiarch and completely unrepentant'.[101] The crowd attempted to throw his followers onto the pyre as well; however, this was stopped by Alexius, who imprisoned the unapologetic heretics instead, where they eventually died.[102] The punishment of death by fire for Bogomilism was echoed again by twelfth-century Patriarch Michael II who ordered the execution of its adherents.[103] Even the canonist Theodore Balsamon was shocked at the brutality and methods used, stating:

> I am still surprised that the synod enjoined a punishment of this kind, for we have been told to cut heretics off from the body of Christ, but we have not learnt to punish them, but rather to hand them over to the civil power if they are unrepentant, and that sentence against them be given by the magistrates.[104]

Heresies and gnostic ideas continued to spread outside of Byzantium's jurisdiction. In the West, Gnostic and heretical ideas with roots in the Paulicians, Tondrakians, and Bogomils spread via the Cathars in the thirteenth century, became prominent in the south of France and northern Italy.[105] In the East, heretical sects were exported via the interconnected Silk Road, where some ideas and institutions made it as far as

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[101] Anna Comnena, *Alexiad* (1098), in *Christian Dualist Heresies in the Byzantine World*, ed. by Hamilton and Hamilton, pp. 179–80.

[102] Anna Comnena, *Alexiad*, pp. 175–80.

[103] Theodore Balsamon, *Scholia in Nomocanon Photii Patriarchae IX*, in *Christian Dualist Heresies in the Byzantine World*, ed. by Hamilton and Hamilton, p. 215.

[104] Theodore Balsamon, *Scholia in Nomocanon*, p. 215.

[105] Zatar, 'Bogomils and Cathars', pp. 388–90.

China, where persecution continued.[106] It is theorised by scholars that various heretics even found their way into South and South East Asia, as far as Sri Lanka, Thailand, Vietnam, Malaysia and Indonesia, with possible exports of Persian Nestorians and Armenian Monophysites via the sea trade out of Persia.[107]

Johnson and Johnson acknowledged that via the Silk Road's exponential spread of ideas, Nestorianism was embraced by nomadic groups in Central Asia, with an enemy in Byzantium being their commonality.[108] Lieu noted that the Nestorian Church was well established on the South China Coast by the time Marco Polo visited in 1292, and that 'Kublai Khan himself was the son of a Nestorian princess'; the sect could have first come to China by seventh-century Islamic invaders.[109] However, the Nestorians were all but extinct by the end of the tenth century, yet made a resurgence within the Mongol ruling elite **between** the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.[110] A heavily Sinicised Manichaeanism was further established in thirteenth-century China, having originated with seventh-century Sogdian priests. In Central Asia, a Uighur leader, and ally of the Tang dynasty,

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[106] Garry W. Trompf, 'The Gnostic World: A History of Scholarship (Until 2000)', in *The Gnostic World*, p. 27; Peter Frankopan, *The Silk Roads: A New History of the World* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), pp. 60–2.

[107] Ian Gillman and Hans-Joachim Klimkeit, *Christians in Asia before 1500* (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 308.

[108] Donald James Johnson and Jean Elliott Johnson, 'The spread of religious beliefs: just as silk, porcelain, spices, gold, and silver moved along the Silk Road, so, too, did ideas. In fact, religious values and practices were among the most important ideas that spread along these routes', *Calliope*, 12 (2002), 11.

[109] Samuel N. C. Lieu, 'Nestorians and Manichaeans on the South China Coast', *Vigilae Christianae*, 34 (1980), 71–88 (pp. 71–2); S. Wells Williams, 'The Nestorians in China', *The Open Court*, 23 (1909), 45–8 (p. 46).

[110] Gillman and Klimkeit, *Christians in Asia before 1500*, pp. 284–9.

converted to Manichaeanism, and established the movement in the region.[111] Some

Gnostics even tried to blend Christianity, Buddhism and Daoism into a 'hybrid

gospel', to seem 'consistent with what the local population already believed' and

avoid marginalisation.[112] Similarly to the Byzantine case, the peripheral heretics

became a threat to the establishments of East Asia. Gillman and Klimkeit, who

quoted Muslim writer Abu-Zaid, noted that Christians, along with Muslims, Jews

and Parsis, were directly targeted as part of a massacre of over 100,000 foreigners in

the late-ninth century by the Chinese rebel Huang Chao in Guangzhou.[113] An edict

was even issued by the Tang Emperor Wuzong calling for 'more than 2,000 men of

the Nestorian and Mazdean religions to return to lay life and to cease polluting the

customs of China'.[114] Christian and Dualist heresies, therefore, appeared to have

continued to both flourish and threaten their new homes as they spread abroad.

CONCLUSION

Throughout the Middle Ages, 'heretical' beliefs remained a basis for marginalisation

from both the centralised Church and various imperial authorities. After the Fall of

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[111] Lieu, 'Nestorians and Manichaeans on the South China Coast', p. 74; Sam Lieu, 'Gnosis on the Silk Road, Gnostic Parables, Hymns and Prayers from Central Asia. By H. J. Klimkeit' (book review), *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 11 (2001), 305–8.

[112] Frankopan, *The Silk Roads*, pp. 59–60; Daniel H. Bays, *A New History of Christianity in China* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), pp. 17–21.

[113] Gillman and Klimkeit, *Christians in Asia before 1500*, p. 283. See also: Williams, 'The Nestorians in China', p. 46; Jonathan N. Lipman, *Familiar Strangers: A History of Muslims in Northwest China* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997), p. 27.

[114] 'Emperor Wuzong's Edict on the Suppression of Buddhism' (AD 845), in *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, Vol. 1: *From Earliest Times to 1600,* ed. by William Theodore de Bary and Irene Bloom (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), pp. 585–6; Bays, *A New History of Christianity in China*, pp. 17–21.

Rome in 476, there was a pivot away from early heresies in urban centres, such as the Marcionites, Arians and Nestorians, towards peripheral heretical movements. In relation to the Paulicians and Tondrakians, the unique geographic location of Armenia established these movements as both political and spiritual threats to Church and imperial structures. That Armenia was a crossroads of local, Byzantine, and Islamic interests ensured it was the perfect place for these heretical movements to develop and flourish.   The marginalisation of the Paulicians and Tondrakians was further perpetuated by representations of these heretical groups from both the Armenian Apostolic and Byzantine Orthodox Churches. Although difficult to determine the actual beliefs of these heterodoxic movements and communities, it is evident that their rejection of the doctrines and institutions of the centralised Churches inspired ecclesiastical condemnation. Unfortunately, it is a challenge for modern researchers to establish how these heretical groups viewed themselves, since many of their scriptures, sacred spaces, and artefacts were destroyed over centuries of hostility. However, evidence suggests that the Paulicians and Tondrakians perceived their 'heresies' as a return to true religious knowledge that had been lost from orthodox Christianity due to centuries of entrenched materialism, corruption, and ecclesiastical debate. Nevertheless, the condemnation of the Paulician and Tondrakian movements can be found in an array of sources from both Armenian and Byzantine cleric-chroniclers. This condemnation and marginalisation further led to centuries of political destabilisation, destruction of property, population transfers, and military campaigns enacted against these heretical movements.

Moreover, both the Paulicians and Tondrakians, likely in reaction to imperial and ecclesiastical persecution, mobilised as militant and political groups at the crossroads of empires. This solidified these movements as more than just religious heresies, but also as territorial threats. Thus, the scale of persecution of Paulicians and Tondrakians developed from the anathematisation and executions of key leaders, to forced removals, resettlements, and massacres. However, despite centuries of persecution and official attempts to eradicate these heresies, there is evidence to suggest the underground continuation of these movements in altered forms until the nineteenth century.

Chaucer's Twitter: The Human-bird Interface as Emotional Practice in *Troilus and Criseyde*

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This article concerns the human reception of and interaction with birds in Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde *as an emotional practice that promotes self-reflection and emotional regulation. It aims to contribute to the field of the History of Emotions a new understanding of the role of animals as signifiers in medieval emotional narratives, which have hither to largely been interpreted as static and separate from the human psyche. This article aims to elucidate the human-bird interface in* Troilus *as an example of how the animal as signifier can be consciously engaged with by characters within a text as an emotional practice, as, in the case of* Troilus, *one of self-reflection resulting in emotional regulation. The two instances of the human-bird interface are first measured against Monique Sheer's criteria for emotional practice, and then examined in the context of comparison with Gower's* Tale of Philomene, *which is itself directly referenced in* Troilus. *Additional context for reading of the birds themselves is then gleaned by the reading of their entries in medieval bestiaries. Ultimately, this research presents a thorough case study of the human-bird interface in* Troilus *as an example of how animals can operate as signifiers within the context of an emotional practice, and how, in this text, it presents as a psychological ritual of self-reflection and emotional regulation.*

In Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*, the human reception of birds becomes a method in which emotions can be reflected, interpreted, and modulated, thus implying a connection between the human-bird interface and the interior self. This positions the human-bird interface as method of emotional practice, which Monique Sheer

proposes are: 'habits, rituals, and everyday pastimes that aid us in achieving a certain emotional state. This includes the striving for a desired feeling as well as the modifying of one that is not desirable.'[1] These qualities can be observed in the two instances of the human-bird interface in *Troilus*, as Pandarus and Criseyde engage with the swallow and the nightingale, respectively, in order to modify their emotional state. In addition to reading these characters' interpretations of their avian visitors, further understanding of the emotional context of the swallow and the nightingale can be gleaned from their appearance in Gower's *Tale of Philomene*, which is itself directly referenced in *Troilus*. Additional context to inform the reading of the symbolic and emotional function of these birds in the human-bird interface may also be gleaned from their entries within medieval bestiaries. Through careful study of the human reception of the swallow and the nightingale, in tandem with the contexts provided by their intertextual relationships, this essay will determine the function of these specific birds in their episodes of the human-bird interface. This will, in turn, inform the primary study of this essay in which the human-bird interface, as experienced by Pandarus and Criseyde, can be observed as an emotional practice engaged in order to modulate emotion, thereby presenting a method in which medieval texts may represent the interior self.

A close reading of *Troilus*'s two episodes of the human-bird interface reveals that emotional modulation is achieved through the human ascribing meaning to the

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[1] Monique Scheer, 'Are Emotions a Kind of Practice (and is that what makes them have a history)? A Bourdieuian Approach to Understanding Emotion', *History and Theory*, 51 (2012), 193–220 (p. 209).

bird, then either accepting or rejecting that meaning in order to mitigate internal

conflict. In the human-bird interface, the bird sings a message to be decoded by the

human listener, a process that is unavoidably influenced by the state of the human's

interior self. As Weisel observes, the human-bird interface in medieval texts 'creates

the potential for the singing of birds to be an articulate language […] that Chaucer

exploits in his interactions between speaking birds and human listeners.'[2] Through

showcasing the episodes of human-bird interface as a means of affective modulation,

Chaucer presents a way in which the interior lives of characters can be reflected in

medieval narratives.

For Pandarus, the human-bird interface becomes a method by which he can

recognise and modulate feelings of guilt into passive acceptance. Playing mediator for

Troilus's romantic pursuit of his niece clearly creates an emotional conflict within

Pandarus, as evidenced by the sleepless night he endures in which he 'made, er it was

day, ful many a wente'[3] before meeting with Criseyde the following morning. His

troubled sleep is finally disturbed in full when he awakens to hear the swallow's

'sorowful lay | […] hir waymentynge' (ll. 64–65). This could be read as the climax of

Pandarus's internal struggle, as conflicting feelings of guilt and obligation have built

up overnight and, unable to be ignored any longer, are projected onto an external

figure so that Pandarus may at least wake up and acknowledge them. In Pandarus

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[2] A.J. Weisel, 'In Briddes Wise: Chaucer's Avian Poetics', in *Animal Languages in the Middle Ages: Representations of Interspecies Communication*, ed. by Alison Langdon (Cham: Springer Nature, 2018), pp. 113–32 (p. 118).

[3] Chaucer, *Troilus and Criseyde*, ed. by Stephen A. Barney (London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2006), l. 63.

recognising the swallow as Progne, Weisel suggests that the swallow's song 'makes clear the inevitable painful outcome of the love affair while simultaneously suggesting that it cannot change its course.'[4] By attaching the warning of the swallow to the myth of *Philomene and Tereus*, Pandarus utilises the human-bird interface to alleviate his feelings of guilt by framing his narrative in a mythological context. As Mudruck notes: 'his looming treachery to Criseyde […] the universal poignance of the myth dims somewhat and makes more endurable.'[5] In this manner, Pandarus is able to absolve himself of the responsibility for the outcome of his intended actions by simply accepting that outcome as an inevitable universal truth. From this, we can observe that Pandarus's engagement in the human-bird interface allows him to address his guilt and absolve himself of it, thereby using it as a tool to aid internal conflict resolution and, through this, emotional modulation.

Criseyde's engagement in the human-bird interface is also a complex affective experience which affords emotional modulation through the human interpretation of birdsong. Before the appearance of the nightingale, Criseyde appears to be mentally and emotionally overwhelmed and exhausted by the subject of love. Her abrupt evasion of Antigone's questions on the matter: 'Ywys, it wol be nyght as faste,' (ll. 898) reads as a gentle plea of fatigue to excuse herself from commenting. However, the following line: 'but every word which that she of hire herde | she gan to prenten in hire herte faste,' (ll. 899) implies that Criseyde may be becoming overwhelmed with

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[4] Weisel, 'In Briddes Wise: Chaucer's Avian Poetics', p. 122.

[5] Marvin Mudrick, 'Chaucer's Nightingales', *The Hudson Review*, 10 (1957), 113–32 (p. 91).

the emotional subject matter. Indeed, she is so mentally and emotionally overwhelmed by the topic of love that, like Pandarus, it interferes with her ability to sleep: 'whan al was hust, than lay she stille and thoughte | of all this thing; the manere and the wise.' (II. 915–916). From this, we can observe Criseyde as experiencing an emotional inconvenience in need of correcting. Given her immediate mental fixation on love, it comes as little surprise that, when the nightingale makes its presence known, Criseyde interprets the birdsong as a 'lay | of love' (ll. 921–922). The implications of this particular reading of the nightingale will be further explored later as what is important here is the function that the human-bird interface performs. Understanding her need to modulate her emotional state so that she may achieve rest, Criseyde consciously engages with the nightingale: 'herkened she so longe in good entente' (II. 923). The intent here is clear: in order to be soothed to sleep, order must be brought to the chaos of Criseyde's internal self, and such order may be afforded by the musical quality of birdsong. As Weisel notes, the nightingale's 'lay of love' operates as 'not an articulated text but a meaningful emotion that creates a human text, audible and meaningful to Criseyde.'[6] By interpreting the nightingale's song as a 'lay of love,' Criseyde grants it the status of music; the literal organisation of otherwise unrelated notes into a coherent melody. Music makes meaning out of chaos, and in this manner, the birdsong of the nightingale can be observed as creating emotional meaning for Criseyde. In recognising the nightingale's song as a 'lay of love,' Criseyde

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[6] Weisel, 'In Briddes Wise: Chaucer's Avian Poetics', p123.

is able to use music as a blueprint to organise and understand her own internal chaos, and so, is able modulate herself from being alert and overly contemplative, to 'fressh and gay' (II. 922). From this, we may observe that Criseyde consciously utilises the human-bird interface to modulate her emotional state, as the 'lay of love' operates to organise her internal chaos and allow for tranquillity and rest.

As signifiers in love narratives, the swallow and the nightingale bear heavy intertextual connotations that may have implications for these initial readings of the human-bird interface. Both birds appear as unequivocally tragic figures in Gower's *Tale of Philomene and Tereus*, and the text even provides direct translations of the birds' songs which can be compared with Pandarus and Criseyde's interpretations. This additional context may provide further insight into how Pandarus and Criseyde receive their avian visitors, and further inform the reading of their emotional engagement in the human-bird interface.

For Pandarus, the direct reference to Gower's *Tale* strengthens the initial reading of his engagement with human-bird interface as a mitigation of guilt. Chaucer's omniscient narrator sees Pandarus interpret his avian visitor as Proigne, who 'made hir cheterynge | how Tereus gan forth hire suster take' (II. 68–69). This translation of the swallow's 'cheterynge' closely reflects Gower's: 'to chide | and chitreth out in hir langage | what falsehood is in marriage.'[7] However, it can be observed that Pandarus has slightly misinterpreted Progne's message. In the Gower

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[7] *The Tale of Philomene and Tereus*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt. (London: W.W. Norton, 2018), pp. 465–7.

text, Progne's birdsong is a warning for married women of 'the falshood of hir housbonde […] for ther been many untrewe of tho,'[8] which concentrates condemnation on Tereus' 'spousebreech,'[9] rather than his raping of her sister. As Weisel notes, this slight error in communication is due to the bird's message being 'filtered through human interpretation,'[10] and this provides further insight into how Pandarus emotionally engages in the human-bird interface. In Gower's text, Progne only mentions the rape of her sister when, before her avian transformation, she expresses guilt over her involvement in the events that lead to Tereus' crime: 'I therfore in al the world shal bere a blame | of that my suster hath a shame | that Tereus to hire I sente.'[11] In conflating Progne's birdsong with the guilt she expressed in human form, Pandarus reinterprets her 'chiterynge' warning meant for married women as one meant for him. The parallel between himself and Progne as intermediaries can then be recognised, and from this, Pandarus can infer the implications for his niece. This positions the swallow in this human-bird interface as an ominous figure intent upon diverting Pandarus from his course, lest he and those he seeks to aid suffer similarly disastrous consequences. However, as previously discussed, the application of the mythological context allows Pandarus to mitigate his sense of guilt, thereby allowing him to ignore the swallow's warning. Though Pandarus ignoring the advisory sentiment of Progne's message is problematic, it can

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[8] *The Tale of Philomene and Tereus*, p. 476.
[9] *The Tale of Philomene and Tereus*, p. 469.
[10] Weisel, 'In Briddes Wise: Chaucer's Avian Poetics,' p. 121.
[11] *The Tale of Philomene and Tereus*, pp. 306–8.

at least be observed that he does, indeed, receive this warning.

Unlike Pandarus, Criseyde appears to be completely ignorant of the ominous connotations that the nightingale carries from the myth of *Tereus and Philomene*, particularly for women in romantic contexts. This complicates Criseyde's position in the human-bird interface, as it calls into question the accuracy of her own reading of the nightingale. Chaucer's earlier reference to Gower's *Tale* during Pandarus's human-bird interface prompts the reader to similarly consider Criseyde's nightingale in the context of this work. Gower provides the song of nightingale with a literal translation: 'o why | oh why ne were I yit a maide? […] Ha, now I am a brid […] though I have lost my maidenhede | shal noman see my cheekes rede.'[12] Informed by Gower's text, the nightingale becomes a signifier of feminine sexual shame, and this conflicts with Criseyde's comforting reading of her avian visitor. Weisel argues that Chaucer's choosing of the nightingale as the avian half of the human-bird interface is made more appropriate for the context of Gower's *Tale*: 'because Philomene is another trans-avian, she embodies a series of meanings that allow her sound to be translated into human terms.' [13] Following from this, if Criseyde was able to successfully translate Philomene's message from the nightingale, a significant alteration must be made to the reading of her usage of the human-bird interface as a tool of affective modulation. Criseyde's misinterpretation of the nightingale's lay of 'loves maladye,'[14] as a simple

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[12] *The Tale of Philomene and Tereus*, pp. 433–44.

[13] Weisel, 'In Briddes Wise: Chaucer's Avian Poetics,' p. 112.

[14] *The Tale of Philomene and Tereus*, p. 446.

'lay of love,' implies a wilful denial which then allows the human-bird interface to reinforce her sense of emotional security in her romance with Troilus. Mudrick argues that the interpretation of the nightingale is naturally coloured by Criseyde's emotional state, as it is received 'not out of the myth it shares with its sister the swallow (where, in a less comfortable mood of Criseyde's, it might belong).'[15] This would imply that Criseyde was already enjoying some level of emotional security in her romance with Troilus; however, that she did misinterpret Philomene's message would also imply that aware or otherwise, she still felt the need to reinforce that emotional security. From this, we can observe that the human-bird interface is used by Criseyde to reinforce emotional security, as her wilful ignorance allows her to enjoy the simple 'lay of love' whilst blissfully ignoring Philomene's warning against taking men as lovers.

Further context for understanding the roles of the swallow and the nightingale during their episodes of the human-bird interface in *Troilus* may also be gleaned from their respective entries in medieval bestiaries. These texts consciously engage in and encourage symbolic reading of animals, as Houwen notes: 'the *Physiologus* and its derivatives provided the foundation for the later use of animals and their symbolism; this was further developed in the twelfth century and later with the bestiaries.'[16] This makes the medieval bestiary a highly appropriate source to further inform reading of

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[15] Mudrick, 'Chaucer's Nightingales,' p. 91.
[16] L.A.J.R. Houwen, 'Animal Parallelism in Medieval Literature and the Bestiaries: A Preliminary Investigation', *Neophilologus*, 78 (1994), 483–96 (p. 484).

the significance of the swallow and the nightingale, and provide further context for reading their roles in their respective episodes of the human-bird interface.

The swallow described in medieval bestiaries can be read as a messenger of caution, as it is able to heal impaired vision and even predict future events, thus complimenting the earlier reading of the swallow as warning Pandarus against his intended actions. The *M.S. Bodley 764* notes the swallow's 'outstanding cleverness of its intelligence and observation;'[17] as does White's *Book of Beasts*, which comments on the bird's 'uncommonly devout state of mind, heedful to all sorts of things.' [18] Additionally, the *Aberdeen Bestiary* states that the swallow 'lets you know when buildings are about to fall by refusing to nest on their tops.'[19] From this, we may infer that the swallow itself not only signifies caution and awareness, but that it can also be read as self-aware of its role in the human-bird interface as a messenger of caution. Additionally, the swallow's reported healing ability related specifically to vision impairment strengthens its role as a corrector of perception. As the *MS Bodley 764* states, if a swallow's chicks are born with vision impairment, 'it possesses a means of healing by which their vision can be restored,'[20] which the *Aberdeen Bestiary* also notes as 'a kind of healing power with which it can restore their vision.'[21] The ability of

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[17] Richard W. Barber, *Bestiary: Being an English Version of the Bodleian Library, Oxford M.S. Bodley 764: With All the Original Miniatures Reproduced in Facsimile* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1993), p. 166.

[18] T.H. White, *The Book of Beasts: Being a Translation from a Latin Bestiary of the Twelfth Century* (London: Cape, 1954) p. 147.

[19] University of Aberdeen, fol. 47ᵛ, in *The Aberdeen Bestiary Project – MS 24*, <https://www.abdn.ac.uk/bestiary/> [accessed 13 November 2021].

[20] Barber, *Bestiary*, 166.

[21] Fol. 48ʳ, in *The Aberdeen Bestiary Project*.

foresight, in tandem with being corrector of impaired vision, compliments the earlier reading of the swallow as a messenger of caution, as it emphasises a concern for enabling perception and itself perceives the future. This places additional value on Pandarus's ignoring of the swallow's message, as it implicates him in a conscious refusal to have his perception corrected, which the swallow's presence indicates the requirement of. Read in this context, the swallow's song in the human-bird interface becomes a warning for Pandarus of dangers that he is not yet aware of, and his reception of it would imply that he would rather remain unaware and take comfort in that ignorance.

The *Aberdeen Bestiary* also determines the swallow as a signifier of repentance, which supports the initial reading of Pandarus's engagement with the human-bird interface as an affective experience related to the recognition and mitigation of guilt. *The Aberdeen's* claim that 'the cry of the swallow, it signifies, unless I am mistaken, the lament of the penitent soul'[22] echoes the sentiment of Gower's Progne who claims to 'bere a blame'[23] for sending her sister to Tereus. Though this lament was expressed by Progne in human form in Gower's *Tale*, the *Aberdeen's* statement supports the reading of Pandarus's interpretation of the swallow's song as Progne's admission of guilt. This in turn strengthens the reading of the swallow in the human-bird interface as a means by which Pandarus can recognise his own guilty conscience before mitigating it.

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[22] Fol. 48ᵛ, in *The Aberdeen Bestiary Project*.
[23] *The Tale of Philomene and Tereus*, p. 306.

In a similar manner to the swallow, the nightingale also often embodies ominous themes of caution and watchfulness that supports the earlier intertextual reading of the bird's song as a warning for women, and naturally clashes with Criseyde's interpretation of it. As the *M.S. Bodley 764* states, the nightingale is a 'very alert watchman,'[24] embodying motherly devotion and specifically nocturnal caution. This is supported by the *Aberdeen Bestiary*, which offers that 'it is an ever-watchful sentinel, warming its eggs in a hollow of its body, relieving the sleepless effort of the long night with the sweetness of its song.'[25] These positions the nightingale as a particularly maternal bird, concerned with tending to its young whilst guarding them against nocturnal dangers. From this, we may infer a parallel between the nightingale singing to its chicks to protect them from nocturnal danger, and its singing to Criseyde a warning of the potential for a different kind of nocturnal danger, such as might be found with a new lover. This compliments the earlier intertextual reading of the nightingale as an ominous figure that cautions women against the taking lovers due to the potential risk of sexual violence.

The nightingale in medieval bestiary tradition also carries a connotation with the sunrise, and so, can be inferred as an emblem of transition into new beginnings, which both complicates and compliments the previous reading of the nightingale as a harbinger of romantic strife. The *Aberdeen Bestiary* states that the nightingale is 'so

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[24] Barber, *Bestiary*, p.158.
[25] Fol. 52ᵛ, in *The Aberdeen Bestiary Project*.

called because it signals with its song the dawn of the new day.'[26] This sentiment of

new beginnings can certainly be gleaned from Criseyde's second encounter of the

nightingale; 'as the newe abaysed nyghtyngale | that stynteth first whan she

bygynneth to synge […] Right so Criseyde, whan hir drede stente | Opned hire herte

and tolde hym hir entente' (III. 1233–1239). Chaucer's use of the nightingale as a

metaphor for Criseyde's emotional transition between hesitation and action

appropriately compliments a heroine renowned for her 'slydynge of corage' (V. 825).

This connotation could infer the nightingale as endorsing Criseyde's new relationship

with Troilus. However, given the previous reading, it makes more sense if this

connotation is read in the nightingale's song as a wish for Criseyde's 'slydynge of

courage' to become a means of proactive feminine agency. As Johnston notes,

Criseyde possesses 'the emotional gliding or sliding that enables the female

protagonist [...] to leave the embrace of Troilus for the arms of Diomede, just as the

circumstances may require.' [27] The encouragement of new beginnings being

interpreted through the human-bird interface would provide Criseyde some comfort

on her sleepless night, as she may interpret the nightingale's song as encouragement

to commence her romance with Troilus. However, it would appear more likely that

the nightingale's endorsement of transition was meant as an encouragement for

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[26] Fol. 52v, in *The Aberdeen Bestiary Project*.

[27] Andrew James Johnston, 'Gendered Books: Reading, Space and Intimacy in Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*,' in *Love, History and Emotion in Chaucer and Shakespeare: Troilus and Criseyde and Troilus and Cressida*, ed. by Andrew James Johnston, Russell West-Pavlov, and Elisabeth Kempf (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016), pp. 172–88 (p. 180).

Criseyde to act in her own best interest, and possibly a pre-emptive support of her leaving Troilus.

The human-bird interface, as exhibited in *Troilus and Criseyde*, provides a complex method of interior representation in a medieval text. In addition to being interpreted as signifiers in their own right, the nightingale and the swallow can both be observed as engaging in the human-bird interface as deliverers of specific messages for their human counterparts. How Pandarus and Criseyde receive, interpret, and react to these messages can be seen to reveal their interior conflicts, and reflects how each character addresses and resolves them. In these actions, both characters can be observed as engaging with the human-bird interface as a method of affective modulation. Criseyde purposely misinterprets the song of the nightingale in order to avoid the confrontation of her own fears regarding Troilus, thereby keeping emotional turmoil at bay and allowing herself to be soothed to sleep. Pandarus similarly eases his internal conflict by using the human-bird interface to interpret his guilt through a mythological lens and reframe the potentially disastrous outcome of his actions as a simple universal truth. Additionally comforted by the wilful ignorance of any warning that would imply that he is wrong to do so, Pandarus is able to commence his role in Troilus's courting of Criseyde without feeling emotionally compromised. From this, we may infer that, in Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*, the human-bird interface operates as an emotional practice in which characters can engage in order to resolve internal conflict, for better or worse.

Stephen Gordon, *Supernatural Encounters: Demons and the Restless Dead in Medieval England, c. 1050-1450*; **Studies in Medieval History and Culture (London & New York: Routledge, 2020) ebook, 231 pp., RRP USD 51.79; ISBN 9780429432491**

Review

Born in part from Stephen Gordon's 2013 doctoral dissertation, though without its dual focus on archaeological and literary evidence, *Supernatural Encounters* promises to examine the form and development of the medieval English belief in revenants. These are essentially the reanimated corpses of dead people, often called the 'restless' or 'ambulant' dead, the 'undead', or even 'embodied ghosts' in secondary scholarship or translations. A modern ghost is the incorporeal spirit of a deceased person, but a medieval ghost could also have referred to a 're-energised' or 'demonically-activated' corpse. In contemporary popular culture, such phenomena might superficially be identified as zombies, except that these medieval revenants were not mindless, even when controlled by a demon, and were very much identifiable as their previously alive selves, through their personality, their actions, and most importantly, their speech.

The introduction to *Supernatural Encounters* begins with a useful, if brief, overview of recent and influential scholarship on medieval revenants as well as an examination of the idiosyncratic, ambiguous, and even obfuscatory, medieval terminology used to describe them. However, the subsequent chapters (excepting the last one) each take but a single text as their main focus, and through this literary

analysis, Gordon aims to show how 'the belief in – or, more precisely, the *acknowledgement* of the belief in – the walking corpse seems to have been an entrenched, if porous and malleable, socio-cultural 'text' of the medieval period in general' (p. 3).

Gordon opens chapter one with a literary analysis of the Witch of Berkeley from William of Malmesbury's early-twelfth century *Gesta regum Anglorum*, while the second half of this chapter is a reception history of this digression. The brevity and clear morality of the original allowed it to take on a life of its own outside of *Gesta* and become a universal text adaptable to any situation, flavoured by the specific eschatological fears contemporary to each author and illustrator from the thirteenth through to the nineteenth century. Where the Witch of Berkeley was an historical *prestigio*, having occurred in the 1040s, but recorded in the 1140s, in chapter two we have a literary analysis of recent ambulatory corpses reported in William of Newburgh's *Historia rerum Anglicarum* in the context of contemporary political upheaval with the absence of the king and popular revolt in London, as well as widespread crop failure and famine within written in the last decade of the twelfth century. This is because '[t]he macrocosm (monstrous kingship) and the microcosm (monstrous corpses) were inextricably linked' in contemporary attitudes (p. 87). Together, chapters one and two make a strong argument for reading the appearance of restless corpses within medieval literature as not just being a commentary upon the character of the dead person, but a meta-commentary upon society and political governance (or its lack) as a whole.

The next three chapters all take a more theological angle, beginning with Walter Map's *De nugis curialium*, a subversive and satirical commentary on contemporary society also written in the same period as *Historia* featuring four revenants and how to quell their restlessness. There is nothing novel about the actions of Walter Map's unquiet dead – itself a sign of how very commonplace the belief was – but he does present two different approaches to dealing with them. The traditional approach was for suspected corpses to be exhumed, dismembered, and decapitated, but Map also has one revenant who engages in conversation with their living kin advising them that though they had once been doomed to hell, through the intercession of prayer their soul was now free to ascend to heaven and their body was free to naturally decompose. This novel interaction paves the way for chapter four, which begins with an overview of the doctrine of Purgatory and the variation between official theological eschatology and popular belief in corporeal revenants between the twelfth and the fourteenth centuries. The primary literary subject of this chapter is the late fourteenth century *Festial* of John Mirk, a popular collection of lay sermons, specifically the burial sermon, which details the rites for how the body travels from the deathbed to the church to the grave, and which provided a template on how to avoid the return of the dead. With his analysis of Geoffrey Chaucer's *Friar's Prologue and Tale* in chapter five, Gordon continues this theological examination through a thorough literary analysis of the conversation between the Devil and a Summoner about the nature of demonic possession and whether in fact it was sometimes the literal possession of a (dead) body.

Chapter six takes a very different approach by examining the phenomena of the nightmare, firstly through a modern medical and psychological explanation, and secondly through an overview of the ancient and medieval medical and theological explanations, before finishing with a curious shift to early modern vampiric encounters. Finally, the epilogue shifts gear into a post-medieval discussion of how the belief in revenants persisted despite the Protestant reformations having effected a profound change in Christian eschatology. The removal of many layers of mediation between the individual and God – such as through the sudden denial of Purgatory as a concept, the rejection of the intercessory power of the saints, and the dissolution of the monasteries – also removed any ambiguity surrounding the agency and purpose of the revenant which became a purely devilish phenomenon.

Although it was Gordon's intention for each chapter to provide a 'close reading of a particular text … [rather than] to evaluate the entire corpus of undead encounters from England c. 1050–1450' (pp. 13–14), and he acknowledges that this has made Supernatural Encounters 'a collection of essays' (p. 224), the structure of his book could have been more effective. Material is reiterated unnecessarily across chapters, such as with the reanalysis of William of Newburgh's *Historia* in chapter one, two, and six, or the outline of the doctrine of Purgatory in chapter three and four. The discussion of the terminology for revenants is spread unsatisfactorily throughout the book with the discussion of *prestigio* in chapter one, *miracula* and *mirabila* in chapter two, and *spiritum* in chapter four, while other terms are discussed in the introduction. These issues are all arguably the result of chapters two, three, and six – almost half of

the whole book – having previously been published as individual journal articles. This leads to a sense of disjointedness, of the book being less a monograph and more an edited collected of single-author essays, which is emphasised by each chapter having an individual bibliography. Many of these issues could have been improved upon through more judicious editing of the main chapters and the expansion of the introduction, but especially through having chapter six as the sophomore chapter of this book. When chapter six is read first, many of the points Gordon makes in the previous chapters become more meaningful and the broader vision of the medieval English eschatological landscape becomes far clearer.

As it stands, *Supernatural Encounters* is an interesting book which has a number of excellent insights into medieval literature and society. The way in which the texts Gordon has chosen utilise revenants for various literary purposes demonstrate how very prevalent the belief in revenants was across these centuries. While *Supernatural Encounters* is by no means an introductory level text regarding the concept of medieval revenants, it should in fact be read widely by many different specialists to ensure that medieval revenants, alongside other supernatural phenomena, are not relegated to the fringes of modern scholarship, but are instead analysed as fundamental to medieval Christian thought and society.

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Jenni Kuuliala and Jussi Rantala, eds., *Travel, Pilgrimage and Social Interaction from Antiquity to the Middle Ages*; **Studies in Medieval History and Culture (London & New York: Routledge, 2020) ebook, 328 pp., RRP USD 51.79, ISBN 9781032087290**

R e v i e w

Emerging from a conference convened in 2015 at the University of Tampere on travel and pilgrimage from Antiquity to the Middle Ages, this volume pertains primarily to the social and cultural contexts of travel. The essays contained herein consider questions of the travellers' motivations, the practicalities of their journeys, and the networks intrinsic to their undertakings. The volume's ambitious chronological and geographical scope covers the eras from mid-Republican Rome through to the late Middle Ages in western Europe. The editors' aim is to provide a venue for comparative studies between eras and cultures where they have identified a lacuna in scholarship.

As this journal is for specialists in the field of medieval and early modern studies, this review will simply note for the sake of reader interest that after the first chapter, which offers an introduction to the volume, chapters two through six focus on travel and pilgrimage in the Republican and Imperial periods of Roman history and fall outside *Cerae*'s scope. Chapter seven by Jussi Rantala and Ville Vuolanto examines the *Hellados Periegesis*, one of the most important sources for pre-Christian sacred travel. While most of the chapter contains the authors' analysis of whether

those involved in the cults featured in his work can rightly be designated as 'pilgrims' and their scrutinization of Pausanias' choices as to whom he decided to include and exclude in his descriptions of local customs, the chapter does conclude with an interesting juxtaposition of pilgrimage in Pausanias's work with medieval pilgrimage found in western Europe. While pre-Christian and Christian European pilgrimage both systematize the types of pilgrimage (e.g., 'local' 'intra-regional' and international/Panhellenic' as explicated in Pausanias compared to 'minor', 'major', and 'oversees' [sic] as found in the medieval period — pp. 194, 196); pre-Christian pilgrimages, the authors argue, were happy occasions. This stands in contrast to pilgrimage in a medieval context which was often used for penance and as a reflection of the soul's displacement while on earth. Chapter eight, by Eva-Maria Butz and Alfons Zettler, examines Christian graffiti from Antiquity to the medieval period. The authors study six collections of Christian graffiti from sites in present-day Switzerland, Italy, and Germany, which date from the third to the eleventh centuries. Perhaps their most interesting comment relevant to the volume's theme is the conspicuous lack of graffiti at important religious sites that can be unquestionably attributed to religious pilgrims, countering suggestions by previous scholars who believed that the graffiti must have been by pilgrims.

An ambitious chapter nine by Klaus Herbers discusses *peregrinatio ad loca sancta* using Santiago de Compostela as his focal point. Herbers traces the evolving concept of pilgrimages to place Santiago de Compostela as a rival of Jerusalem and Rome. He shows how initiatives such as the composition of the *Liber Sancti Jacobi*

served to bolster the site's prestige. Chapter ten by Christian Laes offers an illuminating study of immobility in Merovingian miracle stories wherein people were cured of their disabilities, highlighting the diversity of their experiences and, interestingly, the inclusion of those with disabilities into their communities as an expected feature of daily life. In chapter eleven, M. Cecilia Gaposchkin's informative study considers both the conservation and evolution of religious travel. Her research demonstrates that travel-associated liturgical rituals, which commenced in the eighth century, can be traced through to their adapted forms found by those going on crusades centuries later.

Sara Ellis Nilsson's excellent contribution in chapter twelve turns the reader's attention northward to Scandinavia in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries to assesses the hagiographical accounts of five saints from Sweden and Denmark, showing how the act of travel itself accentuates the motif of transience while often simultaneously underscoring the saint's sanctity. In chapter thirteen, Fabienne Meiers highlights the centrality of the horse for land-based travel in an impressive chronological scope commencing in Imperial Rome and culminating in the late medieval period. Taking readers to the Holy Land, chapter fourteen by Stefan Schröder provides a case study of the Dominican pilgrim Felix Fabri's (d. 1502) journey, in particular Fabri's role as an eyewitness and its importance in authenticating Fabri's claims that he had, indeed, been where he claimed to have been. More complex than that, though, Schröder argues that Fabri's narrative had both a missionary incentive and a didactic function for his Christian audience. The volume's final chapter, by Lauri Uusitalo, explores the

transatlantic travels to Spain by sixteenth-century Pasto cacique don Pedro de Henao, whose visit to the royal court offers a fascinating glimpse into the process of colonialization of his region of the northern Andes, and the attendant issues the tension between the Old and New Worlds engendered for Spain's colonies.

There is much to commend in this volume, which contains many fine essays. However, two missed opportunities are worth noting. Collected volumes, such as this, can prove a challenge to edit, especially with such an expansive chronological scope as the one under review contains. Unless editors are careful to make the individual chapters interact with each other, what can result is a collection of loosely related essays that, while valuable, have only the most tenuous of through lines uniting them. While the edited volume covered 'travel, pilgrimage and social interaction', it was sometimes hard to detect a more focused unifying thread that tied the collection together into a more cohesive whole. The essays were organized chronologically, but perhaps arranging them thematically or geographically might have allowed for more coherence as a collection.

Second, I feel compelled to note the regrettable absence of any serious treatment of Britain and Ireland. In a book with such a capacious chronological scope focused on the major European pilgrimage traditions, we would reasonably expect to see a discussion of British and/or Irish pilgrimage where religious travel played a key and even a defining role in the expression of Christian devotion for centuries. The Irish penchant for *peregrinatio*, for instance, led the ninth-century abbot of Reichenau, Walahfrid Strabo, to quip in his *Vita sancti Galli*, '[Scotti] quibus consuetudo

peregrinandi iam paene in naturam conversa est'. British and Irish pilgrims, exiles, and missionaries were trailblazing and profoundly influential in shaping the Continent, but with the exception of two brief mentions in the opening of chapters focused on Spain and Scandinavia, Ireland and Britain do not feature in any meaningful way in the volume. This omission is unfortunately not without precedent. The volume *Exile in the Middle Ages: Selected Proceedings from the International Medieval Congress*, published in 2004, excludes Ireland entirely. While it is understandable that volumes based on conference proceedings are somewhat bound by the contributions of those attending the conference, it is not unreasonable when such a significant lacuna is apparent that the editors seek contributions from those who were not in attendance to provide balance to the volume.

However, these two final comments are not intended to detract from a volume that is, on the whole, a worthwhile collection of essays that both offer illuminating studies of the multifaceted social and religious dimensions of travel while simultaneously providing some promising avenues to pursue for further research.

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Dr. Penelope Nash's *The Spirituality of Countess Matilda of Tuscany* officially launches a new publication series, Quaderini di Matildica/Notebooks of Matilda, sponsored by the Matilda of Canossa and Tuscany International Association. In this inaugural issue of Notebooks, Nash sets an ambitious goal for herself: the identification of what she terms the 'wellspring' of the religious convictions, which she believes 'formed the basis' of Countess Matilda's actions and the extent of her commitment to these convictions throughout her lifetime. While recent studies have analyzed Matilda as a military leader, territorial ruler, and ecclesiastical benefactress, Nash wishes to better understand the origins of the religious zeal which animated all individual aspects of the countess' career. More specifically, Nash attempts to understand Matilda's 'inner being.' She tries to identify those deeply held beliefs to which Matilda clung despite what they cost her politically and personally. Drawing upon the work of David Bell, Nash takes as her working definition of spirituality: 'The quest to do the will of God by holding to what is good and making progress therein' (p. 11). While not stated in so many words, the author seems to take aim at the notion that more cynical, terrestrial considerations often dictated the Countess' decision-making.

Nash divides her examination into four principal sections. The initial section concerns the public spiritual movements of Matilda's time and how their advocates interacted with her family and herself. This section also focuses on Matilda's support for saints' cults and pilgrimage sites. The following section examines the contents of Matilda's library, books sponsored by her, the testimonies of others about her, especially the witness of her spiritual advisors and her vociferous detractors, and instances when her decision-making show her acting for 'primarily religious reasons' rather than for 'personal gain' (p. 65). The third section investigates her endowments to monasteries and other religious institutions and the contents of her will. The final section attempts to explore what Nash terms Matilda's inner life. In order to provide what she deems the 'Social Context' of the countess' spiritual development, Nash prefaces the main body of her study with a well-informed thumb-nail sketch of the evolution of reform ideology from the founding of Cluny in 910 to the showdown between Henry IV of Germany (r. 1056–1105) and Pope Gregory VII (r. 1073–1085) and his immediate papal successors. As the author duly notes, Matilda's convictions were not formed in isolation (p. 13).

Indeed, Nash's central thesis is that Countess Matilda sincerely adopted as her own personal spiritual guideposts the principles of the reform agenda, the core of which the author identifies as opposition to simony, a search for purity, and papal authority over the Church. For the countess, the will of God most clearly manifested itself in these ideals. In addition, Nash observes that a profound reverence for the memory of her parents, Boniface and Beatrice, also held a special place in Matilda's

devotional life: particularly in the form of making restitution to ecclesiastical institutions, which had suffered sundry depredations under her father's predatory lordship. Throughout her own reign, she exhibited an abiding concern for her parents' and all of her ancestors' eternal welfare.

Probing the inner life of any medieval figure, especially one like Matilda, who left behind no personal literary corpus, is a tricky matter. Still, Nash judiciously speculates about the possible course of the countess' spiritual development. She posits that far more than the countess' father, Boniface, who was an impious rogue until his final years, Matilda's mother, Beatrice, imbued the countess with a high regard for the principles of religious reform. A family relative of the reform popes, Leo IX (r. 1049–1053) and Stephen IX (r. 1057–1058), Beatrice was also personally associated with Peter Damian (1007–1072) and in her later years initiated her daughter into the friendship network of Gregory VII. Nash opines that as evidenced by her attempt in conjunction with her mother and Empress Agnes (*c*.1025–1077) to convince Henry IV to dismiss several notorious counselors, Matilda was initially a 'moderate' in the reform camp, who desired collaboration between the empire and the papacy. She was later radicalized, according to Nash, by Henry's mendacity at the impromptu papal-imperial summit at Canossa in 1077 (p. 21).

While Nash produces an abundance of evidence throughout her study that confirms Matilda's personal and enduring commitment to the reform agenda, her strongest evidence appears in the first and third chapters. As the author explains in her opening chapter, the countess was bound by ties of blood and marriage both to

the German imperial family and to Henry IV's anti-pope, Wibert/Guibert of Ravenna. Nevertheless, Matilda resolutely stood by Gregory VII and his immediate successors during the so-called Investiture Contest and thereby in the author's words: 'showed ultimately her commitment to a cause over family' (p. 23). In an age in which familial bonds enjoyed quasi sacred status, the countess' choice speaks volumes about the profundity of her attachment to the papal reform program and the sincerity of her spiritual convictions. Nash, moreover, reminds her readers that Matilda's choice of ideological commitment over familial ties resulted in almost fifteen years of continuously desperate warfare with her powerful relations. The countess, on multiple occasions, faced total ruin. This decision speaks powerfully to Matilda's determination to pursue the will of God as she understood it.

Perhaps the most compelling evidence for Nash's portrait of Matilda appears in a section of the second chapter dealing with the countess' judgments and life decisions (pp. 65–70). As Nash rightly observes, 'judgements and actions' best reveal an individual's 'true mettle' (p. 65). The analysis of Matilda's most decisive 'judgements and actions' is divided into five sub-categories: her willingness to fight on the papacy's behalf, provide the popes with significant financial aid, her firm allegiance to the papacy, her submission to papal decisions, and, finally, her determination to make restitution to her father's ecclesiastical victims.

From within this body of material, two instances of Matilda's submission to papal directives especially reveal the depth and sincerity of her religious convictions. The first instance concerns the countess' evidently heart-felt desire,

gleaned from her correspondence with Gregory VII, to retire from worldly affairs and enter the cloister. Nonetheless, at the Pope's insistence, she forswore her personal preference for the cloister to remain in harm's way as a temporal ruler. The second episode involves an equally personal issue. Matilda, at Pope Urban II's (r. 1088–1099) request, re-married solely for the sake of the papacy's strategic advantage. In 1089, the forty-three-year-old widowed Countess (her first husband Godfrey the Hunchback having had died in 1069) married the seventeen-year-old heir of the duchy of Bavaria, Welf V (*c*.1073–1120). The marriage temporarily placed both sides of the main Alpine passes between Germany into Italy in papal-friendly hands. The unhappy union, however, ended quite acrimoniously after barely six years. Regardless, Matilda had been willing to alter radically her personal life purely, as Bernold of Constance recalled, 'because of obedience towards the Roman pontiff' (p. 68).

Nash, in short, has composed a brief but compelling portrait of Countess Matilda as a ruler of firm religious conviction. This new publication series is off to an auspicious start.

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Kathleen B. Neal, *The Letters of Edward I: Political Communication in the Thirteenth Century* **(Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2021) ebook, 240 pp., RRP £24.99, ISBN 9781800101104**

Review

The Letters of Edward I: Political Communication in the Thirteenth Century by Kathleen B. Neal examines the socio-political significance of letters and letter writing. Medieval letters have typically been viewed as administrative, legal documents, rather than products of rhetoric or political discourse. In her study, Neal argues that royal letters should be considered 'proclamations of ideology and identity that serve to legitimize government to itself, and bind its representatives to its purpose' (p. 8). Across six chapters she analyses how Edward I used epistolary correspondence to construct his royal persona and maintain his relationship with his allies and royal agents in England and on the continent.

The first two chapters focus on the conventions of letter writing and the production of royal letters. Chapter one, 'Royal Letters: The Authority of a Form', indicates how letters inscribed royal authority and articulated royal commands. Neal begins by comparing the abstract and personal format of petitions and letters before discussing the rhetorical forms of royal letter writing that clerks could employ in their epistolary exchanges on behalf of the king, including writs, the theory of *ars dictaminis*, and the *cursus*. In chapter two, 'Rhetorical Refinement: Epistolary Editing and its Implications', Neal contends that medieval letter writing

was a collaborative activity between the king and his clerks. This chapter marks a transition in the study, moving away from the theory of letter writing in the first two chapters to a more in-depth analysis of specific examples of Edward's letters in the subsequent chapters. Neal initially outlines the process of medieval epistolary production in the chancery, showing how royal clerks were instrumental in 'implementing […and] forming the ideology and policies that shaped Edward's epistolarity' (p. 54). She then examines the scribal revisions made to several letters addressing Philippe IV's annexation of Gascony, along with Edward's correspondence with Llewelyn ap Gruffydd between his military campaigns in Wales. Through her analysis, Neal demonstrates how 'royal epistolary language was curated by the king, his councillors and his clerks to manage the rhetorical, legal and political implications of the royal voice' (p. 74).

Chapters three and four consider the role of formal and informal letters in managing diplomatic relationships. In 'Announcing the Message: Communities of Reception and Royal Ideology', Neal provides an overview of the oral performance and aural reception of medieval letters, and shows how Edward used rhetorical formulae in his early letters to his interim chancellor, Walter de Merton, to articulate the priorities of his rule and influence the values of his royal officials until he was able to return to England and assume the throne. The following chapter, 'Dear Cousin: Affect and Epistolarity beyond Borders', focuses on a selection of informal letters – including letters of patronage, intercession, family news, and personal matters – that used relational rhetoric to engage 'the goodwill of potential allies in

the hope of influencing the counsel and decision-making that would determine outcomes' (p. 98). The number of informal letters produced illustrates their popularity in the later thirteenth century, and Neal situates Edward's correspondence in relation to his diplomatic and extended kinship networks in France and Scotland. The contrast between formal and informal letters in these chapters indicate the success of Edward's rhetorical strategies, along with his ability to manipulate language to fulfil his royal agenda at home and abroad.

The final two chapters trace the development of Edward's correspondence from the 1270s to the 1290s. Chapter five, 'Keeping Friends Close: Strategies of Epistolary Alignment', compares the different rhetorical strategies Edward used to manage his relationship with his magnates in England and Gascony during the 1280s. Neal demonstrates how Edward used the discourses of loyalty and patronage to present his interests in line with his English magnates and encourage support for his claim to the duchy. In chapter six, 'Rhetoric under Strain: Re-writing Royal Epistolarity', Neal claims that Edward developed a 'more commanding and less conciliar epistolary mode' (p. 150) in response to growing political and diplomatic pressures. The discussion of royal letters in this chapter is carefully contextualised against the loss of Gascony in 1294 and the 'crisis' of 1297 when Edward's authority was threatened by his magnates. Neal suggests that Edward responded to this crisis by adopting an increasingly authoritarian tone in his letters to his magnates, but that this epistolary module was ultimately ineffective. She proposes that Edward subsequently adopted the discourses of service, satisfaction, and displeasure to

direct and correct his officials, and later adopted the privy seal as a tool of royal governance.

This study emphasises how Edward used language and rhetoric to construct his royal persona and manage his political and diplomatic relationships; it also includes a substantial appendix that contains transcription and translation of Edward's letters that have not been previously published. Each chapter presents an interesting case-study in political rhetoric, but linguistic analysis is sometimes limited as the letters are usually provided in translation, with some key words in the main text, and the original Latin or French text given in the footnotes. The proposed arguments are not always clearly articulated, and improved signposting would help indicate how the argument develops throughout each section, especially as the chapters often begin with the principles of epistolary writing before addressing specific context of Edward's letters. Overall, this study will be of interest scholars working on letters and letter writing, political rhetoric, royal studies, and the presentation of kingship.

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Martha Rampton, *Trafficking with Demons: Magic, Ritual, and Gender from Late Antiquity to 1000* **(New York: Cornell University Press, 2021) ebook, 480 pp., USD 42.99, ISBN 9781501735318**

Review

Trafficking with Demons: Magic, Ritual, and Gender from Late Antiquity to 1000 by Martha Rampton is an ambitious book that attempts to offer new arguments for a field that has already garnered much attention. Rampton makes the book accessible to those unfamiliar with medieval magic, particularly ritual magic and offers great detail and context in her arguments. *Trafficking with Demons* is divided into four parts. The introduction explains that the book will examine the 'intersections between magic, ritual, and gender in late antiquity Christendom and the early medieval Latin West', beginning with 'the development of the church in the first century and end[ing] with the writings of Bishop Burchard of Worms' (p. 2). The project seems ambitious as the subject matter spans a millennium and could easily lose a reader unfamiliar with the era or the subject matter. Thankfully, Rampton provides sufficient context and is kind enough to quickly repeat concepts that were given more depth in early chapters.

Part one, titled 'Studying Magic,' offers sufficient historical, social, and political context, focusing on the Carolingian era. First, and most importantly, Rampton attempts to define magic, witch, sorcerer¸ and terms central to her study by arguing that scholars, and thus the reader, can 'endeavor to observe magic

through the eyes of a medieval individual' (p. 26). Aspects of the book focus on Frankish and English history, though Rampton does mention other geographical locations.

Part two focuses on the first five hundred years CE and, specifically, the relationship that Christianity had with magic, both in terms of theory and practice. Rampton discusses the connection between rituals and spaces, noting that Christian rituals are connected to a church, an enclosed space away from the elements. Christians created metaphors grounded in the city of Jerusalem, while pagan rituals were connected to open spaces and grounded in nature (p. 97). Furthermore, the church, or more specifically, the altar, became a male-gendered space; the night, more specifically, the moon, became gendered female due to its connection with pagan goddess worship (pp. 98, 206).

In addition to discussing Christianity's attempts to forge an identity in contrast to pagan worshippers, much of part two emphasises the role of divination and the connection of death to magic. Women have been connected to death and liminal spaces since antiquity, whether for good or ill reasons (p. 152). Despite the rivalry between Christianity and paganism, there was some agreement between the two ideologies; for example, while necromancy was not necessarily shunned by Christians and pagans alike, both ideologies agreed that the dead should not be used for divination (p. 161).

This book is extensive but not exhaustive. The first half of the book offers a thorough introduction to magic and, more specifically, demonic magic and provides details about specific cases of magic or important historical events that tie into magic or the fear of women going outside social norms.

While the first half of the book lays down the contextual background, part three begins to discuss how magic traffics, or uses, demons in more detail, including how Christianity interacted with magic, specifically demonic rituals. For example, a prophecy given by a lay person was possible, but that prophesy was usually not provided by demonic powers rather than the divine; thus, the demons gave knowledge to humans (p. 222). One way the humans trafficked demons was through the use of healing magic. Rampton indicates when texts directly mention women or when specific magic can be assumed to be connected to women (magic involving childbirth, menstruation, or abortion). Despite its generally positive title, healing magic was not viewed positively by the Christian Church, as the church preferred the use of prayers and other approved rituals to heal others. In the eyes of the Church, healing magic was still demonic and was a step below secular remedies (p. 244). The purpose of this part of the book is to set up the more in-depth arguments of part four. Part three shows the progress of attitudes towards magic after 500 CE when magic changed from 'magic-as-sin' to 'magic-as-communal-disruption.' There was a change in legal records and religious ideology; there was no longer a need to convert pagans, only a need to continue the church's control.

The last section of the book, part four, discusses the second half of the first millennium and focuses on the early Middle Ages within the Romanized areas of Europe (p. 273). It is difficult to generalise the transformations that magic underwent in the last half of the millennium, as magic depends heavily on geographical and cultural settings. In addition to examining the changes that magic underwent between 750 and 1025 CE, Rampton focuses predominantly on the role of women and gender in magic in this section. Rampton notes that there was an early medieval belief that women could not manipulate demons; therefore, any woman claiming to practice magic through the use of demons was not a serious threat to the social order (p. 311). This belief contrasts with an earlier belief that women's magic was sinful and powerful enough to be taken seriously: the belief that magic could be used to empower women (p. 270). Women practising magic opposed the Carolingian ideal that women should be submissive and only occupy supporting roles, not primary roles, such as that of a magic practitioner (p. 313). The latter portion of this section gives two case studies, one of Empress Judith (d. *c*.843) and the other of Theutberga and Waldrada. Both cases involved women accused of magic and women stepping beyond the supportive and submissive role expected of women. The cases highlight the male anxiety surrounding women gaining power.

Rampton's book is an ambitious project, attempting to cover a millennium of historical, social, and political contexts. While the book covers a broad span of time and geographical area, it helps the reader understand how views on magic changed

drastically depending on where and when magic was discussed. The point of this book is to bring new attention to the least studied period in European history: the long early Middle Ages (p. 8). The book fills a gap in scholarship and does so in a way that engages the reader and highlights the depth of the research presented.

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