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Letter From the Editors

Thank you for reading the fourth volume of *Dies Legibiles!* This year, the journal's reach continued to grow; we received more than double the number of submissions than we did during the 2022–2023 academic year, including submissions from more than fifteen colleges and universities. In a time when public support and funding for the humanities is falling, it has been an incredible experience to see such strong enthusiasm for the field of Medieval Studies.

In mid-April, we received a blow: the Humanities and Social Sciences Labs program at Smith College, through which *Dies Legibiles* receives faculty support and student editors, was defunded. Despite this setback, we plan to adapt and publish the fifth edition of *Dies Legibiles* in the 2024–2025 academic year. While the existence of this journal alone cannot alter the trend of diminished humanities funding within academia, we believe that the papers and book reviews contained within prove both the value and necessity of undergraduate research in Medieval Studies. By looking to the past, the upcoming generations of historians and literary scholars demonstrate the resonance of the Middle Ages in the modern age.

We are immensely grateful to every student who submitted a paper, to every faculty member at Smith and other institutions who shared our journal with their students, and to anyone, anywhere, who has spread their love of Medieval Studies to others. Without your passion, *Dies Legibiles* could not exist. Special thanks to Professor Eglal Doss-Quinby for her support with French submissions and to our faculty advisor, Professor Joshua C. Birk.

Dalia Dainora Cohen and the *Dies Legibiles* Team
We proudly present: *Dies Legibiles* Volume IV

"THE STING OF BITTER GRIEF": CHILD LOSS IN THE MIDDLE AGES

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In the earliest days of the Black Death, Joan, daughter of Edward III of England, died in Bordeaux while en route to Castile for her marriage. Edward wrote to the father of Joan's intended husband, informing him with "intense bitterness of heart," of what had occurred.[1] He told him, "no fellow human being could be surprised if we were inwardly desolated by the sting of this bitter grief, for we are human too," before expressing gratitude that God had called her to heaven.[2] Edward's letter articulates an important dichotomy between inner feeling and outward expression which pervades sources discussing medieval child death.

Some have taken the differences in how bereaved parents in the Middle Ages mourned to mean that they did not feel interior grief, but modern scholars tend to disagree. Outward protestations of stoicism and acceptance of God's will belied the development of various rituals and practices that sought to honor deceased children. People looked beyond the religious practices sanctioned by the Church and made efforts to baptize dead babies and bury infants and children in exceptional ways. Furthermore, records from the time show a tension between idealized reactions and the more complicated reality.

The popularity of the argument that the death of a child was unremarkable to medieval parents stems largely from one man: Philippe Ariès. Despite his influence on the study of history, Ariès was not himself a career historian and received no institutional recognition until he was sixty-four years old.[3] He referred to himself as a "historien du dimanche," or Sunday historian, indicating the somewhat

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[1] Thomas Rymer, ed., *Foedera, Conventiones, Litterae, et cujuscunque generis acta publica* III, 20 vols (London: 1704–35), 39–40, quoted in Rosemary Horrox, ed., *The Black Death*, Manchester Medieval Sources Series (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1994), 250.

[2] Rymer, *Foedera, Conventiones, Litterae,* 39–40, quoted in Horrox, *The Black Death*, 250.

[3] Guillaume Gros, "Philippe Ariès, entre traditionalisme et mentalités: Itinéraire d'un précurseur," *Vingtième Siècle. Revue d'histoire* 90, no. 2 (2006): 121, https://doi.org/10.3917/ving.090.0121.

casual and amateurish nature of his historical study.[4] Ariès was involved with the *mentalités* school of history, which gained popularity during the twentieth century. He believed that historical societies should be studied with an anthropological approach like the study of a foreign culture, rather than through the traditional framework of important events and grand movements.[5]

When *L'Enfant et la vie familiale sous l'Ancien Régime*, which had been released in France to marginal success, was translated into English in 1962 under the title of *Centuries of Childhood*, it was met with immediate acclaim.[6] The historical interpretation that it offered felt new and revolutionary, perfect for an era in which the social sciences were undergoing rapid change.

Ariès stated openly in his introduction that he was not a specialist in the *ancien régime*, but rather a demographic historian who wanted to examine the origins of the modern family unit.[7] He sought to identify the evolution of the conception of childhood, and came to the conclusion that it did not exist until roughly the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.[8] Based on that supposition, Ariès argued that in the Middle Ages, the death of a child was hardly an event of note, even to the child's parents. He viewed apathy as a survival mechanism rather than a moral failing because "people could not allow themselves to become too attached to something that was regarded as a probable loss."[9]

Ariès' methodology has faced criticism over its lack of depth. He based his assertions of medieval perceptions of children on the study of premodern pictorial evidence, which treated all art as "unmediated representations of the perceptual categories of their periods," rather than acknowledging any potential for figurative or metaphorical elements.[10] The narrow scope of the sources that he chose to reference inherently limited his capacity to analyze shifting attitudes. For example, he looked to the rise of portraiture that depicts children in the seventeenth century and claimed that it indicated that "the common conscience had discovered that the child's soul too was immortal,"[11] but further research reveals that assertion as simply untrue. Furthermore, he neglects to analyze attitudes towards children beyond recognizing that they are sometimes different to our own.[12]

The idea that medieval parents did not care for their children has been described as "untenable" in light of modern research that interrogates medieval conceptions of emotion more

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[4] Jeroen J.H. Dekker and Leendert F. Groenendijk, "Philippe Ariès's Discovery of Childhood after Fifty Years: The Impact of a Classic Study on Educational Research," *Oxford Review of Education* 38, no. 2 (2012): 134.

[5] Gros, "Entre traditionalisme et mentalités," 132.

[6] Gros, "Entre traditionalisme et mentalités," 133.

[7] Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life*, trans. Robert Baldick (New York: Vintage Books, 1962), 9.

[8] Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood*, 43.

[9] Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood*, 38.

[10] Adrian Wilson, "The Infancy of the History of Childhood: An Appraisal of Philippe Ariès," History and Theory 19, no. 2 (1980): 146, https://doi.org/10.2307/2504795.

[11] Ariès, Centuries of Childhood, 43.

[12] Wilson, "An Appraisal of Philippe Ariès," 138.

thoroughly.[13] In an interview a few years before his death, Ariès said that he wished that he had learned more about the Middle Ages and "refusait d'accepter l'idée qu'il aurait soutenu que l'enfant ait été traité par les adultes comme s'il n'existait pas" [refused to accept the idea that he would have maintained that the child had been treated by adults like he did not exist].[14]

Following the American release of *Centuries of Childhood*, Ariès spent time in Baltimore lecturing to a new generation of historians and continuing his research on the history of death.[15] One retrospective analysis published twenty years after the original release of the book claimed that "few works have exerted a greater influence upon British and American social historians" than *Centuries of Childhood*.[16] Even so, following the publication of Ariès' work, examinations of child death in the Middle Ages did not receive significant attention for several decades.

The bioarchaeology of infants and children generally does not receive as much attention as it ought to due to understandings of infant death throughout history, understandings that some believe to be reinforced by the "apparent marginalization of infants within mortuary contexts."[17] The study of the history of children's funerals dates back to the 1970s and 1980s, though then it was only of interest as it related to familial tombs.[18] However, following the publication of Grete Lillehammer's 1989 article "A Child is Born," which called on anthropologists to focus more on non-adults in their work, infants and children became the subjects of more serious intellectual consideration.[19]

Over the past few decades, emotion has taken more of a place in historical research. Starting in the mid-1990s, post-processual archaeologists have "argued that the elucidation of human experience [is] a legitimate and important contribution that archaeology might make."[20] They have tried to interpret emotional significance from their findings, while understanding the changing role of emotion over the centuries.

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[13] Philippa Maddern, "Rhetorics of Death and Resurrection: Child Death in Late-Medieval English Miracle Tales," in *Death, Emotion and Childhood in Premodern Europe*, ed. Katie Barclay, Kimberley Reynolds, and Ciara Rawnsley (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2016), 49, https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-57199-1_3.

[14] Guillaume Gros, "Philippe Ariès : Naissance et Postérité d'un Modèle Interprétatif de l'enfance," *Histoire de l'éducation*, no. 125 (2010): 53–54.

[15] Gros, "Entre traditionalisme et mentalités," 134.

[16] Wilson, "An Appraisal of Philippe Ariès," 132.

[17] Kevin Cootes et al., "Blood Is Thicker than Baptismal Water: A Late Medieval Perinatal Burial in a Small Household Chest," *International Journal of Osteoarchaeology* 31, no. 3 (May 2021): 358, https://doi.org/10.1002/oa.2955.

[18] M.F. Bacqué et al., "Mort périnatale et d'un jeune enfant. Histoire des rites et des pratiques funéraires en Europe issus de l'expression affective et sociale du deuil. Première partie : de la Préhistoire aux Lumières," *Neuropsychiatrie de l'Enfance et de l'Adolescence* 66, no. 4 (June 2018): 242, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.neurenf.2018.03.001.

[19] Siân E. Halcrow, Nancy Tayles, and Gail E. Elliott, "The Bioarchaeology of Fetuses," in *The Anthropology of the Fetus: Biology, Culture, and Society*, ed. Sallie Han, Tracy K. Betsinger, and Amy B. Scott (New York City and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2017): 85.

[20] Sarah Tarlow, "The Archaeology of Emotion and Affect," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 41 (2012): 172.

Importantly, not everyone agrees on what information to extrapolate from archaeological findings. For example, many historians view the distinct treatment of children's graves and bodies as an expression of tenderness and love on the part of the parents or other adults involved in the burial.[21] Other historians, however, such as Aubrey Cannon and Katherine Cook, view the physical distance between children's graves and those of adults as a way to minimize the need to acknowledge them, removing them from places where they might be seen more regularly.[22]

During the medieval period, there were up to 100 stillbirths and deaths per 1000 live births.[23] That figure posed a problem for a majority-Christian society that believed that they were born tainted by original sin and required baptism to erase it.[24] The faithful then had to consider what happened to those who had died with no sin but the first on their souls.

Saint Augustine of Hippo shaped how pre-Reformation Christians conceived of sin. He wrote in the fourth century that unbaptized infants would burn in hellfire for all eternity as their souls had not been washed clean of the original sin of Adam and Eve.[25] Theologians such as Anselm of Canterbury continued to endorse Augustine's views into the early twelfth century, but the idea of babies burning in hell for no other crime than being born human discomfited many people.[26] By the later twelfth century, Peter Abelard, himself a father, introduced a gentler theory. He suggested that the stain of original sin alone did not merit any punishment more severe than the denial of "the beatific vision of God" in the afterlife.[27] Peter Lombard disseminated the idea further, leading Pope Innocent III to adopt it into canon in 1201.[28] Although the Church accepted that unbaptized infants would not burn in the fires of hell, the question of where exactly unbaptized infants spent eternity remained.

Later figures in the thirteenth century, notably Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas, theorized that there existed a place for unbaptized infants to go after death called *limbus puerorum*, or the limbo of children.[29] There, the souls of infants in limbo rested in eternal darkness, though Albertus clarified that they would not suffer.[30] Albertus wrote that upon the Resurrection, the infants in *limbus*

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[21] Cootes et al., "Blood Is Thicker," 363; Roberta Gilchrist, "Voices from the Cemetery: The Social Archaeology of Late-Medieval Burial," *Medieval Archaeology* 66, no. 1 (January 2022): 129, https://doi.org/10.1080/00766097.2022.2003610.

[22] Gilchrist, "Voices From the Cemetery," 129.

[23] Cootes et al., "Blood Is Thicker," 359.

[24] Cootes et al., "Blood Is Thicker," 359.

[25] Cootes et al., "Blood Is Thicker," 359.

[26] Francis A. Sullivan, "The Development of Doctrine about Infants Who Die Unbaptized," *Theological Studies* 72, no. 1 (March 2011): 3, https://doi.org/10.1177/004056391107200101.

[27] Sullivan, "Development of Doctrine," 3–4.

[28] Sullivan, "Development of Doctrine," 4.

[29] Christopher Beiting, "The Nature and Structure of Limbo in the Works of Albertus Magnus," *New Blackfriars* 85, no. 999 (2004): 492.

[30] Beiting, "Structure of Limbo," 499.

puerorum would receive thirty year old bodies, yet they would remain trapped in their dark void away from their families and the light of God.[31]

The invention of both forms of limbo, like that of purgatory, served to soften the uncomfortable binary of the afterlife in Catholic doctrine, although unlike purgatory, medieval parents found little comfort in the idea of limbo.[32] For one, they were not totally inclined to accept its existence, for which reason it appears relatively rarely in medieval religious iconography.[33] Furthermore, the concept of limbo "proved culturally dissatisfying."[34] It does not fit neatly into the framework of an afterlife where God rewarded the good and punished the sinners. Confusing theological explanations about how it was not technically a punishment did little to mitigate "l'angoisse des parents qui ne supportaient pas l'idée que leur enfant ne puisse y être pleinement heureux" [the anguish of parents who could not bear the idea that their children could not be entirely happy there].[35]

Parents could often come to terms with the fact of their child's death, but not so much the total severance of ties that a lack of baptism could cause.[36] If an infant died before a baptism could be administered, no matter where they were sent in the afterlife, they would be excluded from burial in consecrated ground, and they would not be resurrected with the rest of the Christians at the end of the world.[37] Therefore, they were separated from their families four times over; through death, burial, the afterlife, and, later, by the Resurrection. In a time that placed such heavy emphasis on the importance of the afterlife, that separation must have seemed torturous to the parents.

By the mid to late Middle Ages, the Church allowed any layperson, including women, to baptize an infant whose survival appeared to be at risk.[38] Later, a member of the clergy would need to validate the emergency baptism, and he would require witness testimony confirming that the ritual was performed correctly on a live infant.[39] If those present succeeded in baptizing a newborn before it passed away, they could find some solace in the belief that the baby would spend an eternity in heaven, with God and other lost family members. On the other hand, the obligation of the laity to perform baptisms in moments of crisis placed the responsibility for any lost infants squarely on their shoulders.

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[31] Beiting, "Structure of Limbo," 499.

[32] Isabelle Séguy and Michel Signoli, "Quand La Naissance Côtoie La Mort: Pratiques Funéraires et Religion Populaire En France Au Moyen Âge et à l'époque Moderne," in *Nasciturus, Infans, Puerulus Vobis Mater Terra: La Muerte En La Infancia* (Servei d'Investigacions Arqueològiques i Prehistòriques, 2008), 501.

[33] Bacqué et al., "Mort périnatale," 245.

[34] Steven Bednarski and Andrée Courtemanche, "'Sadly and with a Bitter Heart': What the Caesarean Section Meant in the Middle Ages," Florilegium 28, no. 1 (January 2011): 57, https://doi.org/10.3138/flor.28.003.

[35] Séguy and Signoli, "Quand La Naissance," 500–501.

[36] Séguy and Signoli, "Quand La Naissance," 500–501.

[37] Cootes et al., "Blood Is Thicker," 359; Bednarski and Courtemanche, "Caesarean," 48.

[38] Cootes et al., "Blood Is Thicker," 359; Bednarski and Courtemanche, "Caesarean," 42.

[39] Cootes et al., "Blood Is Thicker," 359.

If a woman died in childbirth with the fetus still inside of her, the medieval Church strongly encouraged a postmortem uterine section, known as a *sectio in mortua,* so that the infant might receive salvation.[40] The idea of the surgical extraction of a fetus in the Middle Ages brings to mind images of a man deciding to sacrifice his wife in favor of a potential heir. The fact of the matter is, such operations were performed—to our knowledge—exclusively on the bodies of women already dead. When in the late sixteenth century a man suggested that such operations might be performed on living women, he sparked outrage from other medical doctors who called the idea "horrible," and said that the operation could only appeal to sadists who wanted to watch women suffer.[41] Even in cases of *sectiones in mortua*, when the mother had already died and could feel no pain, the procedure took a psychological toll on those involved. First hand accounts suggest a discomfort with cutting open the body of a dead woman in an act that must have felt like a mutilation.

One document from Volx in the latter half of the fifteenth century gives an account of a man named Nicolau Fabri whose wife, Catarino, died due to complications during labor.[42] Nicolau petitioned the local bailiff, asking, "with a bitter heart," for permission to allow a barber-surgeon to perform a *sectio in mortua*, "as is normal to be done in such situations."[43] People in the Middle Ages understood that they had a very short window of time between the death of the mother and the death of the fetus.[44] Given that fact, it seems unlikely that Nicolau drew up his petition before the actual procedure. In fact, he filed the petition at the request of the surgeon, who "sought that a public mandate or document be made for him," for his records.[45] The charter may have served as a kind of insurance, indicating a level of anxiety surrounding the opening of a dead woman's body. The fact that the procedure took place at all, and regularly at that, indicates how crucial medieval people understood baptism to be.

One final desperate measure remained for parents who had been categorically unable to baptize their infant before its death: the respite shrine. There, mourners could bring the deceased baby and implore the saints to revive it long enough to receive the rite of baptism, at which point the soul of the baby would ascend to heaven.[46] Respite shrines were very common in western Europe during the

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[40] Bednarski and Courtemanche, "Caesarean," 43.

[41] Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski, *Not of Woman Born: Representations of Caesarean Birth in Medieval and Renaissance Culture* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1991): 45, https://doi.org/10.7298/564m-rx37.

[42] Bednarski and Courtemanche, "Caesarean," 36.

[43] Archives Départementales Des Alpes-de-Haute-Provence, Series 2E, Register 2920, Fols. 60v- 61; 2E 3878 Fol. 176v; and 2E 3901 Fol. 43, quoted in Bednarski and Courtemanche, "Caesarean," 61–62.

[44] Bednarski and Courtemanche, "Caesarean," 40, 43.

[45] Archives Départementales Des Alpes-de-Haute-Provence, Series 2E, Register 2920, Fols. 60v- 61; 2E 3878 Fol. 176v; and 2E 3901 Fol. 43, quoted in Bednarski and Courtemanche, "Caesarean," 62.

[46] Séguy and Signoli, "Quand La Naissance," 503.

medieval period, growing in popularity over the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.[47] At least 2000 supposed miracles were performed at one shrine alone in modern-day Switzerland over a period of around 150 years, which averages out to one per month over the span of several generations.[48]

The journey could be arduous, for which reason mothers recovering from the strains of childbirth rarely went, with family and neighbors going in their place.[49] Travel parties sometimes numbered in the dozens, becoming a kind of community ordeal.[50] While families usually brought their babies to respite shrines immediately after their death, some only did so after they had already buried them in unhallowed ground.[51] The psychological element of carrying the body of an infant, who had in some cases been dead long enough to start to decompose, must have weighed on the travelers. They had hope, but no guarantee that they would succeed in their aim, and the stakes were clearly high. Some likely saw the experience as "une forme de pénitence, d'expiation des péchés des parents, « punis » avec la naissance d'un enfant mort qui n'a pu bénéficier du baptême" [a form of penitence, of expiation of the sins of parents 'punished' with the birth of a dead infant who could not be baptized].[52]

When the party arrived at the shrine they would pray to various intercessory saints, possibly for hours.[53] Eventually, people would come to believe that the baby had been revived due to various supposed signs of life. Some may have interpreted basic elements of decomposition as the infant returning to life. Hours or days after death, when rigor mortis recedes and the body relaxes, "des bruits, proches du spasme, du gémissement ou du sanglot, se font entendre" [noises, close to spasms, moans, or tears, are heard].[54] Additionally, the relaxation of muscles can cause the opening of the mouth or eyes and the movement of limbs, which likely seemed compelling to those who saw it.[55] Although people may have understood how decomposition manifests, most people who saw signs of life likely sincerely believed that they were real. The pilgrims who traveled to respite shrines did so because they believed in miracles, and so they likely saw what they wanted to see.[56] In their desperation and blind hope, they likely seized on anything that would have allowed for the infant's baptism.

A small minority of people manufactured signs of life, probably out of the same impulse that led parents and midwives to baptize infants they knew had already died. One such sign of life included

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[47] Bednarski and Courtemanche, "Caesarean," 47; Séguy and Signoli, "Quand La Naissance," 503.

[48] Jacques Gélis, "Comment faisait-on autrefois le deuil de l'enfant mort-né ? Le rituel du « sanctuaire à répit »," *Le Carnet PSY* 186, no. 1 (2015): 36, https://doi.org/10.3917/lcp.186.0032.

[49] Bacqué et al., "Mort périnatale," 245.

[50] Jacques Gélis, "Miracle et Médecine Aux Siècles Classiques: Le Corps Médical et Le Retour Temporaire à La Vie Des Mort-Nés," *Historical Reflections / Réflexions Historiques* 9, no. 1/2 (1982): 93.

[51] Bacqué et al., "Mort périnatale," 245.

[52] Bacqué et al., "Mort périnatale," 245.

[53] Gélis, "Miracle et Médecine," 93.

[54] Gélis, "Miracle et Médecine," 94.

[55] Gélis, "Comment faisait-on autrefois," 34.

[56] Gélis, "Miracle et Médecine," 92-93.

the upward movement of a feather via thermal lift over an infant's body which had been heated with hot coals, imitating breath.[57] The Church criticized the falsification of signs of life and denied the validity of baptisms performed on their grounds, but they could do nothing to prevent people from misunderstanding other signs, or simply imagining them.[58]

The idea that their deceased unbaptized infants could burn in hell or be otherwise excluded from heaven exacerbated the suffering of grieving parents and gave them a sense of guilt for having failed to secure the salvation of their children.[59] As the desperation that drove efforts to baptize their infant by any means curdled into grief when the infant did not survive, the question that followed was that of what to do with the remains if the baptism had not been successful.

The creation of the cemetery as a sacred place that could be tainted by the inhumation of unbaptized individuals took place in the tenth and eleventh centuries.[60] Many believed that the burial of the unbaptized with the baptized would compromise their salvation, and so had an incentive to prevent it. When normative burial practices were forbidden, communities came up with multiple alternative rituals to honor the children that they had lost.

Some medieval infant burial rituals could have potentially served as a form of posthumous baptism. During the Middle Ages, burials of neonates and infants sometimes clustered around the walls of churches in a phenomenon known as "eaves-drip" burials.[61] The most favored explanation of those eaves-drip burials is that grieving parents believed that the rainwater that would fall from the roof of the church onto their child's grave "would have become sanctified by contact with a holy building," and potentially compensate for the infants lack of baptism in life.[62] In another potential form of posthumous baptism, some medieval parents buried their unbaptized infants in decommissioned baptisteries, possibly in the hopes that contact with the hallowed ground might contribute to their child's salvation.[63] In one Italian medieval church, 80% of those buried in the decommissioned baptistery died before the age of six years, and while many of them who had lived even a few days had likely been baptized, it is possible that parents may have believed that the location of burial could

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[57] Gilchrist, "Voices From the Cemetery," 132; Gélis, "Miracle et Médecine," 92.

[58] Gélis, "Miracle et Médecine," 92.

[59] Bednarski and Courtemanche, "Caesarean," 44.

[60] Bacqué et al., "Mort périnatale," 245.

[61] Elizabeth Craig-Atkins, "Eavesdropping on Short Lives: Eaves-Drip Burial and the Differential Treatment of Children One Year of Age and under in Early Christian Cemeteries," in *Medieval Childhood*, ed. D. M. Hadley and K. A. Hemer, vol. 3, Archaeological Approaches (Oxford and Philadelphia: Oxbow Books, 2014): 95–113, https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvh1drt6.10; Madison Crow, Colleen Zori, and Davide Zori, "Doctrinal and Physical Marginality in Christian Death: The Burial of Unbaptized Infants in Medieval Italy," *Religions* 11, no. 12 (December 2020): sec. 2.2. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel11120678.

[62] Craig-Atkins, "Eaves-Drip Burial," 102.

[63] Crow, Zori, and Zori, "Doctrinal and Physical Marginality," sec. 3.3.

increase the potency of the baptism and protect those who had died before they could become full members of their religious community.[64]

Rules surrounding the exclusion of unbaptized infants from burial in consecrated ground were not consistently followed. Some families decided that their infant's burial within consecrated ground was more important than the dictates of canon law and took it upon themselves to perform clandestine burials within churchyards. It is not possible to know with full certainty which excavated gravesites belong to unbaptized neonates since baptism does not leave a mark on the body, but indications such as gestational age can suggest to archaeologists and historians that baptism was unlikely.[65]

Burials of neonates sometimes involved rites and rituals that differed from the hegemonic standard. Some communities in medieval Italy buried fetuses and infants in roof tiles in a tradition that dates back to Ancient Rome.[66] The practice seems to have been relatively common, and may have provided a certain gravity to the burial of an infant to whom the traditional Catholic rite was unavailable. While tile burials were an Italian phenomenon, it follows across Europe that parents ritualized the illicit burials of their stillborn children. In 2018, archaeologists examining a medieval churchyard in England found remains believed to be those of a late term fetus. The remains were laid out west to east, as dictated by Catholic tradition in a small oak box with iron fittings, including a lock that had been repaired.[67] That container would have been an item of high monetary value within the household and would not have been chosen at random. It seems that the parents chose a receptacle that showed respect for their child, despite the fact that they weren't entitled to any particular rites according to the Church.

Beyond the archaeological data, records from throughout the Middle Ages show that clandestine burials were a recognized phenomenon that the Church had to suppress. One Florentine man, Luca da Panzano, wrote about the potentially clandestine burial of his son. Although the person who delivered the infant claimed that he was stillborn, Luca baptized him and buried him in a churchyard.[68] Similarly, legal records contain many accusations against midwives for post-mortem baptisms and clandestine burials.[69] In part because of that lack of regard for the laws of the Church, the Dean and Chapter of Hereford Cathedral received a royal license in 1389 to encircle their churchyard with walls and a gate that locked.[70]

When families could not, or chose not to try to, bury their offspring in consecrated ground, they commonly chose instead to bury their child in or around the home. Exact methods varied, but

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[64] Crow, Zori, and Zori, "Doctrinal and Physical Marginality," sec. 3.3.

[65] Cootes et al., "Blood Is Thicker," 362.

[66] Crow, Zori, and Zori, "Doctrinal and Physical Marginality," sec. 3.2.

[67] Cootes et al., "Blood Is Thicker," 361, 362.

[68] Crow, Zori, and Zori, "Doctrinal and Physical Marginality," sec. 2.2.

[69] Blumenfeld-Kosinski, Not of Woman Born, 26; Cootes et al., "Blood Is Thicker," 363.

[70] Cootes et al., "Blood Is Thicker," 363.

populations across Europe practiced domestic burial, including the burial of infants up to six months old.[71] Some chose to bury their child under the floor of their home, others chose to bury them under the threshold of the home or in an exterior wall, while still others chose to bury them around the home.[72]

Philippe Ariès made specific reference in *Centuries of Childhood* to the phenomenon of domestic burial of infants and children in Basque culture. The conclusion which he drew was that Basque parents would have viewed their dead child as "such an unimportant little thing," that it was fit to bury them "much as we today bury a domestic pet, a cat or a dog."[73] However, Ariès either did not know or neglected to mention that death and the home had a close relationship in Basque culture. For one, domestic burial has roots in Basque mythology, where a boy was able to return to life as he had been buried in his family's garden.[74] Additionally, the Basques saw their relatives, living or dead, "as one who belonged to the house, the family."[75] That perspective influenced the decision to bury the dead— adults as well as children— in or around the homestead.[76] The burial of unbaptized children on their family's property is therefore a phenomenon linked to Basque cultural tradition, rather than an indication that they viewed their late offspring as trash of which they needed to dispose.

Non-normative burial practices of the very young extended beyond just the efforts to honor the unbaptized. First of all, excavations of medieval churchyards across Europe found grave goods with the remains of infants and children more frequently than with those of adults.[77] The presence of grave goods indicates an additional level of care that people showed for the burial of the very young. Some objects from infant and child graves had religious value, while others, such as domestic objects, accessories, or "small polished stones" seem to have been of a more sentimental nature.[78]

Moreover, medieval people tended to position the bodies of deceased infants and children differently than those of adults within their graves. Examples from across western Europe, such as in England, Belgium, and Switzerland, show that infants and children were often laid out on their sides, curled up in a fetal position.[79] That placement is notable because it is distinct; adults were typically

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[71] Gilchrist, "Voices From the Cemetery," 134.

[72] Crow, Zori, and Zori, "Doctrinal and Physical Marginality," sec. 2.4; Ariès, "Centuries of Childhood," 39; Gilchrist, "Voices From the Cemetery," 134–135; Katarzyna Mirgos, "Death in Basque Culture," *Studia Europaea Gnesnensia*, no. 7 (2013): 75.

[73] Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood*, 39.

[74] Katarzyna Mirgos, "Death in Basque Culture," *Studia Europaea Gnesnensia*, no. 7 (2013): 74–75.

[75] Mirgos, "Death in Basque Culture," 75.

[76] Mirgos, "Death in Basque Culture," 75.

[77] Gilchrist, "Voices From the Cemetery," 129; Crow, Zori, and Zori, "Doctrinal and Physical Marginality," sec. 3.3.

[78] Gilchrist, "Voices From the Cemetery," 129.

[79] Gélis, "Comment faisait-on autrefois," 36; Cootes et al., "Blood Is Thicker," 363; Gilchrist, "Voices From the Cemetery," 129.

buried lying on their backs with their arms crossed.[80] Additionally, the children buried in the curled position, including those of infants buried clandestinely, were generally still laid out in the west to east alignment dictated by Church law.[81]

Clusters of child and infant graves were sometimes located in areas with higher foot traffic so that they could "benefit from more frequent intercessory prayers," which was urgent in an era when people believed that such prayers might speed a soul's journey to heaven.[82] Intercessory prayers may have also felt more important to parents of unbaptized infants, many of whom "subscribed to the non-canonical belief" that their own devotion and religious practice might save the souls of their lost infants."[83]

The expectations of mourning were different in the Middle Ages than they are today. Showing strong negative emotions upon the death of a child or loved one was generally discouraged across religious lines because it indicated anger against the divine, which demonstrated insufficient piety and potential doubts about the religious afterlife.[84] It also indicated a prioritization of the mortal body over the immortal soul, which was antithetical to Catholic doctrine.[85] Furthermore, stoicism dominated some medieval Christian intellectual spheres, and those who subscribed to that philosophy viewed visible mourning as a cession of self control that could lead someone to yield to dangerous and immoral passions.[86] The Church expected people to accept the deaths of their children with grace, without lashing out or expressing anger, and the fact that they needed to clarify that position implies that popular reactions to grief flew in the face of that expectation.

Beyond religious advice and cultural conventions providing guidelines on what grief ought to look like, more rigid structures existed to dictate how people mourned. Some medieval Italian communes had laws that forbade "histrionic displays of grief and public laments for the dead," going so far as to send spies to funerals to fine those who showed excessive grief.[87] The legislation of acceptable emotional expression paints the picture of a society in which the popular practices conflicted with the more high-minded ideals.

Some of the reports of violations of the laws restricting public mourning demonstrated the communal nature of grief for a lost child. In one case in Orvieto, Italy, dozens of men "gathered

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[80] Gilchrist, "Voices From the Cemetery," 129.

[81] Cootes et al., "Blood Is Thicker," 363; Gélis, "Comment faisait-on autrefois," 36.

[82] Gilchrist, "Voices From the Cemetery," 129.

[83] Bednarski and Courtemanche, "Caesarean," 45.

[84] Avner Gil'adi, "'The Child Was Small… Not So the Grief for Him': Sources, Structure, and Content of Al-Sakhawi's Consolation Treatise for Bereaved Parents," *Poetics Today* 14, no. 2 (1993): 376, https://doi.org/10.2307/1773124; Carol Lansing, *Passion and Order: Restraint of Grief in the Medieval Italian Communes* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008), 2, https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7591/j.ctv2n7mzm.

[85] Lansing, *Passion and Order*, 82.

[86] Lansing, *Passion and Order*, 7

[87] Lansing, *Passion and Order*, 2

together to weep and lament" over the death of a nobleman's son.[88] The act of coming together to at least perform grief indicates a certain solidarity with the bereaved parents and illustrates the "social and affective" ties that bound medieval communities.[89] It demonstrates that people understood that parents mourning the loss of their child might appreciate a show of solidarity. Interestingly, among the men who were fined for their violation of the law were those who had written them.[90] We might understand that dichotomy as a form of hypocrisy, but it can also indicate the internal conflict of people's values in a time when the moral dictates from on high contradicted the traditional social response to tragedy.

There was also a gendered element to the legal suppression of expressions of grief. While people in the Middle Ages understood that anyone could experience pain at the loss of a loved one, they perceived acts such as weeping or wailing as feminine and emasculating, and so some fathers might try to conceal the signs of grief—though not the emotion itself.[91] That distinction highlights the broader medieval attitude towards grief. People could feel it, but they should not channel that feeling into any form of expression that might indicate a loss of self control or a lack of faith.

Beyond the internal pressures that provoked gendered reactions to grief, the laws that governed acceptable mourning practice turned most often against men.[92] The laws therefore appear to take on an additional role as a weapon of the legal system to enforce philosophical ideals of masculinity.

Even discussions of grief amongst ordinary people tend to turn towards the teachings of the stoics, though they also indicate an understanding of the necessity of feeling grief before attempting to manage it. A book of household advice written by a bourgeois Parisian in 1393 recounts the reactions of a couple, Prudence and Mellibée, to the brutal murder of their daughter. When Mellibée sees what has happened, he reacts with violent grief, weeping, groaning, and tearing his clothes.[93] Initially Prudence admonishes him for his display, which only makes him weep harder. Seeing the flaw in her initial response, she recalls Ovid's counsel in *Remedia Amoris* that "cellui est fol qui s'efforce d'empeschier la mère de plorer la mort de son enfant, jusques à tant qu'elle se soit bien vuidée de larmes et saoulée de plorer. Lors il est temps de la conforter et attremper sa douleur par doulces paroles" [he is a fool who tries to stop a mother from weeping at the death of her child until she is fully emptied of tears and has wept sufficiently. Then it is time to comfort her and ease her pain with soft words].[94]

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[88] Lansing, *Passion and Order*, 5

[89] Lansing, *Passion and Order*, 5

[90] Lansing, *Passion and Order*, 2

[91] Didier Lett, "Parents Distraught at the Death of a Child. Paternal and Maternal Emotions in Early Thirteenth-Century England," trans. Marian Rothstein, *Clio. Women, Gender, History*, no. 47 (2018): 186–187.

[92] Lansing, *Passion and Order*, 2, 48.

[93] *Le Ménagier de Paris: Traité de morale et d'économie domestique, composé en 1393 par un bourgeois parisien*, vol. 1 (1393; repr., Paris, 1846): 187, https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/44070/pg44070-images.html.

[94] *Le Ménagier de Paris*, 187.

Their story, though fictional, has value in showing the idealization of stoicism in the face of loss but also resistance to that ideal. After Mellibée has wept for a time, a debate ensues. Prudence references the stoic philosopher Seneca, who said that people should take the deaths of their children as lightly as they ought to take their own, and Mellibée responds that even Christ wept for the death of his friend.[95] She counters that "plourer atrempéement soit permis, toutesvoies plorer desmesuréement est deffendu" [crying is permitted in moderation, however, excessive weeping is not].[96] The fact that Mellibée resists the philosophy that his wife promotes and asserts his right to feel and express his pain indicates that stoic ideals did not enjoy universal acceptance.

Some writers in the medieval Muslim world compiled diverse contemporary materials that discussed reactions to the deaths of children into advice books known as consolation treatises.[97] The works served as tools to "channel the strong emotional reactions of bereaved parents into legitimate religious modes of mourning," rather than those that might indicate mistrust or a lack of faith in the divine.[98] Generally that meant that parents should accept that the death of their child was God's will, and that they should bear that will with patience and grace. The need to channel strong emotions into religious matters upon the death of a child— which the treatises instructed— testifies to the existence of those strong emotions.[99] The treatises show without a doubt that parental instincts overrode "cultural-religious dictates" that encouraged stoicism in the face of loss.[100]

People wrote consolation treatises to advise people on how to cope with grief. As such, they present idealized images of appropriate mourning, but also more realistic accounts. The reactions to the loss of a child that one sees in a consolation treatise, despite the contemporary encouragement of stoicism, are familiar to a modern reader. One treatise recounts experiences of bereaved parents who could not eat or sleep, who became physically weak, and who were further disturbed upon seeing their late child's toys or another child who looked like them.[101]

Accounts of the miracles of medieval saints make up an invaluable resource for the examination of child death in the Middle Ages. The resurrection of infants who had died unbaptized was often "a key miracle cited in canonization processes," meaning that a variety of depictions survive today.[102] They offer a look at the reactions of families as well as other community members upon the death of a child in the form of a narrative scene rather than archaeological data for historians to interpret.

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[95] *Le Ménagier de Paris*, 187–188.

[96] *Le Ménagier de Paris*, 188.

[97] Gil'adi, "The Child Was Small," 371.

[98] Gil'adi, "The Child Was Small," 367–368.

[99] Gil'adi, "The Child Was Small," 368.

[100] Gil'adi, "The Child Was Small," 385.

[101] Gil'adi, "The Child Was Small," 376.

[102] Crow, Zori, and Zori, "Doctrinal and Physical Marginality," sec. 2.2.

Parents in miracle stories frequently reacted to the deaths of their children with violent displays of grief, though the descriptions of those reactions differed along gender lines. Fathers sometimes appeared "numb, silent, even stunned" upon learning of what had happened.[103] They might additionally try to comfort their wives while refusing to accept comfort in return in an effort to fulfill the expected role of husband as protector.[104] Invariably, however, the stoic facade could not last forever and the father broke down in tears just like his wife.[105] Essentially, miracle accounts suggest that a father's grief invariably outweighed his social conditioning, however strong that might be.

In line with medieval ideas about women as slaves to "passion," miracle accounts generally present mothers as uncontrolled in their grief in contrast to the father's attempts at stoicism.[106] Tears fall well within the accepted behavior for women, but the violence that grief leads them to enact against themselves takes them out of the bounds of femininity—even out of civilization as they understood it.[107] Medieval society saw women's perceived lack of control over their emotions as dangerous, using the Greek mythological figure of Medea as a representation of the potential consequences.[108]

Furthermore, accounts of miracles show that grief and mourning for infants and children who died extended to non-family adults in their communities. When a child died and no biological parent was present to express grief, other adults, such as adoptive parents or neighbors, expressed grief in their place, sometimes noted to be equal to that of any parent.[109]

Medieval parents frequently lost children and had to come up with strategies to cope with that loss. The hegemonic religious practice of the day did not provide sufficient comfort for such a painful event, so people created their own. The baptismal rituals for stillborn infants demonstrated that people cared about their children before they were even born, and alternative burial rituals for children show that they wanted to memorialize them beyond the simple burial that the Church mandated.

The same spirit that drove medieval parents to circumvent societal ideals around mourning continued for generations. Up until the twentieth century, Irish Catholic communities created alternative burial grounds, called Cillíní, for unbaptized infants in order to honor and grieve for them while still respecting the laws of the Church that forbade their burial in consecrated ground.[110] While the Cillíní are a decidedly post-medieval phenomenon, first appearing during the

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[103] Lett, "Parents Distraught," 186.

[104] Lett, "Parents Distraught," 185–186.

[105] Lett, "Parents Distraught," 182, 186–187.

[106] Lansing, *Passion and Order*, 7.

[107] Lett, "Parents Distraught," 190.

[108] Lansing, *Passion and Order*, 7.

[109] Maddern, "Rhetorics of Death and Resurrection," 53–54.

[110] Eileen M. Murphy, "Children's Burial Grounds in Ireland (Cillíní) and Parental Emotions Toward Infant Death," *International Journal of Historical Archaeology* 15, no. 3 (2011): 416.

Counter-Reformation period, they still show a popular resistance to the callousness of Catholic doctrine surrounding infant burial, even in times when mortality was higher.[111]

Ultimately, the impulse to grieve for and honor a child who has died is not a novel phenomenon. Modern research points to the fact that although people expressed their pain differently in centuries past, they still suffered when their children died. The different practices and rituals that people came up with are a testament to their will to respect those who passed, even when thinking of them caused them pain.

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[111] Murphy, "Cilliní," 410.

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Small Objects for Intimate Spaces: Touch and Stimulation in the Renaissance Studiolo

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Consider the Renaissance studiolo. Born out of a desire to learn, know, and collect, studiolos became homes to eclectic assemblages of man-made art objects and natural artifacts. They became intimate spaces for mental meditations and intellectual ponderings. Although it is certain these rooms and their wondrous objects were valued for their visual beauty, I argue that Renaissance collectors found tactile arousal equally stimulating. Arousal, the context of the studiolo, is not purely erotic. It is a stimulation of the mind and body that, in one aspect certainly has sexual connotations, but also, more broadly, is a holistic, all encompassing feeling encouraged by erudite meditations. Arousal is sensual in that it is an intimate experience, in this case shared between object and person. Thus the studiolo serves not merely as a place for intellectual advancement, but also, and perhaps more deeply, became understood as a place for sensual self-discovery, arousing feelings that are best satisfied through touch. And it is the objects held within the studiolo that served as mediums for such sensuous exploration, demanding the use of touch to fully comprehend the totality of their being.

Small bronze statuettes, medals, plaquettes, and utilitarian objects such as inkwells were produced in great amounts and prized by a wide variety of patrons. They ornamented tables and decorated desks, particularly in the studiolo, fostering intellectual conversations and meditations on mythology and craftsmanship.[1] Ancient sculpture in particular became a favorite subject for

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[1] Joy Kenseth, "The Virtue of Littleness: Small-Scale Sculptures of the Italian Renaissance," in *Looking at Italian Renaissance Sculpture*, ed. Sarah Blake McHam (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

miniatures, and collectors from Piero de Medici to Isabella d'Este held prized numbers of small bronze replicas of famous works from antiquity. With this, I turn to the sculpture of *Hercules and Antaeus,* created by Antico (Pier Jacopo Alari-Bonacolsi) in 1519 (Fig. 1), which is known to have been a part of Isabella d'Este's collection, as an example of the potential tactile arousal of small bronze sculptures.[2] Although this sculpture is heavy and would most likely not have been held for long periods of time, there is possible evidence that it was touched. Geraldine Johnson has argued that the fact that Isabella d'Este's name is engraved on the underneath of the base, which would only be visible if the statue was picked up and examined, hints to the tactile nature of the statue.[3]

Regardless of how long Isabella d'Este's *Hercules and Antaeus* was held, and despite its weight, its smooth, shiny metallic surface and undulating nude bodies would have provided a pleasurable tactile experience. Artists understood that these small bronzes would be handled and thus paid special attention to making their surfaces sensuously appealing to the touch.[4] These small works also contain complex amounts of detail that seem to encourage the graze of a finger, such as tufts of hair on the head, or even more sensuous, on the body. It is important that these sculptures are of nude figures. Their fingers became intertwined with the nude bodies, digesting the smoothness of the surface and the intensity of the detail. Hands therefore became tools for examination and exploration.

Such an act creates an intimate moment between object and possessor. By touching, the desire that the figures arouse in us is satisfied, providing tactile stimulation while also allowing for pensive reflection. Pleasure comes not purely from viewing alone, and part of the joy of miniature bronzes is their ability to be held in our hands. The proliferation of studiolos during the Renaissance came from an obsessive desire to understand all aspects of the physical, and by extension, the metaphysical world.[5] It is partially through touch that we understand our surroundings, and it is perhaps the most intimate of the senses. It requires that we come close to the object, that we allow it into our sphere. Touching bronzes is pleasurable because it feeds a desire to know.

It is touch that is perhaps most linked to sensual pleasure. The desire to touch, and the sensation we feel when we touch something, reminds us of our bodies, and more broadly, reminds us that we are alive.[6] When a Renaissance patron touched the bronze body, in this case Isabella touching Hercules, satisfaction came from the smooth bronze surface. In a philosophical sense, not only did she

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[2] Geraldine A. Johnson, "In the Hand of the Beholder: Isabella d'Este and the Sensual Allure of Sculpture," in *Sense and the Senses in Early Modern Art and Cultural Practice*, ed. Alice E. Sanger and Siv Tove Kulbrandstad Walker (Farnham: Ashgate Press, 2017), 186, https://www.academia.edu/1462339/In_the_Hand_of_the_Beholder_Isabella_dEste_and_the_Sensual_Allure_of_Sculpture.

[3] Johnson, "In the Hand of the Beholder."

[4] Kenseth, "The Virtue of Littleness."

[5] Kenseth, "The Virtue of Littleness."

[6] Richard Kearney, "Coming to Our Senses," in *Touch: Recovering Our Most Vital Sense*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2017.

touch the bronze, but these nude bodies, lustrous and muscular, touched her. Small bronzes, particularly of nude figures, thus became incredibly provocative objects, feeding the human desire to touch and be felt. The sensual nature of these objects cannot be ignored, with nude figures adorning not just figural sculpture, but also utilitarian objects such as inkwells and goblets.

In Isabella's Grota, a small, studiolo-like room that was filled with Greco-Roman philia, inkwells, candlesticks, and oil lamps were displayed along with the *Hercules and Antaeus* bronze. These objects, by design, are meant to be touched.[7] One example is an inkwell by Severo da Ravenna made c.1500 in Padua called *Boy Supporting a Shell*, currently held at the Victoria and Albert Museum (Fig. 2). It features a boy dressed in a rippling tunic, supporting a shell whose cavity would have been filled with ink. Because objects like this inkwell were most likely stored on shelves at eye level or higher, it would have required the user to pick it up and place it wherever they wanted it to go. One could hold it at the base, but I believe it is more plausible that the boy's waist was grabbed to transport the object, as this proves a more stable support for the shell inkwell and more leverage in lifting the heavy bronze off the shelf. It is an incredibly suggestive idea, but one that is not impossible. Figural bronzes became not just literal tools of intellectual activities, but through their intimate interactions with hands, became a medium of sensual meditation.

The shell inkwell is also wrought with evocative symbolism. While studiolos were most certainly spaces for man-made objects, they were also home to large collections of natural artifacts from bones and plant specimens, to shells. These natural objects were collected and cherished for their rarity and further fed the Renaissance curiosity to understand every detail about the natural world.[8] On one occasion, Isabella d'Este was sent a string of amber beads with small animals from Lorenzo da Pavia for her to admire.[9] Objects made of natural materials, and the natural materials themselves, thus came in dialogue with the "artistic" bronze works and paintings kept in the studiolo space, and served as decorations and collectors items. Shells in particular were prized for their dynamic surfaces and mathematical precision, a topic that continues to engage collectors.[10]

Anna Grasskamp, Professor of art at St. Andrews University whose research focuses on material cultures in Europe and Asia, argues that shells induced a sensual, and sometimes even sexual, excitement aroused by the smoothness, shape, and shine of the specimens.[11] Again, the studiolo became not just a place for intellectual reflection, but also the location to explore human arousal

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[7] Johnson, "In the Hand of the Beholder," 192.

[8] Anne Goldgar, "For the Love of Shells," in *Conchophilia: Shells, Art, and Curiosity in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Marisa Anne Bass, Anne Goldgar, Hanneke Grootenboer, and Claudia Swan (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2021), 1.

[9] Leah R. Clark, "Collecting, Exchange, and Sociability in the Renaissance Studiolo," *Journal of the History of Collections* 25, no. 2 (2012): 171–84, https://doi.org/10.1093/jhc/fhs022.

[10] Goldgar, "For the Love of Shells," 10.

[11] Goldgar, "For the Love of Shells," 14.

through sensual stimulation and erotic curiosity. Goldsmiths, like artists, understood the tactile and erotic implications of the early modern collectors' engagement with surfaces, and thus mounted shells on elaborate golden stands. These vessels crafted out of shells were commonly displayed in Italian studioli and later German *Kunstkammern*.[12]

These shell vessels share a striking resemblance to the *Boy Supporting a Shell* inkwell. In particular the *Nautilus Shell Cup* from the Fitzwilliam Museum from c. 1585–86 (Fig. 3) shares the same motif of a shell (in this case a real one) being supported by a figure.[13] In order to pick up the cup, one must grab the mostly nude man by his waist. Furthermore, shells were often regarded as symbols of human body parts, particularly due to their shape and closeness to human skin tones.[14] Such an idea was widespread, and certainly would have been known by well-versed collectors such as Isabella d'Este. It becomes even more provocative when considering the intended actions of each object. With the vessel, one would put their lips to the shell's rim, playing with physical touch and arousing the user not just with the liquid inside, but also with the pleasure of the smooth shell surface. Due to the shell's cultural connection with human genitalia, such an association turns a simple action into a graphic play of human sexuality. Similarly, because it is the shell that holds the ink in the inkwell, inserting the pen into the well of the shell creates a similarly suggestive image.

Such intimate explorations of human sexual tendencies, even if they are playful symbols, demonstrates how studiolos were more than just a space for scholarly knowledge. These spaces were small, intimate, personally created rooms, and would thus have been the stage for private explorations of one's deepest arousals. It is through touch, and therefore physical stimulation, that the most personal connections can be made. Arousal is most aptly satisfied through touch, and humans naturally feel the desire to touch. Unlike the modern museum, studiolos encouraged the handling, examining, fondling, and dissecting of objects.

This desire to touch, to examine, was indeed fed through this obsession with shells. But not only did shells provide tactile arousal in their full forms, they also served as a valuable artistic medium, becoming art objects that were similarly valued for their tactility. Ancient cameos became highly prized during the Renaissance and collectors such as Isabella d'Este and Lorenzo de' Medici had renowned collections. Although shell cameos existed,[15] most were crafted from colorful stones such as agate and

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[12] Anna Grasskamp, "Shells, Bodies, and the Collectors Cabinet," in *Conchophilia: Shells, Art, and Curiosity in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Marisa Anne Bass, Anne Goldgar, Hanneke Grootenboer, and Claudia Swan (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2021), 49.

[13] Although this object dates to about a century later than the time period of this class, it is interesting to see how these motifs continued into the next centuries, certainly based on ideas that came from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

[14] Grasskamp, "Shells, Bodies, and the Collectors Cabinet," 52, 64

[15] See *Badge of the Order of Saint Michael* in the Met's Collection for a seventeenth-century example of a shell cameo.

sardonyx, with these small decorative mementos being valued for both their beauty and classical motifs. A particularly tactile object, cameos had to be turned in the hand to be properly appreciated, their smooth surfaces and delicate details demanding to be touched. Cameos and other small works like medals were collected with vigor, and their value was so great that they were used as important diplomatic gifts. Such objects were easy to transport and would easily mesmerize the receiver.[16]

Cameos also deeply inspired Renaissance collectors and artists to create works like the miniature bronzes as they began to equate miniatures with classical ingenuity.[17] Giorgio Vasari recounts that the artist Matteo dal Nassaro obtained a piece of green and red spotted jasper into which he then carved a scene of the Deposition of Christ, calling particular praise to the way the artist exploited the red speckles of the tone to show Christ's bleeding wounds.[18] Because of the small size of these objects, religious scenes would have allowed for personal and intimate devotional reflection. One can imagine the collector's desire to trace their fingers over Christ's wounds, the tactility of the miniature carved relief guiding their devotion. In the Quattrocento, the motif of Saint Thomas touching Christ's side wound became quite prominent, as seen in small terracotta sculptures by Luca della Robbia. Saint Thomas reaches out and touches Christ's bleeding side with two fingers, an intimate show of devotion and an exploration of the so-called divine touch.[19]

Highly learned patrons would have been aware of the story of Saint Thomas and Nassaro's cameo would have served to initiate religious contemplation through tactile imagery. Thus, the Renaissance obsession with cameos emphasizes how knowledge was sought not just through cerebral contemplation, but that objects encouraged both religious and secular intellectual understandings through touching and engaging with surfaces. Touch allowed for a sensual exploration of one's objects, as the physicality of small sculpture became just as important to the studiolo experience as visual appeal. Furthermore, it is the visual appeal that aroused them to touch. Christ's nearly nude, bleeding body is presented for private examination, allowing the viewer to touch his body. And it is through this sacred touch that the viewer transcends into knowing, coming closer in contact to the eucharistic body of Christ.

It is with this obsession with collecting small objects that patrons began commissioning commemorative medals, another tradition that calls back to ancient times. Portrait and commemorative medals were commissioned to memorialize individuals and serve as mediums of diplomatic or friendly exchange. They are often generated in both recto and verso, both the front and

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[16] Kenseth, "The Virtue of Littleness."

[17] Kenseth, "The Virtue of Littleness."

[18] Giorgio Vasari, *Lives of the Most Eminent Painters, Sculptors & Architects*, vol. 6, referenced by Kenseth, "The Virtue of Littleness."

[19] Christina Neilson, "Bridging Dimensions: Verrocchio's Christ and Saint Thomas as Absent Presence," in *Practice and Theory in the Italian Renaissance Workshop: Verrocchio and the Epistemology of Making Art*, 118–51 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), doi:10.1017/9781316779408.004.

the back carefully designed and detailed. But unlike small bronze figural sculptures, as described by Aimee Ng, they were distinguished by their portability and were crafted with touch in mind, intended to be seen and felt. Because they were decorated on both sides, one was expected to turn the medal in their hands, scrutinizing it from every angle.[20]

A medal's tactility is further emphasized by its weight and size, often no larger than the palm of a hand. One can easily hold a medal in one hand and trace the complex reliefs with their fingers, taking in the profile portraits and symbols that commonly decorated their surfaces. They are perhaps one of the most tactile objects to come out of the Renaissance and their multiplicity within studiolo collections points directly to the tactile nature of collecting. Certainly displayed next to other objects such as figure sculpture and naturalia, their invitations to touch would have, by proxy, encouraged a similar treatment to the objects around them.

Bronze was also thought to have important alchemical properties and was believed to possess life, particularly due to biblical associations with Moses during the Middle Ages and the sensuousness of its reflective surfaces.[21] Because of this belief, bronze medals thus become living representations of the figures depicted, and by touching them, its possessor forms not just a tactile bond with an object, but a living representation. The medal would have, if cast and finished well, been smooth and cool to the touch, invigorating hands as one dissected every small detail. If the medal was of a friend or family member, the act of touching thus becomes even more intimate, as our bodies come in contact with a "living" image of their likeness. In *Portrait of a Man with a Medal of Cosimo the Elder* executed by Botticelli c. 1474–75 (Fig. 4), a man holds up a medal of Cosimo de' Medici for the viewer to examine. It is assumed that this portrait is meant to show a political alliance between the unknown sitter and the Medici family, but what makes this work even more fascinating is that the medal is rendered in stucco, making it three-dimensional.

Touch is thus not only being shown in the composition, but the rendering of the medal in the third dimension puts an even greater emphasis on the tactility of these objects. He proudly shows the medal to the viewer, a ritual that would have occurred within the small, confined space of the studiolo. Geraldine Johnson describes a scene similar to this where a Gonzagan envoy showed a Neapolitan court a medal of Isabella d'Este (Fig. 5) and after "looking at it for a long time, said a thousand times that they wanted to kiss [it]."[22] This small aside demonstrates how these small Renaissance objects, through their visual and tactile appeal, fostered feelings of arousal and a desire for stimulation. I doubt

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[20] Aimee Ng, *The Pursuit of Immortality: Masterpieces from the Scher Collection of Portrait Medals* (New York: The Frick Collection in association with D Giles Limited, 2017), 11–16.

[21] Ittai Weinryb, "The Bronze Object in the Middle Ages," in *Bronze*, ed. David Ekserdjian (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 2012), 72–73.

[22] Leah R. Clark, "Collecting, Exchange, and Sociability in the Renaissance Studiolo," *Journal of the History of Collections* 25, no. 2 (2012): 171–84, https://doi.org/10.1093/jhc/fhs022.

that it was purely the figural representation, but also the sensuous appeal of the metallic surface and intimacy of the small size that further encouraged this bodily reaction.

Leah Clark argues that portrait medals alluded to friendships, alliances, or sought-after acquaintances of the owner and thus became a visual manifestation of the political and familial networks of their possessor.[23] However, I argue that touch too played an essential part in demonstrating the intimacy of these relationships, especially as the man in Botticelli's portrait holds the medal not just in his hands, but against his heart. Medals, with their small size and tactility, demonstrate the social and personal cultures of collecting, and how such multiplicity of tactile objects further emphasizes how the Renaissance studiolo became a place for personal pleasure.[24] Effigies of one's friends and allies surely aroused passion and pride, and though touching them, again remembering that bronze was believed to be a "living ore," collectors connected themselves to each other on an extremely personal level.

Thus it is medals and their explicit tactility that demonstrate how Renaissance studiolos were not purely for erudite contemplation but fostered unique, pleasurable experiences for exploring one's innermost desires. Ludovico Foscarini in describing the studiolo of Isotta Nogarola, wrote that her "little cell…brought me a kind of foretaste of paradise."[25] This connection to "paradise" is particularly telling, as in the Renaissance, the biblical paradise is often depicted as being filled with wonders of the natural world. It is also the place of humans before sin, and where good Christians will rise to in Heaven. But it is also in this "paradise" that humans first discovered the sin of pleasure. Studiolos, and their small tactile objects, thus feed one's desires, arousing feelings of childlike fascination and personal pleasure.

It is not hard to find elements of sensual curiosity in Renaissance studiolos. I believe that it is not a coincidence that humanist collections feature such a prominent emphasis on the nude human body. I see the studiolo as an extension of this exploration of the body, for it is not only the mind that needs stimulation. Studiolos are intimate, small, and idealized. They encourage us to touch and feel and explore ourselves and every aspect of our desires. The Renaissance desire to collect becomes also a desire to explore one's self. As one sat in the studiolo, they too, became an object under examination.

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[23] Leah R. Clark, "Collecting, Exchange, and Sociability in the Renaissance Studiolo," *Journal of the History of Collections* 25, no. 2 (2012): 171–84, https://doi.org/10.1093/jhc/fhs022.

[24] Ng, *The Pursuit of Immortality*, 11–16.

[25] M. L. King, "The religious retreat of Isotta Nogarola (1418–1466): sexism and its consequences in the fifteenth century," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 3 no. 4 (1978), 812, quoted in Clark, "Collecting, Exchange, and Sociability in the Renaissance Studiolo," 171–84.

FIGURES

Fig. 1. Antico (Pier Jacopo Alari de Bonacolsi), *Hercules and Antaeus,* c. 1519, Bronze, h. 43.2 cm with pedestal (17 in), Kunsthistorisches, Vienna.

Fig. 2. Severo da Ravenna, *Boy Supporting a Shell,* c. 1500–25, Bronze, Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Fig. 3. *Nautilus Shell Cup,* c. 1585–86, nautilus shell and silver, Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.

Fig. 4. Sandro Botticelli, *Portrait of a Man with a Medal of Cosimo the Elder,* c. 1474–75, tempera on panel, Uffizi, Florence.

Fig. 5. Gian Cristoforo Romano, *Portrait Medal of Isabella d'Este*, c. 1495–98, gold with diamonds and enamel, Kunsthistorisches, Vienna.

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BOOK REVIEW

IN THE MANNER OF THE FRANKS: HUNTING, KINGSHIP, AND MASCULINITY IN EARLY MEDIEVAL EUROPE

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Eric J. Goldberg, *In the Manner of the Franks: Hunting, Kingship, and Masculinity in Early Medieval Europe*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020. 384 pages.

Eric J. Goldberg's new book *In the Manner of the Franks: Hunting, Kingship, and Masculinity in Early Medieval Europe* investigates the cultural, political, and economic role of hunting in Frankish society. Articulating the coevolution of the Frankish political climate and the hunt, Goldberg incorporates existing scholarship to offer a comprehensive analysis exploring broad themes spanning the time from late antiquity to the last Carolingian king. The lack of extant hunting manuals has led to a belittled understanding of early medieval hunting which he spends the book dismantling.[1] He joins scholars in conversation about the social implications of Frankish hunting and its role as a contriver of noble camaraderie, building upon pre-existing arguments which explore the group bonding aspects of hunting in the time directly following that which the book explores.[2] Goldberg asserts that the role of

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[1] Eric J. Goldberg, *In the Manner of the Franks: Hunting, Kingship, and Masculinity in Early Medieval Europe* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020), 129.
[2] Goldberg, *In the Manner of the Franks*, 89.

hunting with respect to noble community building comes not solely from hunting parties bringing nobles together physically, but also through the shared identity of nobility and manliness found through the display of dominion over nature. This marriage of masculinity and nobility is integral to the specifically Frankish manner of hunting, and a large part of what distinguishes it from hunting practices that came before and after.

The book is divided into eight main chapters headed by cleverly alliterative titles. The first four chapters provide a historical walkthrough from Late Antique Roman hunting through the reign of Louis the Pious (813–840). The latter four chapters explore the logistics of hunting, from techniques and prey, to legal restrictions for peasants and clergy, to the dangers associated with the hunt.

"Emperors and Elites" introduces hunting as a performative act, not only literally in the context of amphitheaters' staged hunts, but also as a display of aristocracy through the technical skill, financial means, and bravery required to hunt exotic and dangerous beasts like lions and bears. The chapter exhibits an impressive collection of art which displays the cultural significance of the hunt and draws connections to military prowess, for example through the inclusion of hunting imagery on the Arch of Constantine (315 CE).

In "Merovingians and Magnates," Goldberg explains how perceptions of hunting as a "badge of elite status and manhood" is clearly present in the writings of the time; however, the connection between hunting proficiency and Frankishness had not yet emerged.[3] The fact that wild animals could not be considered private property made hunting less restricted. Due to the lingering association of hunting with Roman identity, hunting could not yet be identified clearly with Frankishness.

"Charlemagne and the Chase" illustrates the shift towards the identification of hunting as a symbol of Frankishness, in large part due to the privatization of forests and Charlemagne's declaration that wild animals belonged to the Kingship ("our game").[4] It is during this time when hunting *more Francorum* (in the manner of the Franks), as named by Einhard, emerged, distinguishing Charlemagne's rule as a pivotal time for conceptualizing the unique nature of Frankish hunting.

"Louis the Pious and His Legacy" further demonstrates the association of hunting with Frankishness through its role as a generator of noble camaraderie. Through activities like banqueting and large hunting parties, rulers were able to foster camaraderie with and between elites, take notice of promising nobles, and prove their claim to the throne with feats of strength and skill. Hunting served as such an important political tool that Charles the Bald restricted it from his son so as to not allow him to build enough support to overthrow his father.

"Hounds and Hawks" explicates the diversity of Frankish hunting techniques, from falconry to hounding, and weaponry, from bows to spears. Goldberg emphasizes the high cost of keeping dogs

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[3] Goldberg, *In the Manner of the Franks*, 68.
[4] Goldberg, *In the Manner of the Franks*, 74.

and falcons, and how these costs contribute to the strong associations of Frankish hunting with elite status.

"Peasants and Poachers" investigates the types of hunting practiced by non-nobles, which consisted most frequently of trapping and fishing. These activities were seen as more passive, less masculine forms of hunting. The high cost of dogs and falcons restricted the peasantry from hunting outside of these methods, further contributing to the exclusivity of hunting *more Francorum*. By providing opportunities for building healthier, safer, more wealthy communities, as well as opportunities for social mobility, hunting posed a threat to the elite status of the nobility, which likely explains Charlemagne's stress on restricting it.

"Bishops and Boars" examines the alternative form of masculinity associated with clerics, one derived from chastity and man living in harmony with nature. Clerics were restricted from hunting with the exceptions of exterminating dangerous predators and fishing, mainly due to the Bible's generally positive portrayal of fishermen and its generally negative portrayal of hunters, such as Nimrod and Esau.[5]

"Danger and Death" explains the implications of the mortal danger associated with the hunt. Whether it be through vulnerability to assassination, fatal equestrian mishaps, or encounters with teeth, tusks, and claws, hunting placed hunters in vulnerable positions. Political instability resulting from the decline in centralized Carolingian power made nobles more likely to be attacked while out hunting.

Goldberg's writing appeals to a wide audience by providing thorough examinations of historical, archaeological, and artistic sources. While this book will be useful for scholars, its language and style remain accessible to the general public. Throughout the book, he notes the absence of women from hunting scenes, and at times their presence, but he does not spend much time investigating the implications of their place (or lack thereof) in the hunt. Goldberg explores the performance of masculinity through hunting, beginning with Roman *Venationes*, yet does not thoroughly explore that theme with regard to women observers accompanying the party.[6]

Hunting *more Francorum* differed from other medieval hunting, as it occupied a particularly unique role in society as a method of displaying political influence, a badge of manliness, and an opportunity to advance oneself through the demonstration of skill. While these elements are not restricted to those hunting in Frankish Europe, their combination, and the fact that hunting in the manner of the Franks warrants its own title, sheds light onto the notability and uniqueness of the Franks' hunting style.

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[5] Goldberg, *In the Manner of the Franks*, 203.
[6] Goldberg, *In the Manner of the Franks*, 29.

ESPACES, OBJETS, HUMAINS ET LEUR RAPPORT DANS LE LAI DU ROSSIGNOL

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Sept réalités physiques dans le lai du *Rossignol* de Marie de France attirent particulièrement l'attention et demandent l'explication : un mur de pierre grise, deux salles voisines des côtés du mur, deux fenêtres rattachées respectivement aux salles, une étoffe de soie brodée de fils d'or et un coffret d'or serti de pierres précieuses. Mon étude, centrée sur la culture matérielle de la société féodale occidentale du douzième siècle, est censée répondre aux questions suivantes. Quels rôles les réalités physiques jouent-elles dans l'amour entre la dame et le chevalier ? Quelles intentions les amants ont-ils en utilisant certains objets ? Quels traits les réalités physiques possèdent-elles selon la représentation du lai ? Dans cette analyse, je montrerai que le *Rossignol* expose de diverses façons dont les réalités physiques et les humains entrent en relation. Les réalités physiques déterminent le commencement et la nature d'une histoire d'amour. Elles matérialisent l'état charnel et l'état spirituel d'un rapport amoureux. Les humains utilisent les réalités physiques dans le but de s'exprimer et de communiquer ; les réalités physiques incarnent à leur tour des sentiments de ceux-ci. Finalement, les réalités physiques peuvent prendre les rôles que la conception sociale des genres prescrit à leurs utilisateurs.

Le premier élément venant du monde physique dans le lai, le mur entre les maisons voisines des deux amants, tient des fonctions contradictoires. Comme Anne-Cécile Le Ribeuz-Koenig articule, ce mur « sépare et en même temps rassemble les deux amants »[1]. Le rassemblement crée littéralement un aspect de la relation des amants, et la séparation reflète symboliquement une autre forme de séparation. Rappelons-nous tout d'abord que la contiguïté de leurs demeures est une des raisons principales pour lesquelles la dame prend le chevalier pour amant :

> Toutes ses requêtes et ses prières,
> Mais aussi ses grands mérites
> finirent par lui valoir l'amour passionné de la dame :

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[1] Anne-Cécile Le Ribeuz-Koenig, "Le laüstic oci et envolupé: enchâssement et thésaurisation de la voix dans les lais de Marie De France," TrOPICS 5 (2019): 205, https://hal.univ-reunion.fr/hal-01955348.

La proximité du chevalier est l'un de « ses grands mérites ». Puisque le voisinage des amants est un fait concret et un élément de l'origine de leur rapport amoureux, l'environnement architectural se montre comme capable de susciter un événement factuel et l'histoire humaine. Parce que le mari de la dame la surveille, les amants doivent faire face à « l'impossibilité de se joindre / à leur guise ».[3] Le Ribeuz-Koenig fait remarquer justement que « la distance imposée aux amants [est] matérialisée par le mur entre les deux propriétés ».[4] Nous ne pourrions pas de même négliger « les deux propriétés », qui incarnent les corps des amants. Les deux salles où résident respectivement les amants se situent à côté l'une de l'autre, mais restent séparées par le mur ; pareillement, les corps des amants demeurent proches l'un de l'autre, mais ils ne se touchent jamais. Le mur et les deux salles représentent donc la distance, la séparation des corps et l'impossibilité d'activités sexuelles, à savoir l'état charnel de la relation amoureuse.

À part le commencement de l'histoire d'amour, la nature pathétique de celle-ci provient également en partie de l'environnement architectural. Il aurait été facile pour la dame et le chevalier de faire des rendez-vous réguliers compte tenu de la distance menue entre les deux. La facilité superficielle d'avoir des relations sexuelles contraste fortement avec la réalité cruelle de la séparation absolue et ajoute à l'histoire d'amour plus de goût poignant.

La communication réciproque est un autre trait de la relation amoureuse que l'organisation spatiale fait ressortir. Lorsque la dame et le chevalier ne peuvent pas s'aimer de manière charnelle, ils expriment le sentiment d'amour par les médiums oraux, visuels et matériels. L'autrice fait mention des actes de se parler, de se regarder et d'échanger des cadeaux entre les amants sept fois au total.[5] La réciprocité, l'essence de ces actes de communication, est surtout mise en valeur dans le texte. Le Ribeuz-Koenig l'indique par une analyse de l'emploi du préfixe « entre » par Marie de France.[6] Le préfixe dénote une interaction qu'engagent deux parties l'une avec l'autre. La dame et le chevalier voisin peuvent « entrechangier »[7] des cadeaux et « s'entreveïssent ».[8] Quant à l'échange de paroles, l'autrice peint sommairement : « … la dame… / pouvait parler à son ami, / de l'autre côté, et il lui répondait ».[9] Bien que l'autrice n'utilise pas un verbe avec le préfixe « entre » dans la phrase ci-dessus, celle-ci traduit encore fortement le sens de réciprocité.

Ce qui permet à la communication réciproque de se produire, ce sont les fenêtres des deux

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[2] Marie de France, "Le Rossignol," dans *Les Lais de Marie de France* (Paris, France: Librairie générale française, 2007), 211.

[3] Marie de France, "Le Rossignol," 213.

[4] Le Ribeuz-Koenig, *Le Laüstic Oci et Envolupé*, 207.

[5] Marie de France, "Le Rossignol," 210–13.

[6] Le Ribeuz-Koenig, *Le Laüstic Oci et Envolupé*, 208.

[7] Marie de France, "Le Rossignol," 213.

[8] Marie de France, "Le Rossignol," 213.

[9] Marie de France, "Le Rossignol," 213.

salles. Les fenêtres prennent le premier rôle du mur en tant que l'origine factuelle d'un événement concret. Elles continuent également le second rôle du mur en symbolisant un état de la relation amoureuse. L'ouverture, un attribut physique fondamental des fenêtres, correspond symboliquement à l'émission et à la réception libres des messages amoureux. Les positions des fenêtres, qui doivent être symétriques, incarnent la réciprocité entre les communicateurs. Milena Mikhaïlova compare convenablement le vide entre les fenêtres à un « espace de communication ».[10] Le mode d'interaction des amants coïncide véritablement avec le plan de leurs habitations. Lorsque le mur et les salles concrétisent l'état charnel du rapport amoureux, les fenêtres matérialisent l'état spirituel.

Le rapport amoureux et l'accent du lai sur les réalités physiques arrivent à leur tournant quand le rossignol meurt. Le mari tue violemment le rossignol, de sorte que la dame ne peut plus se rendre à la fenêtre et communiquer avec l'amant sous prétexte d'écouter le chant de l'oiseau aux heures où elle doit dormir à côté de son époux. En même temps, après la mort du rossignol, ce sont des objets portables, au lieu de l'environnement architectural, qui tiennent une place remarquable dans le récit. Les objets n'ont pas les fonctions de l'environnement architectural exposées ci-dessus. Les amants les manœuvrent en fonction des propriétés de leurs matières de fabrication de sorte que ceux-ci imposent certains effets sur une autre ou d'autres choses inanimées. Les objets aident ainsi les amants à traduire, à communiquer et à manifester extérieurement l'amertume et l'amour. Ils révèlent d'ailleurs au cours de leur utilisation comment on pensait des rôles de sexes au douzième siècle en Occident.

Le premier objet dans le lai est l'étoffe de soie, le « samit » dans le texte en ancien français, sur laquelle la dame brode son histoire d'amour en lettres d'or et de laquelle elle enveloppe le cadavre du rossignol.[11] Par l'utilisation de l'étoffe de soie, la dame dénote et élève le statut du cadavre, offre à celui-ci une couche de protection et fait reconnaître au chevalier un message vis-à-vis de leur rupture. Le samit sépare physiquement la carcasse du monde autour. Il la marque ainsi comme une entité spéciale qui est distincte du milieu environnant. Le luxe de la soie et des fils d'or achève un effet d'embellissement qui suggère une nature exceptionnellement précieuse du cadavre. La mise du rossignol mort dans l'intérieur du samit évite que des parties du cadavre se détachent et sont perdues après que la décomposition commence. Le samit brodé approche un suaire. L'enveloppement du cadavre est une imitation du rite funéraire pour l'être humain. À travers cette imitation, la dame pleure sur l'animal, l'élevant au même niveau que l'être humain. Le fait que le cadavre du rossignol reçoit un tel traitement soigneux a son origine dans l'attitude et la pensée de la dame à l'égard de son amour. Étant donné que la mort du rossignol signale la terminaison forcée du rapport amoureux, du point de vue de la dame, embellir, protéger et honorer la carcasse, c'est déplorer, chérir et commémorer sa propre relation amoureuse perdue.

Le message de la dame est transmis par l'étoffe de soie ainsi que par la carcasse. Après qu'elle enveloppe le rossignol, la dame l'envoie à l'amant. Le message de l'envoi, comme l'énonce explicitement la dame, est l'aventure de la mort de l'oiseau et de la rupture forcée subséquente, inclue dans l'histoire

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[10] Milena Mikhaïlova, "L'espace Dans Les Lais de Marie de France : Lieux, Structure, Rhétorique," *Cahiers de Civilisation Médiévale* 40, no. 158 (1997): 148, https://doi.org/10.3406/ccmed.1997.2680.

[11] Marie de France, "Le Rossignol," 217.

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brodée sur le samit.[12] Par ce message, la dame veut faire croire à l'amant qu'elle ne « le délaisse » pas.[13] Comme le résume Sarah Bernthal suivant un argument de Rupert T. Pickens à propos des fonctions du cadavre et du samit dans la transmission de l'information, ceux-ci sont « two interdependent components of the same message ».[14] Le cadavre est le composant visuel lorsque le samit le composant littéral. Le message doit également comprendre un aspect émotionnel. Étant donné le traitement soigneux du cadavre et les matières délicates dont le suaire est fait, le double assemblage peut montrer au chevalier que la dame tient encore à leur amour et se sent affligée pour la rupture. Au centre de cette série d'actions—broder, envelopper et envoyer—se trouve notamment le samit orné. La commémoration de l'amour, l'explication de la rupture et l'expression des sentiments, aucune d'entre elles ne serait accomplie si la dame ne maniait pas la pièce de soie ou les fils d'or. Le *Rossignol* met en évidence un rôle des objets matériels : ils sont les appareils indispensables à travers lesquels l'être humain exécute ses intentions.

Après avoir reçu l'envoi de la dame, le chevalier compose une réponse à sa bien-aimée en développant certains actes qu'elle entreprend déjà ou en inventant lui-même des gestes pour ajouter du nouveau sens à l'assemblage. Il la suit d'abord en adoptant encore les objets matériels comme l'intermédiaire de l'expression affective et de la communication. Il fait forger un coffret en or et serti de pierres précieuses, y met l'envoi et ordonne le scellement de la cassette.[15] L'amant crée un triple assemblage en ajoutant la troisième couche qu'est le coffret à l'assemblage original. Les matières de fabrication et la surface du coffret sont plus opulentes que celles du samit, renforçant l'embellissement de la carcasse et signalant davantage le caractère exceptionnellement précieux du rossignol mort. Le coffret perfectionne la fonction de séparation et de protection du samit. Ludger Lieb fait remarquer que le textile ne peut pas bien « protect the interior from external violence or unwanted access ».[16] Même si le samit sépare le cadavre du monde environnant, sa capacité protectrice est limitée et cette séparation est fragile. En discutant les attributs du textile, Michel Verret le considère comme « [p]érissable par le matériau, emprunté : végétal, animal, au règne de la vie, qui, par essence, meurt ».[17] Le samit est donc incapable de subsister lui-même. Contrairement au textile faible et mortel, le coffret peut rester toujours dur. Sa fermeté et surtout sa fermeture l'enveloppe complètement. Par cet isolement absolu, le coffret fait sortir davantage le statut spécial du cadavre et empêche tout contact externe potentiel d'atteindre celui-ci. Le chevalier interprète bien la façon dont la dame veut traiter le cadavre. En outre, puisque l'étoffe de soie est disposée dans le coffret de même que le rossignol mort, elle subit également tous les effets ci-dessus que celui-là engendre. Elle devient isolée, spéciale, précieuse

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[12] Marie de France, "Le Rossignol," 219.

[13] Marie de France, "Le Rossignol," 219.

[14] Sarah Bernthal, "Démembrement et Mémoire au Lais de Marie de France," *Philologie de la côte du Pacifique* 54, no. 1 (2019): 20, 34, https://doi.org/10.5325/pacicoasphil.54.1.0020.

[15] Marie de France, "Le Rossignol," 219.

[16] Ludger Lieb, "Woven Words, Embroidered Stories: Inscriptions on Textiles," *Writing Beyond Pen and Parchment*, ed. Ricarda Wagner, Christine Neufeld, and Ludger Lieb (Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2019), 209, https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110645446-011.

[17] Michel Verret, Michel, "L'enveloppement Textile," *Ethnologie Française* 19, no. 1 (1989): 5, http://www.jstor.org/stable/40989092.

et protégée. Continuant le traitement pour le cadavre, le chevalier manifeste le même regret et entreprend la même commémoration que la dame à l'égard de leur relation perdue ; appliquant également le traitement sur la création artistique de sa bien-aimée, il traduit un chagrin concernant spécifiquement sa perte de l'amante.

Tenant les rôles du protégé vulnérable et du protecteur fort, le samit et le coffret sont genrés. La femme était considérée comme impuissante dans la société occidentale du douzième siècle et que l'homme devait donner à celle-là de l'appui. Les propriétés des matériaux de fabrication que la dame et le chevalier choisissent se conforment avec les caractéristiques des genres féminin et masculin dans la mentalité du douzième siècle, et la protection que le chevalier donne au double assemblage à travers le coffret s'accorde avec le comportement de l'homme prescrit par la culture occidentale contemporaine du lai. Même si les amants ne prennent pas eux-mêmes les rôles des sexes, les objets qu'ils utilisent les prennent.

Sauf l'ajout de la troisième couche, une autre invention du chevalier est la transformation du rite funéraire imité en la commémoration d'une relique simulée. Le Ribeuz-Koenig appelle le coffret un « reliquaire ».[18] Plus précisément, le coffret simule un reliquaire véritable en matière de fonction et d'apparence. Les reliquaires médiévaux occidentaux contiennent des restes physiques des saints défunts afin qu'on puisse commémorer et vénérer ces personnes de perfection religieuse ; les reliquaires sont souvent dorés et sertis de pierres précieuses, et les restes physiques enveloppés des textiles. Une découverte de Cynthia Hahn révèle d'ailleurs que « the overwhelming number of references to reliquaries in medieval sources specify *gemmis et auro*, that is made 'of gems and gold' »[19]. Cette découverte de Hanh assure davantage que l'or et les pierres précieuses sont deux éléments essentiels des reliquaires. Bien que le coffret du chevalier ne soit pas employé en vue de vénérer le rossignol mort, il sert certainement à le commémorer. Même si le coffret, dont les pans sont en or solide, est considérablement plus extravagant qu'un reliquaire véritable doré ne le soit, ils partagent les mêmes composants cruciaux et apparaissent identiques à l'extérieur. Empruntant les deux traditions liées aux reliquaires, le chevalier compare le cadavre du rossignol à une relique et le samit brodé de la dame à l'enveloppe sacrée. Il sanctifie le double assemblage et son rapport amoureux perdu à l'aide du coffret. D'après Buettner, le pseudo-reliquaire de l'amant-chevalier est un « literary conceit » de Marie de France ; il n'existe pas dans la réalité un coffret comme celui du chevalier, qui était forgé dans la société occidentale du douzième siècle, possédait l'apparence et la fonction d'un vrai reliquaire, mais était utilisé dans un contexte laïc et personnel.[20] Le manque réel fait ressortir le caractère extraordinaire de l'existence fictionnelle.

Le dernier nouveau geste que fait le chevalier dans le but de répondre à l'amante, c'est qu'il porte toujours sur lui le triple assemblage. Il garde le souvenir de son amour et ne cesse jamais d'aimer la dame. L'attachement personnel du chevalier pour le triple assemblage ainsi que la nature sacrée et

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[18] Le Ribeuz-Koenig, "Le laüstic oci et envolupé," 204, 213, 214.

[19] Cynthia Hahn, "Que font les reliquaires pour les reliques?," *Numen* 57, no. 3–4 (2010): 284–316, https://doi.org/10.1163/156852710x501324, 309.

[20] Xinran Chen and Brigitte Buettner, personnel, 2023.

inusuelle de la cassette soulignent fortement la fidélité de cet amant et la grande importance qu'il attribue à sa bien-aimée et à leur relation. Lorsque la dame lui fait savoir un amour non péri, il veut offrir à celle-là un amour impérissable. Étant donné que les intentions réciproques des amants ont manifestés au cours de la création du triple assemblage, celui-ci témoigne d'un acte de communication magnifique entre la dame et le chevalier, qui est simultanément leur dernier message.

Le dernier acte de communication, néanmoins, doit rester partiellement complété, partiellement réciproque. Le chevalier voisin ne peut pas envoyer sa réponse à la dame. La communication mutuelle s'arrête pour toujours. Physiquement, les fenêtres sont encore là dans les salles et peuvent bien entendu être ouvertes. Pourtant, elles sont symboliquement fermées. Comme l'exprime Mikhaïlova, l'espace de communication est anéanti.[21] L'état charnel des amants demeure invariable tout au long du lai, d'où la signification symbolique inchangée du mur et des demeures. En revanche, la signification symbolique des fenêtres transforme avec la disparition du rapport amoureux.

Dans le lai du *Rossignol* par Marie de France, une série de réalités physiques interviennent dans le sort des individus, reflètent l'évolution du rapport interpersonnel, fonctionnent comme l'intermédiaire de réalisation des volontés humaines et montrent extérieurement les émotions intrinsèques des individus. La contiguïté des demeures fait tomber amoureuse la dame et déclenche l'histoire entre elle et son voisin. Les demeures matérialisent la séparation triste des corps des amants. La paroi qui unit les habitations intensifie l'ambiance tragique de l'histoire. L'ouverture des fenêtres et de l'espace entre celles-ci manifeste le déroulement continu et libre de la communication réciproque des amants. La terminaison de la communication suggère ensuite la fermeture des fenêtres et l'évanouissement de leur espace. Pendant la dernière tentative d'échange, les amants déplorent et commémorent ensemble leur rapport interrompu ; ils traduisent l'attachement l'un pour l'autre. La tristesse pour la rupture et l'affection profonde de l'amant sont démontrées par le triple assemblage. Lorsque les amants sélectionnent les matériaux appropriés à utiliser et le chevalier fait au coffret récompenser la faiblesse du samit, le récipient et le contenu prennent les rôles féminin et masculin. Le *Rossignol* témoigne d'une conscience sensible, d'une perspicacité subtile et d'une imagination ingénieuse à l'égard de l'interactivité entre la vie humaine et le monde physique dans la mentalité occidentale médiévale.

Bien des descriptions des réalités physiques, grandes et menues, font partie du récit d'autres lais par Marie de France. Dans le *Yonec*, par exemple, la dame suit un itinéraire qui cartographie la ville dont son amant doit être le roi et le paysage naturel autour de celle-ci.[22] La dame passe par une prairie, une porte de la cité, le bourg, la salle pavée du palais et deux chambres du château avant de trouver l'amant blessé à mort dans une grande chambre opulente.[23] Avant de rendre l'âme, le chevalier met dans la disposition de la dame un anneau, une épée et une robe; il précise également comment celle-là

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[21] Mikhaïlova, "L'espace Dans Les Lais de Marie de France," 148.

[22] Marie de France, "Yonec," dans *Les Lais de Marie de France* (Paris, France: Librairie générale française, 2007), 205.

[23] Marie de France, "Yonec," 205.

doit les utiliser.[24] En somme, les lais nous posent des questions surprenantes et compliquées à propos des rôles des espaces et des objets dans les activités humaines et les rapports amoureux. Nous pourrions continuer d'examiner l'importance des réalités physiques et de comparer leurs rôles différents dans tous les lais où elles paraissent.

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[24] Marie de France, "Yonec," 207.

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Mediaeval Monastic Orientalism? Sanctity and the East in the Works of Bernard of Clairvaux

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INTRODUCTION

Was there such a thing as mediaeval orientalism? This is one of the questions at the forefront of Suzanne Conklin Akbari's 2012 monograph, *Idols in the East*, a study of the later Middle Ages based partly on extrapolations of the theory of orientalism espoused by Edward Said in 1978.[1] As Said's definition of orientalism places its origins in the enlightenment period, to successfully make use of his theory it is necessary to deconstruct it to fit the period in question. Akbari does this through the Foucauldian concept of *discourse* seminal to Said's framework.[2] For Foucault, discourse is the significance of texts or statements, be they literary or conversational, particularly in constructing views or impressions about political, social, and power relations.[3] This has particular relevance for post-colonial and racial studies, such as, crucially, orientalism.[4] Hence Said argues that the post-enlightenment discourse about the Orient resulted in an essentialisation of the east, often associated with anachronism.[5] So, following Said, Akbari looks at a wide range of "statements" in Latin, Old French, Italian, German, and Middle English, to analyse the

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[1] Suzanne Conklin Akbari, *Idols in the East: European Representations of Islam and the Orient, 1100–1450* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press 2012); Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin Classics, 2003).

[2] Akbari, *Idols*, 6–7.

[3] Michel Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge, 2nd edition* (London: Routledge, 2002), 23–33 and *passim*.

[4] Sara Mills, *Discourse* (London: Routledge, 2004), 20–24, 94–109.

[5] Said, *Orientalism*, 1–4, 54–55.

understanding of "the East" in the European Middle Ages, to conclude that there was indeed a mediaeval orientalism, although different in important ways to that of Said.[6]

This type of discourse analysis of cultural understanding is to some extent also used by Jean Leclercq in his 1982 monograph *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God*, who argues that the understanding of culture, monastic culture in his case, is predicated on an understanding of their language and literature, for him the most important vessel for cultural output.[7] Leclercq, as opposed to Akbari, has a far narrower focus, and looks at the textual input and output, that is, the "discourse," specifically within the mediaeval monastic tradition. Of course, he also does not focus on orientalism as such. The purpose of my study, then, is a synthesis of methodologies of Akbari and Leclercq, in answering the question "was there such a thing as mediaeval *monastic* orientalism?"

This paper centres around the works of St Bernard of Clairvaux (1090–1153), someone situated at the apex of mediaeval Christian, and specifically monastic, culture. Bernard can be culturally linked to both the early mediaeval tradition and its developments into the later Middle Ages.[8] Firstly, he is often given the epithet "The Last of the Fathers," a reference not only to his familiarity with the writings of the early Church fathers (such as Gregory of Nyssa, Ambrose, and Augustine), but also a textual similarity with them.[9] He was not only an exegete following in their tradition, but also stylistically exhibited what M.B. Pranger describes as "a certain degree of self-consciousness," that is, a palpable presence in his writings, where his own experiences and emotional connection to his readers is apparent, as in patristic texts.[10] He is also particularly significant for the continuity of the Middle Ages, and remained popular for several centuries, as shown by the innumerable manuscripts of his writings compared to the relative paucity of his output.[11] His preaches for the Second Crusade, and his argumentative engagement with scholastics and Cluniacs also situates him at the beginning of the spatial and theological expansion of later mediaeval Latin Christendom.[12]

Said specifies three interconnected meanings of orientalism: (1) the academic interest in Eastern studies, (2) the conceptual or literary interest in the oriental aesthetics, and finally (3) the "corporate institution" for dealing with the real, modern East. "Corporate" orientalism is not (necessarily) corporate in the capitalist sense for Said, and certainly not in the context of this paper,

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[6] Akbari, *Idols*, 18, 180–188.

[7] Jean Leclercq, *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God*, trans. Catherine Misrahi, (New York: Fordham University Press, 1982), 37.

[8] Thomas Merton, *The Last of the Fathers* (London: Lowe and Brydone, 1954), 23–24.

[9] Jean Leclercq, *Bernard of Clairvaux and the Cistercian Spirit*, trans Claire Lavoie (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1976), 25–26.

[10] M.B. Pranger, *Broken Dreams: Bernard of Clairvaux and the Shape of Monastic Thought* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 163–165. See also Leclercq, *Love of Learning,* 4–6 for a discussion of this effect in Bernard's prologue to his sermons on the Canticle of Canticles.

[11] Leclercq, *Cistercian Spirit,* 82–29.

[12] Merton, *Last of the Fathers*, 38–44.

but rather corporate as institutional, be it politically or militarily, with an essentialising purpose of handling the east as something to be dealt with.[13]

Part I outlines the importance of the texts of and about Eastern saints in the origins of monasticism, that is, the academic interest in them, as well as the importance of their aesthetic in the continuation of monasticism, that is, a conceptual or literary orientalism. Part II focuses on the works of Bernard of Clairvaux, both his specific interaction with the first two meanings and his rôle in establishing and promulgating the third. Part III examines the immediate aftermath of Bernard, and the influence of his rhetoric on later mediaeval monastic orientalism. I will finally conclude that there was indeed an identifiable mediaeval monastic orientalism, beginning as an academic and conceptual interest in the cult of Eastern saints that developed, through Bernard and his contemporaries, into the fully fledged tripartite orientalism of the late mediaeval monastic tradition.

PART I: THE ROLE OF EASTERN SAINTS IN WESTERN MONASTICISM

Eastern sanctity had a bipartite influence on Western monasticism. The first regards the discourse of the saints themselves, that is their actual writings and the earliest writings about them, that influenced the development of monasticism. This amounts to an academic orientalism, or at least as far as "academia" existed in the non-scholastic mediaeval regular communities.[14] Secondly, after the reification and foundation of official monastic centres, the later discourse about Eastern sanctity frequently placed it at the forefront of discussions and justifications, using them not only as sources but also as aesthetic or spiritual inspiration. This amounts to a conceptual orientalism. The combination and reconciliation of these two meanings was the culture into which Bernard was born.

1. Eastern Saints as Sources for the Foundation of Monasticism

The life of St Anthony, and the *Life of St Anthony* by St Athanasius, can be described as the origins and initial promulgation of a definably monastic vocation.[15] Athanasius tells the story of Anthony's inspiration by Matthew 19.21–22 in his decision to leave society and live an eremitical life in the desert.[16] The importance of Anthony's *Egyptianness* should not be left unstated. The fact that leaving society meant, for Anthony, going into a literal desert resulted in an aesthetic of asceticism closely associated with deserts, either physical or metaphorical, that continued throughout the monastic tradition. It is even evident in Athanasius: κατ᾽ ὀλίγον καὶ <u>τὴν ἔρημον</u>

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[13] Said, *Orientalism,* 3–4.

[14] For a survey of the specific style of monastic scholarship as opposed to scholasticism, see Leclerq, *Love of Learning,* 1–34 and *passim.*

[15] John McCulloh, "Confessor Saints and the Origins of Monasticism: The Lives of saints Anthony and Martin," in *The Middle Ages in Texts and Texture: Reflections on Medieval Sources,* ed. Jason Glenn (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011), 22–24.

[16] McCulloh, "Confessor Saints and the Origins of Monasticism," 24.

ἐμπλήσῃ τῆς ἀσκήσεως, "[Anthony] would soon *fill the desert with asceticism (monasticism).*"[17] Here, the metaphorical monopolisation of desert life by monasticism is directly linked to the physical space in which it began.

The next important textual event in the history of western monasticism is the publications of two related texts, the *Rule of St Benedict* and the *Life of St Benedict* attributed to St Gregory.[18] These two texts, as Leclercq states, solidified the monastic tradition as specifically *Benedictine*.[19] Similarly to Athanasius' *life,* the rôle of the *Rule of St Benedict* cannot be understated, as it formed the basis for nearly every major monastic order, and even those who do not follow the *Rule* often resulted as a reinterpretation of, or reaction against it.[20] But even though these texts are western, so to speak, their Eastern influences are abundantly apparent. Benedict closes his *Rule* by restating: *Ceterum ad perfectionem conversationis qui festinat, sunt doctrinae sanctorum patrum, quarum observatio perducit hominem ad celsitudinem perfectionis,* "Finally, the most urgent things for the perfection of one's conversion are the doctrines of the saintly fathers, the observation of which leads one to the heights of perfection."[21] The *fathers*, here, are specifically Eastern; indeed throughout the text, Benedict is "attracted, not only to patristic sources in general, but to Eastern sources in particular."[22] Evidently, the writings of Sts. Athanasius, Benedict, and Gregory all utilise Eastern sainthood as scholarly theological sources, revealing their "academic" orientalism.

2. Eastern Saints as Aemulanda *in the Continuity of Monasticism*

After the foundation of Western monasticism on principles of Eastern sanctity, and once it had begun to flourish in Western Christendom, the Eastern saints retained their eminent role, although now as models for the perfect, ascetic, monastic life. In the early days of the Cistercian order, Ordericus Vitalis attributes to Robert of Molesme an explanation for the necessity of a stricter observance of the *Rule*: *nec aspero gradimur Aegyptiorum Patrum tramite, qui in Thebaida, et sancta in terra commorabantur,* "we no longer tread the harsh path of the Egyptian Fathers [Anthony, Macarius, and Pachomius] who survived in the Thebaid and the Holy Land."[23] Here, the example of Eastern saints is not specifically to any given text or story. It is merely the aesthetic of the asperity of the desert and the intensity of the devotion associated with them that is emphasised. In fact, evocations of Egyptian exemplary piety are most often repeated in moments of contention

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[17] Athanasius, *Life of St Anthony,* 8. All translations in this paper are my own.

[18] Leclercq, *Love of Learning*, 11.

[19] Leclercq, *Love of Learning*, 89.

[20] Of the western monastic orders listed in the *Annuario Pontificio per l'anno 2022* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana 2022), 1439–1451, the Benedictines, Camaldolese, Cistercians, and Trappists all follow St Benedict's *Rule* or an interpretation of it, and the Carthusians, Paulines, and Hieronymites follow the *Statutes,* the *Rule of St Augustine,* and the *Rule of St Jerome* respectively, chosen in reaction to the Benedictine *Rule*.

[21] Benedict of Nursia, *Rule of St Benedict*, LXXIII.2.

[22] Leclercq, *Love of Learning*, 89.

[23] Ordericus Vitalis, *Historia Ecclesiastica,* III.8.

within the monastic sphere.[24] During the foundations of new monastic orders or other revivals, Egypt, and particularly St. Anthony, are often mentioned throughout the Middle Ages, from the Carolingian era to the twelfth century of Bernard.[25] And yet, it is not the deeds of the saints that are emphasised, it is the ideals they represented, a microcosm of the spiritual significance of monastic life as a whole.[26] In this way, hagiographies gained a new facet, in that they were not only treated as historical texts, parables, or pieces of biographical fiction, but now as an artistic representation of the aesthetics of sanctity, a description of the look and feel of the type of desolate piety associated with Eastern sainthood.

This is conceptual or literary orientalism. The discourse certainly essentialises the east along the lines of an imagined aesthetic, as well as exhibiting a demonstrable enthusiasm about it. Moreover, the aesthetics utilised are specifically anachronistic, with a clear emphasis on the ancient over the modern east. This is a trend in Biblical scholarship even in the period relevant to Said, where the eighteenth-century British and French political dominance of the Middle East led almost to a textual reappraisal of the significance of Eastern literature, adding a more specifically Biblical aesthetic to the discourse.[27] Nonetheless, this early monastic orientalism was the culture to which Bernard adapted and reacted, but as the Middle Ages developed, so did its orientalism, in no small part due to some of Bernard's own writings.

PART II: ORIENTALISM IN THE WORKS OF BERNARD OF CLAIRVAUX

Bernard exhibited the same tendencies above and followed in the tradition of aestheticising specifically Eastern asceticism. However, in the context of the crusades and the expansion of late mediaeval Latin Christendom, his writings about the modern east paint a very different picture. In this way, the difficulty of the differences between the ancient and the modern East translated into the third type of orientalism defined by Said, a "corporate" orientalism.

1. The Ancient East

In his writings about the ancient East, as above, Bernard exhibits an academic and conceptual orientalism. His academic orientalism was twofold: patristic and mystic. The importance of Eastern patristic texts such as Origen and Gregory of Nyssa is evident in his stylistic inspiration from them, as well as the more general point of the sheer number of their texts made for him at Clairvaux.[28] His mysticism is also something picked up from early Eastern saints. St Anthony was a mystic residing in the deserts of Egypt; St Bernard, in specific and fond emulation of him, was a mystic at the "deserts" of Cîteaux and Clairvaux.[29] His conceptual orientalism also

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[24] Leclercq, Love of Learning, 99.
[25] Leclercq, Love of Learning, 99.
[26] Leclercq, Love of Learning, 99.
[27] Said, *Orientalism*, 17–18, 76–77.
[28] Leclercq, *Cistercian Spirit*, 25–26.
[29] Étienne Gilson, *Théologie mystique de Saint Bernard* (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1934), 30–32.

centres around St. Anthony. Of course, he was nominally the first of the monks, but once again Bernard does not emphasise the actual founding of monasticism as much as its aesthetics. In his *Apology to William of Saint Thierry,* where he argues in favour of the renewal of ancient ascetic values, mostly regarding the art and decadence of some modern monastic centres, he calls back to the time of St. Anthony:

> *O quantum distamus ab his qui in diebus Antonii exstitere monachi! Siquidem illi cum se invicem per tempus ex charitate reviserent, tanta ab invicem aviditate panem animarum percipiebant, ut corporis cibum penitus obliti, diem plerumque totum jejunis ventribus, sed non mentibus transigerent.*

> Oh, how greatly we differ from those monks who lived in Anthony's time! When one of them visited each other for a time out of charity, due to the extent of their avidity they received only the bread of the soul, so they almost entirely forgot the nourishment of the body and spent several days empty in their stomachs, but not in their minds. [30]

Importantly, this is not a section about food (although that comes next), but about excesses in general. Thus, he is not actually talking about the relationship the early monks had to food specifically but is appealing to the ascetic piety that the physical desert brought about, that should be emulated in all aspects of modern monastic life, according to him.

2. The Modern East

Things are certainly different in Bernard's discussions about the modern East, most evident in his discourse surrounding the Second Crusade. He was one of the most important agents in its origins; indeed, as the Trappist monk Thomas Merton put it in 1954, "the [second] crusade is Bernard's work."[31] He preached in favour of it at the Council of Vézelay in 1146, had close connections with Louis VII of France, Abbot Suger, and Pope Eugene III, and wrote in favour of the Order of the Knights Templar.[32] In a letter arguing for the necessity of the crusade, he emphasises the purity and sanctity of the area and the pollution of the people living there, *polluant loca sancta Agni immaculata purpurata cruore*, "they are polluting the holy places, purpled with the blood of the immaculate Lamb."[33] Akbari, in reference to this passage, mentions Bernard's theological relationship with blood, arguing that for him blood can both cleanse in the case of the immaculate Lamb, but also pollute, in the case of the Muslims living in the east.[34] In this letter the purpose is evident: Bernard's emphasis of the purity of the place and the pollution of its inhabitants argues for an organised military effort to, according to him, deal with the "problem."

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[30] Bernard of Clairvaux, *Apology to William of Saint Thierry*, IX.19.

[31] Merton, *Last of the Fathers*, 38.

[32] Watkin Williams, *Saint Bernard of Clairvaux* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1935), 262–263, 287–288.

[33] Bernard of Clairvaux, *La Lettre aux Princes et aux Prélats*, in "L'Encyclique de Saint Bernard en faveur de la croisade," ed. Jean Leclerq, *Revue Benedictine* 81 (1971): 20.

[34] Akbari, *Idols in the East,* 236–237.

In many of the most vicious passages in this letter, the insults are physical, likening the Muslims to dogs and pigs, calling them "dirty," and using their physical blood as contradiction to the sacred blood that makes places holy.[35] However, Bernard's supposed only problem with these people is theological, not racial. Of course, it may well be that these were just the worst ways he thought to attack a group of people, but it is a relevant hypocrisy regarding his treatment of ancient and modern Middle Easterners.

This discontinuity between the ancient East, with associations of Biblical origins and early monastic asceticism, and the modern East, with associations of idolatry and impurity, was the impetus for the development of a mediaeval corporate orientalism. From a zealous admiration for the anachronistic connotations, and an ability to physically, or irrationally racially, distance that from the current inhabitants made the decision to want to "deal with it" with an organised military effort quite clear for Bernard. There are even parallels to the corporate orientalism of Said's time period, such as the 1882 British annexation of Egypt seen as a solution to the perceived "backwardness" of Egypt, with a particular emphasis on Egypt's illustrious antique past.[36] This corporate orientalism as evident in the writings of Bernard continued to influence the discourse about the east throughout the course of the crusades and the Middle Ages, as well as in monastic centres.

PART III: CORPORATE ORIENTALISM IN LATE MEDIAEVAL MONASTICISM

As I have argued, Said's first two meanings of orientalism, the academic and the conceptual, both began in the early monastic period, up until the twelfth century of Bernard. However, in the writings of Bernard himself, all three meanings are evident but split. His academic and conceptual orientalism is firmly focused on the ancient east, whereas his corporate orientalism focuses on the modern east. The purpose of this third section, then, is to demonstrate the proliferation of this third type in later mediaeval monasticism.

Starting with Bernard might seem misleading, as clearly on a broader level, the first crusade was more influential than the second. However, given that the focus here is specifically on *monasticism*, the second crusade, and particularly Bernard's involvement in it, was arguably what solidified the discourse in these communities.[37] So, to demonstrate Bernard's influence in the proliferation of monastic corporate orientalism, it will first be necessary to look at his influence on the second crusade, and then the influence of the second crusade on monastic orientalism.

1. Bernard and the Second Crusade

The influence of Bernard on the second crusade, as mentioned above, was both theological and rhetorical. His own view of the necessity of intense religious fervour, as espoused in almost

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[35] Bernard of Clairvaux, *La Lettre aux Princes et aux Prélats, passim.*

[36] Said, *Orientalism*, 35.

[37] Giles Constable, "Introduction" in *The Second Crusade and the Cistercians*, ed. Michael Gervers (New York: St Martin's Press, 1992), xix–xxi.

every one of his works, and his theological treatises on *militia* and *malitia* ("militia and malice"), intensified the discourse about the second crusade.[38] Perhaps as a result of this intensification, or perhaps as a cause for it, his rhetorical intensity was also particularly influential.[39] The racism in his descriptions of Muslims further contributed to this discourse. The combination of this vitriol with the admiration for the classical ancient east resulted in a discourse of the east as something to be contained, something to be dealt with, a corporate orientalism that only really came about around the beginning of the crusades.

2. The Second Crusade and Monasticism

One immediate outcome of the second crusade on monasticism was the establishment of a number of Cistercian monastic institutions in the east. The first of these was Balamand Monastery, founded in 1157 in the crusader state of Tripoli, followed by Salvatio in 1161, and several more throughout the continuation of the Long Twelfth Century.[40] This is poignant, as Bernard himself was never particularly interested in founding monasteries in the east.[41] He was even offered an old Byzantine church on Mount Joy by King Baldwin II to be converted into a Cistercian monastery, but declined.[42] Despite the strikingly fast expansion of the Cistercian order in the first half of the twelfth century, certainly at least in part due to Bernard himself, he neither had particular interests in either expanding into Asia, nor to go there himself.[43]

Why, then, were these monasteries founded after his death? I argue that this is a result of the discourse that he propagated, that even though he himself had been averse to the monastic expansion into Asia, the impact of his preaches overrode it. A suitable comparison is his *Book to the Knights of the Temple* from the 1130s, where, crucially, he spends the majority of the book describing various important areas and the Knight's settlements there.[44] Clearly, for Bernard, the monastic quality of the Knights Templar is particularly important, and their militia, while necessary, is secondary. This sentiment, coupled with the zeal expressed in his arguments in favour of the second crusade mentioned above, created a discourse of an essentialisation of the east as something to be dealt with, at times even with an emphasis on settlement. The founding of these monasteries, then, is a manifestation of this corporate orientalism. This is of course a microcosm. To overview completely the influence of Bernard and the second crusade in the entirety of the later Middle Ages would require a far longer study, but with a specific focus on monasticism, this

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[38] Merton, *Last of the Fathers,* 39; Aryeh Grabois, "Milita and Malitia: The Bernadine Vision of Chivalry," in *The Second Crusade*, 49–52.

[39] Hans-Dietrich Karl, "Crusade Eschatology as Seen by St. Bernard in the Years 1146 to 1148" in *The Second Crusade*, 36–40.

[40] Denys Pringle, "Cistercian Houses in the Kingdom of Jerusalem" in *The Second Crusade*, 184.

[41] Williams, *Bernard of Clairvaux*, 262.

[42] Pringle, "Cistercian Houses," 183.

[43] Williams, *Bernard of Clairvaux,* 262; Brenda Bolton, "The Cistercians and the Aftermath of the Second Crusade" in *The Second Crusade*, 137.

[44] Bernard of Clairvaux, *Book to the Knights of the Temple*, V–XIII.

typifies a representative trend in the discourse surrounding the East, spurred on by Bernard himself.

CONCLUSION

Bernard is not everything. He did not found the Cistercian order or the order of the Knights of the Temple. Nor was he the single instigator of the second crusade, and he played no role in the first (as he was five or six when it started). That being said, his influence in continuation of all of these phenomena, the expansion of the Cistercian order and the Knights Templar, and, as argued above, the second crusade, is notable. Thus, whether as a catalyst or a reflection of his *milieu,* his writings offer ample evidence of the discourse at the time, especially with regards to orientalism.

In the course of this paper, I have shown that there is a traceable tradition of orientalism within Western monasticism. With its origins in the academic and conceptual orientalisms of the initial founding and eventual consolidation of monastic centres, developing into a corporate orientalism, with Bernard arguably in the centre of it. Indeed, all three types of orientalism continued during the course of the Middle Ages, but it is only in or around Bernard's time that the third is as evidently visible. There is a multiplicity of orientalisms, the post-enlightenment orientalism of Said, the non-monastic mediaeval orientalism of Akbari, the monastic orientalism here, as well as many more. They are, however, all inherently different, and all require their own parameters of analysis.

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Beauty or the Beast: Monstrosity and Courtliness in Lavinia Fontana's Portrait of Tognina Gonzalez

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Monsters and the Maternal Imagination

What creates a monster? This question troubled the minds of many Western thinkers during the sixteenth century, whose conflicting perceptions of science and Christianity led to an obsession with the creation of monstrous offspring. One Italian author, Andrea da Volterra, expressed in his 1572 child-rearing manual the religious importance of aesthetics, proclaiming that children should be "living portraits of the beautiful image of God."[1] The role of producing beautiful children naturally fell to the mother. Many believed that children owed their appearance to their mother's imagination during pregnancy. French surgeon Ambroise Paré wrote in 1585 that "one more commonly sees children who resemble their father than their mother because of the mother's great ardor and imagination during carnal copulation."[2] The notion of "maternal imagination" led doctors to

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[1] Caroline P. Murphy, *Lavinia Fontana: A Painter and Her Patrons in Sixteenth-Century Bologna* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 162.

[2] Wendy Doniger and Gregory Spinner, "Misconceptions: Female Imaginations and Male Fantasies in Parental Imprinting," *Science in Culture* 127, no. 1 (1998): 112, https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351306928-4.

recommend that pregnant women hang paintings of idealized figures above their beds to imprint beauty upon their unborn children.[3]

Children who defied beauty standards, did not resemble their parents, or, most upsettingly, were born disfigured, appalled but also fascinated the public mind. Paré again attributed these misfortunes to the mother, writing in his encyclopedia *Des Monstres et Prodiges* that women should not observe "monstrous things" while pregnant or else conceive grotesque babies: "Et partant faut que les femmes, á l'heure de la conception, et lors que l'enfant n'est encore forme...n'ayent à regarder ny imaginer choses monstrueuses."[4] Nonetheless, all measures of society regarded human "monsters" with intense curiosity, and occasionally some measure of respect.[5] European courts boasted collections of humans with unusual physical features or deformities, such as dwarfs, although they particularly coveted rarer specimens like the "hirsute" Gonzalez family.[6] Pedro Gonzalez[7] and his children, famous for the thick fur covering their entire bodies, occupied a unique position traveling among the courts as both treasured objects and marvels of nature. Although we now know that Pedro Gonzalez passed on hypertrichosis, a genetic condition that causes excessive hair growth, to his children, a sixteenth-century viewer would more likely attribute Tognina's condition to the maternal imagination or perhaps a divine force.[8] The family's time spent among European courts produced numerous artistic depictions, although a portrait of Pedro's daughter Tognina[9] emerges distinct from the rest. Painted by Lavinia Fontana circa 1590, Tognina Gonzalez's portrait opposes the expectation for women to avert their gaze from monstrosity and asserts Fontana's breadth of intellectual interests by revising the tradition of scientific art.

Lavinia Fontana, a Bolognese painter who lived from 1552 to 1614, lived a remarkable life as a woman in the male-dominated world of art, paving the way for later female Italian artists like Artemisia Gentileschi.[10] Scholars now recognize Fontana as the first known female career artist, as she successfully lived off her earnings from commissions and sales.[11] Her art garnered acclaim among the noble families of Italy, including the papacy, and she frequently received commissions for portraits.[12] Many biographers, including Caroline P. Murphy, believe that Fontana has the largest surviving body of work

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[3] Doniger and Spinner, 112.

[4] Ambroise Paré, *Des Monstres Et Prodiges*, ed. Jean Céard (Geneva: Droz, 1971), 37.

[5] Paré, 37.

[6] Christiane Hertel, "Hairy Issues: Portraits of Petrus Gonsalus and His Family in Archduke Ferdinand II's Kunstkammer and Their Contexts," *Journal of the History of Collections* 13, no. 1 (2001): 1.

[7] Also referred to as Petrus Gonsalvus or Gonsalus.

[8] Hertel, "Hairy Issues," 16; Dahlia Saleh et al. "Hypertrichosis," *StatPearls* (2023), http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK534854/.

[9] Also referred to as Antoinetta.

[10] Murphy, *Lavinia Fontana*, 1.

[11] Murphy, *Lavinia Fontana*, 1.

[12] Murphy, *Lavinia Fontana*, 1.

of any female artist prior to the eighteenth century, even considering that many of her paintings have since been lost.[13] Despite lacking a title herself, Fontana was socially respected and became associated with her refined—and some might argue, staid—portraits of the nobility, rendering one of her subjects even more shocking. Among her self-portraits, depictions of noblewomen, and religious and mythical iconography lies a prominent outlier: the portrait of Tognina Gonzalez (Fig. 1).[14]

Fontana's decision to paint Tognina, a young girl whose genetic condition caused her to grow thick hair throughout her body, appears to assert her versatility as an artist and diverges from her otherwise homogeneous pool of clients. At first glance, the painting's style resembles Fontana's portraits of noblewomen and children. Tognina's intricate dress, sedate facial expression, and somber black background suggest she is a high-born daughter. She holds up a piece of paper to the viewer, which appears to communicate her literacy in the tradition of female self-portraits. Many women artists valued education and portrayed themselves in the act of writing or, like Sofonisba Anguissola, holding a piece of writing.[15] However, this polished image is interrupted by one glaring detail: Tognina's fur-covered face. A sixteenth-century audience may have been familiar with notions of monstrosity and medical abnormalities due to the naturalist craze sweeping through Europe; however, they would have found Fontana's choice of portraiture highly unusual in comparison to the typical medium of scientific illustrations.[16] Fontana's approach towards Tognina evokes a kinder attitude toward the girl's plight than other images of the Gonzalez family.

Cave or Court?

The body of artwork depicting the Gonzalez family as grotesque and animalistic can be traced back to the dehumanization of their patriarch, Pedro, after his displacement to continental Europe. Fontana's portrait of Tognina marks a significant shift away from these titillating images of monstrosity. In 1556, an adolescent Pedro arrived at the court of Henri II of France from his birthplace in the Canary Islands, most likely enslaved.[17] The European rulers viewed him as an invaluable wonder but not quite human. Transferred among the various courts and uprooted from his home, Pedro lacked autonomy even if he appears stately and well-treated in painting (Fig. 2). Most portraits of Pedro present him in courtly robes and occasionally show his full body, a composition typically reserved for prominent figures and the nobility. Nonetheless, other elements of these paintings, especially their settings, reveal an alternate understanding of Pedro—one more concerned with his animality than humanity.

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[13] Murphy, *Lavinia Fontana*, 1.

[14] Vera Fortunati Pietrantonio, *Lavinia Fontana of Bologna, 1552–1614* (Milan: Electa, 1998), 27.

[15] Babette Bohn, "Female Self-Portraiture in Early Modern Bologna," *Renaissance Studies*, vol. 18, no. 2 (2004): 255.

[16] Hertel, "Hairy Issues," 1.

[17] Hertel, "Hairy Issues," 4.

A 1621 inventory of Archduke Ferdinand II's private collections, the *Kunstkammer*, lists Pedro as "der rauch man zu Münichen"—"the hirsute man from Munich"—the sole human in a list of inanimate objects.[18] The Archduke further degraded Pedro by commissioning an unknown Bavarian artist to create a series of portraits of the Gonzalez family, which located them in a cave despite their formal dress (Figs. 2, 3, 4). Although the full-length composition extends some dignity, the setting of a cave casts the family as animals unearthed from the back corners of nature.[19] In contrast, Fontana's decision to place Tognina against a black background illuminates her subject's face, employing a soft chiaroscuro, and seeks to highlight Tognina's features rather than hide her in a cave.

While Hertel proposes that the Bavarian portrait of Pedro's non-hairy wife acts as a foil to her children's courtly portrayal, I argue that any apparent class difference does not diminish her family's purposeful affiliation with the animal world (Fig. 5). Instead, Fontana appears to have likened Tognina to her mother's portrait in order to undermine the divide between her condition and her humanity. The 1621 *Kunstkammer* inventory lists Tognina's unnamed mother as "aines bürgerlichen weibsbildt," a middle-class woman, and her portrait has a modest half-length composition.[20] Hertel theorizes that the mother's middle-class status, evidenced by her plain dress, indicates the greater respect for her hairy family members, who warranted fine robes and full-length portraits. Nonetheless, the mother receives even greater esteem than fancy clothing—the portrait treats her as human. She stands indoors, without any elements of nature, and the artist pays greater attention to her facial features, resulting in a naturalistic portrait. Fontana's portrait bears a closer resemblance to this representation, avoiding references to the wilderness, and aligns Tognina with humanity.

Specimens and Spectacles

Despite the sensitivity of Fontana's portrait, comparisons to scientific illustrations of the Gonzalez family suggest that Tognina's portrait still borrows from the naturalist tradition. Fontana may have hoped to associate herself with the perceived rationality and intellect of scientists while also broadening her repertoire with a singular subject. Just as Archduke Ferdinand II listed Pedro as an item in his *Kunstkammer*, prominent naturalists often categorized the Gonzalez family as monsters or natural phenomena alongside non-human flora and fauna.[21] Ulisse Aldrovandi, a Bolognese naturalist, notably viewed Tognina as more animal than human, describing her as "mulier viginti annorum hirsuto capite simiam imitante"—"a twenty-year-old woman with a hairy head who resembles an ape"—underneath her illustration in *Monstrorum Historia* (Fig. 6).[22] Aldrovandi, a friend of

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[18] Hertel, "Hairy Issues," 4.

[19] Hertel, "Hairy Issues," 4.

[20] Hertel, "Hairy Issues," 5.

[21] Hertel, "Hairy Issues," 4.

[22] Ulisse Aldrovandi, *Animali e Creature Mostruose Di Ulisse Aldrovandi*, ed. Biancastella Antonino (Milan: F. Motta, 2004), 203.

Fontana's, most likely introduced her to Tognina, complicating the legacy of her seemingly unique portrait.[23] Did Fontana also treat Tognina as a scientific specimen?

Certain aspects of Fontana's portrait hint at her desire to gain recognition for artistic innovation beyond her commissions of noblewomen. Her introduction to Tognina through Aldrovandi presents the possibility that the portrait served as an elevation of the naturalist's simpler illustration. Rather than conveying courtliness, Tognina's ornate attire may showcase her as a valued possession, much like her father's entry in the *Kunstkammer* inventory. The paper, rather than proving Tognina's literacy, acts closer to the inscriptions in scientific texts, detailing her father's origins in the Canary Islands as if recounting his pedigree.

One cannot deny that the sixteenth-century fascination with monstrosity piqued Fontana's curiosity. Many artists admired medical abnormalities as natural, God-given works of art. One painter observing a dissection of conjoined twins noted "that if they were done in Ivory, he would have paid any money for them."[24] No matter their esteem for nature's curiosities, these artists failed to acknowledge people like Tognina as individuals capable of emotion and rational thought. No other portrait by Fontana or similar artists displays a young girl holding up a piece of paper containing her father's heritage. The paper treats Tognina like an inanimate object in need of categorization, listing her provenance just like any other conquest in a royal collection.

Joris Hoefnagel's illustrations of the Gonzalez family in *Animalia Rationala et Insecta*, published around 1575–80, testify to the coexisting attitudes of pity and amazement towards medical anomalies that may have influenced Fontana (Figs. 7, 8). Tognina's paper mimics an inscription in *Animalia* in which Hoefnagel uses Pedro's first-person to explain his scientific origins: "Petrus Gonsalus [I am], the foster child of the King of France, / Originated in the Canary Islands / Tenerife brought me forth hairy all over my body / (Distributed) [,] a marvelous work of nature…"[25] However, Hoefnagel simultaneously admits sympathy for Pedro's condition, writing underneath his likeness, "Man, born of woman, is poor in days, but rich in sorrows," a verse from Job 14.[26] Characterizing Pedro as both a product of nature and a "man, born of woman," Hoefnagel situates Pedro on the border between animal and human. Likewise, Fontana does not fully embrace Tognina's personhood through her choice of portraiture; she includes the paper to satiate her audience's curiosity about Tognina's peculiar appearance.

Portraiture and Personality

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23 Murphy, *Lavinia Fontana*, 163.

24 Lorraine Daston, "Nature by Design," in *Picturing Science, Producing Art*, ed. Caroline A. Jones et al. (New York City and London: Routledge, 1998), 240.

25 Hertel, "Hairy Issues," 9.

26 Hertel, "Hairy Issues," 7.

The paper's prominence in the portrait and the lack of other identifying objects reveal Fontana's further differentiation of Tognina from a high-born daughter. Fontana ensured that Tognina carefully angled the piece of paper towards the viewer, marking its contents as crucial to our understanding of the portrait. Beyond the writing on the paper and Tognina's ornamentation, the portrait offers no clues to Tognina's interests and personality. In contrast, Fontana's self-portraits emphasize her accomplishments and skills, often including books and musical instruments (Fig. 10). Her portraits of noblewomen and children typically place her subject within an indoor setting that advertises their wealth and status, occasionally including a pet to conjure an atmosphere of leisure. Fontana develops their identities, providing evidence of their personal lives. She avoids labeling them like scientific specimens. While Fontana does not dehumanize Tognina nearly to the extent of the Bavarian portraits of her family, choosing a black background instead of a cave, she still fails to accord Tognina the full respect given to her other sitters. The utter disparity between Fontana's portrait of Tognina and the rest of her portraits speaks to her experimental intent as an artist.

A charcoal sketch of Tognina lends nuance to Fontana's perspective of the girl, supporting Fontana's desire to foray into the world of scientific illustrations while perhaps treating Tognina more sensitively than other artists (Fig. 12). Many scholars support the sketch as Fontana's superior representation of Tognina, arguing that the portrait hides Tognina's face beneath a "mask of fur" or "furry mask."[27] The sketch, in contrast, minimizes Tognina's condition and clearly demarcates the hair on her face from the hair on her head, using reddish-brown charcoal for the face and black for the rest of her body. Fontana distinguishes Tognina from a furry animal by separating her face from her head, unlike the Bavarian portraits which exaggerate the Gonzalezes' novelty by juxtaposing unvarying fur against elaborate court dress. Unlike her frozen expression in Fontana's portrait, Tognina appears alive in the sketch, her alert eyes and faint smile capturing her liveliness and humanity.

Yet, although the sketch rejects naturalist connotations, emphasizing Tognina's innocence and girlhood with gentle lines, it also softens and conceals Tognina's true features. Fontana's portrait may surpass the sketch in its naturalism, as photographs of hypertrichosis show that the condition does indeed create the appearance of a "furry mask," leading to a dense growth of hair on the face.[28] Fontana shows greater sympathy for Tognina, diminishing her monstrosity and likening her to a normal girl, but also hides the reality of her life. The 1590 portrait, despite its objectifying implications, refuses to beautify Tognina.

While Fontana's sketch may romanticize Tognina's appearance, its sister sketches present compelling evidence that Fontana still treated her subject more open-mindedly than any other artist. The sketch belongs to a series of nineteen portraits representing a variety of subjects, from nuns and

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[27] Murphy, *Lavinia Fontana,* 163; Hertel, "Hairy Issues," 15.

[28] Armand Marie Leroi, *Mutants: On Genetic Variety and the Human Body* (New York: Penguin Books, 2005), 277.

friars and noblewomen to a self-portrait of Fontana herself.[29] The identical half-length composition of the portraits demonstrates that Fontana treated them all with equal dignity, awarding no special distinction to social status.[30] Tognina's inclusion among these ranks signifies her normality. Fontana exhibits purely artistic interest in this series. She likely selected her unrelated subjects to practice drawing a diversity of figures. If the portrait shows Tognina's reality as a hairy little girl curiously arranged in courtly attire and identified through her father's foreign heritage, the sketch shows the idealized life Fontana may have wished for her. In this mild world of charcoal, Tognina sits among equals, free from the shadow of scientific observation, and her condition is an afterthought.

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[29] Although Hertel also notes that the "sitters are represented without props that would strongly indicate their social status or their occupation," some of them wear religious garb and Fontana portrays herself with a quill and paper, so the portraits do provide evidence of occupation.

[30] Hertel, "Hairy Issues," 15.

Figure 1: Lavinia Fontana, *Portrait of Tognina Gonzalez*, c. 1590, oil on canvas, 57 x 46 cm, Musée du Château, Blois.

Figure 2: *Hirsute Man, Petrus Gonsalvus (b. 1556)*, c. 1580, oil on canvas, 190 × 80 cm, Kunsthistorisches Museum.

Figure 3: *Madeleine Gonsalvus, Daughter of the Hirsute Man Petrus Gonsalvus (b. 1574)*, c. 1580, oil on canvas, 123 × 86 cm, Ambras Castle.

Figure 4: *Enrico Gonsalvus, Son of the Hirsute Man Petrus Gonsalvus (b. 1576)*, c. 1580, oil on canvas, 100 × 86.5 cm, Ambras Castle.

Figure 5: *Wife of the Hirsute Man Petrus Gonsalvus*, c. 1580, oil on canvas, 111 × 92 cm, Ambras Castle.

Figure 6: Ulisse Aldrovandi, *Tognina Gonzalez,* in *Monstrorum Historia,* 1642.

Figure 7: Joris Hoefnagel, *Pedro Gonzalez and His Wife Catherine*, Plate 1 from *Animalia Rationala et Insecta,* c. 1575–80.

Figure 8: Joris Hoefnagel, *The Children of Pedro Gonzalez,* Plate 2 from *Animalia Rationala et Insecta,* c. 1575–80.

Figure 10: Lavinia Fontana, *Self-Portrait at Clavichord*, c. 1577, oil on canvas, 27 x 23.8 cm, Accademia Nazionale di San Luca.

Figure 11: Lavinia Fontana, *Sketch of Tognina Gonzalez,* c. 1590.

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BOOK REVIEW

BETWEEN CHRISTIAN AND JEW: CONVERSION AND INQUISITION IN THE CROWN OF ARAGON, 1250–1391

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Paola Tartakoff, *Between Christian and Jew: Conversion and Inquisition in the Crown of Aragon, 1250–1391*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012. 140 pages.

The recent publication of the paperback edition of *Between Christian and Jew: Conversion and Inquisition in the Crown of Aragon* by Paola Tartakoff reflects an increased interest in interfaith relations and the religious history of the Iberian Peninsula in recent years. Paola Tartakoff, a scholar on Jewish-Christian interaction during the medieval and early modern periods, successfully portrays that the complicated relationship between the Abrahamic faiths, especially in the Iberian Peninsula, is far from a new phenomenon. Her book focuses on 1250–1391, the century leading up to the horrific massacre and mass conversion of Jews in the Crown of Aragon, a kingdom within the Iberian Peninsula in what is now modern Spain. During this century, Christians and Jews worked productively together and mingled socially. However, inquisitors and the Catholic Church sporadically persecuted Jews and, consequently, Jews also felt negatively about Christianity. In her book, Tartakoff pushes back against the simplification of the relationship between Christians and Jews in the Crown of Aragon prior to 1391 and encourages further inquiry and research into the topic. Tartakoff follows the story of Pere, a Medieval Jewish convert to Christianity. As a result, she conveys the complexities of interfaith relations in Iberia at a time when the Catholic Church had an excess of power and how conversion and inquisitorial investigations impacted these tensions and prejudices. Overall, this book acts as an effective

foundation for future researchers to delve deeper into.

As a grad student, the story of Pere came to Tartakoff's attention when she discovered it in the footnote of an old book. After traveling to Spain to find the inquisitor records of his case, she came to realize that there were no articles or books written about this case, and it had been largely forgotten over time. In part one of *Between Christian and Jew*, Tartakoff dives into her findings from the inquisitor records and tells the story of Pere. After converting to Christianity, Pere states that he was coerced by Jews to denounce Christianity which nearly led him to burn at the stake as a Jewish martyr. This case led to a large inquisitorial investigation, around which Tartakoff structures her book. By focusing on this case, Tartakoff shows the complex relationship between Christians and Jews and how these inquisitorial investigations against Jews were often questionable. In Iberia at this time, Jews were allowed to practice their faith and were supposed to be allowed to be outside of the Christian fold. Therefore, they were not supposed to be impacted by inquisition. Due to the fact that Christians and Jews efficiently worked together and socialized together, it would appear on the surface that Jews were largely tolerated despite the Catholic influence within the region. Of course, as Tartakoff shows in her book, this was not always the case. Inquisitors did in fact prosecute Jews for blaspheming against Christianity and for allegedly attempting to bring Christian converts back to Judaism. Tartakoff lays the foundation of the book by introducing the productive yet problematic relationship between medieval Iberian Christians and Jews while investigating the case of Pere and the inquisitorial investigation of his alleged attackers. By structuring her book around this startling story, she effectively draws in the audience and makes the reader excited to dive further into the book.

Part two of *Between Christian and Jew* shows that the complexity of interfaith relations in Iberia was even more complicated due to Jewish conversion to Christianity. During this time, mass conversion had not occurred in the region, yet, some Jews, allegedly willingly, converted to Christianity. Tartakoff discusses Jewish converts to Christianity by continuing to highlight the case of Pere. While she states that Pere's case was unusual, she adds that Jews did in fact want converts to return back to Judaism, especially the family members of converts. Tartakoff describes Jewish converts as being in a "no man's land" because, despite the fact that the Catholic Church praised Jewish conversion and saw it as proof of Christian supremacy and truth, Jewish converts were still stereotyped as untrustworthy. Tartakoff shows that conversion to Christianity did occur, mostly as an attempt by Jews to have a better life, but converts became a group of their own, isolated both by their former Jewish brethren and their new fellow Christians. Tartakoff illustrates the prejudice that Jews and Christians had against each other despite living in the same region and working alongside each other. Furthermore, she successfully shows the Christian disdain for "Jewishness" and their harmful belief that Jews were dangerous yet inferior, even if they converted to Christianity. On the other hand, she posits that Jews also felt disdain and hatred towards Christianity and Christians. However, due to the limited sources available, Tartakoff admits that generalizations and assumptions must be made to attempt to understand the medieval Iberian view of Christian converts during the century on which that the book focuses. Due to the aforementioned complexity of Jewish-Christian relations in thirteenth and fourteenth-century Iberia, it is likely that we are not getting the full picture from the limited sources

that have been discovered. For these reasons, it is crucial to take the arguments and conclusions conveyed in the book with a grain of salt.

In the third and final part of *Between Christian and Jew*, Tartakoff delves further into the inquisitorial investigations and their consequences. As discussed in the book, many of these investigations were done under torture or threats of death. Inquisitions were deadly and could result in more taxes being burdened on whole Jewish communities. This resulted in further Jewish disdain for Christianity and Christians, which created an even larger divide between the faiths. While diving into this topic, Tartakoff argues that the documentation of the inquisitorial investigations in the Crown of Aragon during this time reveals little about the true story. Not only is there a limited number of sources available, the documentation that does remain was written by the inquisitors' scribes, who not only likely held a bias against those they persecuted, but also used summarization and paraphrasing when documenting the investigations. Therefore, all we can truly know about the lives of Jews during this time from these documentations is what Christians chose to document. These sources get even more cloudy when considering that the Jews being questioned were tortured. They knew that inquisitors could have them killed at the stake, which resulted in truth being withheld in many of these investigations. As Tartakoff mentions, our sources on these matters are scarce, riddled with bias, and have been likely translated on several occasions. Due to this, the takeaways presented are Tartakoff's own interpretations of very limited sources. Tartakoff's *Between Christian and Jew* undoubtedly leaves the reader with many questions. As I concluded the book, I found myself wondering how Jewish converts viewed themselves and their Jewish identities. Due to the limited available primary sources from both the inquisitors and Iberian Jews, the book can at times be very repetitive, and Tartakoff makes generalizations in an attempt to understand the lives of the subjects of the book. More research is needed to truly understand the interfaith relationships discussed in the book. Despite this, Tartakoff successfully portrays the complexities of interfaith relations during 1250–1391 in the Crown of Aragon with the limited materials she did have. Overall, her book argues that Jewish conversion to Christianity and the inquisitorial investigations of accusations of Jewish blasphemy may have increased the tensions and the complexity of the relationship between Christians and Jews. These events, including the case of Pere, were likely on the minds of inquisitors during the horrific events that would follow in 1391. As Tartakoff admits, much of this is speculation based on limited sources. Furthermore, she proves that the image of a religiously tolerant Crown of Aragon during the century before 1391 is not completely accurate and that much more research needs to be done on this topic.

By using the fascinating case of Pere as the foundation of her book, she leaves the reader captivated and interested to dive deeper. Although the book is targeted toward an academic audience, Tartakoff skillfully structures the book in a way that makes it palatable even for a non-academic audience. Tartakoff concludes her book by stating that she hopes it will encourage other researchers to delve deeper into the lives of Jews and Christians in the Crown of Aragon during this time period. While it is clear that much more research and investigation into the lives of Jews and Christians during this time period is necessary to get a clearer picture of their experiences, Tartakoff's book acts as an excellent foundation for further inquiry and research. Those interested in delving deeper into the lives

of medieval Jews and Christians certainly will find themselves enthusiastic to begin their own research.

Ravana's Failures of Conquest: Gendered Spaces in The Ramayana

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Building off of the methodology of Sally Sutherland Goldman's essay, "Gendered Narratives: Gender, Space, and Narrative Structures in Vālmīki's *Bālakāṇḍa*," I will argue that Ravana's masculine failings are demarcated by how women treat him in spaces he is supposed to assume political dominance. Goldman argues that "the physical space and narrative location in which the various episodes of the book occur are marked by considerations of gender," and should thus be considered organizing principles.[1] Using space and setting to interpret why Ravana is fated to fail, we can further understand how the Valmiki *Ramayana* perceives kingship and manhood in relation to dominance over space. The kingdom itself is marked by gendered considerations of how people can move between different spaces. Ravana exemplifies how space and gender interact, illustrating through his lack of dominance over the spaces of his court and the Asoka Grove why he is fated to yield to Rama. It is not only a matter of whether Ravana can defend his land against invasion, but more so a question of whether he can exert command over his land.

Framing the story as an infiltration of heterosexual desire in the forest, Goldman asserts that the death of the male kraunca bird "symbolically lets loose upon the epic story, as it were, an uncontrolled—therefore dangerous—sexual female. The female kraunca is a harbinger of the sexual threat to be loosed upon the males of the Isvaku lineage by various females, particularly Sita."[2] The sexual threat is more expansive than Goldman suggests here. Sita and Surpanakha—who is quite literally interrupted in the midst of her sexual desires—also pose a sexual threat to Ravana's power as well. Surpanakha and Sita, losing their ideal male lover in Rama, use either their unfulfilled desire or grief to force Ravana through his own narrative. He is overcome by the women's need to see their story

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[1] Sally S. Goldman, "Gendered Narratives: Gender, Space, and Narrative Structures in Vālmīki's *Bālakāṇḍa*," in *The Rāmāyaṇa Revisited* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 48.

[2] Goldman, "Gendered Narratives," 51.

resolve and he moves toward his death because women push him—and his power—out of his own space. Because of Surpanakha, he invades Rama's land, signified in Sita's body as the daughter of the Earth. Comparatively, in the Asoka Grove, Sita successfully silences and threatens him in his kingdom, showing the limits of his power even over the land he owns. Literally and metaphorically, he is excised from his own space and does not know it. His kingdom and the Asoka Grove are appropriated and remade by women. The space marks his faux masculinity and ignorance.

The first example of Ravana's deficiency appears after Surpanakha's mutilation when she returns to Lanka to convince Ravan to avenge her insult. She "spoke harshly to Ravana [...] in front of all his ministers. 'Intoxicated with lust, indulging all your desires, living entirely by your whims and totally without any restraint, you have no idea of the danger you are in! You should know this but you don't!'"[3] In his own court, Ravana allows Surpanakha to criticize him and drive him to avenge her insult. Meanwhile, she convinces him that disrupting Rama and Sita is in his favor. She acts like one of his ministers in urging Ravana to act before Rama. Surpanakha presents herself as more aware and knowledgeable than Ravana here and he is easily convinced, unable or unwilling to determine the truth or righteous path for himself. His danger is twofold—first, he is fated to be killed at the hands of Rama and he is entirely unaware of his role within the story, and secondly, he fails to realize the transgression Surpanakha will lead him to commit. His submission to his sister's plan reaffirms his fate. In comparison to Rama's debates throughout the *Ramayana*, Ravana here is undiscerning and unwise. He makes no counter and offers no input, revealing himself to be a false king. In this episode, he acts as the puppet for a woman's revenge. Ravana should know how to act as a king and a man, but he does not, and so he proves malleable to Surpanakha's scheme. His first action to cement his fate at the hands of Rama is committed under the false pretenses that Surpanakha has set before him. She accuses him of ignorance within his court and thus illustrates the court space as mired in gendered conflict, where women invade as a threat to kingly, male power. Valmiki ties space and knowledge together, contemplating how these principles fail to control female pain and emotion while under Ravana's gaze.

The definitions of the Lanka court and the Asoka Grove are symbolically important when thinking about how they compare to the forest, which is poised as the strange, wild standard to which a kingdom is opposed. Through the episodes of Tataka and the story of the Ganges, the *Balakanda* has presented the forest as a domain partially inhabited by untamed women—women who are unaccompanied or who Rama should have "no hesitation about killing" in order to "do what is best for the four castes."[4] The forest is violent and against the grain of social order. As Surpanakha's mutilation occurs in this space, the forest serves simultaneously as a place where women experience freedom and are punished for exercising it. The narrative pairs the disruption of the social order and female sexuality as threats to empire-making. In the *Balakanda*, Vishwamitra wants Rama to go into

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[3] Vālmīki, *Valmiki's Ramayana*, trans. Arshia Sattar (Rowman & Littlefield, 2018), 165.

[4] Vālmīki, *Valmiki's Ramayana*, 66.

the forest and proactively remove the threat of disruption before it can reach Ayodhya. Men and kings move through space to create definition and borders between civilization and the unconquered. But, in Surpanakha, when women move freely, they degrade these well-established barriers.

Between the moment of her mutilation and Ravana's abduction of Sita, Surpanakha moves from the forest to the outskirts of the *raksasas's* kingdom to the center of power in Lanka. She brings the crimes of the forest into the kingdom, uncivilizing the court. By first telling her brother Khara and inciting a battle between him and Rama, she originates an invasion of the forest—undermining spatial, ethical, and gender borders. Though Rama and Lakshmana are the first to act against Surpanakha, they do so completely entrenched in the forest, where justice and honor are not intended to be dictated by courtly or dharmic principles. By involving her brother's armies, Surpanakha transgresses these legal and ethical lines. It was inappropriate to seek justice within the kingdom for something that occurred in the forest. Once Khara sends his army, it is as though he and his sister have initiated an imperial battle between the *raksasas* and Rama for legal control over the forest. From here, Rama is set on an imperial conquest after his symbolic property, Sita, is stolen. Women, then, are at the narrative center of empire disputes.

Surpanakha moves even further by entering Ravana's court itself. When she demands action, she does not mention her mutilation as the primary offense, but instead, the resulting battle she convinced Khara to ignite: "'You don't even know that your people have been massacred in Janasthnana [...] and the Dandaka forest [has] been cleansed[...]!'"[5] Now she has made her unfulfilled desire a problem of empire and undermines Ravana's sense of control. Repeating the same sentiment discussed earlier, she says, "'How could you not know about this catastrophe which occurred within your own kingdom?"[6] Surpanakha has confused the boundaries of Ravana's kingdom in front of him. She convinces Ravana that his kingdom is being invaded, and thus, anticipating his response, makes him an unwitting invader. While women are undoubtedly centered here as liabilities to the security of the kingdom in their unruly desire, whether sexual or for revenge, Ravana, pertinently, is so unaware of the truth that he cannot unravel Surpanakha's manipulations.

Securing his own fate, Ravana only amplifies the narratively misguided desires of Surpanakha. After hearing her argument, he "dismissed his ministers and began to think about what he should do [...] he decided to go ahead with Surpanakha's plan."[7] The plan is not posed as his own. Ravana has not learned to be a player rather than a pawn in political machinations, as Rama learns through his episode with Vali and Sugriva. The detail that he "dismissed his ministers" also reflects his inadequate kingship. Ravana has not appointed Surpanakha and yet follows through with her ideas, rather than confer with his court. Understanding this story as the downfall of Ravana, he necessitates his own demise because

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[5] Vālmīki, *Valmiki's Ramayana*, 222.
[6] Vālmīki, *Valmiki's Ramayana*, 222.
[7] Vālmīki, *Valmiki's Ramayana*, 224.

he mistreats his ministers and women: his ministers by ignoring them and women by allowing them to exert control within his court. Ravana misunderstands the social designations of his own kingdom, placing himself at the bottom of the gender hierarchy. He cannot exert control with his court and he is now attempting to exert control in the forest. The space of the court is drained of masculine political presence.

Moving into the *Sundarakanda*, when Ravana has trapped Sita in the Asoka Grove within his palace, his arguments fall short and Sita exposes the same inadequacies he revealed in the earlier episode. Valmiki says, "The virtuous woman turned her back on Ravana and continued. 'I cannot marry you. I am the chaste and virtuous wife of another man. Respect the conduct of good men and learn to behave like them! [...] Are there no good men here? Do you not listen to their advice?'"[8] As seen in the Surpanakha episode, Ravana is more than willing to dismiss any potentially "good men," and instead surrounds himself with textually lower members of society, often women. He is presented as a king unwilling to learn and one who abandons his own court to pursue his personal convictions. "Good men" are not simply kind, but also satisfactorily conduct themselves as men. Moreover, as king, he should represent the best men of his kingdom and perform his dharmic rites. His denial of his duty to this behavior represents, to Sita and the audience, the failing of all men and of dharma within Lanka. Ravana's failings are justification for the destruction of Lanka. He does not understand himself and the kingdom as one entity.

In Kampan's Tamil telling of Ravana's advances on Sita within the Asoka Grove, Kampan fosters incongruence between Ravana's actions and the space, using this dissonance to still represent his errant control because the space and language of the text rebels against his feeling. The Tamil verse begins with the lingering use of a verb that occurs far earlier in the full text: "He came" writes Kampan "sighing/fierce sighs."[9] His movement presides over the text as if to represent that what follows is encapsulated in this act of arriving. As opposed to translating as "the demon king came *and* sighed/fierce sighs," by invoking the use of parataxis, Shulman's translation revels in Ravana's limitations in controlling his own actions. Without a conjunction or link, these actions are not separated in a way that would exhibit an attempt to process his emotion. Instead, the scorching of the garden is unceremoniously attached to his arrival, as though the destruction explodes from his every step. In this first verse, Ravana is ill at ease in the Asoka Grove and his physicality is disruptive. Ravana's body rejects temperance and knightly poise because he is so overcome by sexual desire for a married woman. Embodying the emotional reasons these actions are paired together, the grove may be seen as the missing link between his arrival and his destruction that the text itself leaves uncertain. The space of

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[8] Vālmīki, *Valmiki's Ramayana*, 347.
[9] David Shulman, "Ravana visits Sita at Night in the Ashoka Grove, from Kamban's Tamil Rāmāyaṇa: Translator's Note and Text," in *Sensitive Reading*, ed. Yigal Bronner and Charles Hallisey (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 165.

the grove draws out his undesirable sentiments, becoming victim to Ravana's incongruent desires and inability to regulate his actions. Both the text and the grove are treated as space—the objects of Ravana's advancement—but still the untethered nature of Kampan's language expresses Ravana's insufficient *kshatriya* masculinity.

Beyond the manipulation of the text, Kampan still emphasizes Ravana's ignorance, as well. His act of searching his own garden heightens his frantic energy. Kampan writes:

> "Although he knew exactly where the goddess
> was sitting, his mind was scattered and,
> [...] he was looking for her
> in every nook and cranny."[10]

Ravana is a useless vessel for knowledge in this condition. He knows where Sita is within this space, but cannot use this knowledge because of his inappropriate yearning. In such a way, this scene mirrors the cultural knowledge of ethics and morals that surrounds Ravana and his disregard for that knowledge in favor of acting disastrously. Although he must be aware of how a proper king should act, his emotions overwhelm him and he lacks awareness of the space of the Asoka Grove. His desires have made him insensible and degraded his intellectual capability. "He came," but now he arrives into a space that is unrecognizable in his passions. This verb, without an explicit link to the rest of the passage, is continually reframed as the reader learns of Ravana's capacity to dominate space.

Even more damning of Kampan's Ravana is the placement of verses. As he is searching in "every nook and cranny," he fails to see Hanuman in the next verse. Hanuman, with his "two / perfect eyes," hid "calmly as the demon came near."[11] Ravana is so deeply lost in his passions that not only does he not see Hanuman in his search, Hanuman is assured. It appears contradictory that Ravana could be said to search everywhere but Hanuman's hiding place, but this reinforces the reader's certainty that Ravana is a poor lord over his kingdom. He lacks awareness of its entirety. His presence now makes the Asoka Grove public and incites more criticism of Ravana, who fails to protect his private affairs.

Returning to Valmiki's rendering, Ravana attempts to recoup from Sita's criticisms, drawing on a pathetic argument that only serves to damn him as a misguided king. He complains, "'The more a man tries to please a woman, the more he falls into her power! [...] A man cannot act against the wishes of the woman that he desires.'"[12] Here Ravana admits to losing control, even in his own space. Within the Asoka Grove, something that he has coveted and made beautiful, he is made powerless because he succumbs to his physical attachments. He diminishes his own abilities in order to justify his anger and lust and the grove is perverted from a realm of sanctuary, where one should acknowledge its sacredness, to something wild and unkempt. Ravana's overdesire is unbecoming of the Asoka Grove.

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[10] Shulman, "Ravana visits Sita," 165.

[11] Shulman, "Ravana visits Sita," 166.

[12] Vālmīki, *Valmiki's Ramayana*, 348.

Comparing the Asoka Grove to other spaces, it is presented strangely in the way that it is not uncontrollable, like the forest, but it is still separated from the private, internal palace. As Hanuman searches for Sita, he witnesses the inside of Ravana palace, where, "Everywhere he looked, he saw rare and exotic delicacies, fine wines and half-eaten food[...] broken pots and overturned jugs so that water mixed with the overflowing liquors."[13] The palace is littered with waste and excess, brimming with vice and corruption. The space and those who inhabit it, Ravana and his wives, revel in their disorder because they believe it is a private space. However, Sita's rebellion in remaining in the grove slightly transforms the cultivated garden into a more public space. So while the Asoka Grove is supposed to highlight a lord's command over the wild landscape, as gardens do, Sita is endangering the borders of Ravana's palace by attempting to remain accessible and public. She succeeds when Hanuman spots her and allows Rama to finally invade Lanka.

While Ravana is in a space that should epitomize his power, Ravana can be used as a medieval model for how men can squander their own power. This framework still places the onus of corruption on women like Surpanakha, but when in the presence of virtuous women, Ravana corrupts his sacred space. Understanding this emasculated Ravana in combination with the Ravana who so easily covets the wives of other men and exerts control over the enslaved women within his palace, we still see a continuity in his neglect of his dharmic and masculine duty. He does not establish a family or lineage in a comparable way to the Iskvalus, despite his many wives and women. His pursuit is not one of generational security. By not asserting control over his lineage, echoed in his conduct in the garden, he opens a space for women to weaponize his emotional failures against him.

Using the principles set out by Goldman, we see that Ravana's failures of spatial and narrative awareness are instigated by women, suggesting that the court setting is a part of a continuum of gendered conflict. Both women accuse Ravana of lacking the knowledge of how to be a good king and usurp some control because he becomes unmoored. Femininity in the court is a threat and a tool if left untempered through labor, as seen through domestic servants and concubines in both Ayodhya and Lanka. *Kshatriya* masculinity is defined by command and cognizance of his space. As expressed by Goldman's analysis of the sexual threat of women within the *Ramayana*, signified by the kraunca bird's lament that crosses temporal boundaries to influence the narrative, women further attempt to control the story of "The Slaying of Ravana" through changing gendered spatial relationships. Ravana's failures to maintain his borders and understand the public gaze on his kingdom allow Surpanakha and Sita to take advantage of the court and the grove, respectively. The kingdom in its entirety is reliant on a strong, masculine ruler to define its borders, lest women and uncontrollable emotion transgress them.

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[13] Vālmīki, *Valmiki's Ramayana*, 339.

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Modest is Hottest :
La chasteté dans
La Cité des dames

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« Elle ne daigna jamais s'accoupler à un homme. »[1] Ce sentiment, qui souligne la supériorité d'une femme sans amant ou mari, est répété maintes fois par Christine de Pizan dans son roman révolutionnaire *La Cité des dames.* Christine de Pizan a écrit *La Cité des dames* en 1405 en réponse aux écrivains antiféministes qui condamnent les femmes. La littérature antiféministe soutient que toutes les femmes sont vulgaires, trompeuses et destructrices pour les hommes. En présentant les femmes chastes, Christine conteste l'argument que d'être une femme est d'être licencieuse. Christine utilise la même stratégie rhétorique que les auteurs antiféministes : elle présente des exemples de femmes qui prouvent son point. Sa cité des dames connues inclut des femmes historiques, des femmes bibliques et des femmes classiques. Il est impossible de généraliser les femmes chastes dans ce livre : Christine inclut les « pucelles », les saintes, les femmes-guerrières, les reines, les veuves, les déesses et même les épouses. Même si une femme ne reste pas chaste pour la totalité de sa vie, elle incarnerait la chasteté dans les étapes cruciales. Par conséquent, pour Christine, la chasteté est une vertu qui est accessible à toutes les femmes.

La phrase « elle ne daigna jamais s'accoupler à un homme » inverse la conception populaire du sexe au Moyen Âge selon laquelle toutes les femmes essaient de séduire des hommes. Selon le médiéviste Benjamin Semple, « the direction of sin was from woman to man, not from man to woman. »[2] Ainsi, sa déclaration qu'il est sous la dignité d'une dame de s'accoupler ou se marier à un homme était révolutionnaire. Avec l'utilisation du mot « daigner », cette louange de chasteté féminine se distingue de l'idée de la chasteté masculine qui était prônée par les auteurs antiféministes. Ils

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[1] Christine de Pizan, *La Cité des dames*, trans. Éric Hicks et Thérèse Moreau (Éditions Stock, 1986), 77.
[2] Benjamin Semple, "The Male Psyche and the Female Sacred Body in Marie de France and Christine de Pizan," *Yale French Studies*, no. 86 (1994): 165, https://doi.org/10.2307/2930282.

soutiennent qu'il est difficile mais nécessaire de résister aux ruses féminines.[3] Christine répond directement aux *Lamentations de Matheolus* de Jehan Le Fèvre (écrit vers l'an 1371–1372) ; *La Cité des dames* ouvrit avec une scène dans laquelle Christine lit *Les Lamentations de Matheolus* et devient déprimée à cause de ces déclarations dégradantes pour les femmes. Trois vertus personnifiées, Dame Raison, Dame Droiture et Dame Justice, apparaissent afin de réfuter ces déclarations antiféministes.[4] Dans *Les Lamentations de Matheolus*, Le Fèvre prétend que la lubricité des femmes est plus ardente que celle des hommes.[5] Il présente des femmes comme des êtres malfaisants qu'un homme doit être bien fort d'éviter. Son appel pour la chasteté masculine diffère complètement de la façon dont Christine discute la chasteté féminine. Pour Christine, la chasteté des femmes n'est pas un exploit ; les dames chastes dans sa Cité pratiquent avec facilité la chasteté. Cette aisance démontre la vertu naturelle des femmes.

La base de l'éloge de femmes chastes est la Vierge Marie, la reine de la Cité des dames. Au Moyen Âge, la Vierge Marie était la seule femme intouchable. Elle possède les deux formes de féminité idéale en une personne: elle est chaste et maternelle en même temps. Christine profite de l'admiration pour la Vierge Marie pour élever toutes les femmes. Dans la première partie du livre, Dame Raison, une des trois dames qui introduit Christine aux femmes de sa Cité, explique à Christine, « Il gagna un rang bien plus haut par Marie que celui qu'il avait perdu par Eve. Car jamais l'humanité n'aurait été réunie à la Divinité si Eve n'avait péché. »[6] Christine de Pizan libère Ève de sa caractérisation comme la destructrice de l'humanité : la vertu de la Vierge Marie est si impressionnante qu'elle pardonne le péché d'Ève. Donc, les femmes ne sont pas destinées au mal à cause du péché originel. Plus tard dans le texte, Dame Justice parle directement à la Vierge Marie et dit : « Dame, toi qui es l'honneur de notre sexe, les hommes ne devraient-ils pas... s'abstenir de blâmer les femmes ? »[7] En louant la chasteté, Christine associe toutes les femmes avec la Vierge Marie et sa qualité la plus connue.

Benjamin Semple examine sainte Marie l'Égyptienne dans son analyse de la sainteté du corps féminin. Il soutient que Marie l'Égyptienne « achieves her sanctity through identification with the Virgin. »[8] Christine de Pizan applique cette stratégie pour les résidentes de la Cité des dames : elles sont dirigées par la Vierge Marie et cette proximité leur accorde l'accès à sa vertu. Pour Christine de Pizan, le

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[3] Par exemple, vers l'an 1180, Walter Map écrit dans une lettre contre le mariage que la réussite plus incroyable de l'empereur Valentius était sa virginité à l'âge de quatre-vingts ans, parce qu'il signifie que Valentius a conquis sa même chair. Walter Map, "The Letter of Valerius to Rufinius, Against Marriage," in *Women Defamed, Women Defended: An Anthology of Medieval Texts*, ed. Alcuin Blamires with Karen Pratt and C.W. Marx (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 109.

[4] Christine de Pizan, *La Cité des dames,* 35–39.

[5] Jehan Le Fevre, "The Lamentations of Matheolus," in *Women Defamed, Women Defended: An Anthology of Medieval Texts*, ed. Alcuin Blamires with Karen Pratt and C.W. Marx (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 192.

[6] Christine de Pizan, *La Cité des dames,* 55.

[7] Christine de Pizan, *La Cité des dames,* 240.

[8] Semple, "The Male Psyche and the Female Sacred Body in Marie de France and Christine de Pizan," 168.

corps féminin est le site de la rédemption des femmes. Les chapitres sur les martyres servent à valoriser la force d'âme féminine. Christine décrit en détail la torture qui était infligée sur les saintes, comme sainte Christine, sainte Catherine et sainte Martine. Sainte Christine est dénudée, chargée en chaînes, flagellée, battue par douze hommes, couverte d'huile bouillante, jetée à la mer et sa langue est coupée[9] ; sainte Catherine est affamée, fouettée, brûlée[10] ; sainte Martine est déshabillée, tailladée, brûlée, et sa chair est arrachée.[11] Cette torture est étroitement liée à la chasteté de ces martyres. Elles ont la capacité d'endurer la peine physique parce qu'elles n'ont pas perdu la source de leur force physique : leur virginité. Même quand elles ont été humiliées physiquement et sexuellement, leurs corps ont toujours purs. En restant vierges, elles protègent leurs mariages à Jésus-Christ, « l'Époux céleste. »[12] En échange, Christ les fournit avec l'endurance contre la punition.

La virginité était aussi une échappatoire à la sexualisation des femmes. Semple explique que la virginité des saintes dans la troisième partie de *La Cité des dames* sert à souligner les qualités intellectuelles et morales de ces femmes. Ces saintes rompent le binaire entre les vierges idéales et les prostituées—les femmes qui ne peuvent pas être des objets sexuels et les femmes que les hommes définissent par leur attrait.[13] Les saintes, toutefois, sont parfaitement chastes à cause de leur spiritualité et étonnamment belles en même temps. Christine note qu'après avoir enduré de la torture, sainte Catherine d'Alexandrie est restée douze jours en isolement total, « elle était encore plus belle et plus fraîche qu'auparavant. »[14] L'éloge du corps féminin dans *La Cité des dames* contredit la conception antiféministe des femmes. Les auteurs antiféministes présentent les corps de femmes comme une aberration. Aristote, le philosophe et scientifique grec qui était vénéré en Europe occidentale au Moyen Âge, croit que « Ton peut croire que c'est une sorte d'infériorité de nature que d'être du sexe féminin. »[15] Ainsi, la beauté, quand combinée avec la chasteté, prouve la valeur des saintes vierges.

Christine de Pizan était fascinée par les belles dames chastes.[16] Pour elle, cette catégorie de femmes est un paradoxe qui fortifie son objectif. Les auteurs antiféministes soutiennent qu'il est impossible pour une belle dame de résister aux hommes qu'elle tente. Ovide, un poète et un satiriste que Christine critique, écrit que « Even the one you suppose reluctant will want it » ; autrement dit, le viol n'existe pas parce que les femmes veulent toujours coïter.[17] Christine utilise des exemples de jolies «

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[9] Christine de Pizan, *La Cité des dames*, 257–260.

[10] Christine de Pizan, *La Cité des dames*, 242–243.

[11] Christine de Pizan, *La Cité des dames*, 247–248.

[12] Christine de Pizan, *La Cité des dames*, 242.

[13] Semple, "The Male Psyche and the Female Sacred Body in Marie de France and Christine de Pizan," 183.

[14] Christine de Pizan, *La Cité des dames*, 243.

[15] Aristote, *Traite de la génération des animaux*, Livre quatrième, vers 775a, https://remacle.org/bloodwolf/philosophes/Aristote/generation46.htm.

[16] Christine de Pizan, *La Cité des dames*, 184–185.

[17] "Ancient Satire: Ovid," in *Women Defamed, Women Defended: An Anthology of Medieval Texts*, ed. Alcuin Blamires with Karen Pratt and C.W. Marx (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 17–20.

pucelles » pour affirmer que les hommes sont les vrais séducteurs et les femmes vertueuses dédaignent leurs avances. La beauté des saintes est un aspect essentiel de leurs histoires. Plusieurs saintes décrites comme belles—notamment sainte Martine de Rome[18], sainte Lucie de Syracuse[19], sainte Théodosie[20] et sainte Barbe[21]—sont publiquement déshabillées et leur virginité est menacée par des autorités masculines. Leur refus des avances des autorités masculines prouve la fausseté de la satire d'Ovide qui justifie le viol. En fait, leur chasteté et leur piété sont si puissantes que le viol et l'humiliation sexuelle ne les touchent pas. Après qu'un juge la menace de viol, sainte Lucie de Syracuse répond « L'âme ne sera jamais souillée si l'esprit n'y consent ; si tu me profanes en me violant, ma chasteté sera redoublée. »[22] Christine révèle que sa conception de la chasteté ne repose pas uniquement sur l'état physique du corps. Même quand le corps féminin de sainte Lucie apparaît « faible, » comme les auteurs antiféministes soutiennent, elle reste capable. Dans *La Cité des dames*, la chasteté sert de lieu commun qui démontre la force physique, intellectuelle et spirituelle des femmes.

La beauté des saintes les donne accès à une peine unique. Les histoires des saintes mentionnées ci-dessus insinuent que les saintes sont publiquement déshabillées et menacées avec le viol parce qu'elles ont une beauté parfaite ainsi que elles ont une spiritualité parfaite. Elles souffrent la honte de l'humiliation sexuelle et la destruction de leur beauté par la torture. Christine de Pizan décrit la nudité de ces femmes avec une formulation presque révérencieuse. Elle raconte que quand la vierge sainte Martine était déshabillée par l'empereur, « la beauté de sa peau blanche comme le lys fait l'admiration des spectateurs » ; quand elle est tailladée, « ses blessures laissèrent couleur du lait en lieu de sang et exhalaient une suave odeur. »[23] Sa beauté combinée avec sa chasteté la laisse pure, simultanément exposée et immunisée contre la torture. De plus, Christine de Pizan mentionne spécifiquement que les « cheveux qu'elle avait longs et blonds comme l'or » de sainte Christine ont été publiquement coupés.[24] La perte de ce joli trait est présentée comme une tragédie comparable aux autres tortures physiques que sainte Christine endure. Sainte Christine vit cette coupe comme une violation physique qui ressemble au viol, quoiqu'elle reste chaste.

Bien que Christine de Pizan loue la chasteté, elle n'oppose pas le mariage ou la naissance : elle était une veuve qui aimait bien son mari et qui élevait ses enfants. De plus, elle cite plusieurs exemples de mères et de veuves dans *La Cité de dames*. Toutefois, elle écrit fréquemment l'histoire de femmes vierges pour illustrer les nuances en étant une femme. Dans son œuvre *Le Livre de la mutation de fortune*, Christine imagine la mort de son mari comme un événement qui la transforme d'un homme.

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[18] Christine de Pizan, *La Cité des dames*, 247.
[19] Christine de Pizan, *La Cité des dames*, 249.
[20] Christine de Pizan, *La Cité des dames*, 253.
[21] Christine de Pizan, *La Cité des dames*, 254.
[22] Christine de Pizan, *La Cité des dames*, 249.
[23] Christine de Pizan, *La Cité des dames*, 247.
[24] Christine de Pizan, *La Cité des dames*, 258.

Cette histoire allégorique est comparable aux œuvres antiféministes de Saint Ambroise, un père de l'Eglise. Dans *De Viduis* (« Au sujet des veuves »), Saint Ambroise décrit Deborah, une femme guerrière de la Bible :

> A widow, she governed the people; a widow, she led armies; a widow, she chose generals; a widow, she made military decisions and had charge of triumphs. Evidently, it is not nature which is answerable for the fault or subject to weakness. It is not sex, but valour which gives strength.[25]

La dernière phrase de cette citation est comparable du sagesse prodigué à Christine par Dame Raison: « Et cette âme, Dieu la créa aussi bonne, aussi noble, identique dans le corps de la femme comme dans celui de l'homme... L'excellence ou l'infériorité des gens ne réside pas dans leur corps selon de sexe, mais en la perfection de leurs moeurs et vertus. »[26] La prose de ces auteurs ressemble à l'un à l'autre parce que Christine a lu l'écriture de saint Ambroise. Elle le mentionne dans *La Cité des dames*, quand elle répond à la charge que les femmes existent seulement pour « pleurer, parler et filer » ; elle loue « bienheureux Ambroise... qui ne tenais pas pour frivoles les larmes de femme ! »[27] Si Christine connaît les œuvres de Saint Ambroise, il est probable qu'avec son éducation impressionnante, elle a lu *De Viduis*. Comme Saint Ambroise, Christine valorise les veuves, telle que la femme biblique, Judith[28] ; Jeanne, une reine de France qui était la veuve de roi, Charles[29] ; Frédégonde, la veuve du roi français, Chilpéric[30]; et Carienne, la veuve du roi Mausole.[31] Quand elles contrôlent la propriété qu'elles héritent de leurs maris morts, les veuves acquièrent le savoir financier et le bon sens qu'elles n'ont pas eu accès quand elles dépendent de leurs maris.[32] Son expérience de veuvage lui permet de comprendre les difficultés sociales qu'apporte cette position, mais aussi les opportunités qu'elle amène, notamment pour accroître son indépendance.

En restant vierges, les guerrières peuvent maintenir leur liberté d'une manière similaire aux veuves. Un exemple que Christine utilise est Camille la Vierge.[33] Camille, un personnage dans l'Énéide de Virgile qui combat pour les Troyens, était promise à Diane, la déesse romaine de la chasse et de la virginité. En incluant Camille la Vierge et les autres vierges-guerrières, Christine démontre le pouvoir intrinsèque des femmes. Les veuves ne sont pas uniques pour leur capacité d'agir seule ; toutes les femmes ont la capacité de raison et de force. Ces femmes possèdent plusieurs idéaux associés avec la

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[25] Saint Ambroise of Milan, "On Widows," in *Women Defamed, Women Defended: An Anthology of Medieval Texts*, ed. Alcuin Blamires with Karen Pratt and C.W. Marx (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 60.

[26] Christine de Pizan, *La Cité des dames*, 55.

[27] Christine de Pizan, *La Cité des dames*, 58–59.

[28] Christine de Pizan, *La Cité des dames*, 169

[29] Christine de Pizan, *La Cité des dames*, 65.

[30] Christine de Pizan, *La Cité des dames*, 87.

[31] Christine de Pizan, *La Cité des dames*, 84.

[32] Aristote, *Traite de la génération des animaux*, Livre quatrième, vers 775a, https://remacle.org/bloodwolf/philosophes/Aristote/generation46.htm

[33] Christine de Pizan, *La Cité des dames*, 89.

masculinité : la force physique de lutter, comme un soldat, et la force physique de résister des pulsions sexuelles, comme un clerc. Christine affirme que pour les femmes, ces deux types de force sont liés.

Similairement aux saintes, beaucoup de vierges-guerrières gagnent leur force de leur virginité. Une dame qui prouve ce point est Zénobie, la belle reine de Palmyre. Elle était une vierge qui « méprisait tout amour charnel et fut longtemps rebelle au mariage, car elle souhaitait se garder intacte sa vie durant. »[34] Dans cette citation, Christine se concentre sur la condition physique de sa virginité—« se garder intact »—à la place d'exprimer le souci plus grave de l'indépendance aux hommes. Après que les parents de Zénobie la contraignent à se marier, elle fut néanmoins « d'une chasteté exemplaire, car non seulement elle évitait les autres hommes, mais elle ne couchait avec son mari que pour assurer sa descendance. »[35] À cause de sa virginité, Zénobie reste indépendante de son mari, qui « conforme à son caractère et à la vie qu'elle s'était choisie. »[36] Une reine puissante, elle dirige ses armées dans les sièges et les expéditions contre ses ennemis. Sa virginité lui donne la force physique d'être une guerrière et l'autonomie d'exercer cette force.

L'abstinence des vierges pose un défi aux écrivains antiféministes qui dénoncent le mariage. Ces auteurs disent que s'accoupler avec des femmes est un acte sale qui contamine les esprits des hommes. Christine propose que les femmes puissent faire le même choix ; les vierges et les dames chastes échappent à la contamination des hommes. Les écrivains antiféministes réduisent des femmes à leur sexe et leur sexualité. Paradoxalement, l'accent sur la chasteté dans La Cité des dames sert à libérer les femmes de cette idée. Un traducteur antiféministe, Denis Foulechat, écrit en l'an 1372 que même si les hommes ont beaucoup des talents, « proprement la chasteté est la vertu des femmes. »[37] Pour Christine de Pizan, cependant, la chasteté est loin d'être la seule vertu des femmes ; la chasteté souligne simplement l'abondance des vertus possédées par des femmes. En restant chastes, les résidentes de la cité des dames gagnent le pouvoir physique et mental. À cause de son dévouement à l'égalité des sexes, Christine démontre que l'indépendance est possible pour toutes les femmes.

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[34] Christine de Pizan, *La Cité des dames*, 81.

[35] Christine de Pizan, *La Cité des dames*, 83.

[36] Christine de Pizan, *La Cité des dames*, 81.

[37] Eric Hicks, "A Mirror for Misogynists: John of Salisbury's *Policraticus* (8.11) in the Translation of Denis Foulechat (1372)," in *Reinterpreting Christine de Pizan*, ed. Earl Jeffrey Richards with Joan Williamson, Nadia Margolis, and Christine Reno (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1992), 100.

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Establishing and Preserving Presence and Identity: Embroidery as Agency in the Rupertsberg Antependium

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Embroidery has been a part of womens' work for centuries, and was an established component of medieval noblewomens' role in society.[1] It provided women with a form of expression, an avenue for creating capital, and a way to establish status as nobility. The monastery in Rupertsberg founded by Saint Hildegard by 1150 is known to have been composed not of expert stitchers, but mostly noble women with an affinity for extravagance.[2] The antependium created by the nuns for the high altar displays these attributes with its lavish materials juxtaposed with its simple stitching.[3]

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[1] Alexandra Gajewski and Stefanie Seeberg, "Having her hand in it? Elite women as makers of textile art in the Middle Ages," *Journal of Medieval History* 42, no. 1 (2016): 27; Jenifer Ní Ghrádaigh, "Mere Embroiderers? Women and Art in Early Medieval Ireland," in *Reassessing the Roles of Women as 'Makers' of Medieval Art and Architecture*, ed. Therese Martin (Boston: Brill, 2012), 93.

[2] Michael Embach, "The Life of Hildegard of Bingen (1098–1179)," in *The Cambridge Companion to Hildegard of Bingen*, ed. Jennifer Bain (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021) 23; Hildegard of Bingen and Tengswich of Andernach, "Mistress Tengswich to Hildegard," in *The Letters of Hildegard of Bingen*, ed. and trans. Joseph L. Baird and Radd K. Ehrman (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 127.

[3] Clare Kemmerer, "'The Nuns With Their Needles Wrote Histories Also': Donations and Portraiture in the Rupertsberg Antependium,'" *Bowdoin Journal of Art* (2020): 9. Cf. June Mecham, *Sacred Communities, Shared Devotions: Gender, Material Culture, and Monasticism in Late Medieval Germany* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014), 67.

The antependium is all that remains of Rupertsberg's medieval decor, yet it provides extensive insight to the lives and livelihoods of the sisters. Silver, gold, and silken threads embellish a large (100cm x 232cm) piece of deep red silk imported from the Levant.[4] The color was achieved with carmine dye created from coccoid insects, a technique which originated in—and had not yet spread from—the Middle East[5]. The materials used to create the antependium were extremely precious, and were likely gifted to the nuns by Siegfried von Eppstein II, Archbishop of Mainz.[6] The nuns would have embroidered the antependium sometime between 1210–1230, although no records exist of exact production dates.[7]

The antependium depicts Christ in Majesty surrounded by a mandorla with the inscription: "*qui me diligitis mea sit benedicto vobis rex ego sum regum statuens moderamina rerum*" (You who love me, I bless you. I am the king of the kings and determine the course of things/the state).[8] On his right stands the Virgin Mary, Saint Peter, and John the Baptist. Mary Magdalene and an unnamed patron are smaller, tucked between John the Baptist and the Virgin Mary. On Christ's left are Saints Rupert, Hildegard, and Martin. Below the Virgin and Saint Peter floats the Archbishop of Mainz, Siegfried von Eppstien II, and below Saints Rupert and Hildegard floats Duchess Agnes of Nancy and Lothloringia. The bottom corners of the antependium host the patron Godefrius (left) and the Abbess Adelheidis (right). Ten nuns border the bottom of the work, hands raised in prayer and looking up to Christ, their names inscribed above them. The nuns are the smallest figures on the antependium and are almost identical to one another, distinguishable only by their names. Finally, the patron Conradus is placed in the center of the nuns, directly below Jesus' feet. The empty spaces of the antependium are filled with either names, geometric embellishments, or nature imagery, demonstrating the meticulous arrangement of the elements and extensive planning invested in this project.

Most interestingly depicted is Saint Hildegard, portrayed as just that: a saint. At the time of the antependium's construction, Hildegard had not yet been canonized.[9] Hildegard holds a church in her right hand and a book in her left, and is encircled by a halo, in the manner of the canonized saints around her. The sisters of Rupertsberg had begun campaigning for Hildegard's canonization around

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[4] Kemmerer, "Nuns with their Needles," 18.

[5] Kemmerer, "Nuns with their Needles," 8.

[6] Kemmerer, "Nuns with their Needles," 8. Cf. Leonie von Wilckens, "Das goldgestickte Antependium aus Kloster Rupertsberg," *Pantheon* 35 no. 1 (1977): 5.

[7] June Mecham, "Rupertsberg," Monastic Matrix, University of St. Andrews, accessed 16 February 2024.

[8] Stefanie Seeberg, "Women as makers of church decoration: illustrated textiles at the monasteries of Atlenberg/Lahn, Rupertsberg, and Heiningen (13th–14th c.)," in *Reassessing the Roles of Women as 'Makers' of Medieval Art and Architecture*, ed. Therese Martin (Boston: Brill, 2012), 381.

[9] Benedict XVI, *Proclaiming Saint Hildegard of Bingen, professed nun of the Order of Saint Benedict, a Doctor of the Universal Church*, apostolic letter, Vatican website, 7 October 2012. https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/apost_letters/documents/hf_ben-xvi_apl_20121007_ildegarda-bingen.html. Hildegard was not officially canonized until 2012.

the time of the textile's construction. Although their letter to Pope Gregory IX is no longer extant, his response to their letter demonstrates his acknowledgement of her works and a desire to initiate the canonization process through interviews.[10] In addition to the saintly depiction of Hildegard, both Saints Mary and Rupert are depicted with imperial crowns. Traditionally, Mary wears a royal crown and Rupert a *Fürstenhut*; however, on the antependium, the nuns have upgraded their headwear.[11] Seeberg suggests these crownings are not coincidental or accidental, as suggested by previous scholars Robert Suckale and Tanja Michalsky, but rather that they are a further assertion of the nuns' opinions on the veneration of those saints.[12] In order to contextualize these depictions, it is necessary to place them in the context of the entire antependium and the monastery itself.

The inscription surrounding Jesus declares that it is he who "determine[s] the course of things/the state," implying that the depictions on the antependium are representative of Christ's divine endorsements. By promoting Mary, blessed among women,[13] their local saint, Rupert, and their monastery's founder, Hildegard, the nuns establish the importance of those in their community, and to a larger extent, women. They also include depictions of themselves and their patrons in proximity to these holy figures, extending to them the reach of holiness. Although the nuns are placed in proximity to the saints and to Jesus, they are the smallest on the parament and are not unique in their design, which could be an attempt to reflect their humility.[14] Their relatively small depiction does not offer much in terms of humility when considering the gold thread that inscribes their names onto the imported silk. The reason for their uniformity and size may simply be logistical. In order to fit all ten nuns (and Conradus) along the bottom edge of the parament so as to be looking up at Jesus, they could not have been made much larger. The nuns' habits are uniform in actuality, so they must also be in embroidered depictions. Finally, when it comes to the nuns' limited skill and training in embroidery, creating distinguishable likenesses of that size could have been beyond their skillset, or even beyond the scope of what one can do with small satin and chain stitches. More important than the nuns' size and uniformity, though, is simply their presence.

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[10] Gregory IX, "Acta inquisitionis de virtutibus et miraculous S. Hildegardis, magistrate sororum ord. S. Benedicti in monte S. Ruperti juxta Bingum ad Rhenum," in *Analecta Bollandiana*, trans. Petrus Bruder and ed. Carolus de Smedt, Gulielmus van Hooff, and Josephus de Backer (Paris: Société Générale de Librairie Catholique, 1883), 116–129.

[11] Seeberg, "Women as makers," 381.

[12] Seeberg, "Women as makers," 381. Cf. Robert Suckale, "Antependium aus dem Kloster Rupertsberg," in *Krone und Schleier: Kunst aus mittelalterlichen Frauenklöstern*, ed. Juttia Frings and Jan Gerchow (Munich: Hirmer, 2005), 313; Michalsky, "Antependium aus dem Kloster Rupertsberg," 400.

[13] Luke 1:42.

[14] Kemmerer, "Nuns with their Needles," 7.

During the time of the antependium's construction, women were not permitted to enter altar spaces "*non fiat, modis omnibus.*"[15] The sisters' access to holy spaces was not restricted to the altar space alone, but even to the participation in mass on high feast days.[16] The administration of the sacraments was denied to the sisters, and female monasteries required male priests to come and perform the masses for them.[17] The antependium was created to be displayed on the high altar, to decorate the space which was used for the most holy of sacraments.[18] Due to their status as women, the sisters would not have been able to be the ones using the cloth for its intended purpose, watching as the priests used it in their stead. Further, on high feast days, when guests were present, they would not be able to even engage in the mass in a participatory capacity.[19]

Because the women of the Rupertsberg monastery were not permitted to be physically present or to directly participate in the administration of sacraments, the sisters found a way to do so by proxy. By embroidering themselves on the parament, they would always be present in the altar space during the liturgical season of its use. Their likenesses and names would adorn the high altar and establish their presence in the holiest part of the church, regardless of whether or not their physical bodies were permitted there. In addition to the spatial component, the embroidering of the nuns also creates a temporal component for their presence at the altar. The antependium was created with extremely expensive materials, and was made to last. Evidenced by its presence today, it has remained a precious object to those who are responsible for its care. The nuns were aware of this attribute during its construction as they were commissioned to embroider patrons and saints in order to serve as *memoria* and inspire prayer for generations to come. With this knowledge, the nuns also intended for their depictions to induce prayer long beyond their time on earth. In this way, the sisters of Rupertsberg were able to establish themselves as extended fixtures on the altar and include themselves in the spaces and ceremonies by embroidered proxy.

Beyond the restrictions to the altar space itself, women were not even permitted to touch the altar cloth, except to launder it.[20] These restrictions are outlined between 1133–1138 by Peter Abelard, a controversial monk and scholar known for his disputative education style and premarital affair with his wife Heloise, which resulted in her seclusion to monastic life, and his castration.[21] Upon receiving

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[15] "Episcoporum ad Hludowicium imperatorem relatio," in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*, ed. Georg Waitz (Berlin: Monumenta Germaniae Historica, 1877), 4.

[16] Seeberg, "Women as makers," 384.

[17] Gisela Muschiol, "Gender and Monastic Liturgy in the Latin West (High and Late Middle Ages)," in *The Cambridge History of Medieval Monasticism in the Latin West*, ed. Alison Beach and Isabele Cochelin, trans. Alison Beach (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 807.

[18] Mecham, "Rupertsberg"; Cf. Wilckens, "Das goldgestickte Antependium aus Kloster Rupertsberg," 7.

[19] Kemmerer, "Nuns with their Needles," 12.

[20] Peter Abelard, "The Rule," in *The Letter Collection of Peter Abelard and Heloise*, ed. David Luscombe, trans. Betty Radice (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 415.

[21] *The Letters of Abelard and Heloise*, ed. Betty Radice and M. T. Clancy (London: Guy Chapman, 2003), xv, xxiii.

oversight of the Paraclete monastery as a gift from her husband, Heloise wrote to him seeking guidance on the adaptation of the *Rule of St Benedict* for women. She was concerned that women could not follow the *RB* to the letter, and would thus be condemned. For example, women required clothing to accommodate their menstrual cycles and were unable to bear the same burdens of fasting due to their nature.[22]

The letters from Abelard are valuable in understanding the expectations of monastic women, yet were intended for Heloise and the Paraclete monastery specifically; this must be considered when applying it to the sisters of Rupertsberg. Abelard's response outlines many adjustments to the *RB*, including how the sisters were not permitted to touch any of the relics, altar vessels, "nor even" the altar cloths, apart from when they were brought to the women to be laundered. Further, he specifies that the women were required to await a monk or lay monk to bring the cloth to them as they were not permitted to retrieve it themselves.

The diminutive language used by Abelard to describe the altar cloth, placing it finally in his list and including the qualifier "*nec etiam*" serves to devalue the altar cloth in relation to the relics and vessels. Apart from the presence of embroidered works which developed properties akin to relics themselves, like the ability to beget miracles and merit their own veneration, even the average parament was an essential component to the altar's function as a visual centerpiece for the mass, and was a product of countless hours of skilled labor; liturgical cloths were not only of great spiritual importance, but also great personal importance to the those responsible for their stitching. Secondly of note is the requirement that the cloths be brought to the women, in particular by a monk or lay monk. The sister in charge of the sanctuary, as described by Abelard, must be "outstanding in purity of life, whole in mind as in body."[23] These are required of the presiding sister, who is not permitted to retrieve the cloth for laundering, yet they are not required of a lay monk who is indeed permitted to retrieve the cloths, and more, whom the women must await.

The restrictions on the sisters' access to the textiles only occur once they begin fulfilling their intended purposes as furnishings. Prior to their participation in the mass and their presence on the altar, the sisters spent multiple hours a day in contact with the antependium. They became intimately familiar with each of the threads—their weight, weft, and texture—in a way, more intimately related than those who practiced mass with it and used it regularly. The women are the ones responsible for the antependium's design, production, and maintenance, yet they are the ones to whom its access is restricted.

By embroidering themselves onto the cloth, the women created a way for themselves to have unrestricted access to not only the antependium, but to the altar itself. The women have placed themselves along the edge of the antependium, lining the fabric with their prayers and likenesses. They

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[22] Radice and Clanchy, *Letters,* 94–97.
[23] Abelard, "The Rule," 415.

look up not only at the embroidered Jesus, but also at the altar vessels and the priests. The women spent hundreds of hours creating this piece, and we would be remiss to think they did not consider their placement and line of sight in their design. In a way, it is as if the sisters themselves could kneel before the altar, or at least come as close to it as possible given their restrictions. They created this piece to reflect the radiance of Heaven with its golden threads, but also to reflect their own place in God's kingdom. The nuns of Rupertsberg were known to have adorned their physical forms with fine silks and golden rings to present themselves as oblations to God, and this mentality is reflected in the presentation of their likenesses on the antependium.[24] In addition to the nuns' likenesses portrayed in proximity to Jesus, the parament resides on the high altar bringing the sisters nearer to God. More than this, the act of embroidering the antependium would have been a gateway for connection with the divine.

The monastery in Rupertsberg followed the *Rule of St Benedict*, which valued work as part of the daily prayer cycle. The Rule of St Benedict encouraged monks to "live by the labor of their hands" and "have specified periods for manual labor as well as for prayerful reading" as a part of their routine.[25] Work was not thought of as separate from prayer, but rather another avenue through which to pray. In Paul's epistles, he encourages his readers to glorify the Lord in all they do, and to "work heartily."[26] The Psalms also align the Lord's favor with the work of the hands.[27] With every stitch, the sisters were praying and imbuing the fabric with their devotion. In addition to the sisters' personal prayers while sewing, it is likely that they would have been listening to religious texts read aloud by another sister while they were working.[28] Focusing the mind mentally and aurally on that which you wish to glorify while conducting the work would have amplified the spiritual significance of the furnishing. The work/prayer experience would not only have been amplified aurally, but also tactilely. The repetitive motion of the stitches reflects the repetitive nature of chanting or praying.[29] In a similar way that the attendance of mass was a multisensory experience which inspired reverence for the divine within lay communities, the multisensory practice of embroidering would have trained the nuns' thoughts on their prayers and intensified their own spiritual experience. Stitching as a meditative practice is a well

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[24] "Hildegard to the Congregation," *Letters of Hildegard,* 129.

[25] Saint Benedict, *RB, 69.*

[26] Colossians 3:23–24 "Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, / Whatever your task, work heartily, as serving the Lord and not men, knowing that you will receive the inheritance as your reward; you are serving the Lord Christ." (NOAB). See also 1 Corinthians 10:31 "So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." (NOAB).

[27] Psalm 90:17 "Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us, and establish thou the work of our hands upon us, yea, the work of our hands establish thou it." (NOAB).

[28] Jane Tibbets Schulenburg, "Female Piety and the Building and Decorating of Churches, ca. 500–1150," in *Reassessing the Roles of Women as 'Makers' of Medieval Art and Architecture*, ed. Therese Martin (Boston: Brill, 2012), 102.

[29] Schulenburg, "Female Piety and the Building and Decorating of Churches," 102.

recorded phenomenon that reaches far beyond monastic communities.[30] In some modern communities, stitching while listening to religious teaching is understood to be a method of focusing one's attention and prayers on the content of the sermon and imbuing the garment itself with love and prayer.[31] In this way, the nuns not only brought themselves closer to God through prayer while constructing the garment, but they also established spiritual connections through the garment itself by manifesting their prayers in physical form. The antependium was therefore not only of spiritual significance after it was consecrated as a parament, but, to the nuns, before as well.

The Rupertsberg antependium is a remarkable record of the devotion of the sisters as well as their patrons. The sisters having contributed the work, and the patrons having contributed materially and financially, both are represented on the final product. They are depicted in shimmering stitches alongside saints of importance to the Christian world as a whole, as well as to their community specifically, which placed them in both visual, physical and spiritual proximity to the divine. The womens' depictions of Saints Rupert and Mary, and in particular Saint Hildegard, reflect their beliefs as they understand God to have willed. Through the agency provided with embroidery, the sisters were able to establish their opinions on the veneration of saints. In addition, they were able to insert themselves into spaces they were restricted to and establish their participation in the performance of the mass. These aspects of the antependium are not restricted to the time in which the nuns lived, but rather they carry through the ages. Still today, the Rupertsberg antependium communicates and establishes who the sisters were and what they believed hundreds of years later.

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[30] Heike Utsch, *Knitting and Stress Reduction*, (PhD diss, Antioch University New England, 2007); Maja Bäckström, *Hanging on by a thread: Confronting mental illness and manifesting love through embroidery* (Master's thesis, Konstfack University, 2020); Heidi von Kürthy, et al. "Embroidering as a transformative occupation," *Journal of Occupational Science* 30, no. 4 (2023). I include these references not to suggest the sisters were embroidering as a way to reduce their stress levels, but rather to incorporate the record of fiber arts' mindful and repetitive nature and the connections being drawn between handiwork and the psychological state.

[31] Amy Miller is a Christian knitter, personal friend, and mentor with whom I often knitted during church in my youth. When asked about her experiences knitting while listening to religious teachings, she replied "I believe my busy hands are valuable for the practical end of the garment, and even more importantly, suffused with the warmth and comfort offered by a faithful follower of Jesus Christ. [...] When knitting during a service,[...] I am far more meditative in my stitches, aware of my prayers for the recipient, and more likely to practice gratitude. [...]" I would like to thank Amy for her time and thoughtful words.

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Universal Monarchs and Heirs of Alexander: Imperial Imagery in the Reigns of Charles V and Süleyman the Magnificent

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1. Introduction

In the sixteenth century, the imperial imagery adopted by Habsburg and Ottoman rulers underwent a stark transformation. As both dynasties moved onto the global stage, the way in which they represented themselves also expanded and adapted for this new global context. This essay will examine how this shift from local to global took place during the reigns of Charles V (d. 1558) and Süleyman the Magnificent (d. 1566). This shift was a temporary phenomenon: it encompassed only the two monarchs' rules and was promptly abandoned following their deaths. Charles and Süleyman both claimed to be universal monarchs whose dominions would encompass the globe and vanquish their greatest enemies. Particular focus will be paid to the two rulers' depiction as successors to Alexander the Great and Scipio Africanus. As I shall demonstrate, the imagery and iconography[1] that developed around points of conflict between the Habsburgs and the Ottomans in this period encapsulate these claims as well as the competition between the two rulers, who strategically deployed various motifs.

2. Heir to Charlemagne, a New Alexander, Universal Ruler: Charles V

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[1] By imagery, I am referring to the larger motifs located within associated artwork, and by iconography, I refer to specific aspects of the piece in question.

Like all the Habsburg emperors who came before him, Charles V saw himself as heir to Rome, through the possession of the Holy Roman Empire. He had also inherited the Low Countries and lands in Spain through his Burgundian and Spanish heritage, and the size of his realm immediately caught the eye of those around the emperor upon his imperial election in 1519. Many commented that not since the time of Charlemagne, did an emperor possess a realm so large.[2] Establishing a genealogy to Charlemagne to establish legitimacy was a common trend for Holy Roman emperors, but these earlier emperors never had the opportunity to establish a dominion spanning across Europe as Charles had.[3] Many European humanists had compared Charles to a new Alexander.[4] Charles was aware of these comparisons, and his grand chancellor in Spain (and later in the Holy Roman Empire), Mercurino di Gattinara, heavily supported imagery portraying Charles as a universal monarch and messianic figure who would herald the apocalypse.[5]

Alexander the Great had a long literary history in premodern Europe. During the Middle Ages, the Macedonian conqueror was seen as one of the so-called "Nine Worthies": heroic, virtuous figures encompassing what a ruler or knight should strive to be. The Worthies were divided into groups of three, with Alexander being one of the worthy pagans, accompanied by Julius Caesar and the Trojan Hector.[6] While the Habsburgs had indeed incorporated Alexander in their imperial iconography prior to Charles, they had only considered him a chivalric figure. Alexander is depicted in the triumphal arch of Maximilian I (d. 1519), a massive set of woodcuts commissioned by the emperor as a part of his patronage project to show dynastic splendour.[7] In 1515, Alexander appeared alongside other classical heroes for Charles's entry into the city of Bruges; however, he is used within a regional context, representing only Charles' control over Flanders, not Charles's realm as a whole.[8]

It was only in 1529, following the siege of Vienna, that Alexandrian imagery was first employed to support Charles's claim to universal monarchy. A 1529 painting by Albrecht Altdorfer,

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[2] Geoffrey Parker, *Emperor: A New Life of Charles V* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2019), 21–22, 40, 171–73, 732–35.

[3] Parker, *Emperor*, 732.

[4] Parker, *Emperor*, 151–52.

[5] Rebecca Boone, "Empire and Medieval Simulacrum: A Political Project of Mercurino Di Gattinara, Grand Chancellor of Charles V," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 42, no. 4 (2011): 1037.

[6] Andrey Egorov, "Charismatic Rulers in Civic Guise: Images of the Nine Worthies in Northern European Town Halls of the 14th to 16th Centuries," in *Faces of Charisma: Image, Text, Object in Byzantium and the Medieval West*, ed. Brigitte Miriam Bedos-Rezak and Martha Dana Rust (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2018), 207.

[7] Albrecht Altdorfer et al., *Arch of Honor*, 1515, Woodcut, 45.7 x 62.2 cm (18 x 24 1/2 in), Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City, https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/388475?imgNo=16&tabName=related-objects (accessed September 1, 2023).

[8] Ethan Matt Kavaler, "Power and Performance," *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek (NKJ) / Netherlands Yearbook for History of Art* 67/1 (2017): 228–29; Jochen Becker, "'Greater than Zeuxis and Apelles': Artists as Arguments in the Antwerp Entry of 1549," in *Court Festivals of the European Renaissance*, ed. J. R. Mulryne and Elizabeth Goldring, trans. Willem Meijs (London: Routledge, 2002), 194.

commissioned for the Duke of Bavaria, depicts the battle of Issus, fought by the armies of Alexander the Great against the Achaemenid Persian Empire led by Darius III. The painting portrays Alexander the Great's army as German and Darius's as Turkish. The Latin plaque at the top of the painting declares Alexander's triumph over the Persians, and symbolically, the Holy Roman Empire's victory over the Ottomans.[9] The painting shows an evolution in the imagination around Alexander, where the conquering Macedonian became more than a virtuous hero and grew to represent a motif of imperial fantasy of the West triumphing over the East.

Due to its proximity to the core of Habsburg domains, it is no surprise that the siege of Vienna and the subsequent Ottoman defeat became a popular topic for Habsburg propaganda. A common image featured Charles V meeting Süleyman the Magnificent on the battlefield outside the city, much like Alexander meeting Darius. A print from Erhard Schön's book on the siege made in 1530, *Des Türkischen Kaysers Heerzug,* depicts Charles and Süleyman and their armies going head-to-head. Charles and his army are depicted heroically in armour, while the sultan and his forces are dressed simply in robes.[10] The print was produced in a large spread of fifteen sheets and included other scenes of Charles as a "protector of Christendom" assaulting the "hereditary enemy of the Christian Faith."[11] Alongside a myriad of pamphlets created by other German printers, Schön's book became extremely popular in Germany and was widely read around the empire.[12] While most prints focused on the fearsome threat the Ottomans posed to Europe, Schön's prints focused on Charles's deeds as a Christian warrior. This depiction of Charles was not common in pamphlets created about the siege but had a significant impact, as evidenced by a series of woodcuts designed by Maarten van Heemskerck in 1555–56. These woodcuts, titled "The Victories of Charles V," depict a similar event, with Charles on his horse fighting alongside his brother Ferdinand; on a hill behind them, the sultan waits, surrounded by his troops.[13]

During the siege of Vienna, Charles was busy in Italy, fighting in the War of the League of Cognac and finalizing the peace of Cambrai between France and the empire. When Ferdinand—Charles's brother and Archduke of Austria—alerted Charles of the Ottoman siege, the emperor simply responded there was nothing he could do.[14] However, Charles told a different story

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[9] Rose-Marie Hagen and Rainer Hagen, "The Battle to End All Battles," in *What Great Paintings Say* (Köln: Taschen, 2003), 128, 131–33.

[10] Bart Rosier, "The Victories of Charles V: A Series of Prints by Maarten van Heemskerck, 1555–56," *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art* 20/1 (1990): 29–30.

[11] John W. Bohnstedt, "The Infidel Scourge of God: The Turkish Menace as Seen by German Pamphleteers of the Reformation Era," *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 58/9 (1968): 18–19.

[12] Richard W. Bulliet, "The Other Siege of Vienna and the Ottoman Threat: An Essay in Counter-Factual History," *ReOrient* 1/1 (2015): 16–17, 20.

[13] Rosier, "The Victories of Charles V," 24, 29.

[14] James D. Tracy, *Emperor Charles V, Impresario of War: Campaign Strategy, International Finance, and Domestic Politics* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 119–22.

when he entered Bologna in triumph to meet Pope Clement VII later that year, on November 5, 1529. Accounts describe the emperor's army carrying wreaths signifying victory against the Ottomans, and his infantry "arrayed in the manner of a phalanx of Alexander the Great's soldiers."[15] Charles could see the Alexandrian parallels to the victory in Vienna and capitalized on it. In the early months of 1530, Charles was crowned emperor of the Holy Roman Empire and King of Italy by the Pope, which only added to his imperial splendour.[16] While visiting Mantua, Charles was depicted as the "master of the world" in a triumphal arch created for the emperor.[17] Two years later, Charles gained the opportunity to meet the sultan in battle, as raids near Hungary resumed in 1532. In a grand imperial gesture, the emperor took control of military forces in Hungary, echoing the calls by his Burgundian ancestors for a crusade against the Turks. When he met Süleyman and his army, Charles dressed himself in a gilded jacket and extravagant headwear.[18]

The siege of Tunis in 1535 served as the next stage in this shift in Habsburg propaganda. Seeking to stop Hayreddin Barbarossa (d. 1546), whose raids targeted Habsburg assets in the Mediterranean and distracted Charles from fighting the Ottomans in Hungary, Charles raised an army. Pope Paul III declared Charles's Tunisian campaign a crusade whose success would guarantee the conquest of Istanbul and Charles's realization of universal monarchy. After a brutal siege and campaign, Charles took Tunis but was unable to capture Barbarossa. While some advisors wished the emperor to enact the pope's plan, Charles returned with his tired army to Italy, presenting his shortened campaign as a grand imperial feat. In Sicily, Charles combined imperial and Christian imagery, cementing his place as both crusader and emperor; more specifically, he used the siege to capitalize upon his self-presentation as a contemporary successor to Scipio Africanus, a military leader victoriously returning from defeating the Carthaginians. While Charles had besieged only one city, and Barbarossa would launch raids on an even greater scale in the Mediterranean only a few years later, to Charles, the siege of Tunis had marked the advent of the emperor's universal rule. In Rome, Charles showed this rule by inviting nobles and statesmen from all over his empire to accompany the emperor's triumph through Italy.[19]

Van Heemskerck's "The Victories of Charles V" includes a depiction of the emperor's victory at Tunis, which sees him bravely charging into the city's gates on horseback. In the plate depicting the siege and in the majority of plates that show the emperor in armour, Charles is depicted wearing a heavily stylized and decorated armour.[20] His military outfit in these prints mimics the style of sixteenth-century parade armours, which were heavily used by the Habsburgs and served as a wearable

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[15] Parker, *Emperor*, 270.

[16] Parker, *Emperor,* 273–74.

[17] Parker, *Emperor,* 273–74.

[18] Parker, *Emperor*, 318–22.

[19] Parker, *Emperor*, 331–32, 334, 338–46.

[20] Rosier, "The Victories of Charles V," 30–31.

canvas for rulers to showcase their dynastic and political claims through embossed and engraved steel, rather than through ink on paper or brush and canvas. Parade armours were often crafted in *all'antica* style, which harkened back to Graeco-Roman armour and often combined motifs from the two.[21] In representing Charles's armour as *all'antica*, these prints do not simply show Charles in an exotic military outfit but also serve to bolster Charles's imperial legacy, now utilized against a non-Christian enemy.

Charles's posturing as a new Scipio Africanus marked a distinct shift in the way Holy Roman emperors had previously displayed their Roman heritage through similar visual means. In the tenth century, Ottonian emperors portrayed themselves in a Byzantine fashion and declared themselves restorers of Rome.[22] Thirteenth-century emperor Frederick II depicted himself in classical fashion on coins minted throughout his reign.[23] As explained above, earlier Habsburg rulers had used Alexander the Great to bolster their dynastic claims, while Charles took a distinct approach related to the Ottomans. In a similar fashion, while Holy Roman emperors used ancient Roman history to legitimize their power, Charles's reign saw a shift of this imagery to a Mediterranean stage and its strategic deployment in Charles's conflict against the Ottomans. In the sixteenth century, Carthage was seen as one of the archenemies of Rome, a city whose ruins were both closely tied to Rome, and a city which, according to Virgil's *Aeneid*, was fated to fall by Roman hands. Classical authors poised Carthage and Rome as two rivals fighting over dominion of the world, much as Charles and Süleyman were poised against each other.[24]

The iconography utilized after the siege of Tunis became a mainstay in combat and parade armors produced by the Habsburgs. For example, a burgonet made for the emperor in 1536 presents four palm fronds embossed into the steel, which simultaneously resemble an unconventional laurel wreath and symbolize the emperor's victory in Africa.[25] A shield made shortly after the campaign, dubbed the "Apotheosis of Charles V," depicts a triumphant Charles in *all'antica* armour standing on a galley, with Fame, Victory, and Hercules alongside him. A woman can be seen tied to a palm tree, the spoils of war around her. A turban is placed on top of the tree, representing the defeated Ottoman enemy.[26] The woman possesses distinct European features and can be identified as Sophonisba, a

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[21] Alvaro Soler del Campo, *The Art of Power: Royal Armor and Portraits from Imperial Spain*, trans. Jenny F. Dodman (Madrid: T.F. Editores, 2009), 82–92.

[22] Thietmar of Merseburg, *Ottonian Germany: The Chronicon of Thietmar of Merseburg*, ed. and trans. David A. Warner (Manchester: Manchester University Press), 2; Nandini Das, "Time and Memory in Carthage," *Renaissance Studies* 35/3 (2021): 373–74.

[23] David Abulafia, *Frederick II: A Medieval Emperor* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 15, 251.

[24] Das, "Time and Memory in Carthage," 364–65.

[25] Caremolo Modrone, "Burgonet," Armour, 1536, Royal Armouries Collections, Leeds, https://collections.royalarmouries.org/object/rac-object-39981 (accessed September 1, 2023).

[26] del Campo, *The Art of Power,* 217–19.

prominent figure within Petrarch's fourteenth-century poem *Africa*, which first presented Sophonisba as a white princess and started a lasting iconographic and literary tradition.[27]

Roughly ten years after the siege, another burgonet was made for Charles, depicting an Ottoman soldier on the helmet. The soldier is dressed in Roman armour and sports a turban and a long mustache, the stereotypical features given to Ottomans by European artists. He is being grabbed by Fame and Victory, who stretch him along the crest of the helmet. The two allegorical figures present the Ottoman soldier to the emperor; the words "Thus Yours, Invincible Caesar," (SIC·TVA· IVICTE · CÆSAR) are inscribed into the helmet. The *all'antica* armour worn by the soldier is curious, and suggests an acknowledgment of the Ottomans' imperial claims on Charles's part.[28] However, it is more likely that the Ottoman is being depicted here as a Carthaginian soldier.

A tapestry created for King Francis I of France (d. 1547) around the same time as this helmet depicts the Punic Wars and shows Carthaginians dressed in classically inspired armour, like that the Ottoman soldier is wearing.[29] This iconography surrounding Charles's self-depiction as a Roman general ties together anti-Ottoman propaganda and Charles's strategic use of ancient heritage: a defeated Ottoman soldier is presented to Charles the crusader, a Punic warrior to Charles the Roman conqueror.

Closer inspection of the woman tied to the palm tree in the "Apotheosis of Charles V" shows further connection to Petrarch's *Africa*. In the poem, Petrarch recounts that Carthaginians were brought to Rome after their defeat at the hands of Scipio Africanus, and that at the temple of Jove, they saw "the sceptres and bracelets and necklaces stripped from their necks" and "the shields and broken boats and Punic signs" of Carthage.[30] Around the woman in the "Apotheosis of Charles V," we find a variety of *all'antica* shields, armor, and goods that replicate the scene described in Petrarch's *Africa*, further reinforcing the Roman imagery surrounding Charles's conquest of Tunis. Together with other elements of Habsburg iconography depicting Charles as Scipio Africanus reborn, this connection links the Ottomans and the Habsburgs—more specifically, Charles—within a broader narrative that follows the footsteps of both the Caesars of Rome and Scipio Africanus, conqueror of Northern Africa.

This iconography remained with the emperor until the end of his reign. "The Victories of Charles V" presents the emperor over his vanquished enemies, showing an Ottoman Sultan alongside the king of France and a Protestant prince. Compared to the monumental expectations laid down by Habsburg propaganda, Charles's minor victories against the Ottomans were reshaped as achievements

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[27] Robert John Clines, "Dido and Laura in Carthage: White purity, epidermal race, and sexual violence in Petrarch's *Africa*," *Postmedieval* 14/1 (2023): 89–118.

[28] del Campo, *The Art of Power,* 118–19.

[29] del Campo, *The Art of Power,* 145–49.

[30] Das, "Time and Memory in Carthage", 377.

of universal dominion. In reality, Charles's reign was one marked with disappointment and concession to the Ottomans.[31] In 1547, Ferdinand was forced to pay tribute to the Ottoman sultan for land he owned in Hungary, and a second African expedition in 1541 ended in a complete failure. Süleyman captured Buda and much of Hungary, and issues within Europe exhausted Charles, ultimately leading to his abdication in 1555.[32]

In the years following his reign, Charles's claim to universal monarchy was not further utilized by the Habsburg dynasty. Charles's son, Philip, marked his early reign by copying his father's iconography, but these motifs do not appear in the same number. In a burgonet made for Philip in the 1560s, Philip depicts himself not as Scipio Africanus, but as Scipio's grandson, using the imagery simply to strengthen his own legitimacy.[33] "The Victories of Charles V," which showed the emperor's triumph over his enemies, was only used by Philip as a point to be made against the rebellious Protestant Dutch.[34] While Philip did make Messianic claims to his rule akin to his father's, they never carried the same imagery and grandeur.[35] When the image of Alexander the Great was used in festivals for Philip, Alexander once again turned into a chivalric hero, as he was seen prior to Charles's reign.[36] Charles and the iconography around him still showed the emperor as a universal monarch, albeit only to legitimize Philip's rule.

3. A New Iskander, Heir to Osman, Universal Ruler: Süleyman The Magnificent

During the reign of Charles V, Ottoman imperial imagery underwent a similar shift. Much like the Habsburgs, the Osman dynasty utilized ancestral claims to justify their rule; however, it was specifically under Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent that Ottoman imagery shifted to a global perspective. As Charles was the heir to Charlemagne, Süleyman was the heir to Osman, the founder of the Ottoman state.[37] Also like Charles, Süleyman was the true heir to Rome, a warrior of the faith, and the successor to Alexander the Great. Much as a rich literary tradition arose surrounding Alexander the Great in Europe, so too did stories of Alexander arise in the eastern Mediterranean. Alexander, or as he would have been known to the Ottomans, Iskander, first came to the attention of the Ottoman sultans

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[31] Parker, *Emperor*, 755–60.

[32] Parker, *Emperor*, 377–87, 663–74; Tracy, *Emperor Charles V*, 207.

[33] del Campo, *The Art of Power*, 125–27.

[34] Rosier, "The Victories of Charles V," 26, 38.

[35] Geoffrey Parker, "The Place of Tudor England In the Messianic Vision of Philip II of Spain," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 12 (2002): 170–85.

[36] Hugo Soly, "1549: A Year of Grace for Emperor Charles V and His Subjects in the Low Countries," in *Charles V, Prince Philip and the Politics of Succession: Imperial Festivities in Mons and Hainault, 1549*, ed. Margaret M. McGowan and Margaret Shewring (Turnhout: Brepols, 2020), 48.

[37] Colin Imber, "The Ottoman Dynastic Myth," in *Studies in Ottoman History and Law* (Istanbul: Isis Press, 2010), 309.

through contact with Persian versions of the Alexander Romance,[38] such as the *Iskandarnamah* or *Shahnamah*, chronicling Alexander the Great and later Persian rulers.[39]

The earliest work merging Alexander with the Ottoman rule is the *İskendernāme* made for Bayezid I, but Alexandrian imagery does not resurface until the reign of Sultan Mehmed II, painting himself as a new Alexander. Sultan Mehmed II also revitalized the use of Roman imagery for the Ottomans, using the conquest of Constantinople to merge Roman imagery with Turkic imagery of the Seljuk Sultanate of Rum. Furthering this Roman adoption, the Persian sources on Alexander presented the Macedonian as a Roman, and thus established a genealogy where the Roman Empire was a successor of Alexander.[40] Another important action Mehmed II took was styling himself as a Roman emperor in a way Europeans would understand. Mehmed II commissioned a painting of himself in the western style by Venetian artist Gentile Bellini. He advertised to Venetian diplomats his knowledge of classical sources, and of Arrian's *Anabasis* discussing Alexander. The Ottoman court was taken aback by these imperial claims, and it was only until the sixteenth century that this imagery reached its culmination.[41]

Süleyman came to the Ottoman throne surrounded by these imperial claims. At the time of Süleyman's accession in 1520, the Ottomans had acquired lands in Syria, Egypt, and Arabia, and started to see themselves as the defenders of the Islamic world. Ottoman sultans were known as *gāzī's*, Turkic warriors who were obligated to take on great campaigns for the spread of Islam. By the reign of Süleyman, *gāzī* had come to represent frontier raiding but was still used by Süleyman as a justification for his expansion beyond the core of the Ottoman empire. Süleyman's claim to universal rule was seen from the start of his reign. Süleyman's father was upheld as a defender of the faith,[42] and Süleyman used universal imagery to create his own image and legitimacy, as the beginning of his reign was marked with instability. A law code from 1525 defines Süleyman as *ṣāḥib-ḳırān*, a great ruler who is destined to conquer the world. The law code also dubs Süleyman caliph, providing Süleyman with spiritual authority to augment his universal claims.[43]

A major aspect of these claims entailed claiming the title of Caesar from Charles V and denying the emperor's claim to universal rule. Süleyman's court historian, Celalzade Mustafa, claims that the campaign of 1529 was undertaken to prove to the world which ruler was the true universal

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[38] Su Fang Ng, "Heirs to Rome," in *Alexander the Great from Britain to Southeast Asia: Peripheral Empires in the Global Renaissance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 61–66.

[39] Minoo S. Southgate, "Portrait of Alexander in Persian Alexander-Romances of the Islamic Era," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 97/3 (1977): 280-81.

[40] Ng, "Heirs to Rome," 62–66.

[41] Ng, "Heirs to Rome," 62–66.

[42] Imber, "The Ottoman Dynastic Myth," 309–10, 318–20.

[43] Kaya Şahin, *Empire and Power in the Reign of Süleyman: Narrating the Sixteenth-Century Ottoman World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 188–90.

monarch.[44] After Charles's grand triumph in Bologna, Süleyman surpassed Charles' display by parading throughout Hungary to the front lines. Süleyman's grand vizier Ibriham Pasha had Venetian artisans construct a four-tiered crown for the sultan's triumph. The crown, which was completely new to Ottoman imperial iconography, was made to mimic a papal tiara, and the fourth tier of the crown was made to symbolize the crown Charles V used at Bologna. Süleyman claimed political and spiritual dominion through this crown, cementing his claim to universal monarchy. European diplomats were told that the crown was an Alexandrian relic, cementing Süleyman as the heir of Alexander, and the conqueror of the East and West. The four crowns also represented the four cardinal directions, and similar iconography was used on a turban worn by the sultan while on parade in Baghdad in 1534.[45]

As Süleyman's reign progressed, those around him became less enamoured by the emperor's claim to ṣāḥib-ḳırān,[46] and Süleyman shifted his image again. Unlike Charles, who in the face of minor victories, and numerous distractions in Europe, kept the moniker of a universal monarch, Süleyman portrayed himself as a powerful and orthodox Muslim ruler. Conflicts with Safavid Persia caused the Ottomans to change their imagery again much as they changed their imagery with the Habsburgs, with Süleyman now acting as a ruler waging war against the "heretical" Safavid Persians.[47] By the 1540s, after victories against the Habsburgs and Safavids, Süleyman was presented through his merit first, and universal rule second; he became a "distributor of crowns" and lawgiver rather than a universal monarch,[48] and even Charles V was portrayed as the universal monarch of Europe, and not the world. In 1553, a similar title was bestowed upon Süleyman, who, seeking legitimacy over the Safavids, proclaimed himself as the universal monarch over the Muslim world.[49]

4. Conclusions

As both Süleyman and Charles took the throne of their respective realms, they found themselves with a great amount of potential and power behind their rule. To establish legitimacy and prestige, both adopted the moniker of universal monarch. In this adoption, previously used imperial and religious imagery was adapted to a global stage, wherein both rulers claimed ancestry to the Roman emperors of old, and Alexander the Great, who had come to represent a great world-conquering figure. Charles V and Süleyman clashed in 1529, spurring imagery using traditional and new motifs to represent the all-encompassing glory of these universal monarchs. While Süleyman saw initial defeat, ushering in a wave of imperial splendour for Charles, Süleyman eventually began to see victory after

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[44] Şahin, *Empire and Power in the Reign of Süleyman*, 188–90.
[45] Gulru Necipoglu, "Suleyman the Magnificent and the Representation of Power in the Context of Ottoman-Hapsburg-Papal Rivalry," *The Art Bulletin* 71/3 (1989): 407–17.
[46] Necipoglu, "Suleyman the Magnificent," 420.
[47] Imber, "The Ottoman Dynastic Myth", 318.
[48] Şahin, *Empire and Power*, 191.
[49] Şahin, *Empire and* Power, 190–93.

victory. The sultan's success, which affirmed his legitimacy alongside changing policies, prompted Süleyman to move away from his claim as universal ruler, looking inward and depicting himself as a stable law-giving monarch. In the face of defeat, campaigns cut short, distractions in Europe, and minor victories, Charles was instead forced to continuously uphold his claim of universal monarch, in a driven attempt to gain the legitimacy and power needed for him to accomplish his goals. With Charles's passing and ambition cut short, his son and successor did briefly keep the imagery of the universal monarchy alive, albeit purely to establish the legitimacy of his own reign. By using new and adapted iconography, connecting different strands of imperial ancestry, and faith, Charles and Süleyman utilized global imagery to sustain their claim to universal monarchy, and thus legitimacy and stability for their reign, and used said imagery as an important tool in the rivalry between the two sovereigns.

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Saint Brigit of Kildare, the "Mary of the Gaels": The Many Faces of Ireland's Only Female Patron Saint

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Ireland in the fifth and sixth centuries was undergoing an era of transformation. With the canonical arrival of St. Patrick dated at 432, Christianity began to spread throughout the island, largely through the conversion of Irish kings and the reclaiming of sacred polytheistic spaces as Christian ones. Severed from the traditions of the territories of the former Roman Empire, this Celtic version of Christianity developed a reputation for rigorous practices of confession and fierce asceticism from the models of figures including Patrick and Palladinus. Among the hundreds of Christian holy folk from this *insula sanctorum*, there is but one female patron saint to be found, and that is St. Brigit of Kildare. Among the limited sources available to historians on her life, hagiographies prove the most cohesive. Cogitosus' *Life of Saint Brigid the Virgin* (termed *Vita II* by seventeenth-century Bollandists) is the only *vita* for which we have authorship, while the authors of the Latin *Vita Prima Sanctae Brigitae* (*Vita I*) and the Old Irish *Bethu Brigte* are unknown. These *vitae*, as well as a number of hymns recorded in praise of Brigit, remain the primary sources of Brigit's dossier, which has been studied far less extensively than those of her saintly male counterparts. Although our knowledge of her may be limited, a study into the origins, life, and cults of St. Brigit reveals a wealth of insight into the role of women in the Celtic monastic tradition and female expressions of spirituality both in Ireland as well as on the European continent.

Among the controversy as to the validity of Brigit's three *vitae* is the argument that Brigit was not an individual herself, but an amalgamation of various holy women, as well as that this saintly figure was a Christianization of the Celtic fire goddess bearing the same name. Regardless of the conflicting views that exist on the matter, from these three lives of St. Brigit, we can easily discern that she was a figure steeped in liminality and duality. As *Vita I*—which provides the most detailed accounts of her upbringing—reveals, Brigit was born to a nobleman of Leinster, Dubthach, and his slave, Broicsech, and later was sold with her mother to a druid.[1] Upon her birth, the druid delivered a double message, telling her father that "'Your wife's progeny will serve your bondmaid's progeny until the end of the world,'" and her mother that "'the grace of your little infant will set you free.'"[2] The druid's message to both parents subverts the position of servitude into which Brigit is born, prophesying a child that will surpass one of her parents and deliver the other from enslavement. Her rearing by a druid contradicts what we might think of as a traditional model of sainthood. Unlike her predecessor, Patrick, Brigit was a Celtic native and did not claim status by birth. Moreover, her upbringing attests to her dual nature; *Vita I* paints her with sympathy towards polytheistic Ireland. In *Vita I*, when Brigit was born, her mother was "neither in the house nor outside the house, and the infant's body was washed with the warm milk which she was carrying."[3] The very circumstances of her birth, described with allusion to the pre-Christian Celtic literary tradition, reflect the liminality with which Brigit is associated.[4] Here, we see that it is precisely this quality which gives Brigit a type of authority that is fundamentally different from that of her male counterparts.

Out of the three extant recounts of St. Brigit's life, *Vita I* and *Bethu Brigte* bear the most in common, especially in the chronicles they provide of Brigit's upbringing, the latter of which exhibits an understanding of the polytheistic backdrop upon which this saint is cast. These hagiographies recount the early evidence of the child's prophesied holiness with similar language, both drawing on allusions to Ireland's pre-Christian past. Fire imagery — symbolism often associated with the Celtic goddess Bríg — figures heavily into both hagiographies. In *Vita I*, a "holy man" saw a "ball of fire in the place where the bondmaid slept."[5] Similarly, in *Bethu Brigte*, the author recounts: "In the middle of the night the druid was watching the stars and saw a fiery column arising out of the house in which

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[1] Seán Connolly, "Vita Prima Sanctae Brigitae Background and Historical Value," *The Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* 119 (1989): 14, https://www.jstor.org/stable/25508969.

[2] Connolly, "Vita Prima Sanctae Brigitae Background and Historical Value," 14 .

[3] Connolly, "Vita Prima Sanctae Brigitae Background and Historical Value," 15.

[4] Lisa M. Bitel, "Body of a saint, story of a goddess: origins of the Brigidine tradition," *Textual Practice* 16, no. 2 (2002): 217, https://doi.org/10.1080/09502360210141466.

[5] Connolly, "Vita Prima Sanctae Brigitae Background and Historical Value," 15.

were the slave and the maiden."[6] The fact that this feat is recognized by both a Christian and a pagan as remarkable and spellbinding establishes her presence as a powerful one within both faiths. Brigit's connection with fire, while it links her to pagan traditions, does not take away from her Christian sanctity. If anything, it enhances the proof of her holiness. For the author of *Vita I*, this ball of fire all but confirms that "this girl is full of the Holy Spirit.'"[7] Indeed, this allusion to the Celtic goddess bridges the gap between the pagan and Christian spheres that existed within Ireland at the time, reflecting the blending and breaking down of the rhetorically constructed boundary between the two traditions that Brigit exemplifies. Many readers, at first glance, are wont to take the correspondence of the Feast of St. Brigit with the Celtic holiday of Imbolc on the first of February as proof of Brigit's pagan transmogrification.[8] While the argument that Brigit emerged in the wake of the Celtic deity cannot be discarded in totality, reading her *vitae* presents a unique opportunity to explore the ways in which her figure blurs this imagined boundary, providing insight into the manifold ways in which Christianity was embraced by the polytheistic peoples of Ireland.

As Christianity spread throughout the isle, the Irish developed a religious tradition that was largely centered around monasticism. Monastic enclosures, disparate from secular society, presented a unique opportunity for women. For free women in early medieval Ireland, taking the veil was the only legitimate alternative to marriage; within the confines of the nunnery, women could devote themselves to God by becoming brides of Christ.[9] This spiritual parallel to legal marriage, however, was not necessarily widely adopted, or available, to women. Thus, Brigit's story of taking the veil should be taken as an exceptional example of female spirituality, rather than the norm. According to Cogitosus, Brigit's parents wished her to marry, but for her "virginal love of chastity," she took the veil on her "saintly head" from the bishop Mac Caille.[10] The monk of Kildare presents us with a relatively innocuous narrative of Brigit's decision, whereas *Bethu Brigte* and *Vita I* characterize it with a greater degree of desperation and violence. In *Vita I*, Brigit prayed to God for a bodily deformity, and subsequently, "one of her eyes burst and liquified in her head. For she preferred to lose her bodily eye than the eye of her soul and loved the beauty of the soul more than that of the body."[11] In *Bethu Brigte*, while Brigit is still the agent of action in the narrative, she causes the deformity with her own hands,

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[6] M. A. O'Brien, "The Old Irish Life of St. Brigit: Part I. Translation," *Irish Historical Studies* 1, no. 2 (1938): 122, https://www.jstor.org/stable/30006061.

[7] Connolly, "Vita Prima Sanctae Brigitae Background and Historical Value," 15.

[8] Phillip Campbell, "Appendix: Brigid the Pagan Goddess?" in *The Life of Saint Brigid of Kildare by Cogitosus and Other Writings* (Grass Lake: Cruachan Hill Press, 2022).

[9] Lisa M. Bitel, "Women's monastic enclosures in early Ireland: a study of female spirituality and male monastic mentalities," *Journal of Medieval History* 12, no. 1 (1986): 17. https://doi.org/10.1016/0304-4181(86)90011-4.

[10] Cogitosus, "Life of Saint Brigid the Virgin," in *St. Patrick's World: The Christian Culture of Ireland's Apostolic Age*, trans. Liam De Paor (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1993), 209.

[11] Connolly, "Vita Prima Sanctae Brigitae Background and Historical Value," 18.

rather than through divine intervention: "'Here is that beautiful eye for you.'"[12] The Brigit of the latter two *vitae* is a force to be reckoned with, while Cogitosus' Brigit, though powerful, is pious and charitable to the point of passivity. The bodily violence with which the latter two *vitae* characterize her taking the veil—as well as her brothers' anger at being deprived of their *tinscrae*, or bride-price—reflects not only the value of women within Irish society, but also the exceptional case that was the story of St. Brigit.[13] For Brigit's family, the potential economic gains of marrying her off was threatened by her desire to take a vow of chastity and enter the nunnery. Thus, the position of nuns in early medieval Ireland was not one to be romanticized. The power they were able to wield within religious enclosures, as well as the threat they posed to the patriarchal hegemony, was not easily tolerated. St. Brigit, perhaps more so than any figure of her time, exemplifies this notion.

Of the abbey at Kildare (or *Cell Dara*, meaning "church of oak" in the Old Irish), Cogitosus tells us that "Its jurisdiction extends over the whole land of Ireland from sea to sea."[14] He makes a bold claim that should be acknowledged with hesitance, as his *vita* reads more as an advertisement for Kildare than it does a chronicle of this saint's life. What is also particularly remarkable about Brigit's supposed founding of the abbey at Kildare is its double monastery model. Historians have often cited Ireland as the origin of mixed-sex monasteries, with Brigit herself as the founder of this model.[15] The significance of this model is such that it transcends the assumption that in Christian communities in the early middle ages, men and women were kept distinctly separate. There were specific roles to be found for women within the abbey, however. At Kildare, a sacred fire was maintained exclusively by female virgins; men who violated its sanctity supposedly went mad or lame.[16] Brigit's holy fire served as a distinctly female space within the double monastery model. Women were able to wield (limited) power within the walls of the abbey, with Brigit being the source of this jurisdiction. Brigit's story of ordination is an unusual one. As it goes in *Bethu Brigte*: "There the bishop being intoxicated with the grace of God did not recognize what he was reading from his book, and consecrated Brigit with the orders of a bishop. 'This virgin,' said Mel, 'alone in Ireland will have the episcopal ordination.'"[17] This accidental ordination seems a fitting tale to supplement Brigit's hybrid origins, including her mixed-class parentage, her simultaneous pagan and Christian influences, and her birth upon the threshold of a house. All of these circumstances suggest that it is because of these anomalies— perhaps

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[12] O'Brien, "The Old Irish Life of St. Brigit: Part I. Translation," 125.
[13] O'Brien, "The Old Irish Life of St. Brigit: Part I. Translation," 125.
[14] Cogitosus, "Life of Saint Brigid the Virgin," 207.
[15] Maeve B. Callan, "'The Safest City of Refuge': Brigid the Bishop," in *Sacred Sisters: Gender, Sanctity, and Power in Medieval Ireland* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2019), 99.
[16] Callan, "'The Safest City of Refuge,'" 99.
[17] O'Brien, "The Old Irish Life of St. Brigit: Part I. Translation," 126.

even because of her gender—that Brigit could claim power that, at the time, was only reserved for elite men.

Brigit was often identified by medieval sources as a Mary or Christ figure—a comparison which earned her a great deal of reverence from these sources. Her hagiographies represent her as either figure, sometimes within the same narrative. In *Bethu Brigte*, a bishop recounts a vision of Brigit's coming to Kildare, in which he was told: "'This is Mary who will dwell among you.'"[18] The bishop's vision presents her with a certain degree of humility that represents the ideal Christian leader: a moral model to follow, but ultimately, an equal. Just as Mary came from ordinary beginnings, Brigit, too, is prophesied to rise above her peers in terms of moral excellence and piety. Similarly, in St. Broccán's hymn, Brigit is likened to Mary; the last stanza of the poem reads:

> There are two nuns in the Kingdom,—
> I implore their aid with all my effort,—
> Mary and St. Brigid;
> may we be under the protection of these two.[19]

In coincidentally invoking Mary and St. Brigit for protection, the speaker not only draws a parallel between these two figures, but reflects the need for Ireland's own virginal mother figure. In denoting Brigit as the "Mary of the Gaels,"[20] her Irish worshippers lay claim to their very own Mary. Where perhaps the Biblical story of Christ's birth seems distant, through Brigit, they invoked a motherly figure who was distinctly connected to Ireland for their protection. Thus, Christ's power is made manifest on the island. Moreover, some of her miracles mimic those of Christ. Notably, Brigit recreated Christ's first miracle, as recorded in Biblical sources, with a classic Irish spin: "Marvellous for her the bath which she blessed: / about her it was red ale."[21] A similar miracle is recorded in *Bethu Brigte*, in which Brigit produces eighteen tubs of ale from a single sack of malt, and "there was no lack of feasting in every church."[22] Brigit's doubleness as a saint also manifests in her portrayal as both a Mary and a Christ figure. This duality complicates the ways in which her gender relates to her sainthood.

While Brigit's gender and her saintliness did not always connect in a coherent manner, her position as "Mary of the Gaels," or the spiritual head of women in Ireland created an important, but atypical, model for female spirituality on the island. Brigit's liminality—her gender, in particular—embodies the message of Galatians 3:28, which asserts that within Jesus Christ, all binaries,

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[18] O'Brien, "The Old Irish Life of St. Brigit: Part I. Translation," 123.

[19] Broccán, "Bróccan's Hymn in Praise of St. Brigit," in *Goidelica: Old and Early-Middle-Irish Glosses, Prose and Verse*, ed. Whitley Stokes (London: Trübner and Co., 1872): 137.

[20] Sean O'Riordan, "The Cult of St. Brigid," *The Furrow* 2 (1951): 91.

[21] Broccán, "Broccán's Hymn in Praise of St. Brigid," 143.

[22] O'Brien, "The Old Irish Life of St. Brigit: Part I. Translation," 126.

including that of gender, are transcended.[23] The same principle applied to Brigit, whose hagiographers portrayed her with many of the same virtues that would often be ascribed to male saints in order to elevate her status. Cogitosus, for instance, writes that "she earned the great authority that came to her," referencing the fact that according to his narrative, she was the only early Irishwoman to exercise clerical functions.[24] Moreover, Ultan's hymn calls upon Brigit to "save us beyond throngs of demons!"[25] Here, Ultan presents Brigit with the masculine, "warrior-of-Christ" language that was typically ascribed to saints. Although Cogitosus references her "temperate ways" and "virginal heart,", she too is also presented with distinctly masculine language that seems to transcend or overwrite her gender.[26] As Lisa Bitel writes: "By adhering to the male model, women could also become saintly."[27] This is clearly reflected in her hagiographies, especially *Vita II*, in which Cogitosus primarily aims to assert the dominance of the monastery at Kildare as a Christian institution by valorizing its saint. The spiritual model which Brigit embodied for women was based largely in her departure from typical "womanly" values. She served not as a model which women should strive to emulate, but as a motherly guardian figure. According to Bitel, "to be more of a saint was, in early Ireland, to be less of a woman."[28] While holy women could become brides of Christ, it was Brigit—somewhat removed from her own gender—who presided over these women as their "Mary" and as their bishop.

Aside from her clerical authority, Brigit's hagiographers deemed her many recorded miracles to be the preeminent evidence of her holiness. Each of her hagiographers, through their flowery language and frequent epithets, sought to establish the validity of Brigit's sainthood by presenting a catalog of miracles, each one more splendid than the last. Cogitosus adheres more closely to this model than Brigit's other hagiographers, but he does not record nearly as many miracles as *Vita I* and *Bethu Brigte*. Brigit's miracles tie her to the very land of the Irish, making her a staple saint for the Irish to call upon for protection. Her miracles display a sympathy for, as well as a command over, the natural world; in *Vita I*, she made wolves guide a group of pigs back to their master without harming them.[29] In a later miracle, she "changed a certain river from one place to another and it still runs as she ordained."[30] Both acts, defying the laws of nature, assert her ability to govern the natural world of Ireland, a land that was still very much undergoing Christianization. This connection to nature implies that Brigit wielded

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[23] Callan, "'The Safest City of Refuge,'" 91.

[24] Cogitosus, "Life of Saint Brigid the Virgin," 212.

[25] Ultan, "Ultan's Hymn in Praise of Brigit," in *Goidelica: Old and Early-Middle-Irish Glosses, Prose and Verse*, ed. Whitley Stokes (London: Trübner and Co., 1872): 136.

[26] Cogitosus, "The Life of Saint Brigid the Virgin," 209, 212.

[27] Bitel, "Women's monastic enclosures in early Ireland," 28.

[28] Bitel, "Women's monastic enclosures in early Ireland," 28.

[29] Connolly, "Vita Prima Sanctae Brigitae Background and Historical Value," 48.

[30] Connolly, "Vita Prima Sanctae Brigitae Background and Historical Value," 49.

such authority for the Irish people, in part, because of her proximity to pre-Christian Ireland. Moreover, her hagiographers chronicle a number of miracles relating to dairy, which was a motif present in her birth and upbringing.[31] As Bitel notes, milk— particularly the bathing of newborns in milk as Brigit was—also shows up as a literary motif in Irish secular stories, frequently symbolizing purity.[32] This demonstrates these two texts' greater sympathies towards Ireland's pagan roots as well as Brigit's transformative power, which translates to her miracles. One in particular, in *Vita I*, records Brigit blessing a glass of water and turning it into milk when there was no cow; the milk, which was "warm as if it had been milked just then," healed a sick nun.[33] This miracle fuses Brigit's connection to nature with her qualities of chastity and purity and, through this fusion of qualities, creates a healing power that is ordained by the divine. Through this analysis, studying her hagiographies brings context and insight to the way in which her cult operated, both in Ireland and abroad.

From her monastery at Kildare, which Cogitosus called "the safest place of refuge among all the towns of the whole land of the Irish, with all their fugitives," Brigit's cult as Ireland's patron and protector was extensive.[34] Worship of her was primarily centered around the home, with the Feast of Saint Brigit canonically observed on the first of February.[35] Brigit's dual nature extends to her cult; she was invoked in matters of fertility relating to the land as well as that of the family unit. Tenth-century hymns referenced the fact that "'Brigid takes the winter away,'" and she was also invoked during childbirth.[36] Early medieval Ireland was a largely agrarian society; social units would have been structured around agriculture, fostering an intimate relationship between the family and the land which they worked. Brigit was therefore an integral figure in ensuring the survival of both the family and their land through her power over fertility. Moreover, befitting her manifold associations with fire, in Irish tradition, Brigit was invoked alongside Mary in the essential practice of keeping the fire in one's hearth alive through the night. For the Celts, fire had a purifying power, and the distribution of these blessed ashes and embers would be used to ensure the fertility of crops.[37] With her deep connection to the land, Brigit, akin to the Virgin Mary, captured the hearts of the Irish, and acted as a more accessible spiritual figure when contrasted with other Irish saints. The line, "Brigit mother of my Lord,— of heaven's kingdom best was she born," in Broccán's Hymn speaks to the intimacy of her relationship with Christ, especially compared to a figure like St. Patrick, whose presence proved more distant and

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[31] Connolly, "Vita Prima Sanctae Brigitae Background and Historical Value," 18.

[32] Bitel, "Body of a saint, story of a goddess," 217.

[33] Connolly, "Vita Prima Sanctae Brigitae Background and Historical Value," 19.

[34] Cogitosus, "The Life of St. Brigid the Virgin," 223.

[35] Séamas Ó Catháin, "Hearth-Prayers and Other Traditions of Brigit: Celtic Goddess and Holy Woman," *The Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* 122 (1992): 14, http://www.jstor.org/stable/25509020.

[36] O'Riordan, "The Cult of St. Brigid," 90.

[37] Catháin, "Hearth-Prayers and Other Traditions of Brigit," 13.

veneration more austere for the Irish.[38] Through their worship of Brigit, individuals were allowed to hope that they might follow the bridge she created from the earthly to the divine; "May (she), the sun dazzling splendid, bear us to the eternal kingdom!"[39] The majesty of her power was not confined to Ireland, however; through Irish missionaries, her cult spread throughout the British isles and to parts of western Europe.

From the sixth to eleventh centuries, an increasing number of Irish learned men opted to quit their native land in order to pursue missionary work on the European continent, particularly in the territories of the Franks. These Irish *peregrini* were drawn by the appeal of Frankish court; there, they could undertake their very own pilgrimage to a newfound "Rome," as well as spread the world of their gospel and, by extension, their saints.[40] Moreover, some sources point to the fact that Irish exiles were drawn to the continent because of the threat of Viking raids.[41] In Ireland, within a monastic tradition that was somewhat disparate from that of the continent, the love and study of classical languages thrived and contributed to an intellectual identity that was one of the main boasts of these exiles. Along with other Irish saints, the cult of St. Brigit flourished abroad just as it did in Ireland. The main evidence remaining of the veneration of Irish saints on the continent is through manuscripts. In a tenth-century manuscript from Reims, along with an extensive list of Breton saints, the names of Patrick, Colum Cille, Brendan, and Brigit are commemorated.[42] Moreover, the oldest and most complete version of Cogitosus' *Vita II* was produced in Reims, and no early manuscripts of this *vita* are linked to Ireland.[43] This reveals that there was a demand for her hagiographies in the northern territories of the Carolingian world, indicating that her cult was present and active in these areas. Based on her veneration in Ireland, her powers over fertility and the land would have had a somewhat universal appeal, especially given the commonality of agrarian life between Ireland and Carolingian Francia. Brigit's dominion was vast and multi-national, extending far beyond what Cogitosus claimed for her. How, then, can we understand the role of Brigit as the patron saint of Ireland and a universal protector and mother in relation to Ireland's more prominent saints, namely, St. Patrick?

St. Patrick, in name, at the very least, was embedded in the core of the early Irish identity, while Brigit—also deeply important as a figure—remains much more elusive. In the Book of Armagh's *Liber*

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[38] Broccán, "Broccán's Hymn in Praise of St. Brigid," 142.

[39] Ultan, "Ultan's Hymn in Praise of Brigit," 136.

[40] Gerard Murphy, "Scotti Peregrini: The Irish on the Continent in the Time of Charles the Bald," *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review* 17 (1928): 41.

[41] Murphy, "Scotti Peregrini," 43.

[42] Jean-Michel Picard, "*Omnes Sancti Chori Hiberniae Sanctorum Orate Pro Nobis*: Manuscript Evidence for the Cult of Irish Saints in Medieval Europe," in *Music, Liturgy, and the Veneration of Saints of the Medieval Irish Church in a European Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017): 70.

[43] Picard, "Omnes Sancti Chori Hiberniae Sanctorum Orate Pro Nobis," 71–72.

Angeli, dated at around 700, Brigit and Patrick are called the "pillars of the Irish," and the text goes on to speak highly of their friendship: "they were of one heart and one mind."[44] This tale of their supposed spiritual unity hearkens back to the tendency of male-dominated narratives to overwrite those of women; ecclesiastical sources are no exception. Here, there is little sense of Brigit's agency or voice. Instead, a homogenous narrative meshes the two saints together. Just as abbots so often served as the overlords of women's religious spaces within the double monastery system, Patrick took precedence over Brigit in this passage from the Book of Armagh. The fact that Patrick supposedly established a monastery at Armagh further speaks to this likelihood. Brigit's hagiographies also attest to the connection between the two saints. In *Bethu Brigte*, she goes to meet Patrick so that "'he may bless [her],'" and it is said that "she will not perform miracles in the presence of holy Patrick."[45] While she performs miracles on the way to meet Patrick, as soon as she is in his presence, the narrative shifts to focus on him, and Brigit is reluctant to put her power on display. Brigit is portrayed with passivity and is reduced to a mere patron of this great saint; she is only glorified with his permission. Moreover, Patrick decrees that Brigit should be accompanied by a priest at all times, again, reflecting Patrick's position as Brigit's overlord.[46] In a larger sense, the power dynamic between these two is reflective of the gendered ecclesiastical politics of early Ireland. Ultimately, it was Armagh that held the preeminent spiritual power, not Kildare, despite its alleged independence. Although Brigit was powerful in her own right, the patriarchal structures of early Ireland ultimately capped her jurisdiction so that it would not surpass that of any holy man's.

St. Brigit of Kildare had many faces: that of a pagan fire goddess, an accidentally ordained bishop, a Christ figure, a "child" of St. Patrick, and perhaps most prominently, the "Mary of the Gaels." Her cult, both within and without Ireland, demonstrates the universality of her appeal. Whether an individual was invoking Brigit during childbirth, the beginning of spring, or while milking a cow, she was the figure that bridged the gap between the Irish and the divine, the pagan and the Christian, the female and the male. Unlike her fellow St. Patrick, Brigit was native to the island of her patronage. Her connection to land itself embodied the personal and localized understanding individuals had about the world around them, and this connection extended to Ireland's polytheistic roots. She did not set out to eradicate Ireland's pre-Christian traditions and replace them with Christian ones, but to blur the lines between these two sets of practices. Her authority was not without limit, though. While her case of found freedom through the church was an exceptional narrative, her figure was and is still subject to being overwritten by patriarchal forces. The reverence paid to her as "Mary of the Gaels" was extensive, but the power this title wields was ultimately an extension of its

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[44] Callan, "'The Safest City of Refuge': Brigid the Bishop," 90.

[45] O'Brien, "The Old Irish Life of St. Brigit: Part I. Translation," 132–133.

[46] O'Brien, "The Old Irish Life of St. Brigit: Part I. Translation," 133.

male source; Mary herself was only venerated for her role as a mother and her embodiment of chastity. Nevertheless, the cult of St. Brigit is vital to understanding the spiritual and gender dynamics of the early medieval Irish world, and her feast is still celebrated in Ireland to this day.

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