

# Newberry Essays in Medieval and Early Modern Studies

Volume 8

**Edited by Mary P. Angelo**

*Newberry Essays  
in Medieval  
and Early Modern Studies*

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*Selected Proceedings of the  
Newberry Center for Renaissance Studies  
2014 Multidisciplinary Graduate Student Conference*

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Contributing Editors:

Laura Bland, Catherine Conner, Charles Keenan, Danielle Kuntz, Lance Lubelski,  
Andrea Nichols, Greta Smith, David Vaughan, and Daniel Yingst



Chicago, Illinois

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## *Introduction*

By Mary P. Angelo

On a frigid January weekend during Chicago's coldest winter in recent memory, emerging scholars from universities in the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom gathered for the Newberry Center for Renaissance Studies annual graduate student conference. Established in the 1980s by Fran Dolan (then a graduate student at the University of Chicago, now professor of English at the University of California, Davis), the conference has grown and flourished under the direction of a series of Center staff members, such as current associate director Karen Christianson, former interim assistant director Laura Aydelotte, and Center director Carla Zecher. In 2007 Megan Moore (then assistant director of the Center and now an assistant professor of French at the University of Missouri-Columbia) conceived of creating a selected proceedings of the multidisciplinary conference as an online journal. Thus, while the expanded conference now gives a greater number of master's and PhD students an opportunity to share their research in medieval, Renaissance, or early modern studies with their peers, the online journal allows wide dissemination of student work that may still be developed for publication in the future. This year, during eighteen sessions, seventy-two presenters whose universities are among the fifty-one members of the Newberry Center for Renaissance Studies consortium shared their research and listened to the ideas of their fellow students and future colleagues. Nine essays from the 2014 conference are contained in this volume.

The contributing editors are all advanced doctoral candidates representing a broad spectrum of disciplines and periods who helped to vet the submissions and organize the conference panels and discussions. They met at the end of the conference to select the best papers among the many fine contributions and began to edit them in preparation for publication in the journal. That process, and the specialized essays they have chosen, reflect the intent of the early organizers, which was to create a conference where scholars from a wide range of disciplines and periods could gather to develop their professional skills, critically engage with other graduate students, and benefit from the rich collections and academic support that the Newberry Library offers. They now invite you to read and reflect upon the proceedings of the 2014 conference.

*Mary P. Angelo recently completed a PhD in French literature at the University of Chicago. She works as a research assistant for the Newberry Center for Renaissance Studies and teaches at a private secondary school.*



## *Breastfeeding the Soul: Spiritual Hunger and Baby-Death in Henry Purcell's "With sick and famish'd Eyes," Z200*

By Patrick Bonczyk

hee laid mee lower in myne owne eyes than at any time before,  
and shewed mee the emptiness of all my guifts and parts,  
left mee neither power nor will,  
so I became as a weaned child.

– John Winthrop, *Experiencia* (1636)

In her short treatise, *The Countesse of Lincolnes Nurserie* (1622), Elizabeth Clinton (d. 1630?) argues that “it is the duty...of mothers to [nurse] their owne children.”<sup>1</sup> The “motherly office” of breastfeeding, writes the countess, is the “ordinance of God,” and a mother who gives “the sweete milke of [her] own breaste, to [her] owne childe” follows the example of all Biblical women (Eve, Sarah, Hannah, and the Blessed Virgin).<sup>2</sup> In a culture in which parents sent their infants to a wet-nurse (either in or outside the home) for the first twenty-four months of the child’s life, Clinton envisioned that breastfeeding—of showing affection to your own children from birth into late-infancy—could inspire a radical moral and religious movement.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, the letter to the “most Christian, Reader” ends with a galvanizing epigraph by Thomas Lodge:

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<sup>1</sup> I am indebted to Dr. Jyotsna Singh (English, Michigan State University) for welcoming me into her graduate seminar on Renaissance drama and poetry. This essay emerged from research conducted under her advisement. Quotation in first sentence: Elizabeth Clinton, Countess of Lincoln, *The Countesse of Lincolnes nurserie*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Oxford: Printed by Iohn Lichfield, and Iames Short printers to the famous Vniversitie, 1622), 1, digital facsimile of the original in the British Library, *Early English Books Online*, bibliography name/number (STC, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed./5432).

<sup>2</sup> Clinton, i, 2-5, 16-17. See also Henry Newcome, *The compleat mother, or, An earnest perswasive to all mothers (especially those of rank and quality) to nurse their own children* (London: Printed for J. Wyat at the Rose in St. Paul’s Church-yard, 1695), digital facsimile of the original in the British Library, *Early English Books Online*, bibliography name/number (Wing/N893).

<sup>3</sup> Margaret R. Miles, *A Complex Delight: The Secularization of the Breast, 1350-1750* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 104-06; Marilyn Yalom, *A History of the Breast* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1997), 70.



Go then Great booke of Nursing plead the Cause.  
Teach High'st, low'st, all, it's Gods and Natures laws. [ll. 5-6]<sup>4</sup>

Though Clinton wrote the treatise to guide affluent Christian women toward exemplary motherhood, she also showed that seventeenth-century notions of the expression of God's love were both paternal *and* maternal. Mothers should breastfeed their own children, the countess claims, because "God worketh in the very nature of mothers." God himself did not deny his children spiritual nourishment though it required self-sacrifice. Thus, a Christian mother "has no power to deny [her childe] to suckle" even "when shee is in hazard to lose her owne life."<sup>5</sup> Christ's selfless sacrifice of his body on the cross here is analogous to a mother's fleshly giving to her child; and rightly so, as the Christian mythos venerates Christ's corporeal body as food. Furthermore, breast milk was commonly believed to be merely white blood rerouted from the womb to the breast.<sup>6</sup> Because consuming Christ's blood means redemption for believers, his body might also shed some redeeming fluid in the form of milk, as George Herbert imagined in his poem, "To John, leaning on the Lord's breast":

34. "To John, leaning on the Lord's breast"  
Ah now, glutton, let me suck too!  
You won' t really hoard the whole  
Breast for yourself! Do you thieve  
Away from everyone that common well?  
He also shed his blood for me,  
And thus, having rightful  
Access to the breast, I claim the milk  
Mingled with the blood.<sup>7</sup>

Like a sow with her piglets, Christ's milk incites frenzied, competitive feeding.

The religious sanctity that breast milk acquired was due, in part, to its wide respect as a cure-all for ailments both grave and everyday. Medical texts, ministerial pamphlets, sermons, and recipe books called for breast milk to treat ear infections, blindness, skin irritations, gout, insomnia, but

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<sup>4</sup> Clinton, vi.

<sup>5</sup> Clinton, 8.

<sup>6</sup> "ye Consumption of ye Lungs...is best recover'd by Sucking Milk from a Womans Brest, as most familiar to our Lives & Blood, need no Preparation (for it is only Blood discolored) but only Application to ye flesh," Great Britain, Customs Establishment (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1688-91), 69, in Marylynn Salmon, "The Cultural Significance of Breastfeeding and Infant Care in Early Modern England and America," *Journal of Social History* 28, No. 2 (Winter 1994): 249, 251.

<sup>7</sup> Mark Mcloskey and Paul R. Murphy, trans., *The Latin Poetry of George Herbert: A Bilingual Edition* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1965), 118-19.

mainly to alleviate fevers, faintness, and general pain.<sup>8</sup> Still, the primary purpose of breast milk was to provide nourishment to infants. Early modern doctors believed that the denial of human milk from the child nearly always led to sickness or death.<sup>9</sup> In this way, mid-seventeenth-century Christians derived meaning from the social practice of breastfeeding when they projected the life-giving properties of breast milk onto the body of Christ.<sup>10</sup> In this conception of the dyad of God and devotee, the soul is a helpless child and God is the source from which spiritual hunger can be satiated. The neglect of the child (here, the soul) by the mother (God) leads to spiritual starvation and death of the soul.

The devastation of neglect was a frequent topic in mid-century devotional literature. Another of George Herbert's poems, "Longing" (1633), expresses this terror of abandonment. Henry Purcell (d. 1695) later set the poem in a declamatory song in Henry Playford's anthology of sacred "hymns and dialogues," *Harmonia Sacra*, Book 1 (London: 1688).<sup>11</sup> In "With sick and famish'd Eyes" a hungry soul "Cries" and "Groans" for Christ's fulsome breast. When not heard, the soul beseeches more tenderly: "my love, my Sweetnesse, heare!" The soul then grows feverish and "dyes" at the Lord's feet. The song, while leaving out several of the poem's stanzas, still perpetuates the poem's conceit of Christ as metaphorically a mother, while the soul is a tumbling baby crying to be fed.

Though Purcell's setting dates to more than fifty years after the first publication of Herbert's "Longing" (1633), and furthermore, sets only a number of the stanzas, Purcell's song is, all the same, a companion to the poem rather than an alteration. There are several reasons I have come to this conclusion. First, we should not assume that listeners lacked prior knowledge of the entire poem and its meaning(s) before hearing (or performing) "With sick and famish'd Eyes." That is, they could have brought their own meanings when listening and performing Purcell's setting. Nor can we assume that Purcell's song would have fundamentally altered the interpretation of the poem for those of literary attainment. Indeed, Purcell's setting could support both existing interpretations and incite future readings of the full poem.

---

<sup>8</sup> Gervase Markham recommended breast milk to ease labor pains and to ensure successful childbirth in his *The English House-wife, Containing the inward and outward Vertues which ought to be in a compleate Woman* (London: 1637), 39; Gulielma Penn claimed that she used breast milk mixed with egg whites to relieve ear pain in her recipe book, *Penn Family Papers* 6 (Philadelphia: Historical Society of Pennsylvania), 103; Felix Platter wrote about his use of breast milk as an analgesic, *Enchiridum or an Abridgem[en]t of Platerous Golden Practice of Physick by T.W.* (London, c. 1660), 180; Jacques Guillemeau also wrote that "The Nurse, besides a sufficient quantity for the nourishment of the child" might also use breast milk to "[cool]" or soothe any "imperfections" of the skin, including "heat, pimples, [and] itching," *Child-Birth or, The Happy Deliverie of Women* (London: 1612), 6. Salves with breast milk as a main ingredient could cure gout and insomnia, Great Britain, Customs Establishment (1688-91), 195 (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society), in Salmon, 249-50.

<sup>9</sup> Salmon, 250.

<sup>10</sup> See Richard Crashaw's poem not discussed here, "Luke 11. Blessed be the paps which thou has sucked," *Steps to the temple sacred poems, with other delights of the muses* (London: Printed by T.W. for Humphrey Moseley, 1646), 17, digital facsimile of the original in the Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery, *Early English Books Online*, bibliography name/number (Wing/C6836).

<sup>11</sup> Henry Purcell, "With sick and famish'd Eyes," *Harmonia Sacra*, Book 1 (In the Savoy: Printed by Edward Jones, for Henry Playford, at his shop near the Temple Church, 1688), 22-25, digital facsimile of the original in the University of Illinois Library, *Early English Books Online*, bibliography name/number (Wing [2nd ed.]/P2436 [v. 1]).

In addition, the endurance of Herbert's poetry was not easily upset. The cultural impact of Herbert's only collection of English poetry, *The Temple: Sacred Poems and Private Ejaculations* (1633), is difficult to overstate. Republished eleven times at regular intervals from 1633 to 1695, Herbert's *Temple* was widely read and available to the public before, while, and after Purcell printed his song.<sup>12</sup> Herbert's collection appealed to all strata of religious in England: from Charles I to Oliver Cromwell's own chaplain.<sup>13</sup> By 1670 Herbert's collection had sold some ten thousand copies alone, and other prominent poets, including Christopher Harvey, Richard Crashaw, and Henry Vaughan, imitated it.<sup>14</sup> With so many editions in circulation (eleven by 1700) and the saturation of texts modeled after Herbert, the chances of a person of literary interest having encountered Herbert's "Longing" are high.

Next, Purcell's musical setting emerged from a culture that encouraged the active comparison of printed texts.<sup>15</sup> To that end, publishers bound, sold, and advertised textual companions that reprinted song texts in full with their corresponding songbooks. Nahum Tate's *Miscellanea Sacra* (1696) was just such a companion to *Harmonia Sacra*. Besides the similar title, *Miscellanea Sacra* had the same publisher (Playford), had reproduced many of the poems in *Harmonia Sacra*, and carried a frontispiece by the same engraver (Simon Gribelin II). In the preface, Tate acknowledged Herbert as a "divine," indicating that his poetry was not only sacred, but a permanent fixture of English religious identity.<sup>16</sup> Herbert's "Longing," was not reproduced in *Miscellanea Sacra* likely because it was still widely available (the eleventh edition dating to the year prior, 1695). Indeed, with the new ability to compare printed texts, that is, poem against song, listeners could have sought out and read the poem

<sup>12</sup> Known new editions and reprintings occurring after the first edition (1633) but before 1700 are 1634, 1635, 1638, 1641, 1656, 1660, 1667, 1674, 1678, 1679, 1695.

<sup>13</sup> Helen Wilcox, "George Herbert," *The Cambridge Companion to English Poetry, Donne to Marvell* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993), 183.

<sup>14</sup> Izaak [Isaac] Walton, *The Life of Mr. George Herbert* (London: Printed by Tho. Newcomb for Richard Marriott, sold by most booksellers, 1670), 109, digital facsimile of the original in the University of Illinois Library, *Early English Books Online*, bibliography name/number (Wing/W669); an eighteenth-century edition of Walton's biography updated the number of Herbert's collections sold to twenty-thousand, Walton, *The lives of Dr. John Donne; Sir Henry Wotton; Mr. Richard Hooker; Mr. George Herbert; and Dr. Robert Sanderson* (York: Printed by Wilson, Spence, and Mawman. sold by J. Robson, New Bond-Street, B. White, Fleet-Street, T. Payne, at the News-Gate, and T. Egerton, Whitehall, London; J. Cooke, Oxford; J. Deighton, Cambridge; and Wilson, Spence, and Mawman, J. Todd, and H. Sotheran, York, 1796), 386, digital facsimile of the original in the British Library, *Eighteenth-Century Collections Online*, Gale document number (CB130071502); Christopher Harvey's *Synagogue, or, The Shadow of The Temple...in Imitation of Mr George Herbert* (1641) was bound with the 6th ed. of Herbert's, *The Temple*, see Random Cloud, "FIAT FLUX," in *Crisis in Editing: Texts of the English Renaissance*, ed. Randall M Leod. (AMS Press: New York, 1994), 74-75, 78; Richard Crashaw's *Steps to the Temple* (1646) includes a flattering praise of *The Temple* as if gifted to a lover ("On Mr George Herbert's Book Entitled 'The Temple of Sacred Poems,' sent to a Gentlewoman"); Vaughan says of Herbert in *Silex Scintillans* (1650): "I shall propose but one to you, the most obedient Son that ever his Mother had, and yet a most glorious true Saint and a Seer." Included next to this text is the following note: "Mr. George Herbert of blessed memory; See his incomparable prophetick Poems, and particularly these, Church-musick, Church-rents, and schisms. The Church militant." Vaughan then reproduces several stanzas from Herbert's "The Posie." In his *The Mount of Olives: or, Solitary Devotions* (1652), Vaughan refers to Herbert as a "most glorious true Saint and Seer."

<sup>15</sup> David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 88-89.

<sup>16</sup> Nahum Tate, "Preface," *Miscellanea Sacra, or, Poems on divine and moral subjects* (London: Henry Playford, 1696), unnumbered page, digital facsimile of the original in the Union Theological Seminary Library, New York, *Early English Books Online*, bibliography name/number (Wing/T195).

at a later time, then having to confront it in its entirety. It is also entirely possible that listeners read the poem *while* listening, responding to the singer by mentally filling in the textual gaps.

Lastly, we should not assume that Purcell objected to or censured the stanzas he did not set. In his “Letter to the Reader” that opens *Harmonia Sacra*, Playford assures patrons that he and Purcell did not take editorial liberties. Rather, their project was to preserve the work of “great Men”:

I need say no more than that the *Words* were penn’d by such Persons, as are, and have been, very Eminent both for Learning and Piety... though some of them are now dead, yet their Composure have been review’d by Mr. *Henry Purcell*, whose tender Regard for the Reputation of those great Men made him careful that nothing should be published, which, through the negligence of Transcribers, might reflect upon their Memory.<sup>17</sup>

Instead of a reworking, we might think of Purcell’s setting as an intensification of Herbert’s text. Rather than undercut or “obscure” its meaning, I argue that Purcell’s setting is consistent with the entire poem. Though it seems obvious to reserve analysis to the lines that Purcell set, we limit ourselves when we privilege the song text over the sources that inform or, in this case, generate it. Specifically, we understate the cultural and social tensions that gave rise to the poem in the first place.

Without considering Herbert’s full poem, critics have interpreted this Metaphysical text as an erotic love lament that evokes “the iconic penitent Mary Magdalene” with images of tears and sighing.<sup>18</sup> For Grace Tam, the line “hear, by these thy Feet, at which my Heart lyes all the year” recalls Mary Magdalene “as both the love-stricken and the sin-stricken, and as the embodiment of passionate love.”<sup>19</sup> However, the poem can also be read as the soul’s hunger for God, likened to an infant’s appetite for maternal love. A reading of Herbert’s entire poem, including those stanzas not set by Purcell, reveals how meaning is constructed around the central conceit of a maternal God. Just as a mother pours milk freely from her breast, so does pity spill forth from Christ:

From thee all pitie flows.  
Mothers are kinde, because thou art,  
And dost dispose  
To them a part:  
Their infants them, and they suck thee  
More free. (stanza 3)

<sup>17</sup> Playford, “To the Reader,” *Harmonia Sacra*, Book 1, unnumbered page.

<sup>18</sup> Grace Tin-Yan Tam, “The Penitential Theology of Henry Purcell As Expressed in His Sacred Songs” (PhD diss., UCLA, 2005), 111, 113, ProQuest (document ID: 305033145).

<sup>19</sup> The line “pluck out thy Dart, and heal my troubled Breast” may bring to mind either the piercing arrow of Cupid or the ecstatic visions of Teresa of Ávila in a startling collocation of sacred and erotic. Tam, “The Penitential Theology,” 111, 113.

As in Lincoln's treatise, Christ is the ultimate mother and sets the example for all mothers. In stanza ten, Herbert directly infantilizes the speaker: "Thou tarriest, while I die,/And fall to nothing . . . yet am I stil'd/Thy childe."

Within the context of the full poem, the line that might evoke Mary Magdalene may also describe images of spiritual stature and the helplessness of a starving infant trying to grab the attention of a nursing mother. The song befittingly describes Herbert's image of spiritual longing with groans and cries for food while the melodic declamation slowly crawls upward but then falls into feverishness and death by starvation. If it does evoke the icon of Mary Magdalene, then "With sick and famish'd Eyes" must also align with the tradition of looking to Christ as a mammary reservoir of spiritual food.

Beginning immediately to construct a desire for food, the first five measures open with a disturbing harmonic and melodic declamation that signifies the sickly and "famish'd" condition of the speaker (Figure 1). In the first measure, the melodic line descends a tritone from B-flat to E-natural on the word "sick." Moving rapidly from G-minor to an unprepared C minor chord in measure 2, the harmony continues its chromatic fall to F-sharp diminished while the melody continues to wobble on the line, "with doubling Knees, and weary Bones."



Figure 1. Henry Purcell, "With sick and famish'd Eyes," Z 200, mm. 1-10. Source: (In the Savoy: Printed by Edward Jones, for Henry Playford, at his shop near the Temple Church, 1688), 22-25. Courtesy of the Rare Book & Manuscript Library of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Image published with permission of ProQuest. Further reproduction is prohibited without permission.

Ascending chromatic appoggiature dramatically carry the crying and groaning text through a succession of chromatically altered chords (C minor to C7 to F to D minor to D7 to G minor).

Here, the appoggiature in measures 5-10 signify the yearning to resolve the sickening harmony and melodic lurching of the opening measures (Figure 1).

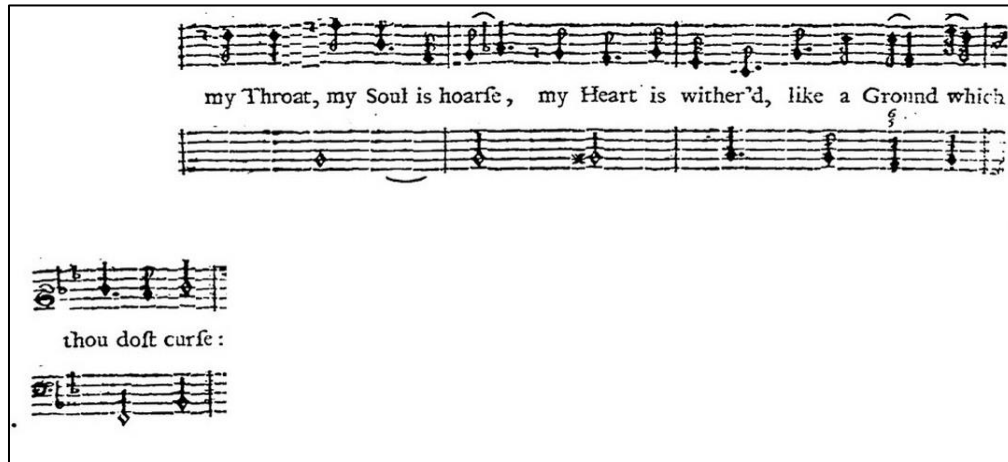


Figure 2. Purcell, "With sick and famish'd Eyes," mm. 11-14. Source: *Harmonia Sacra* (In the Savoy: Henry Playford, 1688), 22-25. Courtesy of the Rare Book & Manuscript Library of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Image published with permission of ProQuest. Further reproduction is prohibited without permission.

Purcell's writing also reflects the physicality of an infant. Of note is how the melodic writing seems to construct the physical stature of the speaker. Throughout the song, being heard and danger of impending starvation is the primary concern of the speaker. The cries and groans for food reach upward toward God, while the line "my Heart is wither'd, like a Ground which thou dost curse" locates the speaker at ground level, dry with thirst (Figure 2).

Reflecting the smallness of a child's voice, the melody bottoms out on "Lord, bow thine Ear and hear," dragging the listener down to a child's level (Figure 3).

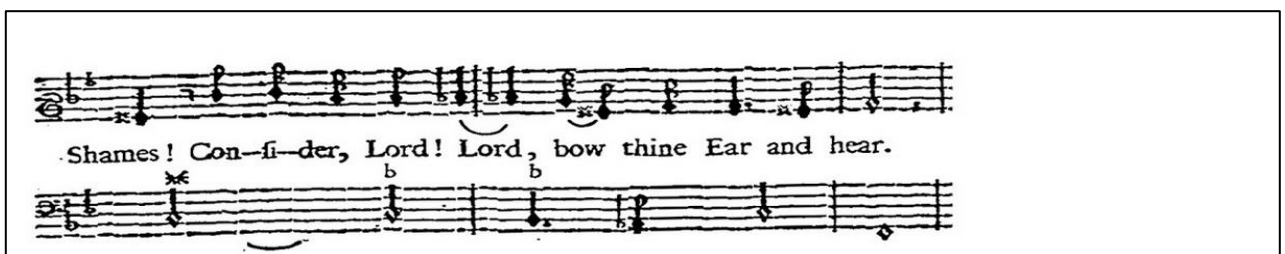


Figure 3. Purcell, "With sick and famish'd Eyes," mm. 33-35. Source: *Harmonia Sacra* (In the Savoy: Henry Playford, 1688), 22-25. Courtesy of the Rare Book & Manuscript Library of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Image published with permission of ProQuest. Further reproduction is prohibited without permission.

Also like a child, the speaker slowly crawls and "creeps" on chromatic intervals upward toward Christ (Figure 4).

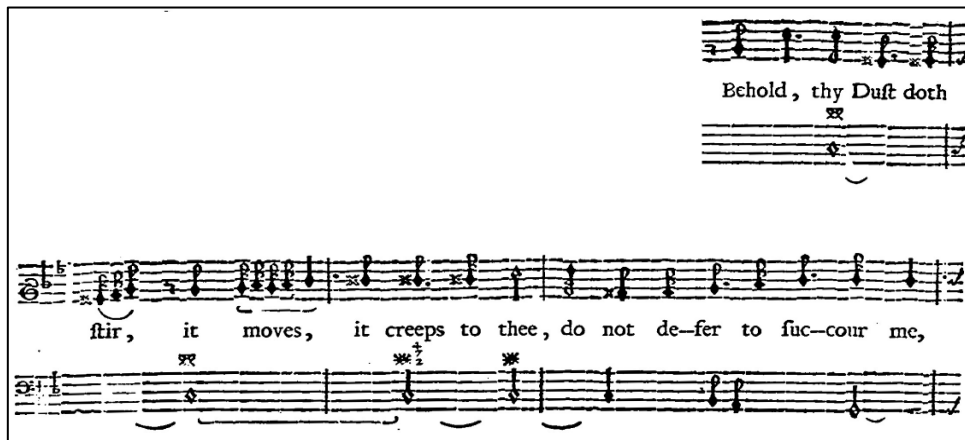


Figure 4. Purcell, "With sick and famish'd Eyes," mm. 44-47. Source: *Harmonia Sacra* (In the Savoy: Henry Playford, 1688), 22-25. Courtesy of the Rare Book & Manuscript Library of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Image published with permission of ProQuest. Further reproduction is prohibited without permission.

The consequences of spiritual neglect are severe. Increasingly, the singer's hunger transforms into faintness and feverishness. On the line "My Thoughts turn round, and make me giddy, Lord! Lord! I fall! Yet call!" (Figure 5), the vocal line tumbles down, like a feverish child losing its balance.



Figures 5a and 5b. Purcell, "With sick and famish'd Eyes," mm. 15-19. Source: *Harmonia Sacra* (In the Savoy: Henry Playford, 1688), 22-25. Courtesy of the Rare Book and Manuscript Library of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Image published with permission of ProQuest. Further reproduction is prohibited without permission.

Finally, the text and melodic writing simulates delirium as the singer complains of a burning fever: "Look on my Sorrows round, mark well my Furnace, Oh what Flames! What Heats abound! What Grievs!" (Figure 6). For the literary critic Michael C. Schoenfeldt, these lines "[apprehend] divine absence as excruciating, burning pain."<sup>20</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Michael C. Schoenfeldt, *Prayer and Power: George Herbert and Renaissance Courtship* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 130.

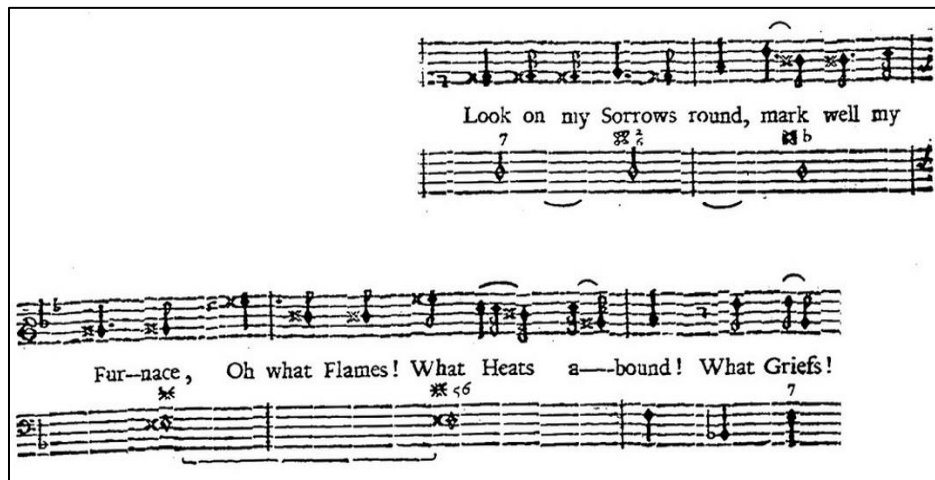


Figure 6. Purcell, "With sick and famish'd Eyes," mm. 28-32. Source: *Harmonia Sacra* (In the Savoy: Henry Playford, 1688), 22-25. Courtesy of the Rare Book & Manuscript Library of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Image published with permission of ProQuest. Further reproduction is prohibited without permission.

Medical texts and recipe books preference breast milk as a common remedy for eye maladies, fevers, and faintness. In his *Booke of Children* (1596) Thomas Phayre recommends "womans milke" to be applied to the affected area for both headaches of "peyne" and "heauines with heat" (ostensibly, a fever) and for "swellynge of the eyes."<sup>21</sup> Theological treatises continued to recommend breast milk for its medicinal properties into the English Restoration. The 1670 English translation of Agrippa von Nettesheim's (d. 1535) treatise, *Female pre-eminence, or, The dignity and excellency of that sex above the male* extolled the universal application of breast milk for all ages:

Mothers *Milk*...not only nourishes Infants, cherishes the sick, and restores consumptive and languishing Nature, but may in case of *necessity* suffice for the preservation of life to persons of any age...Nor is it unusual for Physitians to relate, That the heat of young Womens *Paps*, applyed to the Breasts of persons worn out with age, doth stir up, augment, and serve the vital heat.<sup>22</sup>

Indeed, in Purcell's song the singer boldly commands, "do not defer to succour me." While the word *succour* means "to give help in a time of need," it contains the phoneme "suck," a word that

<sup>21</sup> Thomas Phayre, *The regiment of life. VVhereunto is added a treatise of the pestilence, with the booke of children*, 2nd ed., trans. Jean Goeurot, et al., (London: Edward Alde, 1596), digital facsimile of the original in the Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery, *Early English Books Online*, bibliography name/number (STC, 2nd ed./11976).

<sup>22</sup> Agrippa von Nettesheim, *Female pre-eminence, or, The dignity and excellency of that sex above the male an ingenious discourse*, trans. Heinrich Cornelius (London: Printed by T. R. and M. D. and are to be sold by Henry Million, at the Sign of the Bible in Fleet-street. 1670), 23-4.



appeared earlier in stanza three and is phonetically close to the word, “suckle.”<sup>23</sup> With the earlier image of earthly mothers nursing on God’s divine pap and the complaints of hunger in the opening lines, the word *succour* here is oronymic (or a near-homophone) in evoking help in the manner of breastfeeding. However, the cries go unheard, and the child dies after a final desperate shout to be healed (Figure 7).



Figure 7. Purcell, “With sick and famish’d Eyes,” mm. 54-59. Source: *Harmonia Sacra* (In the Savoy: Henry Playford, 1688), 22-25. Courtesy of the Rare Book & Manuscript Library of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Image published with permission of ProQuest. Further reproduction is prohibited without permission.

With incessant crying, faintness and falling, feverish sickness and death, the singer in Purcell’s setting of Herbert’s “Longing” shows all the symptoms of an infant deprived of proper maternal care. Moreover, “With sick and famish’d Eyes” expresses desire for divine love by way of the real human “longing” to be heard by our mothers and the physical, nourishing rewards of *her* care.

\* \* \*

Studying the social and cultural meanings of breastfeeding provides insight into how religious images of mothering acquired their striking potency. Late Renaissance writers turned to reforming breastfeeding practices in hopes of stemming the high infant mortality rate and to reinforce the moral sanctity of motherhood. The Countess of Lincoln’s contribution was as much civic as it was deeply personal. She blamed the death of two of her eighteen children to the “defalt” of hired wet-nurses who had ostensibly lied about their health.<sup>24</sup> Beginning in the late sixteenth century, Protestant preachers, doctors, academics, and women, such as the Countesse of Lincolne, accused mothers of neglect who did not breastfeed their own children, sending them away to country wet-nurses. Still, men of the nobility often forbade their wives from breastfeeding as it interfered with

<sup>23</sup> In the tenth and eleventh editions of “Longing” (1678 and 1679), the word “suck” was changed to “seek.” In the nine printings prior it is “suck.” However, the second printing of the eleventh edition (1695) returns to “suck.” My conclusion is that the alteration was one of the many variations that the text saw, and that Purcell could have easily used an earlier edition as his exemplar, or consulted several editions. In modern editions, the prominence of “suck” overturns “seek.” Helen Wilcox, for instance, in the most recent critical edition of Herbert’s complete English poetry elects for “suck” and gives a detailed explication: “Infants suck kindness from their mother’s breasts; and mothers (by which is implied all human beings) receive compassion from God, but with greater freedom of access and supply,” *The English Poems of George Herbert*, ed. Wilcox (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), n. 17-18, 516.

<sup>24</sup> Clinton, *The Countesse of Lincolnes nurserie*, 18.

sexual intercourse and inhibited conception of an heir. As Marilyn Yalom writes in her book, *The History of the Breast*, the breast became a symbol of class membership: “There were two kinds of breasts in Renaissance society,” writes Yalom, “compact ‘upper-class’ breasts intended for male delight, and full, lactating ‘lower-class’ breasts belonging to the women who nursed their own children and those of their affluent employers.”<sup>25</sup> From sex with your spouse to raising children, from curing everyday ailments to living in religious righteousness, the issue of breastfeeding intersected nearly every domain of early modern life.

Even more fundamental is the impact breastfeeding has on children. As a corporeal source of food and attention, mothers are often our first teachers of desire. Seventeenth-century poets, composers, and even mothers themselves, used the mother-child dyad to exemplify our relationship to God. They perpetuated images of the affectionate, breastfeeding parent as an ideal relationship grounded in the giving and taking of physical sustenance.

The songs in Henry Playford’s collection are full of dangerous religious experiences. The purchaser of *Harmonia Sacra* was confronted with such characters, scenes, and religious experiences as lovesick madwomen, religious enthusiastic poets, crucifixion scenes, and divine séances (“In guilty Night,” *H.S.* 2). Though the collection is often described as consisting of “domestic devotions,” implying piety and privacy, these songs would have been performed in much the same way as secular music for wealthy English households. The rising non-noble class (or gentry) often held musical gatherings for amateurs as well as hired-professional musicians.<sup>26</sup> Sometimes the host and the servants performed along with hired musicians as a display of wealth and cultural competency.<sup>27</sup> As a songbook for sale, *H.S.* specifically targeted London’s gentry as another tool of “self-fashioning.”<sup>28</sup> Tam explains:

It [is] inaccurate [to] picture a dichotomy between the feigned and the godly. If good manners could be construed as theatrical and dissimulative, so could religiosity and piety be a persona for self-fashioning. Even activities that are ostensibly private and inward might be used to project a front; private worship (except closet devotion) was rarely performed without audience.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Yalom, *A History of the Breast*, 70-71.

<sup>26</sup> Grace Tin-Yan Tam, “The Penitential Theology of Henry Purcell as Expressed in His Sacred Songs” (PhD Diss., UCLA, 2005), 18, ProQuest ID 908200522.

<sup>27</sup> Grace Tam, “The Penitential Theology,” 18.

<sup>28</sup> Tam, of course, uses Stephen Greenblatt’s term, “self-fashioning,” or the construction of personal identity through the adoption and display of socially authorized behaviors and appearances. Socially acceptable behaviors were disseminated in conduct manuals, but appearance was projected in religious iconography for men (Christ) and for women (the Virgin). See Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

<sup>29</sup> Tam, “The Penitential Theology,” 26.

In such a communal performance space, and indeed, one as intimate as the home, it is difficult to ignore the didactic potential of these songs. The music was a guidebook for how to perform the motions of religion and how to *feel* toward God. The devotional songs in *Harmonia Sacra* allowed persons of non-noble pedigree to perform songs of fixation, uninhibited zeal, erotic desire, and spiritual devastation under a moral and religious aegis. As the title epigraph to the second book of *Harmonia Sacra* suggests (1703), performing devotional songs was a “Way” or a means of spiritual “travel.” In Henry Purcell’s setting of George Herbert’s “Longing,” the terror of spiritual neglect is likened to the physical and emotional trauma of maternal deprivation, a topic that immediately spoke to early modern anxieties of parenting, public health, and religious identity. In maternalizing God and infantilizing the soul, early moderns performing and listening to “With sick and famish’d Eyes” fashioned for themselves a model of desire for Christ. That is, should they forget how to grow nearer to God, they had only to think of their mothers.

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## *A Trinity of Donne Plus One: Jack, John, Doctor, and Conscience*

By Caroline Carpenter

In 1619, John Donne sent a manuscript of *Biathanatos*, complete for more than a decade, to Sir Robert Ker, Earl of Ancrum.<sup>1</sup> In dramatic fashion, he charged the Earl to keep the text both safe and secret, to “publish it not, but yet burn it not; and between those, do what you will with it.” Recognizing that Ker might elect to share the book with his intimates, Donne attempted to influence his unknown readers’ perceptions: “Let any that your discretion admits to the sight of it know the date of it, and that it is a book written by Jack Donne and not by Dr. Donne.”<sup>2</sup> In doing so, Donne seemingly created a distinction between two literary selves, differentiated by age and maturity, and implied that the works of Jack were the lesser of the two. Critics have been eager to take hold of the distinction. Even as he argues that *Biathanatos* is Donne’s “most complete philosophical statement,” George Williamson asserts that the book “is Donne putting off the old life so that he may put on the new.”<sup>3</sup> Donne’s letter provides a convenient explanation for readers who wonder how to reconcile the erotic poetry of Jack Donne with the morally upright and inspiring sermons of Dr. Donne: no reconciliation is necessary, since Donne himself apparently sees them as wholly separate. The letter seems to position *Biathanatos* as a work squarely in the center of a life with Jack Donne at one extreme and Dr. Donne at the other.

Such an interpretation, however, ignores the urgency with which Donne enjoins his correspondent to preserve the *Biathanatos* manuscript, which Donne clearly values highly despite its deprecated authorship. Donne has good reason to be concerned about the reception of a work like *Biathanatos*. It is an exercise in case logic, or casuistry, on the subject of suicide. Based on his letters, we know that Donne was intensely interested in suicide. In 1608, at around the same time he is thought to have composed *Biathanatos*, Donne wrote to Sir Henry Goodyer:

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<sup>1</sup> John Donne, *Biathanatos*, ed. Michael Rudick and Margaret Pabst Battin (New York: Garland, 1982). Rudick and Battin date the completion of *Biathanatos* in 1608 based on: Evelyn M. Simpson, *A Study of the Prose Works of John Donne*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Oxford: Clarendon, 1948), 159; A. E. Malloch, “A Critical Study of Donne’s *Biathanatos*” (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1958), 1-3, and S. E. Sprott, *The English Debate on Suicide from Donne to Hume* (LaSalle, IL: Open Court, 1961), 25.

<sup>2</sup> Rudick and Battin, 6.

<sup>3</sup> George Williamson, “The Libertine Donne,” *Philological Quarterly* 13 (1934): 276-91; quotations at 277 and 291.

Two of the most precious things which God hath afforded us here, for the agony and exercise of our spirit, which are a thirst and inhiation after the next life, and a frequency of prayer and meditation in this, are often envenomed and putrified, and stray into a corrupt disease ... With the first of these I have often suspected myself to be overtaken, which is with a desire of the next life; which though I know it is not merely out of a weariness of this, because I had the same desires when I went with the tide, and enjoyed fairer hopes than now; yet I doubt worldly encumbrances would have increased it. I would not that death should take me asleep. I would not have him merely seize me, and only declare me to be dead, but win me and overcome me.<sup>4</sup>

D. R. Roberts argues that Donne had a persistent, lifelong death wish, which he expresses here with the common euphemism “the next life” to indicate a positive desire to die.<sup>5</sup> He wrote often of his own death. But in *Biathanatos*, Donne is concerned with a broader examination of self-murder. The complete title of the work, *Biathanatos, A Declaration of that Paradoxe, or Thesis, that Selfe-homicide is not so Naturally Sinne, that it may never be otherwise. Wherein The Nature, and the extent of all those Lawes, which seem to be violated by this Act, are diligently surveyed*, sets forth Donne’s thesis. The work undertakes an examination and refutation of arguments drawn from civil and canon law and from scripture. Evelyn Simpson notes that Donne “was prudent, however, in deciding to refrain from publication, as the sharp-eyed ecclesiastical censors of the day would almost certainly have regarded the book as heretical and dangerous.”<sup>6</sup> Although *Biathanatos* might well have been inflammatory as a public work, as a private one that reveals Donne’s beliefs, it is luminous.

An examination of the book as a casuistical text in which Donne works through and describes his own practical theology suggests no dramatic shift in moral stance between Donne as a young man and as a mature clergyman. The primacy that Donne affords to the faculty of conscience in *Biathanatos* substantiates a consistent and unified stance throughout the course of his life, in which his works, both youthful and mature, glorify God and thus are moral.<sup>7</sup> This understanding yields a different view of Donne’s works in which *Biathanatos* is not merely the central point in a linear progression from Jack to Doctor Donne but rather serves as the center of a circle encompassing all of his writing.<sup>8</sup> In considering *Biathanatos* as a central point of Donne’s work, we can examine his

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<sup>4</sup> Edmund Gosse, *The Life and Letters of John Donne* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1899), 190-91.

<sup>5</sup> Donald Ramsay Roberts, “The Death Wish of John Donne,” *PMLA* 62.4 (1947): 958-76.

<sup>6</sup> Simpson, 166.

<sup>7</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, ed. John Simpson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, Nov. 2010), accessed December 15, 2010. <<http://www.oed.com>>. The intended sense of “moral” here is in accordance with OED 2a: “Of a literary work, an artistic or dramatic representation: dealing with the rightness and wrongness of conduct; intended to teach morality or convey a moral; hence also having a beneficial moral effect, edifying.”

<sup>8</sup> John Donne, *The Elegies, and the Songs and Sonnets*, ed. Helen Gardner (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), vxiii, note 2. Helen Gardner did much to diminish the significance of differentiating between the younger and elder Donne when she dated the Holy Sonnets as coming from the period of Donne’s secular work. She explains the letter’s distinction as “Donne himself was distinguishing between himself as a young man, writing as an individual, and himself as an older man in order, writing with the authority and responsibility that a profession gives and demands. In one sense all his poetry, whether amorous or religious, licentious or moral, was the work of Jack Donne.”

own perspective on the important role of conscience and the way in which it serves as a test for moral behavior. The wide variety of cases that Donne employs in his own examination indicates that his conclusions can extend to topics other than self murder and thus both the methodology and conclusions of *Biathanatos* can serve as a framework to examine Donne's other works.

The medieval term for casuistry was *casus conscientiae*, "cases of conscience." The way in which medieval theologians understood the idea of conscience helped to shape the activity of casuistry. As philosophers had done in antiquity, theologians sought to answer the question: "How do human beings, whose reason is lessened and whose will is weakened by sin, discover the way to salvation amidst the conflict of earthly desires?" To try to answer, they refer to St. Jerome, who identified a part of the soul that the Greeks called *synderesis*, the "spark of conscience." Philip the Chancellor, who wrote one of the earliest complete treatises on conscience, explains that *synderesis* "murmurs against sin, and correctly contemplates and wants that which is good without qualifications."<sup>9</sup> Because *synderesis* functions without qualifications, it focuses only on the highest good without considering the detailed features of particular actions or deeds. In addition, St. Jerome identifies a second power, *conscientiae*, which combines *synderesis* and free choice.<sup>10</sup> The association with free choice, St. Jerome explains, means that *conscientiae* can be in error. This distinction lays the foundation for the medieval doctrine of conscience. It is Aquinas who creates the synthesis that connects *synderesis* and *conscientiae* by identifying *synderesis* as "a natural disposition concerned with the basic principles of behavior, which are the general principles of natural law" and *conscientia* as "the application of general judgments of *synderesis* to particulars."<sup>11</sup> As Jonsen and Toulmin explain, "in this sense, although *synderesis* cannot err, *conscientia* can; for the application of general moral insights requires a particular premise, and one can be mistaken about such particulars or fail to use a valid argument in reasoning from the general to the particular."<sup>12</sup> Aquinas's theory of conscience creates a great deal of uncertainty because it can be difficult to correctly perceive the particulars and even more challenging to reason correctly.

In response to these challenges, the art of casuistry, also called "practical theology" or "case divinity," became a way for people to resolve these conflicts by applying "a system of directives to reason and conscience that defines, interprets, and applies general laws according to the circumstances of a specific case."<sup>13</sup> Donne was not alone in his concern about conscience in the seventeenth century: rapidly changing political and religious environments created conflicts of allegiance and duty for people at all levels of the social hierarchy, both in England and abroad. In the century preceding the publication of *Biathanatos*, tens of thousands of cases of conscience were published in England and on the continent. With his book, Donne participated in a genre that provided a way to confirm knowledge, arrive at judgment, and justify action—a refreshingly

<sup>9</sup> Albert R. Jonsen and Stephen Toulmin, *The Abuse of Casuistry: A History of Moral Reasoning* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 128.

<sup>10</sup> Timothy C. Potts, ed., *Conscience in Medieval Philosophy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 55-60.

<sup>11</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones Disputatae de Veritate*, Qq. 16-17, in Potts, 122-136.

<sup>12</sup> Jonsen and Toulmin, 129.

<sup>13</sup> Meg Lota Brown, *Donne and the Politics of Conscience in Early Modern England* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995), 2.

concrete activity for those experiencing anxiety over authority and interpretation in a tumultuous world.

Conscience is understandably the central concern of Donne's text, as he attempts to arrive at a deeper understanding of the morality of his own behavior. An educated man, Donne understood a principle central to Christian morality: conscience is the voice of reason, and thus is the voice of God in the individual. Disobeying one's conscience, therefore, is to disobey God and is sinful. Conversely, obeying one's conscience indicates a desire to glorify God and thus leads to moral acts. Donne's casuistry first acknowledges these general rules then places a finer point upon them. As Dwight Cathcart notes, "[In one kind of moral truth] the meaning is clear, the authority unquestioned, the applicability to all men decisive. But it is not the kind of truth found in casuistry . . . justifying actions which tradition or experience or authority has found unjustifiable is the moral truth [Donne] seeks."<sup>14</sup> Margaret Pabst Battin, a philosopher who specializes in the ethics of suicide and co-editor with Michael Rudick of Donne's *Biathanatos*, explains that additional requirements of a moral act are that "it must be done by choice, it must be done because right reason dictates it, and it must be done consciously, not through ignorance or default."<sup>15</sup> *Biathanatos* collocates these elements, providing both Donne's perspective on conscience and a thorough examination of cases in terms of willful choice, deliberate reasoning, and conscious action. More than an academic exercise or a philosophical discussion, *Biathanatos* is a manifestation of Donne's own conscience, an act of casuistry in which he chooses cases that reveal his own deliberate reasoning.

Donne never attempts a justification of his early works under the model that he creates in *Biathanatos* nor does he ever directly examine his own actions as cases in his text. But *Biathanatos* is not only a defense of suicide; it is a defense of Donne's position as a casuist that a human being must be able to support all of his judgments through rigorously exercised reason. In his conclusion, Donne explains the reason that he refrained from defining "particular rules or instances" for suicide was "both because I dare not profess myself a master in so curious a science, and because the limits are obscure and steepy and slippery and narrow, and every error deadly." Yet even as he describes the errors likely to have existed in the text he did not write, Donne excuses them using the conclusion he reached in the text he did: "except where, a competent diligence being fore-used, a mistaking in our conscience may provide an excuse."<sup>16</sup> Since Donne uses *Biathanatos* as a framework to assess his own imaginary text, it is a reasonable progression to use it to examine his actual works, including his elegies, which may seem particularly in need of the excuse of Donne's conscience.

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<sup>14</sup> Dwight Cathcart, *Doubting Conscience: Donne and the Poetry of Moral Argument* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1975), 36-36.

<sup>15</sup> Pabst and Battin, xxxi.

<sup>16</sup> Donne, *Biathanatos*, 5452-56.

Donne begins, in the first distinction of *Biathanatos*, by adopting Aquinas's definition of sin as that which is counter to the laws of nature, the laws of reason, or divine law.<sup>17</sup> He then uses that definition as the organizing principle for his argument. Situating himself in cases pertaining to each system of law, Donne systematically analyzes the case for self-murder, but even as he does so, he makes clear that his framework also functions in a wider context because the systems of law, taken together, provide a greater understanding than each one separately. He proclaims, "Of all of these three laws, of nature, of reason, and of God, every precept which is permanent and binds always is so composed and elemented and complexioned, that to distinguish and separate them is a chymic work."<sup>18</sup> Blending the systems of law together, Donne arrives at his central argument in *Biathanatos*. Natural law demands self-preservation, whose highest form, salvation of the soul, is only obtained by observing divine law, which can only be understood by listening to reason—that is, by obeying one's conscience, the voice of God in man.

If any portion of *Biathanatos* seems particularly applicable to an examination of Donne's works so often accused of libertinism and moral corruption, it is the Second Part, the Law of Reason, Distinction 6, Section 8 (II.vi.8), which examines "how far an erring conscience may justify any act."<sup>19</sup> What follows is an explication of Donne's argument in this crucial section of *Biathanatos* and a close reading of one of Donne's early poems, Elegy 17, "Variety," to demonstrate how a conscience-centered reading of the poem reveals it as an exercise in conscientious behavior, neither blasphemous nor immoral.

When so much depends upon man acting according to his conscience in order to perform morally in a given situation, Donne is careful to address circumstances in which conscience errs. He notes that he must "present such deductions, comparisons, and consequences as may justly seem, in reason to annihilate or diminish this fault [self-murder]" in two contexts: the conscience of the person acting and the perception of the act by external authorities, such as the church.<sup>20</sup> An individual's conscience, Donne asserts, may err either in good faith or bad, following upon either diligence or negligence. One may exercise "moral industry" according to his capabilities and still be in error. One may also fail to exercise such diligence or deliberately choose not to exercise it according to a vicious inclination.<sup>21</sup>

Regardless of the type of error that entangles one's conscience, Donne argues, "as long as that error remains and resides in it, a man is bound not to do against his conscience."<sup>22</sup> One cannot stand

<sup>17</sup> A E. Malloch, "John Donne and the Casuists," *Studies in English Literature* 2.1 (1962): 57-76. Malloch helpfully points out that this definition is one of Donne's instances of elastic citation. The text Donne cites is from an index headings composed by a fifteenth-century Dominican monk, Peter Almadura, for inclusion in an edition of the works of St. Thomas Aquinas published in 1473, the *Tabula Aurea* (63). Donne, *Biathanatos*, 1441-49.

<sup>18</sup> Donne, *Biathanatos*, 1452-55.

<sup>19</sup> Donne, *Biathanatos*, 3816-17.

<sup>20</sup> Donne, *Biathanatos*, 3812-13. "Of which, because most will be grounded either upon the conscience of the doer or upon the church's opinion of the fact when it is done" (*Biathanatos*, II.vi.8.3812-16).

<sup>21</sup> Donne, *Biathanatos*, 3829. Donne describes the second failure as one which might occur "viciously" (3834-35), that is "With addiction or inclination to vice; immorally, dissolutely" (OED1a).

<sup>22</sup> Donne, *Biathanatos*, 3835-36.



outside one's own conscience in order to perceive error and correct it; it is an "invincible ignorance" and thus one can only proceed in error.<sup>23</sup> In this detail, Donne coincides with Aquinas, who notes that one who acts in accordance with an erroneous conscience does so not because it is erroneous but because in his eyes it is correct. Even while proceeding in error, because "this obligation which our conscience casts upon us is of stronger hold and straiter band than the precept of any superior," one's actions remain moral acts because they are made according to conscience.<sup>24</sup> If a person who is inflamed with the holy fire of good impatience should commit self-murder, Donne argues that the act cannot be sinful because the individual was "invited by the spirit of God" – conscience.<sup>25</sup> Having established the primacy of conscience, Donne then expands his arguments beyond the specific case of self-murder, asserting that "any exterior act whatsoever, proceeding from a sincere and pure intention of the mind, is an act of true religion."<sup>26</sup> Donne's poetry, proceeding from his conscience, true or erring, regardless of outside perception of it as libertinous or immoral, must therefore be a moral act.

Of Donne's love elegies, one that his seventeenth century readers might have been particularly likely to label as immoral is Elegy 17, "Variety." Gary Stringer notes in the variorum edition of Donne's elegies that only six manuscript copies of *Variety* survive, suggesting that it was probably the least circulated of Donne's love poems.<sup>27</sup> It appeared in print for the first time in the 1650 reissue of the fourth edition of *Poems*, included in the supplemental material appended to the original text authorized by John Donne Jr. The manuscripts fall into three textual families. The first of these families consists of the Arents manuscript, held in the New York Library, and a transcription of it. The second contains two Huntington Collection manuscripts and a damaged Bodleian Library fragment, which Stringer notes are likely corruptions of the Arents text. The third family contains a British Library manuscript that is probably a memorial reconstruction.<sup>28</sup> The copy text used here is that of the Arents manuscript, and is included in full in the appendix.

*Variety* shares more with *Biathanatos* than the likelihood of a somewhat scandalous public reception upon publication. The works coincide in three significant ways. The first of these coincidences is between the topic of *Variety* and Donne's ultimate case example in *Biathanatos*. In both works, love is a primary concern for Donne. He can make no greater claim in *Biathanatos* for the legitimacy and desirability of self-murder than to argue that it emulates the perfect love for man that Christ displayed when he allowed his own murder, certainly an act of conscience in that Christ acted in accordance with the voice of God within him. Donne notes: "we must remember that we

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<sup>23</sup> Donne, *Biathanatos*, 3892.

<sup>24</sup> Donne, *Biathanatos*, 3842-43.

<sup>25</sup> Donne, "sancto bonae impatientiae igne exardens" 3851-53.

<sup>26</sup> Donne, *Biathanatos*, 3892-94.

<sup>27</sup> Five manuscript copies of *Elegy: Julia* survive, but its attribution to Donne is questionable. See Stringer, 981-82 for a summary of the textual inconsistencies and conflicting witnesses which cast doubt upon the propriety of including *Julia* in the Donne canon.

<sup>28</sup> Gary A. Stringer, et al., eds. *The Variorum Edition of the Poetry of John Donne*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 395.

are commanded to do it so as Christ did it,” and offers John 15:13 as his scriptural support.<sup>29</sup> In *Variety*, the love expressed is of a different kind. It is certainly less perfect because worldly love can only be a shadow of Christ’s love, but the speaker asserts the value of his efforts at love: “why should I/Abjure my so much lov’d varietye/And not with many yeouth and love devide?/Pleasure is none if not diversify’d.”<sup>30</sup> The demonstration and sharing of one’s love is a means of emulating Christ’s loving sacrifice, and supports Donne’s ultimate case for acting conscientiously. Thus, Donne’s conclusion in *Biathanatos*, that to commit self-murder is an act of conscience intended to glorify God by emulating Christ’s act of love, drives the speaker of *Variety* to also attempt to glorify Christ’s love through his efforts to love as well as he may.

The second connection between *Biathanatos* and *Variety* is Donne’s use of casuistry in both works. Certainly, *Biathanatos* is the more rigidly constructed of the two. It offers three parts, one for each system of law, which are further subdivided into distinctions, sections, and numbered paragraphs. Although the sheer volume of cases in evidence may overwhelm a reader, it is unlikely that he would lose his place in the overall argument. Donne acknowledges that his style in *Biathanatos* is rather unappealing, explaining: “I did it the rather because scholastic and artificial men use this way of instruction, and I made account that I was to deal with such, because I presume that natural men are at least enough inclinable of themselves to this doctrine.”<sup>31</sup> Humanists, the natural men to whom Donne refers in *Biathanatos*, would have found the much less regimented organization of *Variety* quite comfortable. But less rigidly organized does not mean less complete or less controlled. Each of the systems of law that Donne uses to marshal cases in *Biathanatos* is also present in *Variety* and the smoothly pentametric lines of the poem are no less controlled than the parts, distinctions, sections, and numbered paragraphs of the prose work.<sup>32</sup>

The third relationship between Donne’s two works is thematic. The variety that is “so much lov’d” in his elegy provides the raw material for his poetic exploration of love in the same way that, from a variety of cases, one can derive an understanding of what to do in a particular situation.<sup>33</sup> Donne’s hundreds of cases and sources in *Biathanatos* allow him to arrive at a single conclusion: to act according to one’s conscience is always to attempt to glorify God by emulating his love. The elegy, too, argues that in maturity one ultimately appreciates a single love. The speaker develops this idea from line 73 to the poem’s conclusion in line 82:

But Tyme will in his course a point descrye  
When I this loved service must denye.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Donne, *Biathanatos*, 4808-09; *The Geneva Bible*. 1560. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2007), NN.iii. “Greater love then this hathe no man, when any man bestoweth his life for his friends.”

<sup>30</sup> Donne, *Variety*, 1-4.

<sup>31</sup> Donne, *Biathanatos*, 1225-29.

<sup>32</sup> Line 6 of the Arents manuscript is hypermetric unless modified, as it is in the first of the Huntington Collection manuscripts: “Sheds flame into, what ever else seemes bright.” Perhaps the Arents scribe made a copy error, but it is equally possible that Donne chose to “shed flame” by including an alexandrine among the iambs—for variety.

<sup>33</sup> Donne, *Variety*, 2.

<sup>34</sup> Donne, *Variety*, 73-74.

The speaker refers to his activities as “service,” a devotional word that connotes service to God or to one’s fellow man. But his conscientious pursuit of a variety of women to express his love must eventually come to an end, just as Donne’s conscientious service to his fellow man in constructing a text like *Biathanatos* had to end. The poem’s speaker continues:

For our alleigance temporary is,  
With firmer age returns our libertyes,  
What Tyme in yeares and judgment we repos’d  
Shall not so easily be to change dispos’d  
Nor to the arte of severall eyes obayinge<sup>35</sup>

In maturity, the speaker gains his freedom from worldly concerns and is able to settle comfortably in the knowledge of love he has gained through his experience, rejecting the need for unending variety.<sup>36</sup> Similarly, when Donne reaches his argument’s ultimate conclusion in *Biathanatos*, he rests on the knowledge that his variety of cases has provided, secure in his assertion that the truth he has discovered through casuistry brings benefits which “shall not be transitory” (5423-24). The speaker also describes benefits that come from understanding variety:

But beautye with trew worth securely weighing  
Which being found assembled in some one  
Wee’le leave her ever, and love her alone.<sup>37</sup>

The variety in physical loves that the speaker of the poem has experienced while acting according to his conscience leads him to a greater love, a beauty with true worth. Having abandoned variety, he will experience a single love, one that contains all the items of “trew worth” that he discovered through variety. Donne’s speaker obeys his conscience and finally gains a love that is more true. The summary of the speaker’s path and his conclusion parallels that of Donne’s exercise in *Biathanatos*. He marshals a huge variety of cases, a casuistical collection of “lesser loves,” and, in proving his argument, arrives at a truth greater than the sum of its parts. When obeying one’s conscientious desire to glorify God, no act can be a sinful one.

Donne presses the same systems of law into service to make his case for love as an expression of conscience in *Variety* as he does in *Biathanatos*. The emphasis begins with references to nature and natural occurrences as examples of natural law:

The Sunn that, sitting in the chayre of light  
Sheds flame into what else soever doth seeme bright  
Is not contented at one *Signe* to Inne  
But ends his yeare and with a new beginns.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Donne, *Variety*, 75-79.

<sup>36</sup> Liberty: freedom from the bondage or dominating influence of sin, spiritual servitude, worldly ties, etc. (OED 1a).

<sup>37</sup> Donne, *Variety*, 80-82.

The sun, a central element in nature, delights in the same variety that Donne's speaker enjoys. It touches on all, in endless variety. Donne reminds his reader that nature is an expression of the divine in his allusion to Christ as the divine Son, who sheds light upon humanity from his position in a chair of light at the right hand of God, which he took up following his willing self-sacrifice. Nature expresses the divine and thus to behave as nature does, to rejoice in a variety of loves, is to glorify God. In doing so, the world is improved: "Rivers the cleerer and more pleasing are/Where their fayre spreading streames runn wide and farr."<sup>39</sup>

Having established Nature's authority, Donne swiftly moves to assert the insufficiency of civil law to determine appropriate behavior. He argues:

Lett noe man tell me such a one is fayre  
And worthy all alone my love to share,  
Nature in her hath done the liberall part  
Of a kind Mistress and imploy'd her arte  
To make her loveable, and I aver  
Him not humane that would turne backe from her;<sup>40</sup>

Man, and his system of laws, cannot describe appropriate behavior for the poem's speaker: "The law is hard and shall not have my voice."<sup>41</sup> Instead, he must love Nature in all her variety. God has made Nature loveable and to embrace her variety is to embrace the divine as his conscience directs. To do otherwise would be less than human.

*Variety* expresses Donne's nostalgia for an earlier time, when men were closer to natural law and less controlled by the laws of men:

How happy were our *Syres* in antient tymes  
Who held plurality of Loves noe cryme.  
With them it was accounted charitye  
To stirr up race of all indifferently,<sup>42</sup>

The reverence Donne expresses here for times past works two ways. In the context of the speaker's argument that to love broadly is to love conscientiously, the ancient times evoke days when polygamy was acceptable and men were accounted charitable for expressing a multiplicity of loves.<sup>43</sup> In addition, the ancient times bring to mind the intellectual heyday of the Stoics, whose methods are out of favor with early modern Humanists but whose "Plurality of Loves" expresses itself in their

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<sup>38</sup> Donne, *Variety*, 5-8.

<sup>39</sup> Donne, *Variety*, 11-12.

<sup>40</sup> Donne, *Variety*, 15-20.

<sup>41</sup> Donne, *Variety*, 24.

<sup>42</sup> Donne, *Variety*, 37-40.

<sup>43</sup> Charity: the Christian love of one's fellow human beings; Christian benignity of disposition expressing itself in Christ-like conduct: one of the "three Christian graces" (OED 1c)

use of many cases to divine a greater truth. Their casuistry was, like Donne's in *Biathanatos*, charitable service to their fellow man.

Donne's speaker mourns the passing of ancient times because the contrast between past and present is so striking. No longer acting in accordance with natural laws, man is not behaving in ways that glorify God:

The golden laws of *Nature* are repeal'd  
Which our first Fathers in such reverence held,  
Our liberty revers'd and charters gone  
And we made servants to *opinion*,  
A monster in noe certayne shape attyrd<sup>44</sup>

Man is no longer free from his worldly concerns. He cannot obey his conscience and love as God commands but instead is a slave to opinion.<sup>45</sup> Man is in a state of sin, not because he behaves as Donne's speaker says and loves many but because he fails to act according to his conscience and thus fails to glorify God. The arrogance suggested in Donne's use of the word "opinion" contrasts with the supplication and selflessness of one who obeys his conscience, submitting himself to the voice of God within him.

Donne exhorts men to love as Christ did in both *Biathanatos* and *Variety*. Having acknowledged that man-made laws often interfere with one's ability to follow one's conscience, the speaker argues that some are able to escape the strictures of convention and revere love appropriately:

Only some few strong in themselves and free  
Retayne the seeds of antient libertye  
Following that parte of *Love* although deprest  
And make a throane for him within their brest  
In spite of moderne censures him avowing  
Their sovereign, all service him allowing.<sup>46</sup>

The speaker emphasizes that modern practices, which prevent man from loving as conscience directs, also prevent some from keeping love in their hearts. At first glance, the notion of enthroning love may seem troublingly idolatrous, until one recognizes that for the speaker, love *is* a manifestation of God and that to enthrone Him in one's heart is precisely what obeying one's conscience directs—the glorification of God.

The similarities between Donne's works reveal strong connections between the young Jack Donne and his libertine poetry and the intermediate John Donne who writes *Biathanatos* and goes on to become Dr. Donne of the inspiring sermons at St. Paul's. The connections make it clear that

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<sup>44</sup> Donne, *Variety*, 46-51.

<sup>45</sup> Opinion: favorable estimate of oneself; conceit, arrogance; self-confidence (OED 6a).

<sup>46</sup> Donne, *Variety*, 61-66.

Donne does not undergo any sudden or dramatic shift in his moral stance as he matures. The moral stance that Donne will eventually articulate at length in *Biathanatos* is already fully developed in Elegy 17. Man must, above all things, act according to his conscience, because to do so is to obey the voice of God, which will lead to moral acts, not sinful ones. The libertine acts of Donne's elegy are not libertine in spite of God; they are libertine at God's direction.

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Appendix

ELEGY XVII.<sup>47</sup>

THE heavens rejoyce in motion, why should I  
Abjure my so much lov'd varietye  
And not with many yeouth and love devide ?  
Pleasure is none if not diversify'd  
The Sunn that, sitting in the chayre of light 5  
Sheds flame into what else soever doth seeme bright  
Is not contented at one Signe to Inne  
But ends his yeare and with a new beginns.  
All things doe willingly in Change delighte  
(The fruitfull mother of our appetite). 10  
Rivers the cleerer and more pleasing are  
Where their fayre spreading streames runn wide and farr  
And a dead lake, that noe strang barke doth greet  
Corrupts itselfe and what doth live in it.  
Lett noe man tell me such a one is fayre 15  
And worthy all alone my love to share,  
Nature in her hath done the liberall part  
Of a kind Mistress and imploy'd her arte  
To make her loveable, and I aver  
Him not humane that would turne backe from her; 20  
I love her well and would if need were dye  
To doe her service. But followes it that I  
Must serve her only when I may have choice?  
The law is hard and shall not have my voice.  
The last I saw in all extreames is fayre 25  
And holds me in the sunbeames of her hayre.  
Her Nymph-like features such agreements have  
That I could venture with her to the grave.  
Anothers browne, I like her not the worse,  
Her tounge is softe and takes me with discourse. 30  
Others for that they well descended are  
Doe in my love obtayn as large a share.  
And though they be not fayre t'is much with me  
To winn their love only for their degree  
And though I fayle of my required ends 35  
Th'attempt is gloriouse and it selfe commends.  
How happy were our Syres in antient tymes

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47 John Donne, *The Complete English Poems of John Donne*. (London: Dent, 1985), 175-78. Arents Manuscript: Original spelling, capitalization and punctuation. Modern typographical conventions for i/j, u/v, and long s.

Who held plurality of Loves noe cryme.  
 With them it was accounted charitye  
 To stirr up race of all indifferently, 40  
 Kindred were not exempted from the bands  
 Which with the Persian still in usage stands.  
 Women were then noe sooner ask'd then wonne  
 And what they did was honest and well done.  
 But since this little Honor hath been us'd 45  
 Our weake credulity hath been abus'd.  
 The golden laws of Nature are repeal'd  
 Which our first Fathers in such reverence held,  
 Our liberty revers'd and charters gone  
 And we made servants to opinion, 50  
 A monster in noe certayne shape attyrd  
 And whose originall is much desir'd:  
 Formlesse at first, but growing on it fashion  
 And doth prescribe manners and lawes to nations.  
 Here Love receivd immedicable harmes 55  
 And was dispoyled of his daring armes:  
 A greater want then is his daring eyes,  
 He lost those awfull wings with which he flyes,  
 His sinnewye Bowe and those immortall darts  
 Wherwith hees wont to bruise resisting hearts: 60  
 Only some few strong in themselves and free  
 Retayne the seeds of antient libertye  
 Following that parte of Love although deprest  
 And make a throane for him within their brest  
 In spite of moderne censures him avowing 65  
 Their sovereign, all service him allowing.  
 Amongst which troope although I am the lest  
 Yet æquall in perfection with the best  
 I glory in subjection of his hand  
 Nor ever did decline his least command 70  
 For in whatever forme the message came  
 My harte did open and receive the flame:  
 But Tyme will in his course a point descrye  
 When I this loved service must denye.  
 For our alleigance temporary is, 75  
 With firmer age returns our libertyes,  
 What Tyme in yeares and judgment we repos'd  
 Shall not so easily be to change dispos'd  
 Nor to the arte of severall eyes obayinge  
 But beuty with trew worth securely weighing 80  
 Which being found assembled in some one  
 Wee'le leave her ever, and love her alone.





# *Amending the Ascetic: Community and Character in the Old English Life of St. Mary of Egypt*

By Mary Helen Galluch

In her book titled *Écriture et réécriture hagiographiques*, Monique Goulet asserts, “It seems to me that one of the most interesting phenomena in hagiographic discourse, for those who want to apprehend from it a double historical and literary dimension, resides in the usage of rewriting, which establishes a system of cross-references between the texts dedicated to one particular saint.” She goes on to describe the ways in which an approach to various versions of the same hagiographical story allow one to glean information about the context of each translator (or “rewriter”), as well as the evolution of a saint’s “spiritual image.”<sup>1</sup>

Among the most eligible saints for such treatment, Mary of Egypt deserves particular consideration: her popularity is evidenced by over a hundred extant Greek manuscripts of her *Life* and her uniquely prominent position in the Lenten liturgical cycle in the Eastern Church.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, her *Life* was translated into Latin, Armenian, Ethiopic, Slavonic, Syriac, Old and Middle English, German, Dutch, Norse, Irish, Welsh, French, Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese.<sup>3</sup> Like another wildly popular Egyptian saint, Catherine of Alexandria, the historicity of Mary of Egypt has been questioned and generally denied;<sup>4</sup> being unencumbered by a community’s memories of her as a living person

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<sup>1</sup>Monique Goulet, *Écriture et réécriture hagiographiques: Essai sur les réécritures de Vies de saints dans l’Occident latin médiéval (VIII<sup>e</sup>-XIII<sup>e</sup> s.)* (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2005), 10. “Il me semble qu’un des phénomènes les plus intéressants du discours hagiographique, pour qui veut l’appréhender dans sa double dimension historique et littéraire, réside dans l’usage de la réécriture, qui instaure un système de renvois entre les textes consacrés à un même saint”; “image spirituelle,” 16.

<sup>2</sup>Hugh Magennis, *The Old English Life of St Mary of Egypt* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2002), 10. St. Mary is the only female saint celebrated on a Lenten Sunday, and in fact is given the fifth Sunday in Lent—the last before (and thus nearest to) Palm Sunday, which immediately precedes Pascha.

<sup>3</sup>Magennis, *Old English Life*, 10-12; also Peter F. Dembowski, *La Vie de Sainte Marie L’Égyptienne* (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1977), 9-10.

<sup>4</sup>Lynda L. Coon, *Sacred Fictions: Holy Women and Hagiography in Late Antiquity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), xx-xxi. Also Benedicta Ward, *Harlots of the Desert* (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1987), 7, 32. Ward argues for the historicity of themes within the *Lives* of the “desert harlots” including Mary of Egypt, though the argument assumes a lack of general historicity. Finally, see Hugh Feiss and Ronald Pepin, *Saint Mary of Egypt: Three Medieval Lives in Verse* (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 2005), 8-10. Feiss and Pepin take Mary of Egypt’s *Life* to be a literary expansion on the *Life of Kyriakos* by Cyril of Scythopolis. Jane Stevenson discusses at length possible historical influences on Sophronius’s fictionalized *Life* of St. Mary in “The Holy Sinner: The *Life* of Mary of Egypt,” in *The Legend of Mary of Egypt in Medieval Insular Hagiography*, ed. Erich Poppe and Bianca Ross (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1996), 19-40.

(compounded by the legend that Mary told only one person—St. Zosimas—her life’s story) has made St. Mary’s *Life* exceptionally susceptible to alteration and reinterpretation over the centuries.<sup>5</sup>

This study will take into consideration two of Mary’s *Lives*: the Old English, as represented by three extant manuscripts and edited by Hugh Magennis, and an Insular Latin version derived from the Latin translation made in the eighth century by Paul the Deacon, also edited by Magennis.<sup>6</sup> While the Insular Latin text, surviving in two manuscripts, may not necessarily be positively identified as the precise document from which the Old English translator worked, it is a fairly reliable representation of the translator’s exemplar—better by far than the version in the *Patrologia Latina*.<sup>7</sup> Although the Insular Latin will be scrutinized here in comparison to the Old English, the *PL* has been cross-checked for each excerpt studied, and it is most generally against the background of the original legend that unambiguous development may be observed.

The Greek *Life of Saint Mary of Egypt*, which was written in the late sixth or early seventh century by Sophronius, bishop of Jerusalem,<sup>8</sup> is the text from which all others derive; it was in its faithful Latin translation by Paul the Deacon that most medieval copyists and translators found their source.<sup>9</sup> In the standard tale, a Palestinian priest and cenobitic monk named Zosimas, troubled by the feeling that he has become perfect, goes on an annual Lenten pilgrimage into the desert in search of his spiritual superior.<sup>10</sup> Deep in the desert, after praying for a spiritual teacher, he spots and chases down a specter, which turns out to be Mary of Egypt: a naked old woman wasted away by ascetic anchoritic living. She is able to quote scripture despite being illiterate—she has been taught by God—and she levitates when she prays for him at the conclusion of a tearful battle of humbleness between the two in which each begs the other for a blessing. After much pleading, Zosimas persuades Mary to tell him her life story.

She reluctantly tells him that, at the age of twelve, she left her parents in Egypt and took up a scandalous life in Alexandria. After seventeen years of engaging in promiscuous acts—not even for money, but out of lust—she boarded a ship of pilgrims headed to Jerusalem for the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. She corrupted all the pilgrims, even forcing unwilling young men to succumb to her desires. Once they arrived in Jerusalem, she followed the crowds to the church.

<sup>5</sup>Christine Walsh, *The Cult of St Katherine of Alexandria in Early Medieval Europe* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2007), 3.

<sup>6</sup>Magennis, *Old English Life*, 14; *Bibliotheca hagiographica latina antiquae et mediae aetatis* (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1901) (hereafter *BHL*) 5414; translated in Ward, 35-56.

<sup>7</sup>Jacques-Paul Migne, ed., *Patrologiae Cursus Completus: Series Latina* (Paris, 1841-1855) (hereafter *PL*) 73: cols. 671-690; Magennis, *Old English Life*, 30. For a compelling discussion of a Latin error translated into Old English (*nunc/nu*) which serves as evidence for the relationship between these versions, see Andy Orchard, “Rhetoric and Style in the Old English Life of Mary of Egypt,” in *The Old English Life of Mary of Egypt*, ed. Donald Scragg, *Old English Newsletter Subsidia*, 33 (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2005), 34. Having established that, Orchard proceeds to refer unapologetically to the insular Latin text edited by Magennis as the Old English text’s source (37).

<sup>8</sup>See Feiss and Pepin, 9-12; also Maria Kouli, “Life of St. Mary of Egypt,” in *Holy Women of Byzantium: Ten Saints’ Lives in English Translation*, ed. Alice-Mary Talbot (Washington DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1996), 66.

<sup>9</sup>Magennis, *Old English Life*, 10-11; Feiss and Pepin, 20-21. Only one Latin translation from Greek was made before the Norman conquest, by Paul the Deacon; Jane Stevenson, 42.

<sup>10</sup>Migne, *Patrologiae Cursus Completus: Series Graeca* (Paris, 1857-1866) (hereafter *PG*), 87: cols. 3697-726. Translated in Kouli.

There, she tried to enter, but found herself barred from doing so by a divine force. Out in the courtyard, where she was forced to remain, she noticed an icon of the Theotokos and repented, pleading to the Virgin Mary for forgiveness and vowing obedience. After that, she was able to enter the church unhindered. She venerated the cross and then followed the instructions given to her by a voice heard during her prayer, “If you cross the river Jordan, you will find a fine place of repose.”<sup>11</sup> She spent the rest of her life in the desert: struggling for 17 years to conquer temptation, and then 30 more at peace, in the process of sanctification.

When she finishes telling this story to Zosimas, Mary asks that he leave and meet her again the following year on Holy Thursday to bring her the Eucharist. She asks him not to tell anybody about her in the meantime. He obeys: when he returns the following year and waits as instructed at the bank of the Jordan River, she walks across the water to meet him. Then she tells him to meet her again the following year; when he again returns obediently, he finds her dead. Although he has not known her name, it is written in the sand by her head. A gentle lion appears to help him dig her grave and mourn; afterwards, Zosimas returns to his monastery to share her story, and also to pass on instructions for the monks’ spiritual improvement which Mary had given him before her death.

While Paul the Deacon’s eighth-century Latin rendering of this legend is a fairly literal translation,<sup>12</sup> I will argue that the tenth-century Old English translation, which was the earliest into a vernacular language,<sup>13</sup> was subtly rewritten with an emphasis on community and a tempering of the protagonists’ asceticism in order to appeal to and reflect pastoral concern for its new lay audience. This anonymous text is preserved in three manuscript fragments;<sup>14</sup> the most complete version is found in the manuscript Cotton Julius E vii as one of four interpolations into the collection of saints’ lives translated by Ælfric of Eynsham in the late tenth century.<sup>15</sup>

That the Old English life of Mary of Egypt is not Ælfric’s work has been determined by its misplacement in the liturgical organization of Ælfric’s *vitae*, as well as by its content.<sup>16</sup> It originates in the *Vitas Patrum*, which Ælfric avoids as a source for his translations on account of its “many subtle points (*multa subtilia*) which are not appropriate for revealing to the laity.”<sup>17</sup> Its heroine has been assessed as too “contemplative,” idealizing ascetic monasticism too highly to fit Ælfric’s pastoral

<sup>11</sup>Sophronius, “Vita Mariae Aegyptiacae,” 85.

<sup>12</sup>Magennis, *Old English Life*, 11; and Feiss and Pepin, 20.

<sup>13</sup>Feiss and Pepin, 21.

<sup>14</sup>Magennis, *Old English Life*, 14.

<sup>15</sup>Andrew P. Scheil, “Bodies and Boundaries in the Old English Life of St. Mary of Egypt,” *Neophilologus* 84 (2000): 138.

<sup>16</sup>Paul E. Szarmach, “More Genre Trouble: The Life of Mary of Egypt,” in *Writing Women Saints in Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. Paul E. Szarmach (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 143-45. For a succinct description of syntactical and stylistic differences between this life and those translated by Ælfric, see Hugh Magennis, “St Mary of Egypt and Ælfric: Unlikely Bedfellows in Cotton Julius E. vii?,” in *The Legend of Mary of Egypt in Medieval Insular Hagiography*, ed. Erich Poppe and Bianca Ross (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1996), 101.

<sup>17</sup> Ælfric of Eynsham, “Praefatio,” in *Ælfric’s Lives of Saints*, ed. Walter W. Skeat. EETS 76 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1881), 2. “Ideoque reticemus de libro uitæ patrum, in 12 quo multa subtilia habentur quæ non conueniunt aperiri laicis.” Also Robin Norris, “*Vitas Matrum*: Mary of Egypt as Female Confessor,” in *The Old English Life of Mary of Egypt*, ed. Donald Scragg. *Old English Newsletter Subsidia* 33 (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2005), 86.

agenda,<sup>18</sup> and the themes of her extreme sin, conversion, and repentance are not consistent with the static “achieved” saints Ælfric championed.<sup>19</sup> These fundamental themes in the legend of St. Mary would have made her biography an unappealing pastoral tool for Ælfric, who, with the “Winchester reformers,” emphasized moderation and community within monasticism, and pastoral care for the extra-monastic community.<sup>20</sup>

A close reading of the anonymous Old English life, however, reveals it to be not merely a translation but a *rewriting*,<sup>21</sup> and one that does in fact reflect the influence of those Winchester ideals. The *Life of St. Mary of Egypt* ostensibly does depart enormously from the static, community-oriented portrayal of Ælfric’s saints; however, the “contemplative content” of the *Life of St. Mary* is emphatically not so starkly “non-Ælfrician” as it has been labeled: contrary to Hugh Magennis’s claim that the translator of Mary’s *vita* shows “no sign of adaptation to an Ælfrician outlook,”<sup>22</sup> a close comparison of the Old English and its probable Latin source reveals precisely such an outlook at work. Qualities that Magennis highlights to distinguish Ælfric’s ideals are in fact what one encounters in making such a comparison, though these popularizing changes are incorporated subtly into the unique context of an ascetic *vita*.

There is, in the Old English translation, a tempering of the Latin text’s severity to produce what may be counted a “transstylized” narrative with a shift of style that is at once less modest and more humble.<sup>23</sup> Although the Old English text most certainly retains the parent narrative’s contemplative setting and characters, the translator uses “artistic embellishment” beyond what is found in the Latin source, as has been discussed at length by Andy Orchard.<sup>24</sup> The areas of divergence from verbatim translation—especially in cases of *concision* and *expansion*<sup>25</sup>—add up to a greater, if subtle, emphasis on community, attainable spiritual goals, and the possibility of widespread salvation. The sum of the rewritten *vita* is one that markedly increases the importance of community and the accessibility of the *vita*’s message to an extra-monastic audience.

This audience—by Andrew Scheil’s estimation, a “wide variety of readers” for this *vita* in particular<sup>26</sup>—had begun its formation with King Alfred the Great, who a century before the composition of the Old English *Life of St. Mary* had set out to educate free Anglo-Saxons in their vernacular, and to translate important works into it for popular reading.<sup>27</sup> Concern for this same lay (or ill-educated clerical) audience is expressed by Ælfric in his *Preface to Genesis*, where he gives

<sup>18</sup>Magennis, “St Mary of Egypt and Ælfric,” 102, 104.

<sup>19</sup>Magennis, “St Mary of Egypt and Ælfric,” 102-3.

<sup>20</sup>Magennis, “St Mary of Egypt and Ælfric,” 105; also see Magennis, *Old English Life*, 24.

<sup>21</sup>Orchard, 38, where he offers evidence to confirm that the Old English *Life* is not, as it has been held, a “slavish translation.”

<sup>22</sup>Magennis, “St. Mary of Egypt and Ælfric,” 106.

<sup>23</sup>Goullet, 94: “La *transstylisation* est le passage d’un style à l’autre, du style humble au style noble (version médiévale du *rewriting* actuel) ou au style moyen.”

<sup>24</sup>Orchard, 32.

<sup>25</sup>Goullet, 92.

<sup>26</sup>Scheil, 138.

<sup>27</sup>Bruce Mitchell and Fred C. Robinson, *A Guide to Old English*, 8<sup>th</sup> ed. (West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 142.

examples of situations in which Old Testament messages may be misunderstood and acted wrongly upon “if some foolish person reads this book or hears it read.”<sup>28</sup> Village priests, who may not be intellectually qualified for exegesis themselves, should not by Ælfric’s estimation be given access to such perilous texts in their vernacular; if they are not learned enough to understand the Latin, they should not be interpreting complicated texts even if those texts are made linguistically accessible. Ælfric asserts that, since “priests are set up as teachers for lay people,” all are liable to be led astray together, should such translations be made.<sup>29</sup>

Like the book of Genesis, the *Life of St. Mary of Egypt* contains descriptions of sin and sexuality that could be misleading. Ælfric feared that readers of Genesis would forget the changes made by Christ and take multiple wives, as was done in the Old Testament, so he likewise would have feared that readers of this *vita* would forget St. Mary’s saintly change of life and take her legend as one condoning a lascivious lifestyle. Paul Szarmach refers to this *vita* as a “literary bait and switch,” supposing that it took a highly confident author to tell Mary’s story without fearing misunderstanding among his listeners.<sup>30</sup> Unlike Ælfric, the anonymous translator demonstrates this confidence in himself and his listeners, and also his confidence that Mary’s life had something to teach even an unlearned audience that was worth the risk. The same confidence must have been shared by the compiler of the manuscript, who in including the life of St. Mary disobeyed Ælfric’s explicit request at the end of his prologue to his *Lives of the Saints* that nothing be added to his work.<sup>31</sup> Indeed, this compiler seems to observe a hypocrisy inherent in Ælfric’s championing of the “Winchester” ideal of salvation for all and his exclusion of a saint whose life was not a model of perfection from start to finish.

To what extent does the translator go out of his way to make St. Mary accessible to his community? We will now compare the Latin text to the Old English translation and address the implications of evident rewriting in three general areas: spiritual communities, the character of Zosimas, and the portrayal of St. Mary herself.

## Communities and Customs

The Old English text, more than the Latin, portrays the monastic community as a place of fellowship and equality. There are two key areas in which the Old English translation deviates from the Latin text in such a way as to reveal these differing attitudes towards religious communities. Both are subtle, but they serve to bookend the story with this positive communal attitude in conjunction with the literary device framing Mary’s story within Zosimas’s. First, in the Old English, when

<sup>28</sup>“gif sum dysig man þas boc ræt oððe rædan g<e>hyrþ,” Ælfric of Eynsham, “Preface to Genesis,” in *The Old English Version of the Heptateuch*, ed. S. J. Crawford (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), 76.

<sup>29</sup>“preostas sindon gesette to lærowum þam læwedum folce,” Ælfric, “Preface to Genesis,” 77.

<sup>30</sup>Szarmach, 149.

<sup>31</sup>Ælfric, “Praefatio,” 6: “Ic bidde nu on godes naman gif hwa þas boc awritan will þæt he hi wel gerihte be þære bysne, and þær namare betwux ne sette þonne we awendon.”

Zosimas arrives at his new monastic home, he tells abbot John, “I have heard about many spiritual practices among you here, and they are beyond expression pleasing to God.”<sup>32</sup> In the Latin text, that speech reads, “I have heard great and praiseworthy things concerning you, and things which are able to unite the soul with God.”<sup>33</sup> In Latin, the emphasis was on Zosimas’s hearing great things *de uobis* (“about you”), while the Old English translator shifts Zosimas’s praise to the cloister’s *fela gastlicra þeama* (“many spiritual customs”). This reveals a shift in emphasis from the individual ascetic to a plurality of religious customs. Additionally, the Latin specifies that these “great things” are able to unite the soul (singular) with God (*posse Deo animam sociare*), creating an image of individual spiritual advancement, while the Old English resists individual attention and claims that the customs in general are pleasing to God (*Gode licwurðe*).

A similar message is given at the end of the text, when Zosimas delivers the deceased St. Mary’s message to abbot John, in which she had suggested he root out present mischief in the monastery. In Old English, “John indeed perceived that some of the *practices of the monastery* had to be corrected, just as the holy woman had previously mentioned, but with God helping he immediately corrected them.”<sup>34</sup> But in Latin, “John the abbot found *certain people* in need of censuring, whom he should chastise, in accordance with the word of that holy saint, and with the mercy of God he converted them.”<sup>35</sup> The distinction is clear: one model of correction is communal, with the fault directed at the *mynsterwisan* (monastery ways), while the other is critically directed to *quosdam emendari corripiendos*, some individuals at fault. In Old English, *he þa sona...geriht: þa*, or “them,” the object being corrected, refers to the *mynsterwisan*; in Latin, *hos...conuertit: hos*, or “them,” refers to the *corripiendos*, the faulted individuals.<sup>36</sup>

Further hints to the English translator’s attitude towards community are visible in more isolated word choices. The Old English text relates that Zosimas’s spiritual efforts were “among his co-workers,”<sup>37</sup> while the same line in Latin says he was “working to advance on his own path.”<sup>38</sup> When the monks are blessed by the abbot, in Old English it is “they” (*hi*, implying “they all together,”)<sup>39</sup> while in Latin it is “each” (*unusquisque*, implying “each one individually,”).<sup>40</sup> When a monk was in the desert, the Latin specifies that “he lived for himself and for God,”<sup>41</sup> while the Old English excises that clause and the extreme independence it exalts. The Old English says the monks “fought among

<sup>32</sup>“Ic her fela gastlicra þeama on eow geaxode, and þa synd beforan gesegnesse Gode licwurðe,” ll. 98-100. Hereafter, lines from the Magennis edition will be cited in the notes; translations are mine.

<sup>33</sup> “Audiui de uobis magnalia et laude digna, et posse Deo animam sociare,” ll. 100-101.

<sup>34</sup>“Iohannes soðlice ongeat sume þa mynsterwisan to gerihtanne, swa swa seo halige ær foresæde, ac he þa sona Gode fultumigendum gerihte,” ll. 954-56.

<sup>35</sup>“Iohannes autem abbas inuenit quosdam emendari corripiendos iuxta sanctae illius sermonem, et hos miserante Deo conuertit,” ll. 895-97.

<sup>36</sup>Szarmach, too, identifies this passage as displaying a surprisingly community-oriented turn, 150.

<sup>37</sup>“gemang þam emnwyrhtum,” l. 119.

<sup>38</sup>“crescere faciens proprium cursum,” ll. 133-34.

<sup>39</sup> l. 146.

<sup>40</sup> l. 154.

<sup>41</sup>“uiuebat autem sibi et Deo,” l. 177.

themselves,”<sup>42</sup> where the Latin says “each one...struggled within himself.”<sup>43</sup> This trend of pluralizing such Latin singulars ends abruptly when the narrative departs from the communal setting.

In this same description of the monks’ desert experiences, the Old English remarkably excises a very individualistic, ominous warning which is present in the Latin: “For those things which are done because of men and which are done in order to please men, not only do not profit their performers, but through much loss of life, many misfortunes will come to them.”<sup>44</sup> Clearly, the Old English rewriter is tempering his translation for his audience, and is not at all interested in discouraging community service.

A different community appears in the narrative during the story of St. Mary herself, at the door of the church where her conversion experience occurs. Here, unlike in the previous examples, we see the community *removed* from the Old English text, but with significant timing: first, St. Mary attributes the blockage of her entry into the church not to people, but to “God’s vengeance,” (*Godes wraecu*)<sup>45</sup> and she later attributes her successful entry to the fact that “nothing” (*nan þing*)<sup>46</sup> pushed her out. This differs subtly from the Latin, where she enters because “there was no longer *anyone who* pushed me back or *who* prevented me from approaching the gates by which they were entering the temple.”<sup>47</sup> As a result of this depersonalization in the Old English, the community is never to blame for St. Mary’s exclusion, but remains supportive and unified.

## The Character of Zosimas

In the Old English version of Mary’s *Life*, there are assorted minor modifications made in the portrayal of Zosimas that add up to a somewhat softer image of his asceticism and sanctity than in the Latin version. First, there are a few reductions of his strictest observances: in Latin, while wandering in the desert, he “hastens on” early every morning<sup>48</sup> while in Old English he merely “goes away” from his resting place in the early morning.<sup>49</sup> Later, when St. Mary calls him by name, the Latin text renders him in a trance<sup>50</sup> while the Old English excises this clause; in the next line, we are told in the Latin that Zosimas is exceedingly alert and wise, but the Old English drops this as well. Zosimas is therefore portrayed in the Old English neither in the former extremely negative sense, nor the latter extremely positive one. In Old English, Zosimas returns to his monastery and is silent all year about

<sup>42</sup>“mid him sylfum wunnon,” l. 182.

<sup>43</sup>“unusquisque...in semetipso decertabat,” ll. 189-90.

<sup>44</sup>“Illa enim quae propter homines fiunt ut hominibus placeant aguntur, non solum non proderunt facientibus, sed et multo damno etatis efficiuntur agentibus obnoxia,” ll. 191-94. This last clause is clearer in the *PL* 73: col. 676C, “et per multa damna efficiuntur...”

<sup>45</sup> l. 474.

<sup>46</sup> l. 526.

<sup>47</sup>“non erat qui me repelleret neque qui me prohiberet...” l. 522.

<sup>48</sup> “diluculo autem properare incipiebat,” l. 202.

<sup>49</sup> “on ærnemergen forgangende,” l. 191.

<sup>50</sup> “mentis excessus accepit Zosimam,” ll. 265-66.



his vision<sup>51</sup>—but this specificity is an expansion on the part of the Old English translator; in the Latin it seems he is simply silent all year. Of course, there are many cases of consistency between the text and its translation wherein Zosimas is portrayed as a good ascetic, but this series of alterations mitigates the severity of his image.

As Zosimas leaves his community and enters the desert, we are reminded of the prototypical *vita* of the desert patriarch St. Antony, written by Athanasius: a *vita* instrumental in the introduction of monasticism to the West and one especially relevant to the story of the encounter between Zosimas and St. Mary. In a time when holy men—cenobites, like Zosimas, and anchorites, like St. Antony—populated the deserts of Egypt and Palestine, Zosimas sets out with the express hope of finding one holier than himself—and indeed is fulfilled in this hope by finding Mary.

One major feature of St. Antony's *vita* is Athanasius's second-hand record of his extensive sermon about discernment of apparitions in the desert. In the *Life of St. Antony*, Athanasius's audience learns to suspect apparitions of St. Mary's sort for demons, sent to test the faith of the monk in question: while still relatively new to the desert life, Antony is visited at night by a demon in the form of a woman. When Antony fails to succumb to this temptation, the devil transforms into a little black boy, who identifies himself as the "friend of fornication."<sup>52</sup> Scheil has observed that, as a sun-blackened woman, Mary of Egypt is "almost a composite of Antony's temptations."<sup>53</sup>

The prominence of Antony's teaching on discernment without fear—and the weight placed on that skill by another defining giant in western monastic thought, John Cassian<sup>54</sup>—lends significance to the prominence of Zosimas's fear in a variety of episodes in the Old English text. This fear in the Old English text's Zosimas is not unprecedented by the Latin text, but it is exaggerated. For example, when Zosimas sees Mary from afar, in the Latin he is "unsettled" (*turbatus est*)<sup>55</sup> by the suspicion that Mary may be an apparition, but he casts off that fear.<sup>56</sup> The Old English is similar, except that instead of being merely unsettled, Zosimas is "greatly frightened" (*swiþe afyrht*).<sup>57</sup> An even more significant episode occurs when Mary walks across the Jordan River, towards the end of the narrative—by which point, if following Antony's model, Zosimas should certainly have learned not to fear Mary. Witnessing this miracle, the Latin Zosimas is filled with "excessive trembling" (*tremore nimio*).<sup>58</sup> While not necessarily a perfect fulfillment of Antony's message, that response seems to demonstrate more ascetic maturity than does the response of the Old English Zosimas, who

<sup>51</sup> "gesihðe forswegode," l. 759.

<sup>52</sup> Athanasius, "The Life of St. Antony," in *Early Christian Lives*, trans. Carolinne White (London: Penguin Books, 1998), 12.

<sup>53</sup> Scheil, 141.

<sup>54</sup> John Cassian, *The Conferences*, trans. Boniface Ramsey (New York: Newman Press, 1997), 59-61; 1.XX.

<sup>55</sup> l. 215.

<sup>56</sup> *egge*, l. 212; *timorem*, l. 217.

<sup>57</sup> "Þa wæs he ærest swiþe afyrht, forþan þe he wende þæt hit wære sumes gastes scinhyw þæt he þær geseah..." ll. 209-10.

<sup>58</sup> l. 806.

becomes filled with “great fear” (*micclan ege*).<sup>59</sup> Indeed, in the Old English text Zosimas proves by his fear that he has not mastered Antony’s central lesson. One may conclude from these modifications to the Old English text that the strict ascetic values of the desert fathers are being somewhat relaxed; as a character, the Old English Zosimas is therefore less idealized and more approachable than his Latin counterpart.

This is reinforced by another modification: in the Old English text, Zosimas thanks God for the arrival of Mary on his second desert excursion, saying that by meeting her he has been shown “how much I [am inferior] in my own sight to the measure of those others’ perfection.”<sup>60</sup> In the Latin, however, he merely says he has been shown through her “how far in my own consideration I am below the measure of true perfection.”<sup>61</sup> True to form, the Old English employs relational, communal reference where the Latin avoids it; but in this case, the Old English specifies that Zosimas not only fails at literal perfection, as the Latin implies, but also at the perfection reached by the desert fathers, implied by “those others” whom he had sought.

## The Popular Mary

In both languages, St. Mary is often described as a wild animal, a vision, an ambiguous she-man. And in both, Mary seems to be a sensational, perhaps “garish” character atypical for the virgin-martyr tradition of female saints’ lives.<sup>62</sup> Despite this broad consistency, there are also subtly differing representations of Mary’s sins and her sanctity in the two texts. As has been seen in the case of Zosimas, Mary’s sanctity is subdued between the Latin version and its Old English translation. Her sins, however, are provocatively exaggerated.

The opening of St. Mary’s description of her past of debauchery is quite comparable between the versions: each has about ten colorful allusions to her past sexual activities, and each describes her loss of virginity, her insatiable love of promiscuity, and her burning passion of lust.<sup>63</sup> Already, this explicit description is a bold affront to the sensibilities of Ælfric, who prefers saints to be role models throughout their lives to avoid any hearer’s misunderstanding.<sup>64</sup> Whereas the Latin text leaves the audience with that description, the English translator continues to amplify the colorful imagery as the story continues: a few pages later, she refers to using the pilgrim youths specifically for the

<sup>59</sup>l. 863. According to Bosworth’s *Dictionary of the Anglo-Saxon Language*, the word *ege* means “fear, terror, dread,” and is equivalent to Latin *timor*; the word *fyrhto* can mean “fear, fright, dread, terror, or trembling,” and is more closely related to Latin *tremor*. Although *fyrhto* is evidently in the translator’s vocabulary, he frequently (as here) opts for *ege* in this text, where *tremore* had been used in Latin.

<sup>60</sup>“hu micel ic [. . .] on minre agene gesceawunge on þam gemete þæra oþra fulfremodnysse,” ll. 821-23. On page 128 of his edition, Magennis notes regarding the elipsis that “there is no indication of omission, but a verbal phrase is lacking, corresponding to *inferior sim*, ‘I am lower down, inferior’ (Latin, line 772).”

<sup>61</sup>“quantum meae considerationis inferior sim mensurae uerae perfectionis,” ll. 772-73.

<sup>62</sup>Szarmach, 144, 163.

<sup>63</sup>Magennis, *Old English Life*, 83, 171.

<sup>64</sup>Scheil, 138.

“pleasure of my body”<sup>65</sup> where the Latin Mary merely alludes to doing with them “what was pleasing to me.”<sup>66</sup> And her actual exchange with the youths undergoes expansion in the Old English: the Latin Mary says, “but proffering other filthier words, I moved everyone to laughter,”<sup>67</sup> while the English Mary elaborates: “And then I quickly stirred them all to *profane sins* and to disgraceful loud laughter, with many other foul and wicked expressions.”<sup>68</sup> The Old English Mary continues to lament her insatiability despite her having had copious “sex on the journey” (*siðfæte hæmdon*),<sup>69</sup> while Latin Mary merely summarizes that she had behaved sinfully.<sup>70</sup> Later, the Old English Zosimas asks if she was able to pass her years in the desert without loving the “burning of that fleshly pull,”<sup>71</sup> while the Latin Zosimas merely asks her if, in all that time, she had felt no heat.<sup>72</sup>

What is the purpose of this descriptive turn? It would appear to be an indulgence on the part of the translator—possibly for his own enjoyment, possibly to pique his audience’s interest and give them a platform, if a sinful one, from which to relate to St. Mary. In discussing the purpose of vernacular hagiography, Phyllis Johnson and Brigitte Cazelles write that the rewritten *vitae* “respond to the needs of an unsophisticated audience for stories which illustrate Church dogma”; they reflect the mentality of the common listeners, at least to the extent of the poet’s knowledge.<sup>73</sup> Johnson and Cazelles add that verisimilitude is a necessary component for connection with such an audience,<sup>74</sup> causing a tension between the presentation of a saint as personable for its worldly listeners, yet true to the “religious ideal of the saint [working] against the world.”<sup>75</sup> Cazelles elsewhere adds that if a saint is portrayed with too much perfection, as saints most often are, the possibility for emulation disappears, and the opportunity for edification diminishes.<sup>76</sup> Thus, Mary’s imperfection serves to relate her to the public, inspiring solidarity and maintaining the possibility of emulation, though there is nevertheless a risk of losing that solidarity in telling of her extreme life in the desert.<sup>77</sup>

A few incidental references complete this image of the Old English Mary as a woman approachable despite her holiness. In the Old English text, her discussion of her craving for wine is specifically contemporary with the narrative: she says she had loved indulging in it before, “and moreover it [wine] is for me likewise *now* very much in my desires,”<sup>78</sup> whereas in the Latin it is

<sup>65</sup>“mines lichaman luste,” l. 419.

<sup>66</sup>“id quod michi erat placabile,” ll. 431

<sup>67</sup>“Sed et alios sordidiores proferens sermones, omnes ad ridendum commoui,” ll. 436-37.

<sup>68</sup>“And ic hi þa ealle sona to þam manfullum leahtrum and ceahhetungum bysmerlicum astyrede mid manegum oþrum fullicum and fracodlicum gespræcum,” ll. 422-25

<sup>69</sup>l. 449.

<sup>70</sup>ll. 457-60.

<sup>71</sup>“ne freode þone bryne þære flæsclican gehwyrfednyssse,” ll. 606-7. Magennis translates *ne freode* as “without thinking longingly.”

<sup>72</sup> “Nihil...sensisti calorem,” l. 591.

<sup>73</sup>Phyllis Johnson and Brigitte Cazelles, *Le vain siècle guerpir: A Literary Approach to Sainthood through Old French Hagiography of the Twelfth Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979), 13-14.

<sup>74</sup>Johnson and Cazelles, *Vain siècle guerpir*, 14.

<sup>75</sup>Johnson and Cazelles, *Le vain siècle guerpir*, 19.

<sup>76</sup>Brigitte Cazelles, “Modèle ou mirage: Marie l’Egyptienne,” *The French Review* 53 (1979): 14.

<sup>77</sup>Cazelles, “Modèle ou mirage,” 14-15.

<sup>78</sup>“nu hit is me eac swilce swyðe on gewilnunga,” ll. 622-23.

certainly left behind in her past: she “*was* strongly desirous [of it].”<sup>79</sup> This is a uniquely expanded flaw which sullies even the record of the repentant and purified Mary, and creates new meaning for her pre-communion confession to Zosimas which makes up the central story.

Additionally, in the Latin, Mary quotes from Job that all who, like herself, have no clothes “are enclosed by a covering of stone, those who have divested themselves of the undergarment of sin.”<sup>80</sup> Use of this quotation explicitly relates Mary’s extreme asceticism to that of the desert fathers who imitate Christ’s death and transition into the resurrected body by entering figurative or literal sepulchers<sup>81</sup>—but this quotation is replaced in the Old English text with the statement, “I am clothed with the garment of the word of God, who holds and encompasses all things.”<sup>82</sup> Finally, where the Latin text refers to her eating merely “herbs/grasses” (*herbis*),<sup>83</sup> the Old English—with a vagueness about the desert typical of this translation and quite understandable for a text being rewritten for an Anglo-Saxon audience—broadens this to give her “plants/crops” (*nyrtum*).<sup>84</sup> All of these aspects serve to portray Mary as a modified ascetic: not of unreachable stature, but a repentant sinner whose past sins are still vivid and even still posing temptations.

### The *Life of St. Mary* for Everyman

In an introduction to her translation into Modern English of the Latin text of St. Mary’s *vita*, Benedicta Ward writes that even the Latin, in its translation from Greek, “has been enlarged and given details which increase the significance of the theme of repentance with reference to the edification of the reader or hearer.”<sup>85</sup> What Ward is describing is what Gouillet has described as *réécriture* or “rewriting,” the term I have adopted for this study. I suggest that Ward’s statement holds even greater truth when applied to the Old English rewriting from Latin, specifically because the “significance of the theme of repentance” is increased in the Old English rewriting by what may be termed a “transvalorization” of the key characters, accomplished by the cumulative effect of the rewritings described in this paper. This is perhaps a slight modification of the definition Gouillet gives this term when she writes that “*transvalorization* is an axiomatic transformation of the role, the image, or the perception of a character: it follows that *revalorization* is, for example, the rendering sympathetic or positive of a character who was antipathetic, negative, or neutral in the original text; it follows that *devalorization* is the inverse of that process.”<sup>86</sup> Of course, St. Mary is and was always the hero of her *vita*. However, she and Zosimas have both been transformed from less sympathetic

<sup>79</sup>“erat ualde in desiderium,” l. 604.

<sup>80</sup>“non habentes operimentum petrae circumdati sunt tegmine, hi qui se peccati expoliauerunt tunica,” ll. 658-60.

<sup>81</sup>Coon, 73.

<sup>82</sup>“ic eom oferwrigen mid þam oferbrædelse Godes wordes, se ðe ealle þincg befēð and befædmað,” ll. 682-83.

<sup>83</sup> l. 644.

<sup>84</sup> l. 664.

<sup>85</sup>Ward, 34.

<sup>86</sup>“Enfin la *transvalorisation* est une transformation axiologique portant sur le rôle, l’image, la perception d’un personnage: *revalorisation* s’il s’agit, par exemple, de rendre sympathique ou positif un personnage qui était antipathique, négatif ou neutre dans l’hypotexte; *dévalorisation* s’il s’agit du processus inverse.” Gouillet, 96.

in the Latin to more sympathetic in the Old English (*revalorization*), and on the other hand from more perfect in the Latin to less perfect in the Old English (*devalorization*). These converse shifts are the ones that perhaps most meaningfully characterize this text as one rewritten.

As a subgenre, *lives* of sexually transgressive women, such as St. Mary, present paradigmatic figures who, by the severity of their sins, serve to offer hope not only for the few most devout monastics, but for the “everyman.”<sup>87</sup> This legend, despite its monastic origins, emphasizes the offering of salvation to all who seek it: St. Mary’s conversion, as Benedicta Ward observes, highlights “the need for redemption in everyman and the power of the redeeming mercy of Christ for all.”<sup>88</sup> In both Latin and Old English, St. Mary quotes from Ezekiel 18:23 that the Lord does not desire the death but the repentance of sinners;<sup>89</sup> in her prayers to the Virgin Mary after her admission to the church she recognizes that God is always ready to receive repentant sinners;<sup>90</sup> and after meeting Mary and hearing her story, Zosimas expresses his recognition that God does not abandon those who seek Him.<sup>91</sup> In this way, the legend lends itself naturally to one desiring to use it pastorally; the shift in emphasis from individual salvation to that of larger communities takes only a little modification, as is evidenced by the subtlety employed by the translator in the passages I have examined. Despite the risk taken by its translator in expanding the accessibility of a character such as Mary, this Old English life is clearly, like those of Ælfric, a work adapted with mindfulness of its audience and their salvation, and with the intention of expanding the reach of its message.

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<sup>87</sup>Virginia Burrus, *The Sex Lives of Saints: An Erotics of Ancient Hagiography* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 129.

<sup>88</sup>Ward, 32.

<sup>89</sup>Old English ll. 441-43; Latin ll. 451-53.

<sup>90</sup>Old English ll. 536-37; Latin ll. 531-32.

<sup>91</sup>Old English ll. 709-10; Latin ll. 679-80.

## *A Different Picture of Female Piety: The Margaret and Catherine Window at Chartres*

By Heather Smith

The window that presents the lives of the virgin martyrs Margaret of Antioch and Catherine of Alexandria is located in a southern chapel of the ambulatory of Chartres Cathedral. It consists of twenty-two panels of stained glass and was commissioned in the first half of the thirteenth century. Along with the windows depicting the lives of Mary Magdalene and the Virgin Mary, it is one of only three extant narrative windows at Chartres that are dedicated to female saints. Much of the scholarship about this window attempts to place it within the chronology of the glazing program at the cathedral. While determining the window's date is certainly important, this essay will turn instead to its complex and surprising iconography and the unusual way it depicts the lives of the two saints in comparison with their visual *vitae* in other churches. This is especially apparent in the absence of the saints' nudity and lengthy torture scenes at Chartres. While the two female martyrs are usually depicted stripped and tortured, the composition of the Chartres window de-emphasizes their torment. This, and the consistent inclusion of the Hand of God, the Holy Spirit, angels, and Christ, presents the two saints primarily as intercessors, intellectuals, and redeemers. I believe that this reflects a desire to construct Margaret and Catherine's lives in a way that inspired hope in the viewer and appealed to his or her spiritual needs: protection, intercession, and the promise of salvation.

The study of medieval stained glass presents many challenges. Generally, very little if anything is known about patronage, and windows were often accidentally or purposely destroyed, targeted for removal, or rearranged over time. Some windows, such as those at the Abbey of Fécamp in northern France, are so badly corroded that it is nearly impossible to read their iconographical programs.<sup>1</sup> Although the window at Chartres fortunately has been well preserved, these circumstances make the pool of examples from which to draw comparisons unavoidably small. To provide some parameters for my study of the narratives of Margaret and Catherine, I will focus on cycles of the saints' hagiographies, or legends, that were created for use in an ecclesiastical context in continental Europe between 1180 and 1310. I have tried to limit my present study to the medium of stained glass,

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<sup>1</sup> Jean Lafond, "Les virtaux de l'Abbaye de la Trinité Fécamp," in *L'Abbaye Bénédictine de Fécamp: Ouvrage scientifique de XIII<sup>e</sup> centenaire 658-1958* (Fécamp: Durand, 1962), 102.

although one of my exempla for the hagiography of Saint Margaret is a carved stone panel from the parish church of Santa Maria Assunta at Fornovo di Taro in Italy. I have included this panel because it is one of the few existing depictions of the life of Margaret in monumental form that predates her appearance at Chartres. In addition, I will compare Margaret's depiction at Chartres with that at the Collegiate Chapel of Saint Margaret in Ardagger, Austria and the cathedral in Auxerre, France. I will compare the visual narrative of Catherine at Chartres with the stained glass cycles at the cathedral of Angers, France; the cathedral of Auxerre, France; and the abbey church of St. Père de Chartres, France. This approach will elucidate the differences in the saints' representation at each house of worship, allowing me to offer an analysis of the Chartres window and to suggest the possible intentions of its donor.

### Patronage of the Chartres Window



Figure 1. Marguerite de Lèves prays before the Virgin and Child: Saints Margaret and Catherine window, Chartres Cathedral, c. 1220-1240, France. Photography by Stuart Whatling; used by permission.

Although the exact circumstances of the window's donation are unknown, a local noblewoman, Marguerite de Lèves, was somehow involved in the process. She has been identified through an inscription on the window bearing the partially preserved names of her second husband Guérin de Friaize, and her sister Mabile's second husband, Hugues de Meslay, both of whom are shown wearing crusading attire and bearing weapons and shields.<sup>2</sup> The bottom leftmost panel of the window concerns Marguerite, who is shown kneeling in supplication before the Virgin and Christ Child (Figure 1).<sup>3</sup> While it is unknown whether the window was donated by Marguerite herself or in her honor by her husband and brother-in-law, who are depicted in the adjoining panel, there is no doubt that her needs and desires are reflected in its composition. At the very least,

<sup>2</sup> This inscription, along with the window's inclusion of Saint Margaret, the likely patron saint of Marguerite de Lèves, has led most scholars to accept Marguerite's identification as the women kneeling in the donor panels. For further information see Colette Manhès-Demreble and Jean-Paul Deremble, *Les vitraux narratifs de la cathédrale de Chartres: étude iconographique* (Paris: Léopard d'or, 1993), 15-17.

<sup>3</sup> Several of Marguerite's relatives held high positions at the cathedral in the mid-twelfth century, including the office of the bishop. Marguerite's family must have still held considerable power and wealth in the region during her lifetime. Guérin was the secular administrator of the Church's extensive lands in the Chartrain and their family donated heavily to the cathedral and local abbeys. See Margot Fassler, *The Virgin of Chartres: Making History Through Liturgy and the Arts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 181-86.

it was designed to secure prayers and intercession for Marguerite and her family.<sup>4</sup> In the donor panel Christ makes eye contact with Marguerite while raising his hand in a gesture of blessing. This intimacy between Marguerite and Christ is striking, and is echoed in the composition of the other panels of the window. The Virgin, however, peers straight out at the viewer.<sup>5</sup> This panel is thus clearly arranged to depict Christ as a willing recipient of Marguerite's prayers and Mary as a willing recipient of the prayers of the window's viewer. This theme of intercession is further emphasized by the inclusion of Saints Margaret and Catherine in the window's upper roundels.

At the time of the window's creation (c.1220-1240), Margaret and Catherine were not officially venerated at Chartres. Margaret does not appear in the cathedral's liturgy until the end of the thirteenth century and Catherine does not appear to have been known at Chartres before 1200.<sup>6</sup> This window thus represents a kind of "cultural conquest" at Chartres of saints popular among the lay people but not yet officially venerated at the cathedral.<sup>7</sup> Margaret and Catherine were among the most celebrated saints in the thirteenth century and were known for their successful intercession with God on behalf of their venerators. Margaret was enormously important to female venerators: because of her escape from the belly of a dragon, she was the protector of women in pregnancy and childbirth at a time when the maternal mortality rate was shockingly high.<sup>8</sup> Additionally, she ensured that infants would be born free of defects such as blindness, dumbness, and lameness.<sup>9</sup> Catherine's cult exploded in popularity in the early thirteenth century when returning crusaders spread her legend to Western Europe.<sup>10</sup> Her intellect and use of logic to convert fifty pagan philosophers to Christianity secured her the role of patron saint of scholars and jurists. Her torture on the wheel made her the protector of wainwrights, and her virginal status meant that she was a favored patron of unmarried girls. Margaret and Catherine appear together in a variety of media starting in the thirteenth century.<sup>11</sup> They are often shown with their respective attributes, the dragon and the wheel,

<sup>4</sup> For an account of patterns of women's donations in the region, see Amy Livingstone, "Women in the Chartrain," in *Aristocratic women in medieval France*, ed. T. Evergates (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 47-49. The window may have also been donated to guarantee or give thanks for the safe return of Marguerite's husband and brother-in-law from the crusades.

<sup>5</sup> Unfortunately, due to a series of heavy restorations and repairs, it is unknown if the original face of the Virgin bore this gaze. See Yves Delaporte, *Les vitraux de la cathédrale de Chartres* (Chartres: Houvet, 1926), 255 note 1. However, other windows at the cathedral depict the Virgin in this manner, such as the nearby window of Saint Remigius, so it seems likely that this is indeed the gaze she once bore.

<sup>6</sup> Delaporte, *Les vitraux*, 256 and Manhès-Deremble and Deremble, *Les vitraux narratifs*, 75-76.

<sup>7</sup> Manhès-Deremble and Deremble, *Les vitraux narratifs*, 112-13. Other saints who were not mentioned in the liturgy at Chartres at the same time they appear in the glazing program are Saints Remigius, Thomas Beckett, Julian the Hospitaller, Eustace, Antonin, and Lubin.

<sup>8</sup> Carole Hill, "Leave my virginity alone: the cult of St Margaret of Antioch in Norwich: in pursuit of a pragmatic piety," in *Medieval East Anglia*, ed. Christopher Harper-Bill (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2005), 229.

<sup>9</sup> Wendy R Larson, "Who is the master of this narrative? Maternal Patronage of the Cult of St Margaret," in *Gendering the Master Narrative: Women and Power in the Middle Ages*, ed. Mary Carpenter Erler and Maryanne Kowaleski (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), 97.

<sup>10</sup> Christine Walsh, "Erat Abigail Mulier Prudentissima: Gilbert of Tournai and Attitudes to Female Sanctity in the Thirteenth Century," *Studies in Church History* 47 (2011): 171.

<sup>11</sup> Maud Burnett McInerney, *Eloquent Virgins from Thecla to Joan of Arc* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 168. Margaret and Catherine are seen together or close to one another in the glazing programs at the French cathedrals of Chartres, Evreux, Auxerre, Saint-Julien de Sault, Dol, and the French abbey of Fécamp.



in panoplies of virgin saints. The saints' appearance at Chartres underlines their immense popularity and their importance to thirteenth century venerator.

### Interpretations of Virgin Martyr Hagiography

A number of studies have addressed the growing presence of virgin martyrs in medieval art and literature with a wide variety of approaches, and a multiplicity of conclusions. Scholars such as Madeline Caviness and Kathryn Gravdal read virgin martyr hagiography as degrading to women. They believe that the emphasis on female virginity displays an attempt to control women's sexuality, and that the violent torture undergone by the saints is sexually exploitative in nature.<sup>12</sup> Since the saints are often depicted as fully or partially nude throughout their ordeals, their torture is interpreted as an open attack on their chastity, which weakens them, sexualizes them, and serves as displaced rape. Caviness has also suggested that virgin martyr hagiography was aimed at male readers who would have reveled in the licentious details of the mutilation inflicted upon the women. Others, such as Katherine Lewis, disagree with this interpretation. While some males may have felt aroused by the torture scenes, and some female readers exploited, she believes that the popularity of the cults of virgin martyrs indicates that these texts offered more than pornographic fantasies to their readers.<sup>13</sup> Their medieval audiences, she suggests, may have perceived the torture as the saints' "voluntary self-sacrifice."<sup>14</sup> Robert Mills has pointed out that women may have even been empowered by the active resistance of the female saints against their tormentors, and strengthened by their endurance of suffering.<sup>15</sup> Most female saints did not abide by social norms. They refused marriage, actively fought to defend Christianity from pagan tyrants, and resisted male authority. A rapid increase in the consumption of literature about these saints by medieval women suggests that women wanted to read these tales and sought meaning in them.<sup>16</sup>

In contrast to the literature and images analyzed by Caviness, Gravdal, Lewis, and Mills, the window of Saints Margaret and Catherine at Chartres puts almost no emphasis on torture. This raises a problematic question about the window's function and its interpretation: if the torture of virgin martyr saints is removed from their legends, does this strengthen or weaken their stories? I believe that in the case of Chartres, the exclusion of Margaret's and Catherine's torture strengthens their stories. The window's donors, designers, and viewers would have been well aware of the numerous physical torments undergone by Catherine and Margaret, yet a conscious decision was

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<sup>12</sup> For further reading on this interpretation see Catherine Pearce, "The Cult of St Margaret of Antioch," *Feminist Theology* 16 (1997): 76; Kathryn Gravdal, *Ravishing Maidens: Writing Rape in Medieval French Literature and Law*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991), 24; and Madeline Harrison Caviness, *Visualizing Women in the Middle Ages: Sight, Spectacle, and Scopic Economy* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 84.

<sup>13</sup> Katherine Lewis, "'Lete me suffre': Reading the Torture of St Margaret of Antioch in Late Medieval England," in *Medieval Women: Texts and Contexts in Late Medieval Britain: Essays for Felicity Riddy*, ed. Joselyn Wogan-Browne and Felicity Riddy (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2000), 73-74.

<sup>xiii</sup> Lewis, "Lete me suffe," 82.

<sup>15</sup> Robert Mills, *Suspended Animation: Pain, Pleasure, and Punishment in Medieval Culture* (London: Reaktion, 2006), 122.

<sup>16</sup> McNerney, *Eloquent Virgins*, 167.

made to omit these images from the saints' visual hagiographies. Instead, the images that are presented and the ways in which they are presented may well have been chosen to show the saints purely as agents of hope, intercession, and salvation.

### Saint Margaret of Antioch

According to her legend, Saint Margaret was raised by a Christian foster mother in Antioch (near the modern day city of Antakya, Turkey) in the early fourth century.<sup>17</sup> She refused the advances of the local Roman governor, Olybrius, who had her brutally tortured and imprisoned. While in her cell, she was swallowed by a dragon and escaped by pressing the sign of the cross into its side, which split the beast in two. Immediately after her escape she was attacked by a demon, which she promptly defeated. Olybrius, tired of Margaret's resolve and enraged by a mass conversion of his subjects to Christianity, ordered Margaret's execution. Before her beheading, she prayed to be given intercessory powers. Additionally, she asked that venerators who prayed to her, made donations in her name, or touched their body with a book containing Margaret's story would not suffer from miscarriage or death in pregnancy and their infants would be born free of deformities. Her request was granted by God and she was executed.



Figure 2. Detail of torture scene, Life of Saint Margaret, Fornovo di Taro, S Marian Assunta, c. 1200, Italy. Photography by Marten Kuilman; used by permission.

Narrative cycles of Margaret's hagiography generally emphasize her lengthy torment at the hands of Olybrius' men. For example, in a carved narrative panel (c.1200) that probably once served as an altar, pulpit, or presbytery enclosure in the local parish church of Fornovo di Taro, Margaret's flesh is cruelly scourged with forked hooks (Figure 2).<sup>18</sup> Her breasts are fully exposed and her genitals are obscured from the viewer only by her long braids. Her tormentors, whose gaping mouths and brutish faces indicate their ruthless nature, pull on the ropes binding her wrists so

<sup>17</sup> For variations of the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> century hagiographies of the saint, see Brigitte Cazelles, *The Lady As Saint: A Collection of French Hagiographic Romances of the Thirteenth Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991), 216-237.

<sup>18</sup> Dorothy Glass, "St. Margaret of Antioch at Fornovo di Taro," in *Medioevo: immagine e racconto, Atti del convegno Internazionale di studi, Parma, 27-30 settembre, 2000*, ed. A.C. Quintavalle (Milan: Electra 2003), 334. Fornovo di Taro was once a stop along the Via Francigena, which was the major pilgrimage route linking France to Rome through northern Italy. A variety of visitors would have passed through its doors and seen the relief. See Elizabeth Parker, "Modes of seeing Margaret of Antioch at Fornovo di Taro," in *The Four Modes of Seeing: Approaches to Medieval Imagery in Honor of Madeline Harrison Caviness*, ed. Evelyn Lane, Elizabeth Carson Pastan, and Ellen M. Shortell (Farnham, England: Ashgate, 2009), 280.

that escape is impossible.

In the scene above, Margaret is stripped to the waist and flagellated while Olybrius watches, his penetrating gaze directed towards her body.<sup>19</sup> Similar scenes appear in the stained glass at the Collegiate Chapel at Ardagger (c.1230-40) and at Auxerre Cathedral (c.1275-85).<sup>20</sup> In the window at Ardagger Margaret's torture is featured prominently: she is stripped to the waist, bound, beaten, flayed, and submerged headfirst in a vat of boiling water before she is finally decapitated.<sup>21</sup> Likewise, at the cathedral of Auxerre, a topless Margaret is bound, beaten, and boiled before her beheading. Her gaze is downcast and her expression despondent (Figure 3). In all three narratives, Margaret is either partially or completely nude when she is tortured. Her nudity serves to further humiliate and punish her for her disobedience.<sup>22</sup>

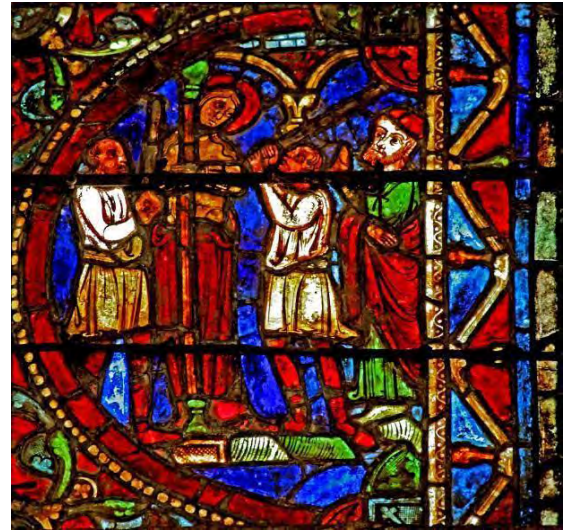


Figure 3. Saint Margaret is beaten. Auxerre Cathedral, Life of Saint Margaret Window, mid-late 13th century, France. Photography by Painton Cowen; used by permission.

Visual narratives depicting Margaret's nudity and torture are confined neither to the locations discussed here nor to the medium of stained glass. Images from her hagiography appear in a variety of media including paintings, frescoes, and manuscripts, and are rife with her physical torments. One particularly imaginative illumination in a fifteenth-century book of hours from Normandy depicts a semi-nude Margaret suspended by her hair while being flogged by Olybrius' men.<sup>23</sup> A late thirteenth-century stained glass window at the cathedral of Clermont-Ferrand contains images of Margaret roasting on a grill; her clothes are incinerated but she escapes unharmed. Such colorful and inventive images of torture however, do not appear at Chartres. Margaret's portrayal at Chartres shows a different side of the saint's *vita*. In lieu of her ability to withstand torture, the focus of the panels is on the strength of Margaret's faith and her redemptive powers. She is presented as active, fearless, and unmistakably powerful. This is especially striking in the case of her confrontation with the dragon and her martyrdom.

<sup>19</sup> Parker, "Modes of seeing," 280.

<sup>20</sup> Caviness, *Visualizing Women*, 104.

<sup>21</sup> Caviness, *Visualizing Women*, 104. The window dates to 1230-1240 and was donated by Provost Henry. See Emanuel S. Klinkenberg, *Compressed Meanings: The Donor's Model in Medieval Art to Around 1300: Origin, Spread and Significance of an Architectural Image in the Realm of Tension between Tradition and Likeness* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2009), 231.

<sup>22</sup> Mills, *Suspended Animation*, 114.

<sup>23</sup> Folio 144r, MS. Rawl. liturg. e. 12, Bodleian Library, University of Oxford.



Figure 4. The dragon appears in Margaret's cell. Ardagger Collegiate Chapel, Life of Saint Margaret Window, mid-late 13th century, France. Photography by Martin Aigner; used by permission.



Figure 5. Margaret emerges from the dragon unharmed. Saints Margaret and Catherine Window, Chartres Cathedral, c. 1220-1240, France. Photography by Stuart Whatling; used by permission.

The windows at Ardagger and Auxerre both depict Margaret just as the dragon appears in her cell (Figure 4). In both scenes Margaret raises her arms in front of her body in a gesture of alarm, and appears to be stepping away from the beast. At Chartres however, Margaret is shown triumphantly after having escaped from the beast's belly (Figure 5). In her right hand she firmly grasps the means of her delivery from evil, a large white cross, while an angel at her side confirms the presence of the divine throughout her tribulations. Aside from the figure of the Virgin Mary in the donor panel, this is the only instance in which any of the window's saints directly face the viewer. This pose not only conveys a sense of force and power but it is also visually clear. Margaret's static posture, cross in hand and dragon at foot, recalls devotional statues of the saint and offers the viewer a figure with whom they can directly communicate. The placement of this roundel in the lower portion of the window is not coincidental; at Chartres Margaret was intended to offer the devoted a venerable figure who is not only reassuring but also accessible.

Margaret's martyrdom at Chartres also presents her as a fearless agent of hope. At Ardagger, Olybrius' order condemning Margaret to death and her execution are combined into one somewhat jarring scene (Figure 6). Margaret has already been decapitated; her head is clearly separated from her body. This manner of representing the saint deprives her of her agency, or her ability to exert power and act on her own behalf, and one of the most important aspects of her legend. It is not visually clear if her prayer to become protector of parturient women is granted, although perhaps this was of no importance to Henry, the window's donor and a secular cleric who was the provost of the church.<sup>24</sup> However, Margaret's execution at Auxerre displays a similar amount of violence

<sup>24</sup> Klinkenberg, *Compressed Meanings*, 231.





Figure 6. The Martyrdom of Saint Margaret. Ardagger Collegiate Chapel, Life of Saint Margaret Window, c. 1220-1240, Austria. Photography by Martin Aigner; used by permission.



Figure 7. The Martyrdom of Saint Margaret. Auxerre Cathedral, Life of Saint Margaret Window, c. 1220-1240, Austria. Photography by Painton Cowen; used by permission.



Figure 8. The Martyrdom of Saint Margaret. Saints Margaret and Catherine Window, Chartres Cathedral, c. 1220-1240, France. Photography by Stuart Whatling; used by permission.

(Figure 7). The window's donor is unknown, but its audience certainly would have consisted of local lay people, visitors, and ecclesiastics.<sup>25</sup> Although the Hand of God reaches from the heavens to touch Margaret's head, her executioner grips her aggressively by the hair to bend her toward him. Margaret is kneeling with her hands clasped in prayer, but this causes her to appear to be cowering before the executioner. At Chartres, however, Margaret faces away from her executioner and looks towards the sky where the Hand of God emerges to touch her halo (Figure 8). Although she kneels, she is depicted as a larger figure than her executioner. This hierarchy of scale is a method employed to emphasize her power and importance. Margaret's depiction here emphasizes her connection with God and visually confirms that her request to be given the means to protect pregnant women was granted. Thus Margaret's martyrdom at Chartres does not convey a sense of violence but rather one of hope.

The narrative images of Saint Margaret at Chartres, Fornovo di Taro, Ardagger, and Auxerre would have had relatively similar audiences of local laypersons, ecclesiastics, and visitors. Yet the selections from Margaret's life displayed at Fornovo di Taro, Ardagger, and Auxerre are peppered with violence and deprive Margaret of some aspects of her agency. These emphases could stem from similarities in patronage, although unfortunately neither the patron from Auxerre nor Fornovo di Taro is known.<sup>26</sup> What is known, however, is that the Chartres window depicts a story that emphasizes a very different side of Saint Margaret's hagiography. This has been ignored by previous scholars, some of whom have even argued that Margaret's presence at Chartres "reinforces chastity

<sup>25</sup> For more information on the cathedral of Auxerre, its history, and its glazing program, see *Inventaire Général des monuments et richesses artistiques de la France, Les vitraux de Bourgogne, Franche-Comté et Rhône-Alps* (Paris: Editions du centre national de la recherche scientifique, 1986) 111-127.

<sup>26</sup> At Auxerre, the windows of Saints Catherine and Margaret were undertaken during the early- to mid-thirteenth century glazing program overseen by Bishop Henri de Villeneuve, but neither window has a donor panel and patronage remains unclear. See *Inventaire Général des monuments et richesses artistiques de la France, Les vitraux de Bourgogne*, 111, 117, and 120-121. The Fornovo di Taro panel's original function, placement, date, and patron are unknown. See Glass, *St. Margaret of Antioch*, 334.

... as well as passivity” as attributes for women and “serves as a reminder to women of their painful duty as a result of Eve’s sin,” namely, childbirth.<sup>27</sup> This may be the case for other visual hagiographies of Saint Margaret, but nowhere does Margaret seem more in control of her own body and her fate than at Chartres. While it may be argued that Margaret presents chastity as a *possibility* for women, this is clearly not the overall message of her story. And at Chartres Saint Margaret is anything but passive. She bursts forth powerfully from the dragon, aggressively batters the demon who attempted to torment her, reproaches Olybrius as she is led to her execution, and uses her final moments on earth to request protection for those most vulnerable. While Margaret may have reminded the female viewer of childbirth, it is clear that at Chartres she exists to protect pregnant women. Her proximity to the divine, and thus her ability to intercede on a venerator’s behalf, is emphasized by the inclusion of either angels or the Hand of God in every panel. She always appears as bold and triumphant. The saint’s presence at the cathedral would surely have comforted the viewer.

In comparison with other depictions, this window presents an empowering version of Margaret’s legend to its audience. Although Margaret was a virgin martyr who underwent many physical torments, these aspects of her story do not define her at Chartres. Perhaps the window’s donor chose not to include scenes of Margaret’s torture in the window because the saint represented more than a woman who was able to withstand physical torment without losing her faith. To Marguerite, and undoubtedly other venerator, Saint Margaret represented strength in the face of obstacles and unfaltering trust in God. While other visual narratives depict the saint in a way that seems to undermine this strength, Marguerite’s window shows a passionate and active side of female piety that might have been tailored to the taste and spiritual needs of its audience.<sup>28</sup> This relationship between audience and image is made more apparent by the presence of similar themes of strength and agency in the visual narrative of the second saint depicted in the window, Catherine of Alexandria.

### Saint Catherine of Alexandria

Saint Catherine’s story at Chartres occupies the four topmost roundels of the window, and presents a longer and more complex narrative that comprises sixteen panels. According to her legend, Catherine lived in Alexandria, Egypt, in the early fourth century. She was a highly educated king’s daughter and a convert to Christianity.<sup>29</sup> When Catherine confronted Roman emperor Maxentius about his persecution of Christians, he promptly had her imprisoned. Maxentius assembled his fifty most skilled pagan philosophers to debate her, but was infuriated when she converted them to Christianity. Maxentius had the philosophers burned to death and had Catherine

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<sup>27</sup> Barbara Fontana Yontz, *Images of Women at Chartres Cathedral: The Virgin Mary and Eve* (M.A. Thesis, Vanderbilt University, 1999), 64.

<sup>28</sup> Pearce, “The Cult of St Margaret of Antioch,” 81.

<sup>29</sup> Cazelles, *The Lady as Saint*, 137.

tortured and imprisoned without food or water for her refusal to recant. Catherine was visited in prison by Christ, by angels who served her the Eucharist for sustenance, and by the empress, whom she converted to Christianity. Enraged at her survival, Maxentius constructed a large toothed wheel on which she would be tortured. However, God interceded on her behalf and broke the wheel, killing many onlookers in the process. Tired of Catherine's continued survival and incensed at his wife's conversion, Maxentius condemned both women. The empress was tortured and executed, and Catherine was beheaded, but not before her prayer to be granted intercessory powers was answered.

As a result of her successful argument against the pagan philosophers, Saint Catherine was an intellectual heroine and the patron saint of scholars and jurists. Bold, quick witted, and resolute, Catherine was not only able to argue successfully in defense of her faith, but also to convert the staunchest of nonbelievers to Christianity—Maxentius withstanding. Catherine's cult reached popularity in the west later than that of Saint Margaret and was first seen at St.-Trinité-du-Mont in Rouen in the mid-eleventh century.<sup>30</sup> Images from her *vita* developed in Western Europe especially during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries and appear in a variety of media including frescoes, sculpture, textiles, manuscripts, metalwork, glass, and paintings.<sup>31</sup> Favored scenes from her life include her triumph over the wheel and her martyrdom by decapitation. The earliest surviving depiction of Catherine in French stained glass is at the Cathedral of Saint Maurice in Angers (c.1190-1210), although she appears in the thirteenth-century glazing programs of the cathedrals of Le Mans, Dol, Rouen, Chartres, and Auxerre, and the abbeys of Fécamp and St. Père de Chartres.<sup>32</sup> Since there was less visual precedent of the saint's hagiography at the time the Chartres windows were installed, the window's donor may have had more freedom to select which scenes from Catherine's life to include in the glass.<sup>33</sup> This could be why some of the images, such as the torture and burial of the empress, are included at Chartres but are rarely seen elsewhere.<sup>34</sup>

Catherine's inclusion in the Chartres glazing program probably reflects her importance to Marguerite de Lèves.<sup>35</sup> A woman of Marguerite's station would likely have been educated, and Catherine's role as a patron saint of female intellectuals could certainly reflect this aspect of Marguerite's life.<sup>36</sup> Catherine's appearance at Chartres may have also been influenced by her popularity among the lay people, or the acquisition of one of her relics by the cathedral, the burgeoning cathedral school, or Countess Catherine of Clermont-en-Beauvais, who held the territory of Chartres in the early thirteenth century.<sup>37</sup> In her comprehensive survey of the

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<sup>30</sup> McInerney, *Eloquent Virgins*, 168.

<sup>31</sup> Manhès-Deremble and Deremble, *Les vitraux narratifs*, 133.

<sup>32</sup> Manhès-Deremble and Deremble, *Les vitraux narratifs*, 133-134.

<sup>33</sup> Manhès-Deremble and Deremble, *Les vitraux narratifs*, 133.

<sup>34</sup> Manhès-Deremble and Deremble, *Les vitraux narratifs*, 133.

<sup>35</sup> McInerney, *Eloquent Virgins*, 168.

<sup>36</sup> For information on Marguerite's lineage and family history, see footnote 2.

<sup>37</sup> For more about the relation of Catherine's cult at Chartres to the acquisition of her relic by the cathedral, see Claudine Lautier, "Les vitraux de la cathédral de Chartres: reliques et images," *Bulletin Monumental* 161 (2003): 28. The territory of Chartres was acquired by Countess Catherine after her husband, Louis I of Blois, died in the Fourth Crusade. Manhès-Deremble and Deremble, *Les vitraux narratifs*, 62.

iconography of the Chartres glazing program, Colette Manhès-Deremble noted that the radiating chapel in which the window of Margaret and Catherine is located bears the theme of saints who quarreled with, confronted, or attempted to convert authority figures.<sup>38</sup> These saints are Remigius, who converted Frankish king Clovis I at Queen Clothilde's request; Nicholas, who confronted the authorities on a variety of occasions and was imprisoned for proselytizing; and the recently deceased Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Beckett, who was murdered after a dispute with King Henry II of England. I would like to expand on this analysis by calling attention to the construction of Catherine's story at Chartres, which reflects some important concerns of venerators and emphasizes the saint's role as an intercessor and an agent of hope and salvation.

At Chartres, Catherine is shown not as the victim of a wicked emperor's whims, but as a force with which to be reckoned. As is the case with Saint Margaret, Catherine's hagiography presents her as an active woman who boldly seeks out her own fate. She is not shown nude, restrained, or explicitly tortured, as she is elsewhere. Although Catherine's legend is one of the least bloody virgin martyr hagiographies, narrative images of her life often include scenes of her being beaten at the hands of Maxentius' men. Stained glass windows at the cathedrals of Angers (c.1190-1210) and Auxerre (mid-thirteenth century) both depict Catherine stripped and beaten. At Angers two men raise large clubs at the saint while Maxentius gives the order for her torture (Figure 9).<sup>39</sup> Catherine is completely nude. To obscure her genitals from the viewer, she crosses her legs and attempts to cover her breasts with her bound hands. Catherine is clearly cognizant of her nudity and seeks to obscure it. At Auxerre, Catherine is shown stripped to the waist twice: first when she is bound to a post and flagellated, and second when she is tortured on the wheel with her arms tied above her head, her bare torso fully exposed (Figure 10). Although it has been broken, the spikes of the wheel remain, grinding into Catherine's bare flesh. The window at Chartres, however, includes neither images of Catherine's nudity nor her bludgeoning. She is twice shown being led to prison by men wielding sticks, though she is never actually beaten by them. The threat of violence is suggested, but the action remains incomplete. The portrayal of Saint Catherine at Chartres focuses instead on the divine gift of her intellect, her ability to convert nonbelievers to Christianity, and her close relationship with God in all forms.



Figure 9. Catherine is beaten. St. Catherine Window, Angers, c. 1190-1210, France. Photography by Stuart Whatling; used by permission.

<sup>38</sup> Manhès-Deremble and Deremble, *Les vitraux narratifs*, 62. Unfortunately the easternmost window of the chapel, bay window 10, has been lost and was replaced with grisaille. Manhès-Deremble and Deremble suggests that St. Denis would have been an appropriate saint to have been depicted in this window.

<sup>39</sup> For an in-depth analysis of this window, see Karine Boulanger, *Les vitraux de la cathédrale d'Angers* (Paris: CTHS, 2010), 204-207.





Figure 10. Catherine is tortured on the wheel. St. Catherine Window, Angers, c. 1190-1210, France. Photography by Painton Cowen; used by permission.



Figure 11. Catherine confronts Maxentius. Saints Margaret and Catherine Window, Auxerre Cathedral, c. 1220-1240, France. Photography by Stuart Whatling; used by permission.

and the philosophers at Angers and St. Père de Chartres, these actions are not explicitly linked to divinity—neither the Holy Spirit nor angels accompany her. Although it can be argued that this affords Catherine a sense of personal agency, I would argue that Catherine's agency is even stronger at Chartres, where she retains her personal ability to exert power but is also explicitly supported by the divine.

The presence of the Hand of God, the figure of Christ, angels, and the Holy Spirit throughout the panels also serve to underscore the saint's agency, the redemption she promised

The Chartres window is unusual in the explicit linking of Catherine's intellect to the divine, as well as her use of speech as a device to defend her faith. In the first panel of her story, Catherine confronts Maxentius for his mistreatment of Christians in the Roman Empire (Figure 11). The Holy Dove touches its beak to the saint's head to impart divine wisdom upon her. She carries a book, an emblem of her learnedness, and raises her hand to Maxentius in a gesture of speech. Maxentius mirrors this gesture, acknowledging Catherine's presence and indicating that the two are in dialogue. These gestures are repeated both in Catherine's debate with the philosophers, during which she is accompanied by an angel, and in a rarer scene in which she refuses Maxentius' order that she worship a golden pagan statue. Her speech demonstrates that she is an agent of God's will on Earth, and also that she retains her own agency. She is supported by a divine being in her argument with the pagan philosophers, but she refuses to worship false idols on her own accord. While Catherine's gestures of speech are not unusual in stained glass, appearing in the windows of both Angers and St. Père de Chartres (c. 1260-70), they are notably omitted from the depiction of her meeting with Maxentius at Auxerre (Figure 12). Catherine carries her signature book in one hand, but the other is gripped by one of Maxentius' men. The emperor is shown addressing her, but her ability to respond is restricted and her agency is thus limited. While Catherine is shown speaking to and debating with Maxentius



Figure 12. Catherine is brought before Maxentius. Auxerre Cathedral, mid-late 13<sup>th</sup> century, France. Photography by Painton Cowen; used by permission.



Figure 13. a (lower) The philosophers are executed; b (upper) their souls are transported to heaven. Chartres Cathedral, c. 1220-1240, France. Photography by Stuart Whatling; used by permission.

stained glass window dedicated to two tortured martyrs portray only the torment of the formerly pagan empress? I believe that in keeping with the overall theme of the window of Margaret and Catherine at Chartres, this single torture scene underscores Catherine's intellectual prowess by emphasizing her successful conversion of pagans who knew that they would be tortured and killed for their newfound faith. The scene of the empress' torture and burial also serve a didactic purpose, reminding the viewer that one must be prepared to die in defense of their faith, no matter how recently acquired. The Hand of God emerges from the heavens to bless her at her final hour, and an angel appears above her burial, affirming the presence of the divine both at her death and at Catherine's execution, which is depicted in

converts, and her intercessory abilities, all of which made Catherine an extremely popular saint and role model, especially for women. After Catherine converted the pagan philosophers and the empress, Maxentius had them executed. At Chartres the philosophers are shown being forced into a furnace, but in the panel immediately above this scene, two angels carry their souls to heaven (Figure 13). The flames rising from the furnace taper into the winding band upon which the angels stand, visually linking the two panels, confirming the redemption of the philosophers, and separating the heavens from the earth. This image is fairly unique. At St. Père de Chartres, as Catherine prays nearby, the Hand of God blesses the burning philosophers, but at Auxerre the divine is noticeably absent when they are forced into a large oven by a man wielding a sharp sword. The Angers window omits any visual reference to the philosophers' conversion, condemnation, and salvation, thus deemphasizing some of the most important aspects of Catherine's hagiography.

A similar theme of Catherine's power to redeem Christian converts is seen in images of the empress, whom Maxentius orders tortured by mastectomy and executed (Figure 14). The image of the empress' torment is the only explicit image of torture in the Chartres window, although she does conceal her breasts with her hands. Why would a



Figure 14. The empress is tortured. Saints Margaret and Catherine window, Chartres Cathedral, c. 1220-1240, France. Photography by Stuart Whatling; used by permission.



the adjoining panel. God's presence is notably absent from the empress' decapitation at Angers, and at St. Père de Chartres any reference to the empress' fate after her conversion is omitted. By depicting the conversion of the philosophers and empress, as well as their respective executions and eventual salvation, Catherine's powers as an intellectual and redeemer are strengthened at Chartres.



Figure 15. Christ serves the Eucharist to Catherine in prison. Saints Margaret and Catherine window, Chartres Cathedral, c. 1220-1240, France. Photography by Stuart Whatling; used by permission.

Finally, the window at Chartres Cathedral emphasizes Catherine's close relationship to God in all forms, which allows her to secure intercession for herself, for those she converts, and for her venerators. Catherine is visually linked to the Holy Spirit, angels, and Christ himself, who brings her the Eucharist while she is imprisoned (Figure 15). Although this image is not unique to Chartres, appearing as it does at both Angers and Auxerre, it deviates from Catherine's written hagiography, which specifies that Christ visited her in prison but that angels served her Communion.<sup>40</sup> Yves Delaporte argued that this was a misreading of Catherine's hagiography by the window's artists, but Manhès-Deremble links it to the twelfth century push by ecclesiastics to convince lay people that the Eucharist is the physical embodiment of Christ.<sup>41</sup> In any case, it serves to closely associate Catherine

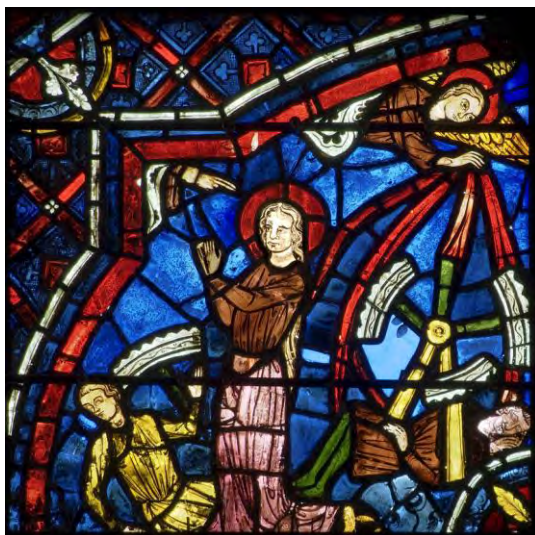


Figure 16. Catherine's wheel is broken. Saints Margaret and Catherine window, Chartres Cathedral, c. 1220-1240, France. Photography by Stuart Whatling; used by permission.



Figure 17. The empress visits Catherine in prison, who is accompanied by an angel (right and central panes); Catherine is executed (left panes). Saint Catherine window, St. Père de Chartres, c. 1260-1270, France. Photography by Painton Cowen; used by permission.

<sup>40</sup> Manhès-Deremble and Deremble, *Les vitraux narratifs*, 220 and Delaporte, *Les vitraux*, 255. Chartres' builders and artists were "certainly" aware of the stained glass program at Angers, which may have served as the inspiration for this image. See Manhès-Deremble and Deremble, *Les vitraux narratifs*, 134.

<sup>41</sup> Manhès-Deremble and Deremble, *Les vitraux narratifs*, 220.

with Christ, and develops her image as a saint who held the power to intercede on behalf of others. Catherine is also more closely associated with the divine in her encounter with the wheel, which is broken by an angel while God himself reaches down to bless her (Figure 16). St. Père de Chartres omits Catherine's ordeal with the wheel entirely, moving straight to her execution, from which the Hand of God is notably absent (Figure 17). At Angers, the Hand of God breaks the wheel, while at Auxerre, it is broken by angels. Even in the window of Saint Pantaleon, the other saint at Chartres who faces the ordeal of the wheel, the Hand of God alone breaks the wheel. The scene of Catherine's encounter with the wheel at Chartres recreates a moment when God's attention is focused solely on the saint and her prayers. Catherine's explicit association with the divine must have comforted viewers praying for intervention and intercession at Chartres.

Catherine's portrayal at Chartres differs greatly from her depiction at Angers, Auxerre, and Saint Père de Chartres. At the cathedral of Chartres, Catherine is not a victim of torture or bodily degradation. She retains a sense of great agency that is based on her intellect, her ability to convert nonbelievers, and her powerful skill as an intercessor through her intimate relationship with God in all forms. This is not to say that Catherine's torture was unimportant to her hagiography. Rather, it suggests that whoever donated or designed the window wished to focus on other aspects of Catherine's story. In this window, Catherine confronts the emperor not once as she does elsewhere, but twice, speaking for God and for herself. To underscore her abilities as an intercessor, the Hand of God, the Holy Spirit, angels, and Christ himself appear throughout the sixteen panels dedicated to her story. Half of the window's panels are dedicated to her encounters with the pagan philosophers and empress, and care is taken to visually confirm the receipt of their souls into heaven. Celebrated are Catherine's remarkable skills as an orator, her ability to make convincing arguments in defense of her faith, and her central role in the fulfillment of God's promise to grant salvation to his believers. The scenes selected to appear in Catherine's window at Chartres portray Catherine as a wise woman who actively sought out her fate, defended her faith, and convinced nonbelievers to convert. At Chartres, the story of Catherine provides an exemplar from which pious men and women could certainly take direction.

### **A Different Picture of Female Piety**

The Margaret and Catherine window at Chartres presents the two saints in a very different manner from their depictions elsewhere. In this window, violence is almost completely absent, and this fact, combined with an analysis of scenes of the saints at other places of worship, has led me to conclude that the donor of the Margaret and Catherine window at Chartres wanted to deliver a message that graphic torture scenes were unable to convey. There was no widespread effort to disguise violence at Chartres. Brutal torture and martyrdom appear throughout the cathedral, most notably in the Saint Pantaleon window, which is located in the radiating chapel across the apse from that in which Margaret and Catherine appear. The unfortunate Pantaleon is boiled in a cauldron of lead, tied to a cross and beaten, weighted down and thrown into the sea, thrown to wild beasts,

tortured on the wheel, and finally beheaded. The similarities between his legend and that of Catherine are striking: they are both imprisoned for their faith, visited by Christ in prison, saved by God from their torture on the wheel, and finally, both are executed by Roman emperors who happen to be father and son.<sup>42</sup>

According to their legends and graphically detailed visual hagiographies in other houses of worship, Margaret and Catherine were brutally tortured. Yet, these scenes were purposefully omitted from their window at Chartres. At Chartres, the two female saints are subjects, not objects; they act, instead of being acted upon. The visual narrative focuses on Margaret's protective abilities, especially towards parturient women and their infants, her spiritual and physical strength, and her unfaltering faith in God. Saint Catherine's narrative focuses on her intellect, her ability to provide redemption to pagan converts, and her personal relationship with Christ and God, who not only offer her their protection but also emphasize her status as an intercessor. The scenes of these two saints' lives reflect the important concerns of pious people like Marguerite de Lèves who sought protection, intercession, and hope through salvation. The window of Saints Margaret and Catherine at Chartres offers the viewer an inspiring, hopeful, and different picture of female piety.

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<sup>42</sup> According to his legend, Saint Pantaleon was martyred by Maximian, the father of Maxentius. See Manhès-Deremble and Deremble, *Les vitraux narratifs*, 62.

## *Hate and Hermeneutics: Interpretive Authority in Luther's On the Jews and Their Lies*

By Jared M. Halverson

Hailed by reform-minded contemporaries for tacking Catholicism to a Wittenberg door, Martin Luther has more recently been excoriated for nailing Judaism to the wall. His 1543 diatribe, *On the Jews and Their Lies*, which foreshadowed many of the Nazi atrocities during the Holocaust, was considered regrettable even by Luther's friends and has been either an enigma or an embarrassment to students of Luther ever since. It remained under a "ban of oblivion" for nearly three centuries and was not even translated into English until 1971—even then, as the American edition apologized, "for historical purposes only, in order that the record of Luther's thought and writing might be complete."<sup>1</sup> Since that time numerous studies have appeared attempting either to explain or to explain away Luther's anti-Semitism. Adding to that number (hopefully in the former category), the present examination of Luther's most infamous anti-Jewish treatise is intended neither to excuse Luther's vitriol nor to revel in what one scholar called the "excellent chance to see one of the great men of Christendom with his pants down."<sup>2</sup> Rather, I offer a brief rhetorical critique of Luther's polemic that makes three interrelated assertions: first, that the focus of Luther's anti-Judaism was primarily scriptural, centering on contested exegesis of a text central to both communities; second, that in attacking the Jews, Luther intended additionally (and perhaps even primarily) to target Catholicism, his true rival in the contest over scriptural interpretation; and third, that Luther's rhetoric of ridicule—a caustic blend of sarcasm, invective, and low-brow scatology—was central rather than secondary to his more rational arguments, an admission that logic alone is insufficient when settling religious questions in the absence of agreed-upon authorities. In short, I argue that Luther's *On the Jews and Their Lies* is illustrative of the ongoing debate over scriptural interpretation in

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<sup>1</sup> On the "ban of oblivion" see Johannes Wallmann, "The Reception of Luther's Writings on the Jews from the Reformation to the End of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century," in *Stepping Stones to Further Jewish-Lutheran Relations: Key Lutheran Statements*, ed. Harold H. Ditmanson (Minneapolis: Augsburg Press, 1990), 120–36. See also Eric W. Gritsch, *Martin Luther's Anti-Semitism: Against His Better Judgment* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012), 97–136. For a broader discussion of reasons "why Luther scholars have been brief in their allusions to the later writings," and for some of the ramifications (and examples) of this neglect, see Heiko Oberman, "Teufelsdröck: Eschatology and Scatology in the 'Old' Luther," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 19, no. 3 (1988): 435–50. The apology for the treatise's inclusion appears in Franklin Sherman's "Introduction to Volume 47" of *Luther's Works*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut T. Lehmann (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), x.

<sup>2</sup> Steven Rowan, "Luther, Bucer and Eck on the Jews," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 16, no. 1 (1985): 80.

the Reformation era, an attempt to sidestep the question of interpretive authority as nascent Protestantism sought to replace the Catholic Magisterium with a *sola scriptura* rationalist hermeneutic.

## Exegetical Adversaries

One of Luther's more careful examiners places at the root of Luther's anti-Semitism a perceived distinction between the "faithful Israel" of Hebrew scripture and the anti-Christian Judaism that grew up in its place—what Luther caustically called the "rotten, stinking, rejected dregs of their fathers' lineage!"<sup>3</sup> Even before posting his ninety-five theses, the young Luther taught that the Jews had been "uprooted from the olive tree and the church," and, more significantly, "from faith and a true understanding of Scripture."<sup>4</sup> In Luther's mind the former was a direct result of the latter—Judaism's ecclesiastical exclusion coming in consequence of its scriptural incomprehension, namely, Judaism's willful ignorance of the allegorical Christocentricity of the Old Testament. "At issue" in all of Luther's anti-Judaic writing "is the interpretation of the Bible by Christians and Jews," making *On the Jews and Their Lies* a war over the word.<sup>5</sup>

Luther voices his concern with scriptural ignorance and misinterpretation in the treatise's opening lines, afraid that "those miserable and accursed" Jews would find it "an easy task" to lure Christians away from the true faith "wherever God's word is absent."<sup>6</sup> The Jews "turned against Scripture," Luther charges, "and have boldly tried to take it from us and to pervert it with strange and different interpretations. . . . They have done nothing these fourteen hundred years but take any verse which we Christians apply to our Messiah and violate it, tear it to bits, crucify it, and twist it in order to give it a different nose and mask." More explicitly, he concludes: "They deal with it as their fathers dealt with our Lord Christ on Good Friday."<sup>7</sup> Here Luther makes clear his association of the word of God with the Son of God, affirming his position that the Old Testament was meant to be read through an allegorical lens that points to Jesus as the promised Messiah. Thus Luther could claim even the Hebrew Scriptures as an essentially Christian book. Note his reversal of the reception history of that record: the Christians had not appropriated and reinterpreted the Jewish scriptures; rather, the Jews were trying to wrestle the Christian Old Testament away from the Christian church.

Mirroring the Bible's "jealous God" with his own version of scriptural jealousy, Luther refuses to surrender any ground to the Jewish claim to scripture. He even contests New Testament texts that he admitted were "commonly accepted" as pro-Jewish by the early fathers of the Christian church, dismissing such texts as "so obscure" as to be inconclusive, and later affirming that he did

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<sup>3</sup> Gritsch, *Anti-Semitism*, 35-36, 47. Martin Luther, "On the Jews and Their Lies," trans. Martin H. Bertram, in *Luther's Works*, 241.

<sup>4</sup> Luther, "Lectures on the Psalms" (1513-15), quoted in Gritsch, *Anti-Semitism*, 38.

<sup>5</sup> Gritsch, *Anti-Semitism*, 47, 51.

<sup>6</sup> Luther, "On the Jews," 137.

<sup>7</sup> Luther, "On the Jews," 238.

“not have any Scripture” to suggest a positive outlook for “all these children of the devil.”<sup>8</sup> In one of his more violent rhetorical outbursts he descends to a string of standard anti-Semitic stereotypes intensified with a touch of scatology, worth reproducing in full only because it dramatizes Luther’s zealousness for scriptural purity:

Shame on you, here, there, or wherever you may be, you damned Jews, that you dare to apply this earnest, glorious, comforting word of God so despicably to your mortal, greedy belly, which is doomed to decay, and that you are not ashamed to display your greed so openly. You are not worthy of looking at the outside of the Bible, much less of reading it. You should read only the bible that is found under the sow’s tail, and eat and drink the letters that drop from there. That would be a bible for such prophets, who root about like sows and tear apart like pigs the words of the divine Majesty, which should be heard with all honor, awe, and joy.<sup>9</sup>

Either unwilling or unable to recognize the polyvalence of the biblical text (and therefore the plausibility of the Jewish position), Luther expresses from the start that he has no intention “to learn from them how they interpret or understand Scripture.”<sup>10</sup> “You cannot learn anything from them except how to misunderstand the divine commandments,” he says elsewhere, and later complains of their “erring arbitrariness.”<sup>11</sup> In Luther’s depiction, what made the Jews “very ignorant teachers and indolent pupils of Scripture,” was their “[departure] from the clear meaning of the text.”<sup>12</sup> Indeed, the “clarity” of the Bible (which in Luther’s mind was a function of its Christocentricity) is affirmed over thirty times in the treatise, suggesting that anyone who disagreed with the obvious interpretation—that is, Luther’s interpretation—was either ignorantly unable or obstinately unwilling to see the plain meaning of the text. “Anyone who would venture to contradict such clear and convincing statements of Scripture,” he writes in a representative example of overconfident exegesis, “must be either the devil himself or whoever is his follower.”<sup>13</sup> The Bible’s “clear and manifest truth” left Christians “sure and certain” of their understanding of scripture, while its “lightning and thunder,” he hoped, would “smash, or at least soften” the Jews.<sup>14</sup> Yet even this seemed unlikely to Luther. The Jews “perverted and falsified all of Scripture with their mendacious glosses”; they taught “what their false imagination smuggles into Scripture”; and they “compos[ed] their own Bible out of their own mad heads.”<sup>15</sup> How could they do otherwise? With such indisputable evidence in support of Christianity’s claims, “it is necessary for the Jews to lie and to misinterpret their error over against such a clear and powerful

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<sup>8</sup> Luther, “Lectures on Romans” (1515–16) and “On the Shem Hamphoras and the Genealogy of Christ” (1543), both cited in Gritsch, *Anti-Semitism*, 40–41.

<sup>9</sup> Luther, “On the Jews,” 212.

<sup>10</sup> Luther, “On the Jews,” 137.

<sup>11</sup> Luther, “On the Jews,” 172, 247.

<sup>12</sup> Luther, “On the Jews,” 204, 186.

<sup>13</sup> Luther, “On the Jews,” 199.

<sup>14</sup> Luther, “On the Jews,” 206.

<sup>15</sup> Luther, “On the Jews,” 156, 174, 214.



text.” With characteristic hyperbole he concludes: “Even if they were to lie for a hundred thousand years and call all the devils in to aid them, they would still come to naught.”<sup>16</sup>

In *On the Jews and Their Lies*, Luther’s concern is scriptural from start to finish. Though other scholars are correct in identifying four overlapping themes in this polemic, Luther’s emphasis on Jewish misinterpretation of scripture undergirds each one.<sup>17</sup> He dwells at length on Jewish ethnocentrism, for example, but culminates his criticism with the assertion that their pride has made it impossible for them to “hear, see, or feel their own clear Scripture, which they read daily with blind eyes overgrown with a pelt thicker than the bark of an oak tree.”<sup>18</sup> Later he bluntly calls the “genuine Jew” a “devil incarnate,” but only because they “[dared] to juggle the awesome word of God so frivolously and shamefully.”<sup>19</sup> At various times he calls Jewish rabbis “night herons and screech owls,” “holy, circumcised ravens,” and “ignorant, untutored asses,” but in each instance he does so in context of what he considers their mutilation of the word of God.<sup>20</sup> “Note how arbitrarily they pervert and twist the prophets’ books with their confounded glosses,” he says elsewhere, “They can no longer stone or kill the prophets physically,” so they “spiritually mutilate, strangle, and maltreat their beautiful verses.”<sup>21</sup> This was Luther’s overarching complaint against the Jews: the “tearing apart and turning upside down [of] God’s word *for us*” (emphasis added).<sup>22</sup> Luther saw the Bible—including the Old Testament portion the Jews refused to surrender—as intended for and belonging to those who recognized its fulfillment in Jesus. Rebuffing Christianity’s claims, the Jews, Luther complained, were like the spoiled child more willing to break the toy than return it to its rightful owner. “They will have nothing of this Jesus, even if they must pervert all of Scripture, have no god, and never get a Messiah. That’s the way they want it.”<sup>23</sup> “If the Jews would only let Holy Scripture be God’s word,” he laments earlier, they would recognize their error and accept Jesus as their Messiah. Instead, “they will rather tear and pervert Scripture until it is no longer Scripture,” leaving them with “neither Messiah nor Scripture” to call their own.<sup>24</sup>

## Targeting Catholicism

Of course, the Jews were not the only group Luther accused of losing its birthright by mistreating the word of God. He saw Turks, Anabaptists, Sabbatarians, and especially Catholics doing the same, and he attacked their interpretations no less vehemently in other writings. As one student of Luther’s

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<sup>16</sup> Luther, “On the Jews,” 252.

<sup>17</sup> Gritsch calls the treatise “an instruction to other Christians in four parts” which are meant, respectively, to expose the unfounded ethnocentrism of the Jews, establish Jesus as the true Messiah, defend Christianity against Jewish slanders, and recommend violent treatment of the offending Jews. Gritsch, *Anti-Semitism*, 79–89.

<sup>18</sup> Luther, “On the Jews,” 155.

<sup>19</sup> Luther, “On the Jews,” 213.

<sup>20</sup> Luther, “On the Jews,” 244, 246, 247.

<sup>21</sup> Luther, “On the Jews,” 163–64.

<sup>22</sup> Luther, “On the Jews,” 247.

<sup>23</sup> Luther, “On the Jews,” 238.

<sup>24</sup> Luther, “On the Jews,” 192.

anti-Semitism has observed, “Luther treated the Jews in no way different than he treated all those he considered opponents of the Gospel.” While this may be overstating the case somewhat, it is true that Luther’s “opposition to all these groups was alike in intensity and tone.”<sup>25</sup> The Jews were simply ideal types of those who opposed the gospel (as Luther defined the gospel) and could therefore represent any of Luther’s other opponents. Thus it appears in *On the Jews and Their Lies* that Luther was employing the Jews as an archetype of all who opposed the pure gospel. This is not to say Luther’s anti-Judaism was merely rhetorical, for sadly, it was real. Rather, this is to argue that in Luther’s hands the Jews—long cast within medieval anti-Semitism as both scapegoat and straw man—were a ready-made and recognizable stand-in for other enemies. The Jews provided Luther an opportunity to attack his principal adversaries while taking aim at a more acceptable foe.

In this treatise, after all, Luther’s audience was not Jewish, but Christian—people torn between traditional Catholicism and Lutheran reform. If any Jews should read it and be moved “to reform and repent,” Luther wrote, “so much the better,” but this time he was writing “for the strengthening of our faith” more than the conversion of others.<sup>26</sup> Though he occasionally referred to the Jews in the second person—“There, Jew, you have your boast”—he did so for rhetorical effect, as if challenging Jews to their faces.<sup>27</sup> More frequently he spoke of them in the third person, intending to “prove convincingly before God and the world” and “not before the Jews” that his views were correct.<sup>28</sup> This grew in part out of Luther’s pragmatism. After two decades of unsuccessfully proselytizing the Jews, he altered his approach and decided that in this polemic he would “not [be] talking with the Jews but about the Jews . . . so that our Germans, too, might be informed.”<sup>29</sup> Rabbi Josel of Rosheim, one of the few contemporary Jews who actually read the treatise, expressed surprise and sorrow, but not much alarm, at what he called the “tyrannical and outrageous treatment” Luther recommended against his “poor people.” In reality, Jews had little to fear from Luther’s treatise (at least not until the Nazi recuperation of the text), since it was largely ignored by German authorities and bemoaned by Luther’s closest associates.<sup>30</sup>

The common people were another story, however. Luther’s coarse rhetoric seems aimed at the German populace, those he was most concerned might be led astray by the “crass follies of the Jews in their belief and their exegesis of the Scriptures.”<sup>31</sup> But the Jews were never Luther’s principal foe. In spite of his avowal that he was writing to warn “the Christians to be on their guard against them,” the Jews were neither sufficiently successful in attracting converts nor sufficiently numerous in their own right to present a legitimate challenge to Luther’s burgeoning following.<sup>32</sup> That honor belonged to Catholicism—the object of his most significant reforms, the source of his most bitter opposition, and

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<sup>25</sup> Olaf Roynesdal, “Martin Luther and the Jews,” (PhD diss., Marquette University, 1986), 1–2 (abstract).

<sup>26</sup> Luther, “On the Jews,” 140, 149.

<sup>27</sup> Luther, “On the Jews,” 149.

<sup>28</sup> Luther, “On the Jews,” 142.

<sup>29</sup> Luther, “On the Jews,” 140.

<sup>30</sup> Eric W. Gritsch, *Martin—God’s Court Jester: Luther in Retrospect*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Ramsey, NJ: Sigler, 1991), 141.

<sup>31</sup> Luther, “On the Jews,” 140.

<sup>32</sup> Luther, “On the Jews,” 137.

the target of his most ongoing invective. In competition for Christian souls and the Christian scriptures, compared to the Pope, the rabbis were not rivals at all.

Beyond demolishing Judaism's interpretation of scripture, therefore, Luther intended to use the Jewish experience in Europe as a cautionary tale regarding the consequences of scriptural ignorance and abuse—charges he consistently leveled against Catholicism. In Judaism's case, Luther wrote, "Moses has become entirely unknown . . . just as the Bible became unknown under the papacy in our day."<sup>33</sup> The Jews were "sullied with rabbinical, foul ordinances and unbelief," which "corresponds to the situation of the papacy in our day, in which Christ and his word can hardly be recognized because of the great vermin of human ordinances."<sup>34</sup> And just as the rabbis held the Jews captive to their leadership, "in the same way the pope also held us captive" to his.<sup>35</sup> In each instance, that captivity involved monopolizing and misinterpreting the word of God, which they had been commanded to "teach and preserve" instead.<sup>36</sup> In this the papal "jackasses" were just as guilty as the Jewish scribes, leaving Luther "no longer amazed by . . . the Jews' blindness, obduracy, and malice, since I have to witness the same thing in the most holy fathers of the church."<sup>37</sup>

As with previous examples, Luther often makes explicit his association of Judaism with Catholicism. He compares the self-righteous Jews, for instance, with the "barefoot friars who possess so much excess of holiness" that they can sell indulgences to the unsuspecting poor.<sup>38</sup> He accuses both groups of hypocrisy, the vice-ridden Jews hiding behind the Mosaic Law and the "devilish" Catholics "[parading] about in the garb of a pope, cardinal, bishop, or pastor."<sup>39</sup> Elsewhere he links Jews and Catholics in their reliance on works to prove "they are God's people and church," when justification was to come by faith in Christ alone.<sup>40</sup> And just as the Jews had forfeited their status as God's chosen people, "similarly among us Christians the papists can no longer pass for the church." Both had substituted the word of God for the "empty husks" of sacramental ceremonialism, and as a result, both had "forfeited the right to teach."<sup>41</sup> In fact, of the two, "the papists" were doomed to suffer "far worse than did the Jews," since they "refuse to listen to [God's] word, but rather persecute it most terribly."<sup>42</sup> The pope, like the Jews before him, had separated work from word, and "in this way they lost God and his word and now no longer have any understanding of the Scriptures."<sup>43</sup> It was thus not Jews alone but "false Christians" who suffered for their rejection of scripture.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Luther, "On the Jews," 269.

<sup>34</sup> Luther, "On the Jews," 254.

<sup>35</sup> Luther, "On the Jews," 269.

<sup>36</sup> Luther, "On the Jews," 181.

<sup>37</sup> Luther, "On the Jews," 181, 177.

<sup>38</sup> Luther, "On the Jews," 172.

<sup>39</sup> Luther, "On the Jews," 169.

<sup>40</sup> Luther, "On the Jews," 175.

<sup>41</sup> Luther, "On the Jews," 162, 269.

<sup>42</sup> Luther, "On the Jews," 162.

<sup>43</sup> Luther, "On the Jews," 163.

<sup>44</sup> Luther, "On the Jews," 139.

Elsewhere Luther draws parallels between Judaism and Catholicism more implicitly. Just as his *sola scriptura* reforms were meant to remove Catholicism's post-biblical additions, he accuses the Jews of going beyond the Bible with "[addenda of] their own invention," "damnable supplement[s]" to scripture that went against Moses's command not to alter the word of God.<sup>45</sup> He chided the Jews for regarding "their rabbis, Talmudists, and Kokhbaites" as "more authoritative than all of Scripture," a possible dig against the professed interpretive authority of the Catholic Magisterium.<sup>46</sup> As he said in describing an earlier scriptural debate he had with a group of Jews, whenever he "forced them back to the text," they "fled from it, saying that they were obliged to believe their rabbis as [Catholics] do the pope and the doctors."<sup>47</sup> In both communities Luther saw the same "stony hearts and iron souls."<sup>48</sup> He blasted both for placing their trust in temporal power instead of divine grace and for hypocritically emphasizing personal holiness at the expense of Christ's atonement. Thus he could draw upon this pair of degenerate twins (and even turn them into a trio) when encouraging the faith of his readers: "Let us honor [God's] divine word and not neglect the time of grace, as Muhammad and the pope have already neglected it, becoming not much better than the Jews."<sup>49</sup>

As described in the previous section and as shown by these examples, Luther's concern through this polemic remained the interpretation of scripture, and in this he saw the papists as no less guilty than the Jews. He could have had both in mind when he wrote: "It is incumbent on all to know God's book. He did not reveal it to have it ignored [as the Catholics] or rejected [as the Jews]; he wants it to be known, and he excuses no one from this."<sup>50</sup> In Luther's mind, Jewish and Catholic anti-scripturalism were essentially the same. Like the "foxes of Samson," he wrote, their "heads turn away in different directions" but they are "tied together tail to tail."<sup>51</sup>

### Luther's Rhetoric of Ridicule

In a statement that centers on biblical exegesis (this paper's first point), that applies to Catholicism as readily as to Judaism (its second point), and that suggests Luther's obfuscatory rhetorical strategies (its third point), Luther refers to a contested verse and expresses disbelief that the devil could be "so powerful as to delude a person, to say nothing of an entire nation which boasts of being God's people, into believing something at variance with this clear text."<sup>52</sup> Convincing his readers of the belief behind this assertion—that biblical texts were unmistakably "clear" (and clearly in line with his own interpretations)—is the central aim of Luther's rhetoric, a

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<sup>45</sup> Luther, "On the Jews," 153.

<sup>46</sup> Luther, "On the Jews," 243.

<sup>47</sup> Luther, "On the Jews," 191-92.

<sup>48</sup> Luther, "On the Jews," 177.

<sup>49</sup> Luther, "On the Jews," 268.

<sup>50</sup> Luther, "On the Jews," 280.

<sup>51</sup> Luther, "On the Jews," 175.

<sup>52</sup> Luther, "On the Jews," 282.

rhetoric I label obfuscatory because its central purpose was to conceal. Whether aimed at Judaism, Catholicism, or both, Luther's rhetoric of ridicule was meant to obscure the plausibility of opposing arguments, hide the gravity of the contest, and conceal the lack of an authoritative arbiter to decide the case. Luther claims at the beginning of his treatise that it is "not [his] purpose to quarrel with the Jews" and he apparently meant it; the way he presents his case leaves the Jews no room to argue in return.<sup>53</sup>

In part he dismisses the Jewish argument by simply denying it has any basis in reason. Jews were without "a spark of reason or understanding" in them, "truly stupid fools, much more absurd than the Gentiles," and Christians could thus ignore their "raving, mad, and stupid folly."<sup>54</sup> The devil "not only robbed [the Jews] of a proper understanding of Scripture, but also of ordinary human reason, shame, and sense, and only works mischief with Holy Scripture through them."<sup>55</sup> One Jewish interpreter, Luther remarked, was "given to such nonsense that I am at a loss to know whether he is trying to walk on his head or on his ears."<sup>56</sup> In a particularly telling statement Luther writes: "We have seen this happen in the case of the papacy and of Muhammad. The example of the Jews demonstrates clearly how easily the devil can mislead people, after they once have digressed from the proper understanding of Scripture, into such blindness and darkness that it can be readily grasped and perceived simply by natural reason, yes, even by irrational beasts."<sup>57</sup> In this one statement Luther ties together a host of his rhetorical strands: Jews compared to Muslims and Catholics at one point and denied human rationality at another; contested texts presented as though they were demonstrably clear; devilish designs and spiritual blindness, all due to scriptural misinterpretation. Luther's own positions, meanwhile, are comparatively so incontestable that "no one can deny it, not even a Jew, try as hard as he may."<sup>58</sup>

Building on these *ad hominem* attacks against a de-rationalized Jewish straw man, Luther could, to borrow Aristotle's rhetorical terminology, elevate his *ethos* and justify his use of *pathos*, all while claiming to rely on *logos* alone. In other words, he could affirm his own authority, excuse his emotional appeals, and appear to be grounded in rational argumentation rather than mere brashness and bravado. Granted, in explaining Old Testament verses through his Christ-centered hermeneutical lens, Luther does provide rational explanations for the Christian position; however, he belies his confidence in the reasonableness of his own position not only by rejecting the potential rationality of the Jewish view, but also by dismissing the effectiveness of reason by questioning its need. After all, if Jews were "so blind and stupid" that they could not see that "the whole of Scripture" opposed their beliefs, then arguing with them rationally would make very little

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<sup>53</sup> Luther, "On the Jews," 137.

<sup>54</sup> Luther, "On the Jews," 139, 148, 140.

<sup>55</sup> Luther, "On the Jews," 213.

<sup>56</sup> Luther, "On the Jews," 190.

<sup>57</sup> Luther, "On the Jews," 253.

<sup>58</sup> Luther, "On the Jews," 210.

difference.<sup>59</sup> His lengthy exegetical arguments are frequently interrupted with protests that such argumentation was both unnecessary (as self-evident to intelligent Christians) and ineffectual (since the Jews were “beyond counsel and help”).<sup>60</sup> Explaining scripture to them was “like addressing a stump or a stone,” like “[talking] to an insane person,” “the same as preaching the gospel to a sow.”<sup>61</sup> “Even stone and wood, if endowed with a particle of reason, would have to yield” to Christianity’s superior light, yet the Jews “remain stone-blind, obdurate, immovable,” “as solid as an iron mountain,” and “harder than a diamond.”<sup>62</sup> Discussing “Markolf the mockingbird” (apparently a fairy tale or children’s story) with such a person would be a waste of time; how much more so the “exalted divine words” of God. Jews were simply not “worthy of wasting a single word on.”<sup>63</sup> Through this rhetoric of dismissal, Luther claims victory in the contest in part by pretending there is no contest. He appears to win a war he denies was being waged.

Sarcasm was another means to minimize the strength of his competition, as it allowed Luther to belittle the Jews through the mockery of false praise. He facetiously points out “what a fine people of God” they were and “what a fine job the Jews have done these fifteen hundred years with Scripture.”<sup>64</sup> Compared to such an exalted people, he adds in mock shame, “what a stench we poor [Christian] people are in their nostrils.”<sup>65</sup> He even warns Moses to “be careful” and calls Jeremiah a “wretched heretic” for daring to chasten such “a noble, chosen, holy, circumcised people of God.” “Well, well, my dear Jeremiah,” he continues, altering his tone, “you are surely dealing roughly and inconsiderately with the noble, chosen, holy, circumcised people of God. . . . For God’s sake, Jeremiah, stop talking like that!”<sup>66</sup> By engaging revered biblical figures in these imagined conversations, Luther enlists the prophets themselves on his side, as if the book’s inspired authors were equally disdainful of the Jews and shared in his biting humor. At the same time, this lighthearted banter so typical between friends—imagine Moses or Jeremiah joining Luther for one of his “table talks”—allows Luther to soften the edge of his rhetoric, as if the Jews were really not worth worrying about. Offering occasional relief from the harsh invective and bawdy ridicule that appears elsewhere in the treatise, Luther’s rhetoric oscillates between anger, disgust, and disdain, permitting Luther to appear simultaneously indignant and unconcerned, the Jews at once a danger and a farce.

Trumpeting the self-evidence of his own views, Luther could sidestep some controversies altogether. Concerning circumcision Luther shrugs, “Let the Jews fret about that! What does that matter to us Gentiles?”<sup>67</sup> Another issue he waves off by saying, “At the present we lack the time to

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<sup>59</sup> Luther, “On the Jews,” 150.

<sup>60</sup> Luther, “On the Jews,” 175.

<sup>61</sup> Luther, “On the Jews,” 159, 184, 170.

<sup>62</sup> Luther, “On the Jews,” 176, 173, 172, 206.

<sup>63</sup> Luther, “On the Jews,” 184.

<sup>64</sup> Luther, “On the Jews,” 145, 253.

<sup>65</sup> Luther, “On the Jews,” 149.

<sup>66</sup> Luther, “On the Jews,” 154.

<sup>67</sup> Luther, “On the Jews,” 158.

deal with this.”<sup>68</sup> Yet another he dismisses with the comment, “We shall let the Jews reconcile and interpret this as they will or can. For us this passage leaves no doubt.”<sup>69</sup> At various moments in the treatise he provides detailed exegesis on contested verses of scripture, but after dwelling at length on the Christian interpretation, he brushes aside any Jewish response as “nonsense . . . which would occur to none but a blinded rabbi.”<sup>70</sup> Their hermeneutical method must be “to close their eyes and ears, ignore Scripture and the history books, and let their imagination run freely.”<sup>71</sup> Recalling “a knavish trick” one former disputant had used against him, Luther likens it to “the rascal of whom [he] once heard as a young monk,” a man who “hacked the Lord’s Prayer to pieces and re-arranged it to read” differently. “That is the way the Jews tear apart the text wherever they can, solely for the purpose of spoiling the words of Scripture for us Christians, although it serves no purpose for them either.”<sup>72</sup> He responded to another Jewish interpretation by drawing an analogy to the kind of verbal incoherence that causes one to doubt the speaker’s sanity. Rather than argue over their absurdities, Luther suggests, “you would be tempted to rejoin: ‘God plant a kiss of peace on a sow’s rump! Where did you learn to jabber so foolishly?’”<sup>73</sup> In these instances, Luther’s rhetoric allows him to minimize the need for rational refutation, relying instead on old anecdotes and earthy invective.

As far as Luther was concerned, Jewish interpretation of scripture had already been “refuted . . . thoroughly” by others anyway, and if the lessons of history were not enough to convince the Jews of their errors, then no amount of “talking and explaining [would] help.”<sup>74</sup> Besides, it was “tiresome to discuss such confused lies and such tomfoolery,” so readers need not take the time or waste the energy trying to understand the Jewish side of the argument.<sup>75</sup> In Luther’s mind, the Bible was unmistakably clear and unmistakably Christian, a truth that should be obvious to Jews “even if [they] were seven times blinder than that are—if that were possible.”<sup>76</sup> He later reiterates that “no barking, interpreting, or glossing” on the Jews’ part will change the truth of scripture, for “the text is too authoritative and too clear. If the Jews refuse to admit it,” he adds dismissively, “we do not care.”<sup>77</sup>

But Luther’s vitriol suggests that he did care, and deeply. Nearing the end of his life, he lamented that his earlier attempts to draw the Jews into Christianity (and the Catholic Church into reform) had been unsuccessful. Twenty years earlier Luther had written similar interpretations for some of the same verses he explains in his later polemic, though devoid of the rancor that characterized *On the Jews and Their Lies*.<sup>78</sup> Here, however, his rhetoric reveals a man who is saddened, surprised, and

<sup>68</sup> Luther, “On the Jews,” 282-83. See also 169.

<sup>69</sup> Luther, “On the Jews,” 202.

<sup>70</sup> Luther, “On the Jews,” 207.

<sup>71</sup> Luther, “On the Jews,” 246.

<sup>72</sup> Luther, “On the Jews,” 244.

<sup>73</sup> Luther, “On the Jews,” 245.

<sup>74</sup> Luther, “On the Jews,” 137-38.

<sup>75</sup> Luther, “On the Jews,” 243.

<sup>76</sup> Luther, “On the Jews,” 145.

<sup>77</sup> Luther, “On the Jews,” 200.

<sup>78</sup> These appear in Luther’s “That Jesus Christ Was Born a Jew” (1523). See Gritsch, *Anti-Semitism*, 63–65.

incensed that his elevation of the word of God had not already reformed the Church, restored the heretics, and redeemed the unbelievers.<sup>79</sup> Unable to effect these changes positively and directly through a pro-Lutheran apologetic, he attempted to do so negatively and indirectly through an anti-Judaic polemic, elevating his own understanding of scripture by reducing his enemies' view to the demonic, the irrational, and the absurd. Indeed, in almost every instance, Luther's rhetoric depends on comparison, advancing Christian exegesis by denigrating the explanations of the Jews. A Christian interprets; a Jew "babbles."<sup>80</sup> The Christian view is "solid rock"; the Jewish is "nothing but straw or spiderweb."<sup>81</sup> Christian interpretation "agrees, coincides, rhymes, and harmonizes beautifully and delightfully"; Jewish exegesis is "subterfuge," "drivel and filth," "nonsense," "fantasies," "empty talk," and "humbug."<sup>82</sup> In one of his coarser comparisons, Luther writes that "instead of the beautiful face of the divine word" open to Christian eyes, the Jews "have to look into the devil's black, dark, lying behind, and worship his stench."<sup>83</sup>

In Luther's mind, God dealt with the misguided Jews with "blows," and rhetorically Luther chose to combat them in similar fashion.<sup>84</sup> He alternately feminizes, juvenilizes, and demonizes his opponents, even while expressing his "great reluctance" for having "to speak in this coarse manner."<sup>85</sup> "Someone may think that I am saying too much," he admits, but ends by affirming, "I am not saying too much, but too little."<sup>86</sup> Near the end of his diatribe he again protests: "It has not been a pleasant task for me to write this book." Then, reflecting on his rhetoric, he adds that he was "obliged to resort now to anger, now to satire, in order to avert my eyes from the terrible picture which [the Jews] present."<sup>87</sup> Based on the bitterness of his vitriol and the sharpness of his wit, Luther's feigned reluctance to engage in this rhetorical battle seems disingenuous at best. So does his professed reasoning for relying on scurrility and satire. Regardless of its form, whether expressed in scatology or sarcasm, insult or mock praise, Luther's rhetoric of ridicule betrays the fact that rival exegetical traditions are frustratingly difficult to dislodge. In such cases, as is often the case, argument cedes to invective, point-making descends into name-calling, and logic deteriorates into dismissiveness. To again call upon the Aristotelian appeals, such rhetoric masquerades as *logos* while drafting *pathos* into the service of *ethos*, shoring up one's interpretive authority by turning sentiment against the argument of one's opponent. It was in part the minds of his readers, not simply his own offended eyes, that Luther's rhetoric was intended to avert.

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<sup>79</sup> Olaf Roynesdal ties Luther's polemicism to pastoral concern in his "Martin Luther and the Jews," 1.

<sup>80</sup> Luther, "On the Jews," 187.

<sup>81</sup> Luther, "On the Jews," 200.

<sup>82</sup> Luther, "On the Jews," 298, 186, 190, 207, 246, 186, 195, 188.

<sup>83</sup> Luther, "On the Jews," 256.

<sup>84</sup> Luther, "On the Jews," 138.

<sup>85</sup> Luther, "On the Jews," 178, 244, 190, 257. For an excellent discussion of Luther's use of scatological rhetoric in much of his writings, see Oberman, 435–50.

<sup>86</sup> Luther, "On the Jews," 228.

<sup>87</sup> Luther, "On the Jews," 291.



## Conclusion

A tireless student of the scriptures and an ardent defender of the Christian faith (as he saw it), Martin Luther devoted his adult life to understanding, interpreting, and defending the Bible in an effort to re-enthroned the word of God at the center of Christian culture. Lack of interpretive uniformity remained one of his most obstinate challenges—a difficulty inherent in the *sola scriptura* assertion that undergirded Protestant thought. Absent an exegetical authority akin to the Catholic Magisterium, believers in the Bible are left with a text that remains stubbornly resistant to singular interpretations or self-evident truths. The problem would only worsen with time as denominationalism—and eventually disestablishment and democratization—further fractured the Protestant faith. In short, there has never been a hermeneutic “unity of the faith” (Ephesians 4:13). In the absence of an authorized adjudicator acceptable to both sides of the debate, arguments over biblical interpretation had to be decided largely by the court of public opinion. No wonder reason so often counted on rhetoric for a stronger defense.

Significantly, Luther’s education, like that of most of the scholars of his day, embraced the study of classical rhetoric, including the oratory of Cicero, whom Luther cites in his own writings. Though most famous for the concept of arrangement in rhetoric, various scholars have also noted in Cicero both a penchant for invective and a political and economic anti-Semitism, both of which factor into Luther’s rhetoric.<sup>88</sup> Even more applicable to the present discussion, Cicero distinguished between a direct approach (*principium*), using plain language, and a more subtle approach (*insinuat*) relying on dissimulation and indirection. While the direct approach conveyed certainty and conviction, Cicero taught, the indirect approach was more appropriate when one’s position was questionable or discreditable.<sup>89</sup> In Luther’s case, *On the Jews and Their Lies* alternates between the clear and the crafty, suggesting both confidence and concern on Luther’s part, or more specifically, absolute confidence in the truth of his own position tempered by an inability to prove his positions authoritatively and unquestionably.

Beyond its echoes of Cicero, Luther’s rhetoric also prefigures such Enlightenment philosophers as Thomas Hobbes, Francis Hutcheson, and the third Earl of Shaftesbury, each of whom argued for ridicule’s role in policing social interaction. By discerning this line of thought in *On the Jews and Their Lies*, we are able to link Luther to these other thinkers and to situate Protestantism’s appeal to authority within an arc in the history of rhetoric stretching from Aristotle, through the European Enlightenment, and on to the religious debates of antebellum America and beyond. In the absence of agreed-upon authorities, the rhetoric of ridicule is a powerful weapon in the hands of those—like Luther—who are able to cut through conflicts with the sharpest wit. And if present debates,

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<sup>88</sup> Edward H. Flannery links political and economic anti-Semitism to Cicero in *The Anguish of the Jews: Twenty-Three Centuries of Anti-Semitism* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, Stimulus Books, 2004), 2; cited in Gritsch, *Anti-Semitism*, 2. On Cicero’s use of the *lexicon invectivae*, see Thomas Conley, *Toward a Rhetoric of Insult* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 34–40.

<sup>89</sup> See Brian Vickers, *In Defense of Rhetoric* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 69; Roger D. Lund, *Ridicule, Religion and the Politics of Wit in Augustan England* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate Publishing Group, 2012), 54.

religious or otherwise, are any indication, there will always be those willing to take Luther's advice and act as he accused the Jews of "acting in this instance" (even as he acted in the same way): "Scold and lie boldly about the person, and your cause will win out. It is like the mother who instructed her child: 'Dear son, if you cannot win otherwise, start a brawl.'"<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Luther, "On the Jews," 255.



## *Theater as a Jansenist Tool?* *Amour-Propre in Racine's Phèdre*

By Sarah Lube Roe

Studies of monstrosity have noted how the monster constantly evades clear classification and definition, dependent as it is upon the viewer's perspective and interpretation for meaning.<sup>1</sup> The etymological sources of the term *monstre*, from the Latin *monstare* and *monere*, "to show" and "to warn," respectively, reveal this connection both to vision and the attempt of the viewer to impose a clear meaning, often attributed to the divine, upon the monster. The word *monstre* appears seventeen times throughout Jean Racine's *Phèdre*, and to be sure, critical studies of the play have offered diverse interpretations of who or what constitutes the play's *monstre*.<sup>2</sup>

Racine perhaps viewed *Phèdre*, written at the end of his secular theater career following numerous critiques from Jansenists, as a final attempt to convince Port-Royal detractors of theater's utility as a school of virtue. Racine describes *Phèdre* as a model of this type of instruction in the preface to the play, suggesting that far from being a simple diversion, tragedy is capable of revealing to spectators their own monstrosity evidenced in their vices and passions, which according to Jansenists such as Pierre Nicole and Blaise Pascal are faults visible to others but concealed from the self by *amour-propre*. In this paper, I interpret *Phèdre* as a tragedy of *amour-propre*,<sup>3</sup> the egotistical self-serving monster that Jansenists understood as alternately revealing and concealing the self. I begin by clarifying my definition of *amour-propre* using Jansenist texts from Pierre Nicole and Blaise Pascal to understand the connections that they make between *amour-propre* and monstrosity. Then, I examine the theatricality of *amour-propre* as it alternately reveals and conceals the self, suggesting the

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<sup>1</sup>See Jean Céard, *La Nature et les prodiges: l'insolite au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Geneva: Droz, 1977) and Lorraine J. Daston and Katherine Park, "Unnatural Conceptions: The Study of Monsters in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century France and England," *Past and Present* 92(1981): 20-54.

<sup>2</sup>Gretchen Besser understands monstrosity in terms of destructive passions unable to be controlled by reason in "The Monster-Metaphor in *Phèdre*," *Hebrew Studies in Literature* 4(1976): 192-203. Anne Graham interprets monstrosity as related to a failure to achieve the historical ideal of *honnêteté* in knowing oneself and others in "Quelques Figures de monstres tragiques dans la littérature française des XVI<sup>e</sup> et XVII<sup>e</sup> siècles" (PhD diss., Queen's University, 2011). I, like Besser and Graham, understand monstrosity as applying to all of the play's characters, and in fact all human beings, rather than singling out *Phèdre*.

<sup>3</sup>See Michel Bouvier, "Une Dramaturgie de l'amour-propre," *Jean Racine 1699-1999: actes du colloque Île-de-France - La Ferté-Milon* (25-30 mai 1999): 189-210. This paper analyzes the theatricality of *amour-propre* less in terms of dramaturgy than Bouvier, and attempts to fill the space he left for an analysis of *Phèdre*.

potential of theater as a form of moral instruction that allows the dangerous functioning of *amour-propre* to be better discerned and understood by spectators.

In his *Essais de Morale*, Pierre Nicole, a Jansenist theologian and writer closely associated with Port-Royal, describes the dangers posed by *amour-propre* as it distorts how people view themselves, their relationships to other people, and their relationship to God. Nicole writes that that *amour-propre* conceals faults from the self; instead, people only see the faults of others while ignoring their own. He states: “*Amour-propre* produces these two effects equally, to hide its presence within ourselves from us, and to show itself to us in others.”<sup>4</sup> In addition to preventing self-knowledge, *amour-propre* causes people to elevate themselves at the expense of others, whom they view as monsters, and to place themselves at the center of everything. Nicole directly refers to this monstrous disposition, and the strain on human relationships caused by *amour-propre* as the monster at the root of all human crimes: “In a word, it contains all the seeds of all the crimes and all the dissolute behavior of men, from the slightest to the most odious. Such is the monster that we contain in our breast.”<sup>5</sup> Finally, in addition to distorting the way in which people view themselves and others, *amour-propre* causes an ignorance or blindness, alternately referred to as “monstrous insensibility” and “monstrous stupidity,” in which people avoid knowledge of God’s laws and remain strangely calm about their own salvation.

Blaise Pascal uses the term *monstre* to describe the incomprehensibility of human beings to themselves, and he frames this incomprehension in terms of a failure of perspective: “If he boasts I cut him down. If he cuts himself down, I praise him. And always contradict him. Until he understands that he is an incomprehensible monster.”<sup>6</sup> Here Pascal, like Nicole, notes peoples’ aggrandized images of themselves, which stand in stark contrast to their actual insignificance. Wes Williams describes this movement between high and low as reflecting Pascal’s view of human beings as monstrous hybrids, caught in between the stations of angel and beast as they seek to elevate themselves.<sup>7</sup>

In his reading of Pascal’s *Pensées*, Guillaume Ansart suggests the system of substitutions by which *amour-propre* conceals itself within each person, blinding him/her to his/her actual fallen state, and gives the illusion of grandeur. Ansart describes the way in which, after the Fall, *amour-propre* works to conceal the void left by “the love of God,” and give the illusion that an authentic identity exists where really there is only a void.<sup>8</sup> Ansart explains that *amour-propre*, which he terms the *Moi* in

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<sup>4</sup>Pierre Nicole, *Essais de morale* (Paris: G. Desprez, 1701), T.1:361. “L’amour-propre produit également ces deux effets, de nous le cacher en nous et de nous le découvrir dans les autres.”

<sup>5</sup>“En un mot, elle renferme les semences de tous les crimes et de tous les déreglemens des hommes, depuis les plus légers, jusqu’aux plus détestables. Voilà le monstre que nous renfermons dans notre sein.” Nicole, *Essais de morale* T. 3, 147-50.

<sup>6</sup>Blaise Pascal, *Pensées sur la religion, et sur quelques autres sujets* (Paris: Ed. du Luxembourg, 1952), No. 130. “S’il se vante je l’abaisse. S’il s’abaisse je le vante. Et le contredis toujours. Jusqu’à ce qu’il comprenne qu’il est un monstre incompréhensible.”

<sup>7</sup>Wes Williams, *Monsters and Their Meanings in Early Modern Culture: Mighty Magic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 231.

<sup>8</sup>Williams, *Monsters and Their Meanings*, 52-54.

Pascal's writings, operates upon the imagination via substitutions: the visible for the invisible, presence for absence and finite for infinite.<sup>9</sup> Whereas in reality human beings are empty and devoid of God's love, *amour-propre* provides the illusion that there is no void, that one's flattering self-image is absolute and authentic in a way that can only exist in the divine, invisible realm. To these couplings, I add that *amour-propre* substitutes the relative for the absolute, whether in terms of identity or, as in the case of Lucien Goldmann, in terms of morals. Moreover, casuistry serves one's *amour-propre* by substituting relative, human morals for absolute, divine morals and thereby causes human beings to regard their faults as less severe.

Both Pascal and Nicole write about how *amour-propre*, in its illusions and concealments, results in failed self-knowledge and casuistry, leading human beings to believe that they are something other than what they are: wretched, empty sinners. Furthermore, *amour-propre* creates an entire society based upon these substitutions and illusions: *amour-propre* is spectacle. Ansart explains Pascal's theatrical vision of society: "The entire social sphere is governed by the law of the visible and spectacular. The same blindness that consists in taking the Moi-spectacle for the Moi-authentic is repeated indefinitely."<sup>10</sup> Nicole similarly writes of society as a spectacle. The individual forms an idealized self-image according to *amour-propre* and is influenced by the different portraits of him/herself reflected back by every person encountered: "Because we are all in regard to one another like that man who serves as a model to students in the painting academies. Each of those surrounding us forms a portrait of us for themselves; and the different manners in which they regard our actions result in forming an almost infinite diversity of portraits."<sup>11</sup> Because these illusions of *amour-propre* and substitutions of the visible for the invisible as well as the relative for the absolute must continuously be repeated, as Ansart stated above, the individual constantly modifies his or her image of him/herself in order to preserve an idealized self-image and accommodate changing encounters with other people. The only way to escape *amour-propre*'s endless cycle of illusion and substitution, as Ansart reads Pascal, is to receive God's grace, which provides the proper perspective from which to view oneself and the surrounding world: "Grace is in fact to figures of the Ancient Testament what perspective is to painting: it offers the correct point of view."<sup>12</sup> While *amour-propre* is understood by Jansenists such as Pascal and Nicole as offering human beings a faulty perspective from which to view themselves and their relationships to other people and the world, the grace of God can correct this perspective and reveal what was formerly concealed by *amour-propre*.

<sup>9</sup>Guillaume Ansart, Le Concept de figure dans *Les Pensées*, "Poétique: Revue de théorie et d'analyse littéraires" 121 (2000): 50, 53.

<sup>10</sup>Guillaume Ansart, "Le Concept de figure dans *Les Pensées*," 52. "la sphère sociale est tout entière régie par la loi du visible et du spectaculaire. Le même aveuglement qui consiste à prendre le Moi-spectacle pour le Moi authentique est répétée indéfiniment."

<sup>11</sup>Nicole, *Essais de Morale*, T.3:12-18. "Car nous sommes tous à l'égard les uns des autres comme cet homme qui sert de modèle aux élèves dans les académies de peintres. Chacun de ceux qui nous environnent se forme un portrait de nous; et les différentes manières dont on regarde nos actions, donnent lieu d'en former une diversité presque infinie."

<sup>12</sup>Ansart, "Le Concept du figure dans *Les Pensées*," 56. "La grâce est en fait aux figures de l'Ancien Testament ce que la perspective est à la peinture: elle offre le point de vue correct."

*Amour-propre* appears monstrous to Jansenists because it constantly forces the individual to adjust and further distort his/her self-image while at the same time concealing this distortion. Secondly, Jansenists relate *amour-propre* to monstrosity because of its connection to the corrupt nature of human beings and because, as Ansart states, it attempts to conceal the void that evidences God's absence after the Fall.<sup>13</sup> At the same time that it conceals, however, *amour-propre* at times reveals the undistorted self. In his *Maximes*, La Rochefoucauld describes the movement between the distortions of *amour-propre* and lucidity in terms of waves: "Here is the painting of amour-propre, of which all of life is only a big, long agitation; the sea is a perceptible image of it, and amour-propre finds in the ebb and flow of its continual waves a faithful expression of the turbulent succession of its thoughts, and of its eternal movements."<sup>14</sup> This ebb and flow movement, which alternately reveals and conceals the monstrous, empty self, emphasizes the theatricality of *amour-propre* as it creates a spectacle both for the self and for others.

Returning to *Phèdre*, the theatricality of *amour-propre* and the importance of perspective is perhaps most evident in the casuistical rationalizations of Oenone and Phèdre. Casuistry substitutes relative for absolute morals, and prevents human beings from seeing their full wretchedness by allowing them to look upon their sins from a comparative, human perspective, rather than from the absolute perspective of God.<sup>15</sup> Casuistry serves *amour-propre* then, by justifying one's actions to oneself, concealing the full severity of these actions and making the self appear in a more positive light. In her reassurances to Phèdre, Oenone becomes the mouthpiece of relative morals, externalizing Phèdre's interior moral debate: as Phèdre voices her belief in absolute values, Oenone responds with relative values that allow the pursuit of self-interest.<sup>16</sup> At the beginning of the play, Phèdre believes that the intention to commit a crime is as bad as actually committing it, approaching all sin as equally condemnable, whereas Oenone establishes varying degrees of sinfulness (I.3.218-20).<sup>17</sup> Oenone later expresses the belief that context determines the severity of a sin. Phèdre's eventual admission of her passion for Hippolyte initially horrifies Oenone, as she later admits: "Madame, I ceased urging you to live/. . . To turn you from it I no longer had the voice" (I.5.337-39).<sup>18</sup> However, following the announcement of Thésée's death, Oenone expresses that because Phèdre is no longer married to Hippolyte's father, her passion is no longer sinful: "Live, you no longer have anything for which to reproach yourself:/Your flame has become an ordinary flame" (I.5.349-50).<sup>19</sup> Further, Oenone points out that it is in fact in the political interests of both her and her son to reveal this passion to

<sup>13</sup>Ansart, "Le Concept du figure dans *Les Pensées*," 52.

<sup>14</sup>François duc de La Rochefoucauld, *Maximes suivies des Réflexions diverses* (Paris: Garnier, 1967), 1. "Voilà la peinture de l'amour-propre, dont toute la vie n'est qu'une grande et longue agitation; la mer en est une image sensible, et l'amour-propre trouve dans le flux et reflux de ses vagues continuelles une fidèle expression de la succession turbulente de ses pensées, et de ses éternels mouvements."

<sup>15</sup>Nicole, *Essais de Morale*, T.2: 16, 66.

<sup>16</sup>Lucien Goldmann, *Le Dieu caché; études sur la vision tragique dans les Pensées de Pascal et dans le théâtre de Racine* (Paris: Gallimard, 1955), 388-89.

<sup>17</sup>All citations from this text are from Jean Racine, "Phèdre," in *Théâtre complet*, ed. Jacques Morel and Alain Viala (Paris: Garnier, 1980).

<sup>18</sup>"Madame, je cessais de vous presser de vivre/. . . Pour vous en détourner je n'avais plus de voix" (I.5.337-39).

<sup>19</sup>"Vivez, vous n'avez plus de reproche à vous faire:/Votre flamme devient une flamme ordinaire" (I.5.349-50).

Hippolyte (I.5.355-62). Until the end of the play, when Phèdre finally recognizes the terrible extremes to which she has been led by her *amour-propre*, and following her jealous scheming to have Aricie killed (IV.6.1259-1265), Oenone continues to encourage relative morals in having Phèdre judge her crimes from a human, rather than absolute, perspective: “Regard an excusable error with a different eye./you live . . ./Weakness is only too natural to humans” (IV.6.1296-1301).<sup>20</sup>

In addition to casuistry, Phèdre’s *amour-propre* causes her to shift blame from herself to others, particularly to Oenone, whom she views as monstrous. When she confesses her passion, Phèdre blames Oenone for pronouncing the name of Hippolyte, as though she were responsible for the sin by giving voice to it: “It’s you who named him!” (I.3.264).<sup>21</sup> After Phèdre learns of Hippolyte’s love for Aricie, she again blames Oenone for her flattery and encouragement of her passion: “With your flattering advice you knew how to bring me back:/You made me envision that I could love him” (III.1.771-72).<sup>22</sup> Even when Phèdre recognizes the crimes she has committed in service to her *amour-propre*, she continues to blame Oenone for flattering her *amour-propre*: “What am I hearing! What advice do you dare to give me? . . . I will no longer listen to you. Go away, vile monster!” (IV.6.1307-17).<sup>23</sup> Phèdre’s *amour-propre*, as Nicole warned in his *Essais de Morale*, causes her to see faults in others and call them *monstres*, and conceals her own faults from her. In particular, when Oenone describes the possibility that Hippolyte might denounce Phèdre’s passion to his father, Phèdre calls him a “dreadful monster” (III.3.884)<sup>24</sup> despite the fact that she soon relinquishes control to Oenone, who accuses Hippolyte of attacking Phèdre.

Phèdre, however, begins to become more aware of her *amour-propre* as she shifts between periods of hallucination and lucidity, when the self is alternately concealed and revealed, much like La Rochefoucauld’s description of *amour-propre*’s ebb and flow. During her first appearance with Oenone, after imagining herself in the woods with Hippolyte and giving free verbal reign to her desire, Phèdre suddenly stops herself: “Madwoman! Where am I? And what have I said?” (I.3.179).<sup>25</sup> When in act two, scene five, Phèdre speaks to Hippolyte in order to plead on behalf of her son, she is overcome by her passion and hallucinates that Hippolyte, not Thésée, was led by her and not her sister from the labyrinth (II.5.648-662). Phèdre, lucid once more, then attempts to cover up the passion she revealed, and accuses Hippolyte of falsely interpreting her words (II.5.665-66) before recognizing that Hippolyte has heard too much not to discern her passion for him (II.5.671-72). Describing how she pretended to hate Hippolyte in order to conceal her passion for him, Phèdre quickly feels herself carried away, but stops herself and asks, “What am I saying? This confession that I just made,/This shameful confession, do you believe it to be voluntary?” (II.5.693-94).<sup>26</sup> In

<sup>20</sup>“Regardez d’un autre œil une excusable erreur./Vous aimez.../La faiblesse aux humains n’est que trop naturelle” (IV.6.1296-1301).

<sup>21</sup>“C’est toi qui l’as nommé!” (I.3.264).

<sup>22</sup>“Par tes conseils flatteurs tu m’as su ranimer:/ Tu m’as fait entrevoir que je pouvais l’aimer” (III.1.771-72).

<sup>23</sup>“Qu’entends-je! Quels conseils ose-t-on me donner?...Je ne t’écoute plus. Va-t-en, monstre exécration ! » (IV.6.1307-17).

<sup>24</sup>“monstre effroyable” (III.3.884)

<sup>25</sup>“Insensée! Où suis-je? Et qu’ai-je dit?” (I.3.179)

<sup>26</sup>“Que dis-je? Cet aveu que je viens de faire,/ Cet aveu si honteux, le crois-tu volontaire?” (II.5.693-94).



this moment of recognition, Phèdre twice refers to herself as a *monstre*, one that Hippolyte should kill (II.5.701-03). Whereas previously in the text the monsters were externalized, mythical beings, here in a moment of lucidity, Phèdre states that the monster lies within. This lucidity, in which Phèdre understands herself to be a monster driven by her *amour-propre*, disappears only to reappear again once more. With her final hallucination, as she begins plotting to kill Aricie out of jealous rage, Phèdre stops herself on the brink of demanding murder and recognizes the crimes she has committed out of *amour-propre*: "What am I doing?.../Me jealous! . . ./My crimes henceforth have made me guilty beyond pardon:/I exude at once incest and imposture; my murderous hands . . ./In innocent blood long to plunge themselves" (IV.6.1264-72).<sup>27</sup> As part of emptying herself of all earthly attachments and waiting for death, as the Jansenists would have her do, Phèdre dismisses Oenone, and thus symbolically the embodiment her own *amour-propre* (IV.6.1317). In the play's final scene, Phèdre confesses her crime to Thésée, finally assuming responsibility for her passion, and explains that she couldn't die until she cleared Hippolyte's name (V.7.1622-1635).

Just as *amour-propre* blinds Phèdre to her own wretchedness and prevents her, until it is too late, from seeing the crimes to which it has led, so too *amour-propre* blinds Thésée upon his return. Already suspicious that Hippolyte has allied himself against him in his absence (III.6.983-94), Thésée readily believes Oenone as she guides his misinterpretation of the unusual behavior and ambiguous language of both Phèdre and Hippolyte upon his return.<sup>28</sup> Despite evidence to the contrary, including Hippolyte's history of virtuous behavior and his later confession of love for Aricie, Thésée's *amour-propre* prevents him from admitting that his initial interpretation was wrong, and he instead blames Hippolyte's lack of transparency (IV.2.1035-40). After he has cursed his son, Thésée remains convinced by his *amour-propre* that he has not directly tried to kill Hippolyte (IV.5.1175), echoing Oenone's earlier language of casuistry, and congratulating himself for his ability to catch Hippolyte despite his trickery (IV.5.1189). Although his doubts begin to express themselves in questions, Thésée persists in believing that he alone knows the truth and everyone else is either lying or blind, even after Aricie warns him of his own blindness (V.3.1443-46) and confirms that she and Hippolyte were in love (V.4.1453). Thésée's *amour-propre* leads him to seek to differentiate himself from all others, as the only one capable of seeing through what he believes is Hippolyte's deception: he points to the blindness and faults of others when, in fact, he is so blinded that he fatally curses his son. In the end, Thésée, like Phèdre, finds himself overwhelmed when he fully comprehends the faults concealed by his *amour-propre* (V.7.1647). The tragedy of *Phèdre*, culminating in Hippolyte's death, is the complete and final realization of *amour-propre*'s effects and the monster within both Phèdre and Thésée.

<sup>27</sup>"Que fais-je?.../Moi jalouse!.../Mes crimes désormais ont comblé la mesure:/Je respire à la fois l'inceste et l'imposture; mes homicides mains.../Dans le sang innocent brûlent de se plonger" (IV.6.1264-72).

<sup>28</sup>Oenone tells Thésée that Hippolyte, not Phèdre, conceived an illicit passion and Thésée misinterprets Phèdre's "You are offended"/"Vous êtes offensé" (III.4.917) and Hippolyte's unusual behavior as signs of Hippolyte's guilt (IV.1.1023-28).

Despite the fact that a literal monster appears within its dramatic universe, the uses of the term *monstre* throughout *Phèdre* suggests a movement away from a mythological understanding and towards a spiritual and moral understanding: monstrosity in the play reflects a Jansenist understanding of *amour-propre* as concealing, and at other times revealing, the self-deceptions and base state of every human being. To potential Port-Royal critics, Racine insists in his preface that none of his other tragedies so clearly emphasize virtue, punish all sins severely, or show spectators their own vices and passions: “The passions are only presented to show all the disorder that they cause; and vice is painted throughout with colors that make one know and hate their deformity.”<sup>29</sup> *Phèdre* serves to show or reveal to spectators the monster within each person that *amour-propre* works to conceal, illustrating the potential of theater as Jansenist tool. To this end, the play dramatizes and instructs in the importance of proper perspective and interpretation in overcoming the illusions of *amour-propre*, thereby contributing to the Jansenist emphasis on recognition of true human nature and the need for God’s grace.

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<sup>29</sup>“Les passions n’y sont présentées aux yeux que pour montrer tout le désordre dont elles sont cause; et le vice y est peint partout avec les couleurs qui en font connaître et haïr la difformité.”



## *Prohibited Games, Prohibited People: Race, Gambling, and Segregation in Early Modern Manila*

By Kristie Patricia Flannery

*Real people, not mechanical processes, make segregation, and the ideas, interests and practices people mobilize for and against segregation are complex. The political dramas that result never stop to rest in one spot; they are always dynamic, shape-shifting, unpredictable, and internally contradictory.*<sup>1</sup>

Late seventeenth-century Manila was a colorful, cosmopolitan but segregated port city. Manila's large Chinese population was made to live beyond the high walls that enclosed the Spanish quarter known as *Intramuros*, and apart from the city's *negro* (blacks) and *indio* (indigenous) residents. As Carl Nightingale observes in his seminal history of urban segregation, the division of cities is a "dynamic, shape-shifting, unpredictable" process.<sup>2</sup> Segregation in early modern Manila was shaped by concerns about *mestizaje* (the biological and social mixing of distinct ethnic groups) and tensions over the spiritual landscape that were most visible and antagonistic during the overlapping Chinese Lunar Festival and Lent.

The Lunar Festival celebrating the beginning of each New Year was concentrated in the *Parián*, Manila's Chinese quarter. The annual festivities were inaugurated with noisy fireworks that were followed by two weeks of public gambling tournaments, nightly performances of Chinese operas, and evening markets. The Lunar Festival frequently coincided with the beginning of Lent: the forty-day period in the Catholic liturgical calendar set aside for somber prayer and self-denial in preparation for Easter. During Lent Manila's missionaries intensified their efforts to save the souls of sinful baptized Catholics and the unconverted alike. In 1687 the Jesuit priest Pedro Murillo Velarde recounted that during Lent "the Jesuits surround the city walls, calling to every class of people with the trumpets of the jubilee and offering pardon."<sup>3</sup> The Dominican friar Francisco de Villalva recalled that the Order increased its efforts to make new converts out of Chinese *infieles* (non-Christians) during this most sacred of seasons with "continual preaching [to the Chinese] in

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<sup>1</sup>Carl H. Nightingale, *Segregation: A Global History of Divided Cities* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 10.

<sup>2</sup>Nightingale, 10.

<sup>3</sup>Pedro Murillo Velarde, "Condition of the Islands," in *The Philippine Islands*, Vol. 44, ed. Emma Helen Blair and James Alexander Robertson (Cleveland, OH: Arthur H. Clark, 1908), 38.

their own language through the streets.”<sup>4</sup> So as the missionaries called to their flocks in many different tongues, shouting to be heard above the music and applause, the rogues of Manila feasted and gambled in the streets.

Anxieties about gambling fueled debates between religious and colonial government officials in Manila, and the King and Council of the Indies in Spain. This article considers how these debates influenced the reorganization of segregation in Manila from 1678 to 1712. Laws proscribing who could gamble, when and where they could gamble, and what games of chance people could play, were deeply entangled with the regulation of urban space.<sup>5</sup> I argue that the gambling laws introduced by the Spanish Crown in 1678 contributed to a legal regime of segregation that aimed to prevent the formation of a multi-ethnic, criminal underclass in the city. Segregation changed significantly by the early eighteenth century, as the Crown came to distinguish Chinese Christians from Chinese *infieles* and mandated that these groups be physically separated. Discussions about the idolatrous nature of Chinese gambling and the game of *metua* in particular that emerged in the context of the Chinese rites controversy contributed to this shift. Evidence presented in this article suggests that the status of Chinese as a *gente prohibida* (prohibited people) was dynamic rather than static in colonial Manila, and the reasons for separating the Chinese from other groups who lived in the city were far more complex than historians have acknowledged. Although it is often overshadowed in studies focused on the evangelization of indigenous people, the view that the Crown could and should convert Manila’s Chinese to Catholicism was a constant consideration in the segregation agenda.<sup>6</sup>

This article challenges the orthodox interpretation of Chinese segregation as a rigid strategy that enabled the Spanish to pursue profitable trade with China while limiting the risk of a general Chinese rebellion. Certainly there is strong evidence that the fear of a Chinese uprising influenced the colonial policy of segregation. By the late seventeenth century the *Parián* was surrounded by elaborate Spanish fortifications and bronze cannons were permanently aimed at Chinese homes and business.<sup>7</sup> In stark contrast to forts erected in other Spanish port cities that were designed to defend the King’s vassals from the attacks of pirates and other foreign invaders, such as the Fort of San Diego in Acapulco, Manila’s defenses were constructed to protect the city against an internal enemy – the *Parián* Chinese. Yet if we look beyond the defensive walls and heavy artillery to the regulation

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<sup>4</sup>Francisco de Villalva, “Petition for Dominican Missionaries,” *The Philippine Islands*, Vol. 39, ed. Emma Helen Blair and James Alexander Robertson (Cleveland, OH: Arthur H. Clark, 1906), 124.

<sup>5</sup>My approach draws upon Juan Pedro Viqueira Albán’s approach to studying the twin regulation of public diversions and public space in colonial Mexico City, in *Propriety and Permissiveness in Bourbon Mexico*, trans. Sonya Lipsett-Rivera and Sergio Rivera Ayala (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, 1999).

<sup>6</sup>Although Juan Gil’s important study of the Chinese in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Manila has drawn attention to the missionary enterprise in the *Parián*, this is often neglected in historiography of religion and the missionary enterprise in the colonial Philippines which is largely focused upon the conversion of indigenous peoples to Catholicism. Juan Gil, *Los Chinos en Manila, Siglos XVI y XVII* (Macau: Centro Científico e Cultural de Macau, I.P, 2011), 125-26, 168-73; Vicente L. Rafael, *Contracting Colonialism: Translation and Christian Conversion in Tagalog Society under Early Spanish Rule* (ACLS Humanities E-Book, 1988); John Leddy Phelan, *The Hispanization of the Philippines: Spanish Aims and Filipino Responses, 1565-1700* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1959).

<sup>7</sup>Alberto Santa Maria, “The Chinese *Parián*,” in *The Chinese in the Philippines 1770-1898*, ed. Alfonso Felix, Jr. (Manila and New York: Solidaridad, 1975), 110-11.

of Chinese gambling in Manila, we see that other anxieties also influenced Chinese segregation in this Pacific port city.

Despite the handsome profits that the Crown generated from the sale of *metua* licenses, this game was ultimately banned in Manila because it undermined the campaign to bring Catholicism to the Iberian Pacific world. By illuminating the Crown's deep commitment to evangelism in Philippines, this article also destabilizes the view that "the pact of cohabitation [between the Spanish and Chinese in Manila] kept in place during the 250 years of the galleon trade was clearly for the sake of profit."<sup>8</sup> This crude characterization of the Spanish colonial project in the Philippines persists in the historiography of the Spanish empire and the emerging field of global history.

### The Gambling Reforms of 1678: Segregation and Social Order

In 1678 the Spanish Crown introduced a law that for the first time regulated Chinese participation in games of chance in Manila. The *Real Cédula* (Royal Order) issued on October 20 of that year prohibited Chinese people from gambling inside or outside of the *Parián*, except for during the Chinese Luna Festival.<sup>9</sup> In multiple ways this legislation functioned to enhance the colonial order in the city.

The restrictions imposed on Chinese gambling attempted to curb the political, economic and social disruption that excessive gambling losses were allegedly generating within the large Chinese community in the colonial capital. The *Parián* Chinese had some autonomy from the Spanish colonial government in Manila. The Chinese community had its own governor, mayors, guards, and other ministers and officials who oversaw the day-to-day running of the neighborhood, including the collection of tribute and other taxes, and the administration of justice.<sup>10</sup> The *Real Cédula* indicated that various *Parián* officials gambled so recklessly throughout the year that they lost their entire estates, and the bankruptcy of community leaders was not conducive to the stable political environment that the colonial government desired.

Furthermore, Spanish colonial authorities believed that gambling debts were responsible for the alarming number of Chinese suicides they observed in Manila. Government officials assumed that the many Chinese men who hanged and drowned themselves in the capital took their own lives after they lost their fortunes and honor at the city's numerous gambling dens.<sup>11</sup> Other Chinese men who

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<sup>8</sup>Guillermo Ruiz-Stovel, "Chinese Merchants, Silver Galleons, and Ethnic Violence in Spanish Manila, 1603-1683," *México y la Cuenca del Pacífico* 12, no.36 (2009), 48; Katharine Bjork, "The Link That Kept the Philippines Spanish: Mexican Merchant Interests and the Manila Trade, 1571-1815," *The Journal of World History* volume 9, no. 1, (Spring 1998), 25-50.

<sup>9</sup>Archivo General de Indias FILIPINAS (hereafter AGI FILIPINAS), 341, L.7. To ensure that the colonial government enforced this policy, the *Cédula* threatened that the governor and captain general of the Philippines would be prohibited from holding any subsequent office in the Spanish Empire if the Council of the Indies discovered that they had consented to Chinese gambling at other times of the year.

<sup>10</sup>Gil, 249-56.

<sup>11</sup>AGI FILIPINAS, 341, L.7; Gil, 425-26.

lost everything in games of chance chose life and fled the city and their debtors. The Crown recognized that this epidemic of flight and suicides caused economic and social problems in the city, including numerous unpaid debts, as well as wives without husbands and children without fathers.<sup>12</sup> The 1678 restrictions on gambling attempted to eradicate these destabilizing consequences of gambling.

To some extent, Manila's late seventeenth-century gambling reforms can be viewed as broadly consistent with existing imperial law that regulated gambling across the global Spanish Empire. The section of laws pertaining to "Games and Players" in the *Laws of the Indies*, which applied to all of Spain's colonies in the Caribbean, the Americas, and the Asia Pacific, clearly attempted to curtail rampant gambling and its negative impact on economy and society. "The First Law of Games and Players" introduced by King Charles I in 1529 set an upper limit on how much money a person could gamble: no one was permitted to bet "more than ten pieces of gold in a natural day of twenty-four hours."<sup>13</sup> It also stipulated that any person who violated this provision would be required to pay a fine equivalent to four times the amount that he or she had illegally gambled. Another law introduced in 1533 mandated that "no person, irrespective of their *calidad* or condition, may bet more than thirty *ducados* on a game of *pelota* in one day," and also prohibited people from gambling with borrowed money.<sup>14</sup>

These early restrictions on colonial gambling were pragmatic policies that sought to preserve the good character and property of those men and women who enjoyed betting on games of chance. In Spain's overseas colonies these rules applied equally to the wealthiest members of society, including government officials and merchants, as well as to people of more modest means, such as soldiers and sailors. The Crown preferred that none of its imperial subjects would fall into abject poverty and vagrancy as a result of gambling losses.

What distinguishes Manila's 1678 gambling law from those recorded in the *Laws of the Indies* is that the former aimed to reinforce the separation of Manila's Chinese and non-Chinese populations. By prohibiting the city's Chinese residents from participating in games of chance except for during the Lunar Festival, the *Real Cédula* formally segregated all gambling activities and the spaces in which these were conducted for 349 days in the year. Significantly, two additional *royal cédulas*, issued on October 20, 1678, strictly prohibited all Indians and blacks from gambling in the Philippines, regardless of their status as free or enslaved people.<sup>15</sup> Restrictions on gambling in Manila evidently became part of the legal regime of segregation that operated in the city, reinforcing the physical boundaries that separated the various groups of people who lived in Manila.

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<sup>12</sup>AGI FILIPINAS, 341, L.7.

<sup>13</sup>Consejo de Indias, *Recopilación de Leyes de los Reynos de las Indias*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., Vol. 2 (Madrid: Antonio Perez de Soto, 1774), 280.

<sup>14</sup>Miguel Pino Abad, *El delito de Juegos prohibidos: Análisis historio-jurídico* (Madrid: Dykinson, 2011), 82-83.

<sup>15</sup>AGI FILIPINAS, 341, L.7.

The 1678 restrictions on gambling remind us that early modern Manila was home to a multi-ethnic population. This Pacific port city's residents included a diverse body of Spaniards from the Iberian Peninsula as well as Spain's American colonies who traveled to the Philippines as colonial administrators, merchants, soldiers (many of whom were convicts), and missionaries. Free and enslaved blacks were also conspicuous in the city. This colonial category encompassed a diverse body of Africans and their descendants, as well as dark-skinned people indigenous to the Indian subcontinent, including Malabars and Bengalis.<sup>16</sup> Indigenous peoples, whom the Spanish referred to as *Indios* (Indians), also lived in Manila and its hinterland. Indians worked as domestic servants in convents and in the private homes of wealthy Manilaños, and Indian tributary workers comprised the bulk of the labor force employed in the construction and refitting of the huge galleons in the naval yards at Cavite. By the late seventeenth century, the racially mixed progeny of multi-ethnic Manila known as *mestizos* comprised the majority of the city's urban population, as was the case in other colonial capitals in the Spanish Empire at this time.<sup>17</sup>

Manila's late seventeenth-century gambling regulations suggest that the city's multi-ethnic population resisted segregation. The physical walls that were meant to separate the Chinese from the rest of Manila were porous and frequently transgressed, most egregiously when Spaniards, Indians, blacks, Chinese, and mestizos came together in the streets and homes of the *Parián* to bet money on games of chance. Why did colonial officials regard the mixing of these groups as a problem? The 1675 report that the *Procurador General* (Attorney General) of the city of Manila Don Diego de Villatoro submitted to the King and Council of the Indies provides some answers to this question, as the 1678 gambling reforms largely responded to Villatoro's assessment of the colony upon entering office. Villatoro's report reveals that the colonial government's anxiety about this mixing of ethnic groups in Manila was fundamentally an elite anxiety about the formation of a large, multi-ethnic plebe or lower class in the colonial capital. He argued that gambling was to blame for the high rate of property crimes in Manila, as Indians as well as free and enslaved blacks were driven to rob private homes and churches after losing everything that they owned gambling with Chinese. In addition, Villatoro complained that gambling turned Indians and blacks into vagabonds, and that the presence of this group of mobile, unemployed, subalterns in the city disrupted the social order.<sup>18</sup> As Villatoro traveled to the Philippines from Mexico, it is likely that his negative perceptions of *mestizaje* was influenced by the dominant elite ideology operating in Spain's American colonies that associated this social and biological process and the mixed-race subjects it produced with criminality and unruliness.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>Déborah Oropeza Keresey, "La Esclavitud Asiática en el Virreinato de la Nueva España, 1565-1673," *Historia Mexicana* 61 (2011): 23.

<sup>17</sup>Maria Fernanda Garcia de los Arcos, "Grupos Ethnicos y Clases Sociales en las Filipinas de Finales del Siglo XVIII," *Archipel* 57 (1999): 66.

<sup>18</sup>AGI FILIPINAS, 341, L.7.

<sup>19</sup>R. Douglas Cope, *The Limits of Racial Domination: Plebian Society in Colonial Mexico, 1660-1720* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1994), 15, 22.



Villatoro's report further attests to the idea that Chinese segregation did not only aim to prevent a Chinese uprising. The *Parián* also attempted to suffocate the formation of a multi-racial plebe that threatened to destabilize colonial Manila. Debates about Chinese gambling and Chinese games in the colonial capital, which were so intricately linked to debates about the organization of space and physical mobility, suggest that the colonial government in Manila and officials in Spain regarded the city's racially-mixed, poor, working class as a prohibited people who ought to be physically contained.

It is significant that neither colonial officials in Manila nor the Council of the Indies in Spain argued that the 1678 gambling regulations would completely resolve all of the problems that gambling caused in the city. The restricted mode of Chinese gambling this reform permitted during the time of the Lunar Festival was begrudgingly conceded on the grounds that the proceeds generated by this activity would fund the costs of expanding military defenses in the Philippines and Spain's other Asia-Pacific possessions.<sup>20</sup> By the late seventeenth century, Spain had erected a network of *presidios* (forts) strategically scattered across the Philippines Archipelago and other Pacific outposts in order to defend its vassals, lands, and galleons from enemy attacks. The *Real Cédula* acknowledged that improvements to this system of fortifications were necessary to prevent further attacks from enemies like the Chinese corsair Pompuan, who sacked and destroyed churches in Spanish settlements in the Marianas and Mindanao in 1671. In this instance, the financial benefits the empire accrued from restricted Chinese games outweighed its potentially detrimental consequences. The 1678 policy towards Chinese gambling balanced the colonial government's obligation to reduce the economic and social costs of excessive gambling and respond to the geopolitical vulnerabilities of the Spanish Philippines.

### ***"The Source of Many Offences to God": The Campaign to Eradicate Metua from Manila, 1697-1712***<sup>21</sup>

Two decades passed without any further changes to the regulation of Chinese segregation and gambling after introduction of the 1678 reforms. It was Archbishop Diego Camacho y Ávila's arrival in Manila in 1697 that prompted the redefinition of these issues as problems that the Crown needed to resolve. Scholars have long singled out Camacho as one of the most controversial figures in the history of the early modern Philippines. Studies of his time in the colony (1697-1704) have emphasized the Archbishop's fraught battles with the regular clergy over his relentless attempts to bring the parishes and hospitals run by Dominicans, Jesuits, and Franciscans in Manila under his direct authority.<sup>22</sup> The controversial war that Camacho waged against Chinese customs, including

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<sup>20</sup>AGI FILIPINAS, 341, L.7.

<sup>21</sup>AGI FILIPINAS, 163.N.36.

<sup>22</sup>Pedro Rubio Merino, *Don Diego Camacho y Ávila, Arzobispo de Manila y de Guadalajara de Mexico, 1695-1712* (Sevilla: Escuela de Estudios Hispano-Americanos, 1958).

particular types of gambling that he regarded as idolatrous, has received much less attention from historians.<sup>23</sup>

Camacho wasted little time lobbying the King of Spain and the Council of the Indies to completely ban the game of *metua* from Manila. *Metua* was played on a smooth, square mat or table that was divided into quarters by a cross drawn from corner to corner. Players picked up as many Chinese copper coins as they could hold in two hands and dropped these into the mat, and bets were placed on where the would coins land.<sup>24</sup> This Chinese game of chance is not known to have been played in other parts of the Spanish empire.

The Archbishop mobilized old arguments to convince the Crown to end its toleration of the game. In his petitions to the King and Council of the Indies, Camacho asserted that it was shameful that Spanish men and women who were *vecinos* (residents of a high social status) of Manila freely participated in this “pernicious game” in the *Parián* “always at the beginning of Lent.”<sup>25</sup> In his view, it was unacceptable that Christians were gambling and revelling in the company of heathens when they should be praying and fasting. Camacho was particularly anxious that *convertidos*, or recent Chinese converts to Catholicism, were playing *metua*. Like many of his contemporary theologians, Camacho considered the faith of neophytes to be particularly vulnerable and corruptible. He believed that Chinese *infieles* would tempt the *convertidos* to abandon Catholicism. Camacho was committed to the evangelization of Manila’s Chinese population.

Camacho also insisted that *metua* was a form of idolatry. This was a new claim mobilized in support of a complete ban of this game. Camacho argued that this particular game should be suppressed because baptized Catholics who played were committing the sin of worshipping false idols.<sup>26</sup> The meaning and weight of this allegation only makes sense when considered in the context of the global Chinese Rites Controversy that was coming to a climax at this moment. Catholic theologians had debated the nature of Chinese rites since the early seventeenth century. Of particular concern was whether aspects of Chinese ancestor worship and the cult of Confucius were secular and could be accommodated within Christianity, or were religious and incommensurable with Catholicism. The Church’s initial toleration of Chinese rights waned as the seventeenth century progressed. Pope Innocent XII began an inquiry into Chinese Rites in 1697 that was completed by his successor Pope Clement XI. In 1704, Clement decreed Chinese rites to be idolatry and prohibited further discussion of the matter. The Pope also threatened to excommunicate members of the clergy who taught or acted contrary to this ruling.<sup>27</sup> Historical studies of the Chinese Rites

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<sup>23</sup>David R. M. Irving’s recent history of Manila noted that Camacho prohibited the performance of “música de los Sangleyes,” or Chinese music or operas. D. R. M., *Colonial Counterpoint: Music in Early Modern Manila. Currents in Latin American and Iberian Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 199.

<sup>24</sup>Gil, 421-22.

<sup>25</sup>AGI FILIPINAS, 163.N.36.

<sup>26</sup>AGI FILIPINAS, 163.N.36..

<sup>27</sup>George Minamiki, *The Chinese Rites Controversy: From Its Beginning to Modern Times* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1985); Liam Mathew Brockey, *Journey to the East: The Jesuit Mission to China, 1579-1724* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard, 2008).

Controversy focus on its impact upon Catholicism in China. It has not previously been acknowledged that the Controversy contributed to the reorganization of urban space Manila.

Despite Camacho's complaints about *metua*, the Crown was initially reluctant, for purely economic reasons, to prohibit the game, because the sale of licenses to host *metua* tournaments during the Lunar Festival generated a significant income for the *Real Hacienda* (colonial treasury). In 1697, the Governor of the Philippines, Don Fausto Cruzat y Góngora, reported that the sale of *metua* licenses consistently raised up to 7500 pesos per year for the colonial government throughout the late seventeenth century, except in years when galleons were lost and Manila was plunged into recession.<sup>28</sup> The King first responded to Camacho's concerns with a compromise: the *Real Cédula* issued on 26 March 1697 instructed the Governor of Manila to forbid Chinese converts to Catholicism from playing *metua*, and also from living in the *Parián* with the *infieles* under any circumstances.<sup>29</sup> This law authorized the reorganization of segregation premised on a revised conception of *gente prohibida*. The *Cédula's* distinction between Chinese converts and unbaptized Chinese rejected the notion that all Chinese were a prohibited people, and applied this category only to Chinese who were not Catholics.

The distant Crown and imperial bureaucracy naively believed that the worst offenses of *metua* could be harnessed while profits would continue to flow to the colonial coffers. In a rare moment of agreement, Archbishop Camacho and Governor Cruzat considered the Crown's solution impossible to implement. In 1700, both men respectively informed the King that Chinese converts could not be stopped from playing *metua* as long as the game was permitted in the city, though it was not for want of trying. Cruzat explained that his government's efforts to prevent baptized Chinese from playing *metua* in the *Parián* had failed. Despite applying fines and penalties to those caught hosting or participating in the game, the Ministers of Justice continued to discover people playing the game year-round. Cruzat reasoned that the "Chinese propensity to gamble" was so strong that it could not be tamed.<sup>30</sup> Camacho reported that preventing baptized Chinese from playing *metua* was unfeasible because Chinese *convertidos* could not be easily distinguished from unbaptized Chinese: these two groups looked very much alike. Evidently, segregation based on religion was more difficult to enforce than segregation based on ethnicity or physical type.

If the 1697 policy could not be implemented, what was to be done? Camacho was firm that the damages and injuries *metua* caused far outweighed the benefits it generated in terms of income for the colonial treasury. He insisted that the game be abolished completely, even if this would cause "a notorious riot" among those who loved to gamble or profited from it. On 22 February 1702, the King and Council of the Indies issued another *real cédula* that fulfilled the Archbishop's wishes. This royal order prohibited *metua* in the Philippines, and reasserted the new regime of Chinese segregation. It proscribed that Chinese Catholics should live in distinct pueblos, apart from the

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<sup>28</sup>AGI FILIPINAS, 163.N.36.

<sup>29</sup>AGI FILIPINAS, 163.N.36.

<sup>30</sup>AGI FILIPINAS, 163.N.36.

*infieles*, and “that Spaniards, *mulatos* and *mestizos* should do the same”.<sup>31</sup> Importantly, the *Real Cédula* explained that the main reason for the prohibition of *metua* was the allegation that this game was played in honour of the Chinese gods. But lacking sufficient evidence to prove this, the *Real Cédula* was accompanied by a request that the Governor of the Philippines provide more information to the Council of the Indies about the idolatrous nature of *metua*.<sup>32</sup>

In response to the Crown’s request for information, the President and judges of the *Audiencia* (court) of Manila conducted an inquiry into *metua* in December 1703 that sought to establish whether this game incorporated “any superstition or other abuse that opposes our sacred religion.”<sup>33</sup> It is not surprising that the *Audiencia* approached the Dominican fathers attached to the Convent de Los Santos Reyes to enlighten them about *metua*, since their convent was situated within the *Parián* and its mission was to convert the Chinese who lived there.

The Dominicans readily complied with the *Audiencia*’s appeal to their expertise. The Dominican Friar Christobal Pedroche swore under oath that he did not have an intimate knowledge of *metua*, though he was able to inform the colonial government that the Chinese were naturally superstitious people. He explained that during “their new year,” which was the time of year when the suspect game was traditionally played, the Chinese worshiped “the sky, the land, and their idols” in ceremonies that they believed would reveal whether the coming year would bring good or bad fortune.<sup>34</sup> Another Dominican, Friar Francisco Marquez, proved more knowledgeable on the Chinese diaspora’s traditions and beliefs. By 1703 Marquez had lived and preached in the *Parián* for twenty years. During this time he had studied Chinese language and customs to be better able to convert this community to Catholicism. Marquez was able to provide the *Audiencia* with a detailed report that summarized the various “omens, vain observances, and superstitions” attached to *metua*.<sup>35</sup>

Marquez’s report is a fascinating document that thoroughly details the un-Christian beliefs and practices entangled with *metua*. The friar stated that the Chinese believed that good and bad spirits influenced the outcome of *metua* matches, and accordingly many engaged in rituals that attempted to attract the good spirits and repel the bad spirits. For example, Marquez elaborated that Chinese gamblers would “always take the same route” from their homes to the places where they played *Metua*, “because they believe in this road there is a good spirit that influences wins, and if they lose they do not return by this same route because they believe there is a bad spirit in this road that influences losses.” The Dominican also described how players were also known to wrap the *metua* mat along with pieces of silver inside of something brightly colored, often the brightly decorated skirt of a woman, as this ritual too was supposed to attract good spirits who brought wins. To scare away bad spirits and prevent further losses after losing a match, gamblers would often shake their mat while making loud noises.

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<sup>31</sup>AGI FILIPINAS 167.

<sup>32</sup>AGI FILIPINAS, 163.N.36.

<sup>33</sup>AGI, FILIPINAS, 167.

<sup>34</sup>AGI, FILIPINAS, 167.

<sup>35</sup>AGI, FILIPINAS, 167.

Additional incriminating evidence in Marquez's report included the claim that paintings of "imaginary animals" often decorated the walls of the rooms where people gathered to play *metua*. Marquez elaborated that one of these animals was called Leong and looked like a snake, and another known as "quy, is like a unicorn." *Metua* players regarded these animals as lucky, and believed they would win with their presence. There would have been no doubt in the minds of the President and judges of the *Audiencia* (Court) of Manila that such beliefs opposed Christianity. The spirits and imaginary animals that the Chinese appealed to were most definitely not the angels and saints to whom the Christians prayed: these ghosts and mythical beasts were false idols. For baptized Catholics, believing in the existence of such beings and actively seeking their assistance to win games of *metua* constituted heresy.

Finally, Marquez reported that chocolate and other comestibles prohibited by the *Audiencia* of Manila were also consumed around the *metua* mats. It is possible that such chocolate was illegal because it had been smuggled into the Philippines from New Spain (present-day Mexico) via the galleons. If this was the case then Marquez was showing that *metua* tournaments were offensive to the laws of men as well as the laws of God. However, it is also possible that Marquez understood the consumption of chocolate by baptized Christians during Lent to be an un-Christian act. Some seventeenth-century theologians in the Spanish Empire argued that chocolate was a foodstuff and that consuming it during Lent broke the ecclesiastical fast.<sup>36</sup> It is also possible that the association between chocolate and witchcraft that Martha Few has discussed made its way across the Pacific to the Philippines.<sup>37</sup> Marquez's report confirmed that *metua* was embedded in a web of beliefs and rituals that were decidedly contrary to Catholicism.

The full impact of Marquez's damning evaluation of *metua* is observed almost a decade after it was produced. In July 1710, another new Governor of the Philippines, Martín de Urzúa y Arizmendi, petitioned the King of Spain and the Council of the Indies to once again permit *metua* to be played in Manila during the Chinese Luna Festival.<sup>38</sup> Utilizing the arguments previously put forward by his pro-gambling predecessors, Urzúa emphasized that the sale of licenses to play *metua* "for so few days" would generate "such great benefits" for the colonial Treasury that it made clear economic sense to once again tolerate this game of chance.<sup>39</sup> Urzúa also boldly suggested that the "extirpation of these games would reduce commerce" between Spain and China.<sup>40</sup> The King and Council of the Indies refused the Governor's request in 1712. The Council firmly stated in its response to Urzúa that *metua* was not to be tolerated in the Philippines under any circumstances. Neither the King nor his advisors were convinced that the prohibition of *metua* had any negative

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<sup>36</sup>Beth Marie Forresta and April L. Najjajb, "Is Sipping Sin Breaking Fast? The Catholic Chocolate Controversy and the Changing World of Early Modern Spain," *Food and Foodways: Explorations in the History and Culture of Human Nourishment* 15, no.1 (2007): 31-52.

<sup>37</sup>Martha Few, "Chocolate, Sex, and Disorderly Women in Late-Seventeenth and Early-Eighteenth-Century Guatemala," *Ethnohistory* 52 (2005): 679-80.

<sup>38</sup>AGI, FILIPINAS, 167.

<sup>39</sup>AGI, FILIPINAS, 167.

<sup>40</sup>AGI, FILIPINAS, 167.

impact on trade. In fact, they reminded the Governor of the Philippines that commerce had increased since the game was abolished in the colony in 1703. Most importantly, the King's advisors in Spain did not consider that the potential earnings from the sale of *metua* licenses justified the approval of an activity in the colonial capital that had been established as un-Christian. The idolatrous nature of *metua* was crucial to the Crown's decision to permanently disallow the game of chance irrespective of its financial benefits.

## Conclusion

This article challenges the way we understand segregation to have operated in Spain's Pacific Empire. Segregation in early modern Manila was unfixed and variable. Debates about the tolerance of gambling in the city and corresponding gambling reforms observed between 1678 and 1712 suggest that segregation responded to evolving perceptions of social groups as threats to the colonial order. As a result, segregation in Manila was very different in 1712 to what it had been in 1678.

Gambling regulations introduced in Manila in the late seventeenth century reveal a legal regime of segregation that attempted to suffocate the formation of a multi-racial plebe in the port city. This ethnically-diverse segment of colonial society constituted the "prohibited people" that segregation attempted to control. By the 1690s, the spiritual threat Manila's Chinese allegedly posed to colonial society was increasingly perceived as a problem the colonial government ought to address. Debates about the tolerance of *metua* prompted a new regime of segregation that divided Manila's baptized and non-baptized Chinese into two distinct groups. Colonial policy-makers in Manila and Spain did not regard the Chinese in Manila as a homogenous group, and neither should historians.

The prohibition of *metua* in 1702 shows that Spain was prepared to sacrifice profits in order to win Chinese souls in the Pacific: the colonization of the Philippines was not only a commercial enterprise. Ultimately, it was the commitment of Manila's religious authorities to cleanse the colonial capital of Chinese Rites that persuaded the King and Council of the Indies to ban this game of chance, and to segregate Chinese Christians from Chinese heathens, even though this meant sacrificing a valuable flow of revenue into the colonial treasury. The desire to make the Philippines a Catholic colony determined the spatial organization of the city between 1678 and 1712.

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# *Médicos and Mestizos: Medical Discourse, Empirical Evidence, and Catholic Epistemologies in an Eighteenth-Century Mexican Inquisition Case*

By George Klaeren

This essay investigates the ways in which Spanish and *criollo* religious thinkers and inquisitors viewed the nature of testimony and truth, and demonstrates their use of alternative evaluatory systems to distinguish fact from fiction and orthodox belief from heretical heterodoxy. Ultimately, it is argued that the eighteenth-century introduced new scientific, medical, and epistemological discourses that affected the evaluatory standards of the Inquisition, which resulted in a growing preference for eyewitnesses. It also encouraged inquisitors and theologians to rely upon the expert advice of medical professionals. However, the employment of traditional *ad hominem*, “external” criticisms of witnesses based on *calidad* and gender was maintained to evaluate Inquisition testimony, and thus remained an important part of the tribunal’s review of a case. These reputation-based and personal constructions of validity were particularly relevant in Spanish America, where the categories of gender and race could even deter inquisitors from prosecuting a case and where the particular heterodoxy of witchcraft was often implicitly connected with non-Spaniard women. In highlighting the particular categories of medical discourse and eyewitness empiricism, this paper seeks to clarify the evolving definitions of testimony and credibility within the Spanish Catholic Church. In order to demonstrate these broad thematic questions in a contextually-informed and coherent way, this essay will analyze the case study of the 1774-1776 investigation into the illness of Maria Ignacia, a resident in San Luis Potosí, Mexico. The case serves as a touchstone, a microhistorical example from which broader conclusions may be drawn about the late-colonial Mexican Inquisition.

## **Situating Medical Discourse in the Historiography of Early Modern Epistemology**

The historian Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra has argued that during the eighteenth century, a “new art of reading” began in Spain and in Spanish America that dismissed the primacy of eyewitness narratives and stressed ‘internal consistency’ and coherence.<sup>1</sup> In his work, *How to Write the History of the New World*, Cañizares-Esguerra studies this textual criticism specifically within the context of

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<sup>1</sup>Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra, *How to Write the History of the New World: Histories, Epistemologies, and Identities in the Eighteenth-Century Atlantic World* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 6.



historiography and the writing of natural and geographic histories of the Spanish New World. He notes however, that this “new art of reading” both influenced and was influenced by similar discussions of spiritual discernment and religio-intellectual verification. He writes that, “[U]nlike Renaissance arts of reading, this new art did not privilege eyewitnesses. As part of larger scholarly debates about the probability of miracles, some authors began to argue that testimonies needed to be judged by their internal consistency, not by the social standing or learning of the witnesses.”<sup>2</sup> This was part of wider debates being held across the Spanish Empire, and indeed, throughout early modern Europe, about epistemology at this time. Cañizares-Esguerra rightly relies upon the work of Steven Shapin and Simon Schaffer, who have studied the impact that scientific and technical advances had in carving out an epistemological niche for the factual and the ‘matter of fact.’<sup>3</sup> The work of botanical expeditions, geographic histories, and natural discourse that dominated Spanish and Spanish American intellectuals during the eighteenth century are indicative of this factual, natural approach to epistemology.<sup>4</sup> The ‘matter of fact’ impulse of scientific, technical, and medical discourse did not only impact the writing of history and the revisionism experienced by Spanish, and even more so, *criollo* intellectuals examining stories of the encounter. It also affected theologians, inquisitors, and religious intellectuals concerned with discouraging superstition, discerning orthodoxy from heterodoxy, and establishing what Cañizares-Esguerra has labeled “emerging evolutionary scales of credibility.”<sup>5</sup> These later changes were particularly important in the trial settings of the Inquisition, where authoritative standards of ascertaining credibility and testimony were a necessity.

Cañizares-Esguerra supports the work of Lorraine Daston, who argues that in the evaluation of miracles and claims of supernatural occurrences (miraculous healing, apparitions, possession, for example), “internal criticism,” which esteemed the logical consistency and natural probability of a report, gradually replaced “external criticism,” which largely depended on the *ad hominem* assessment of the witness.<sup>6</sup> In tracing the case of Maria Ignacia I will argue that combative internal-external criticisms must be rejected or nuanced, because the Inquisitional record suggests that even the evaluation of a text’s logical consistency frequently invoked a witness’s character, and thus character, virtue, and proximity to an event, especially eyewitness status, remained a crucial part of interpreting testimony and credibility. This is shown to be particularly true for the Inquisition of the Spanish colonial Tribunals (Mexico, Lima, and Nueva Granada), where the categories of gender, race, and social position continued to play an unusually important role in the evaluation of witnesses and defendants during the late-colonial period. Similarly, the case of Maria Ignacia demonstrates that while the growing fields of medicine and science certainly impacted the practice of inquisitors and

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<sup>2</sup>Cañizares-Esguerra, *How to Write the History of the New World*, 6.

<sup>3</sup>Cañizares-Esguerra, *How to Write the History of the New World*, 16.

<sup>4</sup>See, for example, Daniela Bleichmar, *Visible Empire: Botanical Expeditions and Visual Culture in the Hispanic Enlightenment* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012).

<sup>5</sup>Cañizares-Esguerra, *How to Write the History of the New World*, 7.

<sup>6</sup>Cañizares-Esguerra, *How to Write the history of the New World*, 22. See also Lorraine Daston, “Historical Epistemology,” in *Questions of Evidence: Proof, Practice, and Persuasion across the Disciplines*, ed. James Chadler, Arnold I. Davidson, and Harry Harootunian (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

the evaluatory systems of theologians, they by no means replaced existing understandings of folk medicine or popular healing. Thus, the ‘crisis of credibility’ that accompanied the influx of new ideas across the Spanish Atlantic simultaneously influenced the practices of the Mexican Inquisition, while failing to significantly depose the epistemological practice of accrediting greater faith to witnesses of higher quality and to eyewitnesses (*testigos oculares, testigos de vista*).<sup>7</sup>

### The Bewitchment of Maria Ignacia (Autumn 1774)

On the seventeenth of November, 1774, in San Luis Potosí, Joachim de Bocanegra, the *fiscal* (prosecutor) of the local tribunal of the Mexican Inquisition, heard serious and grave claims of witchcraft. These accusations had been presented “without being called” by a *mulata*, Maria de los Santos Tobar, and her husband of nineteen years, Joseph Hordones Tristan, a Spanish worker on the nearby Rancho Nuevo.<sup>8</sup> Their daughter, twenty-year-old Maria de la Luz Ignacia Hordones y Tristan, had suffered since August with a most strange and unusual malady. She was confined to a bed with illnesses “as if she were pregnant,” “deprived of speech” and would spend hours motionless, without eating, drinking, or making a sound.<sup>9</sup> Even stranger, Maria Ignacia would periodically vomit a series of foreign objects: a walnut with a live spider inside of it, the spine of a mesquite branch, or a piece of string.<sup>10</sup> At the height of her illness, Maria Ignacia was even rumored to be possessed temporarily by a demonic spirit.<sup>11</sup> The alleged perpetrators of this witchcraft, a vaguely identified mother and daughter known only as San Juana and Josephina Viviana, were never apprehended, and the case, which continued through the middle of 1775, was eventually dropped for lack of these suspects.

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<sup>7</sup>The Mexican Inquisition has been sadly overlooked in the historiography on the relationship between the Enlightenment and epistemology. If changes in the practices of tribunals or the composition of prosecutions are noted, they are often explained as fundamentally political in nature. For example, in his seminal work, *Inquisición y Sociedad en el México Colonial*, Richard E. Greenleaf writes in a chapter titled “La Inquisición Mexicana y el Siglo de las Luces (1763-1805),” “It is evident that it has always been a political instrument since its founding in New Spain. . . . The apparent decline of the Mexican Tribunal of the Inquisition after 1763 resulted above all from a conjunction of political and diplomatic circumstances” (“Es evidente que ha sido siempre un instrumento político desde su fundación en Nueva España. . . . La decadencia aparente del Tribunal Mexicano de la Inquisición después de 1763 resultó de todo un conjunto de circunstancias políticas y diplomáticas”). Accordingly, Greenleaf focuses on the shift in Inquisitorial activity to censorship during this time. He does concede, however, that “the activities [of the Inquisition] . . . started to atrophy due to the tendency of the royal and ecclesiastical officials to adopt philosophical eclecticism” (“las actividades . . . empezaron a atrofiarse a causa de la tendencia de los funcionarios reales y eclesiásticos a adoptar el eclecticismo filosófico”). Greenleaf, *Inquisición y Sociedad en el México Colonial* (Madrid: Ediciones José Porrúa Turanzas, S.A., 1985), 201. This atrophying “eclecticism” is the term often given to the disparate philosophical practices, especially of enlightened Catholics, who adopted both ideas of the “new sciences” while maintaining some degree of loyalty to traditional methods of epistemic authority. For a comprehensive introduction to eclecticism, see Martin Muslow, “Eclecticism or Skepticism? A Problem of the Early Enlightenment,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 58, no. 3 (July 1997), 456-77.

<sup>8</sup>Hesburgh Library, Rare Books and Special Collections, University of Notre Dame; Inquisition Collections, 123.1a. “parecio sin ser llamada, u juro en forma por D.S.N. [Dios Nuestro Señor].”

<sup>9</sup>Hesburgh. Inq.123.1b “privada de la habla” and 123.21b (among five other occurrences) “como si estuviera preñada.”

<sup>10</sup>See Maria de los Santos Tobar’s descriptions beginning on 123.1b.

<sup>11</sup>See Hesburgh. Inq.123.15b-16b.

The case is not alone in its lurid and graphic details of the supernatural and the occult. Scholars have located and researched many extant inquisition records from colonial Mexico that point to the existence of popular magic and medicine practiced by *curanderos* during this time, including magico-medicinal traditions of harming and witchcraft. Maria Ignacia's case is important, rather, because of the many witnesses--medical professionals, clergy, and men and women from various socioracial positions--called during the course of the nearly seven month investigation. By comparing the tribunal's evaluation of their testimony, this paper argues that while individuals of higher *calidad* traditionally were trusted and valued as inherently better witnesses, new empirical influences on epistemology elevated the role of the informed observer. After the local tribunal was unsuccessful in locating the alleged practitioners of witchcraft, the *fiscal* Bocanegra stated in a letter to his superiors in June of 1775 that he would first present the claims of the bewitched and her family. However, he would then present "to strengthen the safety and accuracy of her [testimony], a priest, and a Spanish man of reason, who both go as witnesses in the information, and to even more complete it; although people of low status, all are *ladinos*..."<sup>12</sup>

In the course of Maria Ignacia's illness, her parents employed the services of a priest, Nicolas de Lima de Michoacán, various *boticarios* (pharmacists), and importantly, Dr. Josef Antonio Carmano, a *médico* and a *protomedicato tribunal* (a royally certified medical advisor to the tribunal) – or in Bocanegra's own words, "a Spaniard of reason."<sup>13</sup> Both the priest and the doctor were enlisted as alternative and complementary agents of curing the disease, and it was debated throughout the Inquisition case whether Maria Ignacia's illness was natural or induced by illicit and magical means. In this manner, the illness of Maria Ignacia in San Luis Potosí in the second-half of the eighteenth century is the perfect microhistorical example for a discussion of the important role that medical discourse and eyewitness, empirical evidence had in evaluating testimony in the Mexican Inquisition.

It was an evening in mid-August of 1774 when Maria de los Santo Tobar and her daughter, Maria Ignacia, had been assisting with the rosary and singing and chanting the mysteries of the faith as was their usual custom.<sup>14</sup> In the course of these actions Santo Tobar noticed that one of their *maestros*, Miguel Angel Sanches, had fallen into a near-catatonic state with "movements as [though he suffered from] heart disease, with closed eyes and a locked voice."<sup>15</sup> Miguel Angel would later say that "two women gave him two slaps or strikes in the same room that he was in."<sup>16</sup> Neither Maria nor her daughter noticed anything abnormal about themselves at the time. The following Sunday however, Maria Ignacia accompanied her father to hear the Mass in the *Pueblo de la Hedondia*.

<sup>12</sup> Hesburgh. Inq.123. frontmatter, "y los de mas que la completer; aunque es gente de baxo calidad, todos son ladinos, y sin embargo, se les advertio la Religion de juramento y gravedad" The construction of this sentence with *aunque* does not necessarily imply a contradiction between Bocanegra's classification of the witnesses as "gente de baxo calidad" and "ladinos." While *ladino* can also mean clever or wily, it seems most likely that in this context it is employed more literally to mean non-whites.

<sup>13</sup> Hesburgh. Inq.123.frontmatter, "afianzo la seguridad e veracidad de ella, un presbitero, y otro hombre español de razón, quienes ambos van de testigos en la ynformacion"

<sup>14</sup>See Hesburgh. Inq.123.1a-2a.

<sup>15</sup> Hesburgh. Inq.123.1b, "con recios movimientos como de mal de corazón, con los ojos cerrados, y voca cerrada."

<sup>16</sup> Hesburgh. Inq.123.1b., "que dos mujeres le dieron dos quantadas en el mismo cuarto en que estaba, y luego volvió."

Returning home from Mass at around one o'clock in the afternoon, Maria Ignacia and her father stopped at the local *estanco* to purchase some *cigarros*. The woman in charge of the stand, simply named Martira, asked Maria Ignacia if she was the "bewitched girl of Rancho Nuevo."<sup>17</sup> This was, of course, news to Maria Ignacia, and she indicated that she was no such thing. But Martira persisted, responding "your bewitchment is hidden, and would come out in time."<sup>18</sup>

Martira's pronouncement was prophetic, for on the way from the *estanco* to their house Maria Ignacia began to fall ill. Maria Ignacia's initial symptoms were confined to a loss of appetite. She was asked multiple times to eat or drink something, but would refuse sustenance whenever she entered the kitchen.<sup>19</sup> By Monday night, Maria Ignacia began to vomit<sup>20</sup> foreign objects: a piece of string, even a thorn from a mesquite branch the size of two fingers.<sup>21</sup> Her parents were understandably distraught by Maria Ignacia's illness and began searching for remedies. A gentleman named Estrada informed them that when his own daughter was ill he had found remedies in the *boticarios* (apothecaries, pharmacists) from the city, who had given his daughter "pharmaceutical drinks, prayers, and conjurations" to cure her.<sup>22</sup> The following Saturday therefore, Maria de los Santo Tobar, her husband, and the ailing Maria Ignacia left for the city, to the neighborhood known as Tequiquiapa.<sup>23</sup>

In Tequiquiapa, Maria de los Santo Tobar and Joseph Hordones Tristan tried numerous potential remedies successively and coterminously. First, the local clergy Nicolas Obispo de Lima, a presbyter and *vecino* of the city, came to pray and to perform exorcisms for the young Maria Ignacia.<sup>24</sup> The presbyter continued in this vein for three evenings, during which time the parents also consulted the local *boticario* who gave them three medicinal drinks that they administered to Maria Ignacia. Other than causing a bout of the hiccups however, these potions "had no effect" on the young woman.<sup>25</sup> At this point that the denunciants began to believe that the illness was the work of witchcraft; it was also during these days that they learned of two women, San Juana and her daughter Josephina Viviana, who lived in Rancho Nuevo and who were rumored to have caused this and similar illnesses, such as that of a *mestizo* named Godines who was suffering from an almost symptomatically identical sickness.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Hesburgh. Inq.123.2a, "le dixo a la enferma que si ella era la enechizada del Ranco Nuevo, y a ello le respondió que ella no decía que estaba echizada."

<sup>18</sup> Hesburgh. Inq.123.2a., "tu echizo esta oculto, el saldría en uxebe tiempo que esto le dixo su referida higa a la declarante."

<sup>19</sup> Hesburgh. Inq.123.2a, "aunque entró a la cocina dos o tres veces no comio."

<sup>20</sup> Literally, discharge ("despidió"), Hesburgh. Inq.123.2a.

<sup>21</sup> Hesburgh. Inq.123.2b.

<sup>22</sup> Hesburgh. Inq.123.2b., "con los remedos de botica, ensalmos, y conjuros se podría curar."

<sup>23</sup> Hesburgh. Inq.123.2b., This is most likely modern day Tequisquiapan.

<sup>24</sup> Literally, "conjurar." Hesburgh. Inq.123.3a, among others.

<sup>25</sup> Hesburgh. Inq.123.3a, "le dieron una purga y no le hizo efecto."

<sup>26</sup> Hesburgh. Inq.123.3b-4a.

## Witchcraft and Popular Healing in Eighteenth-Century Mexico

While some religious scholars and historians of early modern Europe have argued that the introduction of Protestantism, the increase in naturalism, and the anti-superstitious efforts of the Tridentine Catholic Church had effectively reduced the belief in witchcraft to the level of superstition by the eighteenth century, this argument is no longer tenable.<sup>27</sup> Witchcraft remained a popular and learned belief in both Catholic and Protestant societies throughout the early modern period, including the eighteenth-century Spanish Empire. For Catholic Inquisitors operating in late-colonial Mexico, the difference between superstition and witchcraft would have been marked primarily by the belief in the establishment of a diabolic pact or *maleficia*. The historian Gary K. Waite has stated that there were two main interpretive positions of *maleficia* by religious authorities. The first is a *providentialist* or skeptic's opinion, that argued that "malicious activity of demons was limited to the mental and spiritual spheres."<sup>28</sup> In the second position, Waite labels "*realists*" those who held that, with God's sovereign permission, real, physical diabolic activity could exist.<sup>29</sup> Both positions, Waite stresses, involved diabolic activity, but to a different extent.

In her work *Christians, Blasphemers, and Witches: Afro-Mexican Ritual Practice in the Seventeenth Century*, historian Joan Cameron Bristol argues that in Mexico, debates about the origin of illnesses, the epistemology of sickness, and the relationship between the supernatural and the natural were uniquely intensified by the tripartite combination of Spanish-European, African, and Native Indigenous belief systems.<sup>30</sup> All three believed that there was a connection between the spiritual and supernatural and the bodily and natural, although the particular method of discerning this connection varied greatly throughout time. Bristol therefore describes the religious-healing scene of colonial Mexico as particularly muddled and unclear. She states that,

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<sup>27</sup>The historian of witchcraft Michael D. Bailey states, for example, "Baconian-style empiricism in general can actually be seen not so much as rejecting occult aspects of nature as, in a way, making them central to its conception of the natural world." Michael D. Bailey, *Magic and Superstition in Europe: A Concise History from Antiquity to the Present* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007), 205. In this way, Bailey supports the work of Stuart Clark, who has similarly argued that demonology helped to develop scientific advancements.

<sup>28</sup>Gary K. Waite, *Heresy, Magic, and Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (Houndmills, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 125. Waite seems to imply that medical discourse usually augmented this realm of skepticism. He cites the Dutch physician and demonologist Johann Weyer's work *De praestigiis daemonum* (1563) as an example where medicine sought to "naturalize" many of the activities ascribed to demoniacs. This includes, coincidentally, the regurgitation of foreign objects.

<sup>29</sup>Waite, 125.

<sup>30</sup>See Joan Cameron Bristol, *Christians, Blasphemers, and Witches: Afro-Mexican Ritual Practice in the Seventeenth Century* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2007), particularly chapter five, titled "To have Health There Was Nothing That He Wouldn't Take."

Although the crown and church defined “witchcraft” and “curing” as distinct activity, most men and women probably saw them as points on a continuum of methods capable of regulating the body and its place in the world...in the end, decisions about unacceptable activities rested with individual inquisitors who interpreted cases and issued edicts, and these definitions were not always consistent.<sup>31</sup>

In addition, the lack of professionally-trained doctors and licensed medical practitioners was a further reason for the flourishing of popular healing in colonial Mexico. It was in this context of uncertainty that the Church and the Inquisition desperately sought to enlist empiricism and medical discourse to aid in their discernment between natural and supernatural and between superstition and diabolic witchcraft.<sup>32</sup>

### **The Doctor Is In: The *Protomedicato* Carmano Visits Maria Ignacia (September 1774 – January 1775)**

When the efforts to cure Maria Ignacia through prayer, confession, exorcism, and *boticarios* failed, her parents called for the help of a court-approved doctor: a *médico* named Josef Antonio Carmano. Carmano visited Maria Ignacia “three times on various days” and “ordered several medications that had no relief.”<sup>33</sup> Carmano’s professional methods are not detailed, rather, his inability to cure Maria Ignacia is emphasized. Significantly, as part of the ratification process detailing the illness of Maria Ignacia, the local tribunal procured written statements from both Nicolas Obispo, the presbyter from Michoacan, and the *médico*, Josef Antonio Carmano.<sup>34</sup>

Carmano’s affidavit is the crux of this Inquisition case. In it, he first introduces himself as a qualified medical professional, a *médico*, “examined by the *Real Tribunal* of the *Protomedicato* of *Nueva España*.”<sup>35</sup> He then describes in writing his firsthand experience with Maria Ignacia:

I certify in every way that . . . the immoderate spell under which she [Maria Ignacia] has fallen must refer to some species of Lethargy, although it has lasted some days (according to the claims of the attendants) without any success of an ability to excite

<sup>31</sup>Bristol, *Christians, Blasphemers, and Witches*, 161-162.

<sup>32</sup>See also, Thomas Robisheaux, “Witchcraft and Forensic Medicine in Seventeenth-Century Germany,” in *Languages of Witchcraft: Narrative, Ideology and Meaning in Early Modern Culture*, ed. By Stuart Clark (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2001), 197-216.

<sup>33</sup>Hesburgh. Inq.123.4a, “la visitó trese veces en distintos días en que le ordenó varios medicamentos, y no tuvo alivio”

<sup>34</sup>This is an assumption based on the dates given by the authors of these affidavits. The letter from Nicolas Obispo is dated the 29<sup>th</sup> of November, 1774, which places it early in the investigation. Carmano’s letter, however, came later on January 30, 1775, once the investigations had been renewed following the Christmas season. Both letters, being written and submitted individually, were placed by the editor of the Inquisition folio between the pages of the section labeled “Ratificacion de la enferma Maria Ignacia Hordoñes Tristan – Donzella de poco mas de veinte años.” See Hesburgh. Inq.123.12a-13b.

<sup>35</sup>Hesburgh. Inq.123.12a, “examinado por el Real Tribunal del Prothomedicao de esta Nueva Espana”

her, [Lethargy] is a disease that is caused by natural causes, as can be verified by experiments, referred to in the History of Medicine, and this aforementioned Maria is thus, according to my Judgment, [suffering] from a Passion of the Mind, following the order and method of natural diseases.<sup>36</sup>

Carmano's initial judgment was that Maria Ignacia's condition was a natural illness. Lethargy, according to Carmano, was a well-documented illness; in his letter, Carmano supplies references to numerous medicinal works that can corroborate his evaluation of Maria Ignacia's symptoms and his subsequent diagnosis. Yet Carmano, as a *médico*, does not limit himself to his natural diagnosis. In the very same letter, he adds that Lethargy and its natural symptoms could be caused by perfidious means:

[T]herefore the disease is purely natural, but as always, the Devil (who only operates *intra vines Naturae*) . . . so often disturbs these same causes in order to produce different complicated effects, and between these same discordant [effects], to the end that the wise Médico is the more perturbed, shaken, and confused . . . in light of this, I judge that if you find to be true that this aforementioned Maria Ignacia has, with strong nausea expelled strange things like hair, rags, and other of this sort, which is not opposed by medical observations . . . in this case I certify that this referenced disease according to the symptoms must probably contain some evil . . . this is how it appears to me.<sup>37</sup>

Carmano posits several causal possibilities, and in doing so, offers key insight into how inquisitorial officials in late-colonial Mexico used professional medical discourse to aid in their investigations and to understand the difference between superstitions caused by natural illnesses and cases of actual witchcraft.

### Medicine, Natural Philosophy, and the Mexican Inquisition

The *médico* Josef Antonio Carmano's recorded testimony and participation in these events makes this Inquisition case particularly valuable to this study. While it is true that popular medicine and

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<sup>36</sup> Hesburgh. Inq.123.12a, "certifico en toda forma . . . el sueño immoderado en que ha incidido, y que debe refirse a una especie de Lethargo, pues ha durado en el algunos días; (según afirman (¿) los Asistentes) sin valer Arte alguno para excitarla, es enfermedad que se origina por causas naturales, como lo comprueban los experimentos, referidos en la Historia medica (a), y que este en la mencionada Maria resulto según mi Juicio de una Passion de Animo, por lo que atenta ratione causae es una enfermedad, que prosiguió el orden, y método de las enfermedades naturales."

<sup>37</sup> Hesburgh. Inq.123.12a-b, "y portanto es enfermedad [b] Puramente natural, pero como quiera que el Demonio (quien solamente opera *intra vines Naturae*) . . . o muchas veces perturbe de tal modo las tales vasas para que produzgan efectos diferentes, complicados, y entre si mismos discordes, a fin de que el pridente Medico los pervierta mas, agite, y confunda . . . en conformidad de esto Juzgo que si se declarare por verdader el que dicha Maria Ignacia, mediante fuerte nausea ha expelido cosas extrañas, como cabellos, trapos, y otras de este genero, lo que no repugna según observaciones medicas . . . en este caso certifico, que en la referida enfermedad, según sus symptomas debe temerse probablemente de algún maleficio. . . . Este es mi parecer."

healing magic were ubiquitous parts of the daily economy of colonial Mexico, they were not the sole recourse to individuals seeking healing. Particularly in the late-colonial period, when medical advances and Bourbon restructuring of the regulations of medical professions had taken place, subjects in Spanish America consulted not only *curanderos* and priests, but barbers, surgeons, bleeders, pharmacists, and doctors. Nor were the services of one of these healers exclusive, and those suffering often sought out multiple remedies simultaneously in a desperate effort to obtain relief.<sup>38</sup> While many scholars have analyzed the importance of popular medicine as part of the social economy, as a marker of cultural retention or acculturation, or even as a form of resistance, fewer have studied the emergent importance of medical discourse in eighteenth-century Mexico.

It is important to stress that advancements in natural discourse and rationalist philosophy, particularly in the fields of science and medicine greatly influenced the way theologians, intellectual clerics, and inquisitors thought about the nature of truth, fact, and knowledge. These changes also altered the way accounts of the supernatural and heterodox were interpreted. The historian Andrew Keitt has recently developed the heuristic term “medical fideism” to describe the increasing reliance of Spanish religious authorities upon medical and scientific advances during the seventeenth century.<sup>39</sup> According to Keitt, medicine and medical discourse aided the Inquisition in the prosecution of imposters who simulated spiritual possession, mystic visions, or apparitions. Throughout the seventeenth century, religious intellectuals and inquisitors were increasingly concerned with the discernment of natural from supernatural. As Keitt states, “the pressing question for the Inquisition became how to define precisely the ‘forces of nature’ in order to differentiate them from the supernatural.”<sup>40</sup> Scientific, and particularly medical discourse, was used increasingly to evaluate witnesses and to ascertain the value of a witness’s testimony.

In a seventeenth-century guide for the interrogation of witnesses to apparitions located in the Archivo Histórico Nacional, inquisitors were instructed to verify not only the soundness of the doctrines implied by a testimony, but to carefully assess the *person* giving the testimony – including their corporal, mental, and spiritual states. The guide directs: “First, [investigate] the age and state of origin, and place of his *naturaleza*, and his *calidad*. If he has a particular confessor or spiritual master who governs his soul, who is it, and how long has he had him...If he is of whole and sound judgment, and if no injury to his understanding has taken place.”<sup>41</sup> Inquisitors are specifically

<sup>38</sup>Such was certainly the case with Maria Ignacia, whose parents simultaneously employed the services of a presbyter, a pharmacist, and a doctor.

<sup>39</sup>Andrew Keitt, “The Miraculous Body of Evidence: Visionary Experience, Medical Discourse, and the Inquisition in Seventeenth-Century Spain,” *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 36, no. 1 (Spring 2005), pp. 77-96.

<sup>40</sup>Keitt, 79. See also the early work of sixteenth-century Dutch physician/theologian Johann Weyer (Weir). Sam Migliore, “The Doctor, the Lawyer, and the Melancholy Witch,” *Anthropologica* New Series 25, No. 2 (1983): 163-192.

<sup>41</sup>Archivo Histórico Nacional, Sección de la Inquisición, Libro 1226, pg. 750b (Madrid). The document, which is a guide specifically for evaluating visions and raptures, is undated. Andrew Keitt suggests in his work, as do others, that, because it has been compiled with texts from the mid-seventeenth century, this is the most likely date. In this case, the date would indicate that science and the introduction of natural discourse was a broad process that began before the “enlightenment proper” of Spain during the eighteenth century. This dynamic translation is my own; the original text is as follows: Primero la edad, y estado que tiene origen y lugar de su naturaleza, y de su calidad. Si tiene particular



reminded of the intrinsic connection between a person's mental, physical, and spiritual states, and as they negotiated the relationship between the supernatural and the natural, inquisitors used medicine to understand the connection between body and soul. This cooption of science and medicine supports Keitt's designation of medical fideism and clearly demonstrates that natural knowledge impacted the way that religious intellectuals revised their system of epistemology, particularly within the Inquisition. Medical discourse was part of a "larger project of naturalization" according to Keitt, and one that augmented rather than replaced theological explanations of causality. As Keitt states in his work, *Inventing the Sacred*,

If, however, we are in search of a paradigm shift in which medical explanations supplant theological ones on a case by case basis, we will be disappointed...there never developed a clear-cut professional affiliation between physicians and inquisitors that would allow for a definitive designation of illness as a mitigating factor in trials for imposture...<sup>42</sup>

This is not to say, Keitt hastens to add, that medical discourse was absent from theological and inquisitorial discussions. Evidence of such discourse is further corroborated by the work of Timothy Walker, who, unlike Keitt, argues that an informal alliance between medicine and religion *did* exist among the formal positions that physicians and surgeons had in the Portuguese Inquisition. Walker states that:

...in the eighteenth century [the advancement of surgeons] would become a common occurrence. Increasingly, university-trained physicians and surgeons simultaneously held important posts at court, took up influential positions within the Inquisition, and maintained ties with an elite class of surgeons and doctors with whom they practiced and discussed ideas for change within the medical profession.<sup>43</sup>

Walker further argues that this theological-medical union was specifically directed against the popular healers who were common among the *vulgo* – the lower, uneducated people of Spanish and Portuguese society.<sup>44</sup> It is unclear if inquisitors saw a defined role for physicians, or if, as Bristol has suggested, it was dictated by individual place, person, and context.<sup>45</sup> Walker argues that physicians and inquisitors in Portugal during the first half of the eighteenth century were particularly eager to eliminate popular healers for two reasons: physicians thought the *curandeiros* charlatans and

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confessor y maestro spiritual que gobierne su alma, quien es, y quanto tiempo ha que le tiene...Si es de entero, y sano Juicio, y que no [h]aya...decido alguna lesion en el entendimiento...

<sup>42</sup>Andrew Keitt, *Inventing the Sacred: Imposture, Inquisition, and the Boundaries of the Supernatural in Golden Age Spain* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 150.

<sup>43</sup>Timothy D. Walker, "The Role of Licensed Physicians and Surgeons in the Inquisition and at Court during the Reign of João V," *Mediterranean Studies* 9 (2000), 143.

<sup>44</sup>See for example Sheila Barker's review of Timothy D. Walker, *Doctors, Folk Medicine, and the Inquisition: The Repression of Magical Healing in Portugal during the Enlightenment* (Leiden: Brill, 2005).

<sup>45</sup>Bristol, 162. This could involve discerning whether an illness was natural or supernatural, evaluating the employment of *curanderos* in a case or, as Walker notes, even monitoring the health of defendants who were being tortured or incarcerated.

dangerous, while the inquisitors thought them superstitious and irreligious.<sup>46</sup> Thus, Walker identifies three simultaneous and causally related trends within the Portuguese Inquisition, specifically the tribunal at Coimbra: first, the increased number of trained and licensed physicians, second, the rise of Inquisition cases directed against popular healers (*curandeiros*, *curanderos*) in the second-half of the eighteenth century, and lastly, an increase in the active role for physicians in the Portuguese Inquisition.<sup>47</sup>

Physicians worked as familiars (paid, non-ecclesiastical informants and advisors to inquisitorial tribunals), as personal physicians for inquisitorial officials, and even as *médicos dos cárceres*, responsible both for monitoring the health of prisoners of the Holy Office and evaluating the physical condition of those undergoing torture.<sup>48</sup> Walker posits several possible reasons for this union of scientific, medical professionals and religious, inquisitorial officials. They include the decline of Jesuit influence at Coimbra, the diminishing “exigencies of the Counter-Reformation,” and the “growing appreciation for the application of scientific principles” among the learned elite.<sup>49</sup> This learned elite, moreover, was a class to which both educated *médicos* and literate inquisitors commonly belonged.<sup>50</sup>

These were not solely Portuguese or even peninsular trends. Throughout the Iberian world, science, medicine, and natural discourse became increasingly ubiquitous and provided an important source for patriotic narratives.<sup>51</sup> This study of science and medicine in the context of Spanish America is particularly important when considering the Inquisition’s interrogation of various heterodoxies. In the viceroyalties of New Spain, Lima, or Nueva Granada, where tripartite syncretism created unique challenges, medical discourse may have actually functioned as a mode of acceptance for alternative native and African magico-medical practices, and was therefore less effective in assisting the epistemological hegemony of the Inquisition and the Spanish Catholic Church. Some historians have argued that the need for remedies outweighed particular religious objections and made alternative magico-medical practices of healing more tolerable.

In her article “Medical Practice in Early Colonial Spanish America,” Linda Newsom persuasively demonstrates that the Spanish colonies were marked by a drastic shortage of professional physicians and surgeons, and although they were legally prohibited from doing so, priests often had to assume

<sup>46</sup>Walker, “The Role of Licensed Physicians,” 143.

<sup>47</sup>Walker, “The Role of Licensed Physicians,” 144.

<sup>48</sup>Walker, “The Role of Licensed Physicians,” 149-51. The work of *médicos de cárceles* also included routine preventative care for those imprisoned. In 1634, for example, two *licenciados* from the Tribunal de Cartagena de las Indias wrote to the Consejo Suprema asking for funding for “a *médico* and *cirujano* . . . in order that the poor imprisoned people may be cured of the illnesses which the heat and the darkness cause in the cells” (“*médico y cirujano . . . para que los pobres presos sean curados de las enfermedades que el calor y obscuridad les causan en las cárceles*”) Archivo Histórico Nacional, Sección de la Inquisición, 4821.41, “Tribunal de Cartagena de Indias, Hacienda, Personal, Salarios. Carta Sobre la Petición de Asignación de Salario de Médico y Cirujano de Tribunal,” página 1<sup>a</sup>.

<sup>49</sup>Walker “The Role of Licensed Physicians,” 144-45

<sup>50</sup>Walker, “The Role of Licensed Physicians,” 168

<sup>51</sup>See, for example, Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra, *Nature, Empire, and Nation: Explorations of the history of Science in the Iberian World* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006).

medical responsibilities.<sup>52</sup> Universities capable of training medical professionals did not exist in the colonies until the first half of the seventeenth century.<sup>53</sup> Such shortages of qualified medical personnel contributed, according to Newsom, to a widespread need for popular medicine and healing magic. Ultimately, this fusion created “authorities [who] were relatively tolerant of alternative medical practices.”<sup>54</sup>

The establishment of *protomedicatos* throughout the Spanish empire was an attempt by the Crown to address the lack of trained physicians. *Protomedicatos* were essentially board-certified specialists responsible for granting licenses to medical practitioners (bleeders, surgeons, doctors, etc.), reviewing *boticarios* to ensure that they sold legitimate medicines, and advising civil and inquisitorial officials when medical questions arose.<sup>55</sup> However, as Newsom demonstrates, the process of certification was long and tedious; furthermore, the historian John Tate Lanning has established that *protomedicatos* continued to be regulated by standards of gender and caste, and never became a popular or prestigious career path for young *españoles* in colonial Mexico.<sup>56</sup> The result was that the need for popular healing and folk medicine remained constant throughout the eighteenth century. Carmano, as *protomedicato* in San Luis Potosí, was in rare possession of professional medical knowledge and thus a particularly valuable asset to the tribunal.<sup>57</sup>

While the need for healing of any kind may have led inquisitors to be initially lenient towards popular healers, they maintained a firm opposition to witchcraft and superstitious belief. As greater numbers of licensed physicians, surgeons, and barbers grew in colonial Spanish America, the need-based reliance on popular medicine may have experienced a decline similar to what Walker has noted in Coimbra. Nevertheless, as Keitt has demonstrated, medical fideism and the religious cooption of medical knowledge began long before the eighteenth century. Moreover, it is not readily apparent from the case of Maria Ignacia whether the presence of Dr. Josef Antonio Carmano reflects any of these trends. Carmano, after all, was both an expert evaluator due to his role as the *protomedicato tribunal* employed by the local inquisition, and a witness who was initially called by the denunciator and her family.<sup>58</sup> In any event, the tribunal’s request for Carmano’s professional medical opinion of Maria Ignacia’s condition is important, and because the request for the ratifying letter

<sup>52</sup>Linda A. Newsom, “Medical Practice in Early Colonial Spanish America: A Prospectus,” *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 25, no. 3 (2006), 372.

<sup>53</sup>Newsom, “Medical Practice,” 375. Mexico (1631) and Lima (1634) were these universities.

<sup>54</sup>Newsom, “Medical Practice,” 367.

<sup>55</sup>*The Royal Protomedicato: The Regulation of the Medical Profession in the Spanish Empire* by John Tate Lanning; John Jay TePaske; review by Cheryl E. Martin, *The Americas* 43, no. 3 (January 1987), 367.

<sup>56</sup>Lanning, *The Royal Protomedicato*, and Newsom, “Medical Practice.”

<sup>57</sup>For further reading on the history of medicine and the development of the medical profession in colonial Mexico, as well as throughout the Spanish empire, see: Lilia Zenequelli, *Historia de los Médicos y Boticarios en el Buenos Aires Antiguo, 1536-1871* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Dunken, 2002); Luz María Hernández Saénz, *Learning to Heal: The Medical Profession in Colonial Mexico, 1767-1831* (New York: Peter Lang, 1997); Raúl Francisco Arias Sánchez, *Del Protomedicato al Colegio de Médicos y Cirujanos: 145 Años de Historia* (San Pedro: Editorial Porvenir, 2002); Lourdes Márquez Morfín and Patricia Hernández Espinoza, eds., *Salud y Sociedad en el México Prehispánico y Colonial* (México: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 2006); and Sherry Fields, *Pestilence and Headcolds: Encountering Illness in Colonial Mexico* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008).

<sup>58</sup>It seems quite possible from this fact that Carmano may have been the *only* physician in San Luis Potosí.

occurred early in the investigation, it appears that the tribunal's decision to pursue the investigation greatly depended upon Carmano's diagnosis of Maria Ignacia's illness as natural or caused by witchcraft. Moreover, the tribunal's reliance upon Carmano is indicative of the larger trend practiced across colonial Mexico and the Iberian Atlantic in which medical, scientific discourse and religious aims in the tribunals of the Inquisition were combined.

In his analysis of this trend in the context of the Portuguese Inquisition, Walker refers to "a most contradictory relationship," writing that "the Church had a long record of resisting scientific discoveries which contradicted orthodox teaching" and that "science and religion embarked on increasingly divergent paths as the Enlightenment wore on."<sup>59</sup> The existence of such a position as *protomedicato tribunal*, and the cooperation between Catholic Inquisition and scientific empiricism was, according to Walker, due to an unusually aligned interest in persecuting popular healers, albeit for alternative motives. Walker thus attributes the decline of the Catholic Reformation as an opportunity for this relationship to occur. However, I argue that this union was not directly related to a subtextual persecution of popular healers, but rather was part of a broader, long-standing willingness of the Catholic Church and the Holy Office of the Inquisition to bolster doctrine with science and reason (rather than "resisting scientific discoveries").<sup>60</sup> Medical knowledge and the rise of scientific empiricism promoted an emphasis on the sense-acquisition and 'fact-based' nature of understanding. This, in turn, encouraged inquisitors to seek eyewitnesses as their preferred form of testimony.

Certainly, in this microhistorical example of the illness of Maria Ignacia, the idea of a coordinated persecution against popular healers provides an insufficient explanation. Carmano is the sole identified professional healer; and neither Carmano nor Bocanegra prosecutes popular healers in the case of Maria Ignacia. In fact, they appear quite open to the idea of alternative methods of healing her and seem more concerned with finding a cure to the malady induced by San Juana and Viviana.<sup>61</sup> In September of 1775, near the end of the investigative activity, the tribunal summoned Maria Ignacia's father, Joseph Hordones Tristan. The seventy-year-old *labrador* was asked "if he knew, or had heard talk of someone else being sick?"<sup>62</sup> Hordones Tristan replied that he knew of a mestizo named Godines who had fallen similarly ill. Godines, in fact, could testify that San Juana, the accused bewitcher, had actually verbally stated that she was the cause of his illness.

Godines eventually recuperated from his illness. Bocanegra and the tribunal immediately inquired of Hordones Tristan "if a *Médico* assisted in the healing of this Godines?" To which Hordones Tristan responded, "that he didn't know of any Médico that assisted him, nor could he have paid one, because he was poor. That this is the truth, he swore..."<sup>63</sup> In this investigation,

<sup>59</sup>Walker, "The Role of Licensed Physicians," 156.

<sup>60</sup>Walker, "The Role of Licensed Physicians," 156.

<sup>61</sup>Methodologically, however, it is almost impossible to challenge Walker's supposition; in *name*, Bocanegra and the Inquisition were not persecuting a *curandero*, but a witch who practiced *hechiceria*. According to Walker's analysis, this terminological shuffle could be a front for the *médicos*' and inquisitors' true motives.

<sup>62</sup> Hesburgh. Inq.123.51a, "Preguntado si sabe, o ha oido decir que alguna persona haya enfermado a otra?"

<sup>63</sup> Hesburgh. Inq.123.51a, "Preguntado: que Medico asistio a la curacion del dicho Godines? Respondio: que no sabe que lo asistiera ningún Medico, ni tiene con pagarlo por ser pobre."

Bocanegra attempted to not only discern the cause of the illness but the remedy as well. In doing so, Bocanegra and the local tribunal navigated between popular healing practices and professional medical discourse, alternating between expert eyewitness testimony and the presented statements of 'lower folk.' The Mexican Inquisition therefore occupied a unique interstitial position at the intersection of popular folk medicine and magic, religio-intellectual discourse, and scientific and medical practices.

Carmano operated at this intersection as *protomedicato tribunal* of the local inquisition in San Luis Potosí: a physician employing his professional study of medicine to aid in the theological discernment between natural and supernatural activity undertaken by the Mexican Inquisition. Carmano noted that the cosmological, causal categories of supernatural, preternatural, and natural were confusing, even to an educated médico. The Devil, according to Carmano, operated "*intra vines Naturae*" – using natural means.<sup>64</sup> As a supernatural entity, the Devil could cause natural illnesses and could further confuse attending physicians by emphasizing or obscuring symptoms. The natural and supernatural could exist, however, conterminously in an inquisition case. Secondly, Carmano's explicit references to the devil and to witchcraft (Carmano's deliberate word choice for evil was *maleficio*) reaffirm that the introduction and reliance of medical discourse did not oblate preexisting Catholic epistemology or causal frameworks for understanding the world.<sup>65</sup> Lastly, Carmano implicitly doubts the testimony of those who have stated that Maria Ignacia regurgitated strange and foreign objects. It was possible, according to Carmano, and *if it were judged to be true*, it would point toward witchcraft; however, Carmano's first diagnosis of Maria Ignacia's condition as natural indicates that he doubted the veracity of these claims. Notably, as the investigation proceeded after Carmano's testimony, the local tribunal painstakingly examined more than a dozen new witnesses who might have been present during the manifestations of Maria Ignacia's more supernatural symptoms, indicating that Carmano's affidavit was a watershed moment in the case. Having heard his expert opinions, Bocanegra and the tribunal sought to establish whether or not Maria Ignacia's illness was as fantastic as was reported.

<sup>64</sup> Hesburgh. Inq. 123.13b.

<sup>65</sup> *Maleficio* is more specific than "evil," but rather references *maleficium*, a term developed during the late medieval and early modern period to refer to those practices of witchcraft that were specifically the result of making diabolic pacts in exchange for harmful powers. Waite argues in *Heresy, Magic, and Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* that this connection became explicit following the late fifteenth-century publication of the *Malleus Maleficarum* (44). Carmano's use of *maleficio* therefore refers to the specific evil of diabolic witchcraft. In her article, "Witchcraft, Poison, Law, and Atlantic Society," Diana Paton argues that the British of eighteenth-century Jamaica deliberately interpreted Afro-Mestizo spiritual medicine (*obeah*, *brujería*, and *feitçaria*) not as witchcraft, but as poison, placing it in the natural realm and legal jurisdiction. Paton states that this especially occurred after Tacky's Rebellion in 1760. This is clearly not the case in the 1774-1776 case of Maria Ignacia in colonial Mexico; poison is not referenced a single time throughout the sixty pages of the case. To Carmano and Bocanegra, the illness was either natural, or induced by *maleficium* (witchcraft/diabolic means). This has interesting theoretical implications; most likely the difference between British Anglican colonial culture and Iberian Catholic colonial culture could account for these divergent epistemological frameworks. See Diana Paton, "Witchcraft, Poison, Law, and Atlantic Society," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 69, no.2 (April 2012): 235-64; also Sue Vincent Brown, *The Reaper's Garden: Death and Power in the World of Atlantic Slavery* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010).

## The Investigation Continues: The Search for Credible Testimony and Eyewitnesses in the Mexican Inquisition

On February 7, 1775, after receiving the expert testimony of Carmano, the Inquisition continued its investigation by examining Joseph Ignacio Estradão, the Spanish *caballero* who had initially recommended the *boticarios* of Tequiquiapa to Maria Ignacia's parents.<sup>66</sup> Following his testimony, the tribunal heard numerous other declarations, including those of men and women who were carefully categorized and labeled by profession and diverse *calidad* - *mestizos*, *lobos*, *castizos*, *coyotes* – but in Bocanegra's own words, were dismissed as “people of low *calidad*.”<sup>67</sup> The tribunal only called witnesses who were present at Maria Ignacia's illness, indicating the paramount importance of proximity to the event. Moreover, the order in which witnesses were called follows the general pattern of those who had been closest (physically and relationally) to Maria Ignacia for the greatest amount of time, and would therefore have the most information to offer from their experience and observations.

The rise of empiricism as the preferred framework for gathering evidence and establishing credibility may thus be seen as having a direct impact in the preference for eyewitnesses. Although traditional socioracial classifications continued to influence inquisitors' preference for Spaniards as inherently more truthful and reliable, empiricism increasingly challenged this notion. By elevating actual, sense-based experience as the superior way of knowing, empiricism argued that those most proximal to the event in hearing and seeing were necessarily most proximal to the truth.

Certainly, Cañizares-Esguerra's notion of internal coherence and corroboration between testimonies was an influential factor to the tribunal. Throughout the records of various declarations, the tribunal's secretary included marginalia such as “This was not mentioned by the Mother or the Daughter,” “No one [else] has referenced this in their declarations about the sick girl.”<sup>68</sup> Yet firsthand, empirical observations were also important. For example, Maria Ignacia was rumored to be physically possessed by a demonic spirit that commanded her to utter vulgar obscenities to four men who were in the room watching over her. Of the four men, three offered contradictory accounts of this event. The fourth testimony of one Pedro Blanco was written off by the secretary in the margins, because he was *actually* in the adjacent room, noting that “although he [Pedro Blanco] was there for the same [the supposed possession of Maria Ignacia], and though he heard her talking, he didn't hear what she was saying.”<sup>69</sup> The comment may suggest the continued prominence of the empirical and, more specifically, the ocular throughout the eighteenth century.

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<sup>66</sup> Hesburgh. Inq.123.14a.

<sup>67</sup> Hesburgh. Inq.123.Cover, “gente de baxo calidad.”

<sup>68</sup> Hesburgh. Inq.123.14a-14b, marginalia, “No espresan cio la M. e ni la Hija.” “Nada se esto refiere en su Declaracion la enferma.”

<sup>69</sup> Hesburgh. Inq.123.15b, marginalia, “Y Pedro Blanco, que aunque le desperta son para lo mismo, y la oío qomo que hablaba, pero no oio lo que decía.” It may seem obvious that evidence is linked to empirical observations, but importantly, this legal-theological dimension may have greatly affected the importance of experience to the Spanish Catholic epistemological framework.

Research remains to be conducted on the emergence of the category of the “eye-witness” as a preferred class of testifiers that was fundamentally rooted in the ‘matter of fact’ nature of empiricism, as opposed to gender, race, or social standing. This is particularly important for the study of eighteenth-century Mexico, where these two epistemological frameworks operated conterminously. Only in the last ten years has a serious study of this category been produced. In *The Invention of the Eyewitness*, Andrea Frisch, who limits her study to the discourse of travel narratives of France, comments on the divergence between ethical and epistemic witnesses, but no such study exists for the emergence of these categories within the Spanish empire, nor for the specific context of testimony within the Catholic Church and the Inquisition.<sup>70</sup> It is notable that the dictionary of the Real Academia Española produced in 1739 contains separate entries for *testigo*, *testigo de oídas*, and *testigo de vista*, whereas Covarrubias’ 1611 publication, *Tesoro de la lengua castellan o española* contains only one entry for *testigo*, in which the definition mentions no such division or preference.<sup>71</sup> This suggests that empiricism became more acceptable as the common framework for understanding the acquisition of knowledge.<sup>72</sup> However, as is demonstrated by this case, and others, inquisitors in eighteenth-century Mexico continued to employ traditional modes of evaluating witnesses based on religious affiliation, profession, gender, and socioracial status.

### Traditional Evaluatory Systems in the Eighteenth-Century Mexican Inquisition

The search for credible witnesses and verifiable testimony was the primary focus of the tribunal of San Luis Potosí for months. During the Lenten season of 1775, Bocanegra and his fellow inquisitors sat through more than a dozen testimonies and ratifications, each providing a unique perspective on the infirmed condition of Maria Ignacia. When presented with conflicting testimonies from multiple eyewitnesses, the local tribunal relied upon alternative, older ways of weighing evidence. The pattern of investigation in this Inquisition case strongly suggests that despite the new epistemological sources of science and nature, inquisitors still employed gender and *casta* as sufficiently discriminatory standards for the credibility of witnesses during the eighteenth century. This was especially important in cases of witchcraft, which involved a disproportionately high number of non-Spaniards and women, who were believed to have inferior legal status and less worthy testimony.<sup>73</sup>

<sup>70</sup>Andrea Frisch, *The Invention of the Eyewitness: Witnessing and Testimony in Early Modern France* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

<sup>71</sup>Real Academia Española, *Diccionario de la lengua española* (1739), and Sebastián de Covarrubias Orozco, *Tesoro de la lengua castellana, o española* (1611).

<sup>72</sup>This may also support Stuart Schwartz’s notion of “the philosophical breakthroughs that led to the rise of religious tolerance and freedom of conscience,” which he argues occurred across the Iberian Atlantic during the eighteenth century. See Stuart B. Schwartz, *All Can Be Saved: Religious Tolerance and Salvation in the Iberian Atlantic World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 3.

<sup>73</sup>See for example the case presented in Luis R. Corteguera, *Death by Effigy: A Case from the Mexican Inquisition* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 170. In this example, the testimony of a *castizo* is ultimately used to secure the accusations against a Spaniard.

Ruth Behar is one of the first historians to study these themes with her analysis of religious heterodoxy's highly gendered nature and the relationship between religion, women, family, and marriage. Behar assesses the Inquisition in eighteenth-century Mexico in her article, "Sex and Sin, Witchcraft in Late-Colonial Mexico."<sup>74</sup> She stresses that by viewing how the Inquisition operated in poorer, racially-mixed areas of Mexico one may understand both colonial Mexican Catholicism and heterodox spirituality in distinctly social, racial, and gendered terms. She finds that the struggles of religious syncretism during the colonial period offer a "fascinating conjuncture of sexuality, witchcraft, and religion, in which Spanish, indigenous, and African cultures converged."<sup>75</sup> Practitioners accused of witchcraft, for example, were nearly always members of the *gente vil*: the 'lower folk' of mixed-racial status, from rural areas, politically disenfranchised, and poor. Women were therefore the largest demographic component of religious heterodoxy. This was augmented, Behar notes, by the fact that the majority of witchcraft and magic was "highly sexual," having to do with marital stress, illicit relationships, sexual abuses, or amatory interest.<sup>76</sup>

Behar concludes that the Inquisition in Mexico abated persecution of these poorer 'heretics' during the late-colonial period, because as subjects they were deemed ignorant, base, and unworthy of investigation. Similarly, in order to be licensed as a medical professional by the *Protomedicato Real*, proof of *limpieza de sangre* – purity of blood – was required. This made the entire medical profession interwoven with notions of *calidad*.<sup>77</sup> Furthermore, indigenous traditions that regulated marital stress and amatory problems were dismissed as mere superstition by the end of the eighteenth century. Behar's work, drawn from Mexican archival resources, provides a significant historiographical contribution by assessing how heterodox religious practices and beliefs could be particularly tied to racial (caste) and gender (women) categories. Behar's argument that personal assessments guided which cases inquisitors chose to pursue supports this essay's investigation of the way these same personal assessments governed testimony and authority once a case began. Behar's argument rests on two implied axioms: first, that 'lower folk' were inclined to practice superstition; and secondly, that these 'lower folk' would routinely present worthless admissions in trial. In this way, Behar argues against the application of a "new way of reading" to cases of the Mexican Inquisition. For Behar and for others, the ad hominem assessment of witnesses specifically tied to the categories of gender, race, and *calidad*, remained a very real discriminatory practice in the eighteenth century.

<sup>74</sup>Ruth Behar, "Sex and Sin, Witchcraft and the Devil in Late-Colonial Mexico," *American Ethnologist* 14, no. 1 (February 1987), 34-54. For a similar study that focuses less on religious deviancy, see Behar's contributing chapter in *Sexuality and Marriage in Colonial Latin America*, ed. Asunción Lavrin, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989).

<sup>75</sup>Behar, 34.

<sup>76</sup>Behar, 35, 52.

<sup>77</sup>Bristol, 152.



In her article “Colonial Conspiracies,” Irene Silverblatt argues that the social construction of races by the Spanish (and the resulting stereotypes) often led to accusations by inquisitors of grand conspiracies, motivated by an ‘etiology of blame.’<sup>78</sup> Misled by personal fears and racial and gender stereotypes, inquisitors misconstrued reality into colonial conspiracies of a heretical nature. Silverblatt’s work shows the importance of understanding the way that racial and social categories mediated the methodology of inquisitorial persecution. This included the receptivity of inquisitors and theologians to the testimony and credibility of witnesses based on their gender and *casta*. Supporting this is Nora E. Jaffary, who in her influential work, *False Mystics*, studies the social roles of both the accused and the accusers in Colonial Mexico.<sup>79</sup> Jaffary concedes that the attitude toward a *beata*’s claim to mystical experience often depended upon social position: poorer Spanish women were thus marginalized, as surely--if not to the same degree--as black, native, mulatto, or mestizo healers and magicians. Indeed, social status, according to Jaffary, was one of the most influential factors in determining the outcome of a case during the Inquisition.<sup>80</sup> A woman’s testimony was more credible if she was a woman of status and good reputation. Although science and medicine had important epistemological ramifications for the Spanish Atlantic world, particularly demonstrable in the writing of new histories, and although natural discourse was coopted via the method of medical fideism to be of use in the inquisitorial investigation of superstition, these ‘new ways of thinking’ were ultimately unable to unseat the prejudicial evaluation of witnesses by race, gender, virtue, or *calidad*.

These trends can also be seen in the investigation of Maria Ignacia’s illness. First, the witnesses called to give testimony are almost uniformly *gente vil* – the “low people” to whom Bocanegra referred in the opening preamble of this case.<sup>81</sup> Although Bocanegra referred to them as *ladinos*, they were not, as some historians and anthropologists have classified the term, hispanized blacks.<sup>82</sup> Rather, as noted in each of the individual declarations and ratifications, they were first and foremost named *mestizos*, along with *castizos*, *lobos*, and *coyotes*.<sup>83</sup> If proximity to the event and duration of the observation were the sole determinants in testimony, the case would have been built upon these ratifications. Many of these witnesses indicated in their testimony that they were present at Maria Ignacia’s bedside or in her house for a period of time greater than either Nicolas Obispo or Carmano. Moreover, their testimony included stories and details that Obispo’s and Carmano’s depo-

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<sup>78</sup>These were in response to colonial pressures or societal problems on a larger scale. Everyday trouble existed as well, and witchcraft was often a solution to the common problems involving marital strife, individual economic hardship, love and romance, etc. See Behar for further information concerning the “mundane” aspects of witchcraft.

<sup>79</sup>Nora Jaffary, *False Mystics: Deviant Orthodoxy in Colonial Mexico* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004).

<sup>80</sup>See Jaffary, especially chapter two, “Mystical Spirituality in the Social Context of Colonial Mexico,” 47-78.

<sup>81</sup>Hesburgh. Inq.123.Cover

<sup>82</sup>This for example is the interpretation of the term in Javier Villa-Flores, *Dangerous Speech: A Social History of Blasphemy in Colonial Mexico* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2006), 132, 139-40.

<sup>83</sup>Note for example the prevalence of native, indigenous vocabulary throughout the testimony given by many mestizos; even the name of the barrio, Tequiquiapa, indicates a strong indigenous influence.

sitions do not. Maria Ignacia's alleged possession, for example, rested upon the testimony of four mixed *castas*. It is telling that this story was not developed in later questioning nor was it further inquired about by Bocanegra's superior, Vallejo.

Even more telling is the order of presentation of testimony, which generally establishes that *mestizo* testimony is presented after that of Spaniards, and women's testimony after that of men. Some caveats must be established, however. First, the evidence of the Spanish caballero Estradão is critiqued extensively in the marginalia as being incoherent. Secondly, it is arguable that even from an empirical standpoint the informed observer is more trustworthy than the uninformed observer. Because learned and informed observers were routinely of a higher socioracial position and ability, it is certainly plausible that the testimony of Carmano was highly valued solely because of his empirical authority. It is possible however, that his socioracial identity in San Luis Potosí was inextricably woven with his credibility.

Socioracial identity seems a more plausible explanation for the prominence of Obispo's affidavit. Although Obispo's letter contains few specific details and is more anecdotal than empirical, his testimony is presented as distinct from that of the "low people." Obispo's profession as a *presbítero* is advanced as his qualification. Religious affiliation and participation could therefore serve as a marker of trustworthiness for witnesses. All ratifications in the case, for example, were specifically stated as being undertaken by "honest and religious persons."<sup>84</sup> The pairing is unique and important, and implies that, especially for the Inquisition, being *religious* and being *honest* were seen as necessarily related. Indeed, when faced with particularly recalcitrant witnesses, the frustrated inquisitors of the tribunal instruct the individuals that "for the reverence of God, recollect your memory well and speak the truth!"<sup>85</sup> Thus, not only does Maria Ignacia's case begin with Bocanegra's cursory presentation of the testimonies as being unequal in value and worth, but socioracial evaluations are reflected in patterns throughout the ratifications and declarations of witnesses.

### The Case Grows Cold (Autumn 1775)

After nearly eight months of investigation, Bocanegra and the tribunal were forced to concede defeat. Bocanegra submitted a notice of remission on May 29, 1775, but received an advisory letter in reply in late July from his superior, Vallejo. In this letter, Vallejo prudently suggested that

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<sup>84</sup>This is was a common expression in the formulation of ratifications among Inquisition documents. See, for example Hesburgh. Inq.123.5a, 5b, 6a, 9b, 17a, 19a, among others. Variation in the expression, however, may indicate a more substantive commentary of the *notario*. Of the eighteen recorded instances of the description of individuals as *honest* ("honestas"), precisely half of them occur as *honest and religious* ("honestas y religiosas").

<sup>85</sup>Hesburgh. Inq.123.38b, "que por reverencia de Dios recorra su memoria bien y diga la verda[d]." As early as the medieval manual of Bernard Gui, inquisitors were instructed that "People like this [recalcitrant witnesses] can and must be forced, compelled, by sentence of excommunication as noted above, to respond clearly and to say exactly what their general, equivocal, or confused answers mean." Bernard Gui, *The Inquisitor's Guide: A Medieval Manual on Heretics*, trans. and ed. Janet Shirley (Welwyn Garden City, UK: Ravenhall Books, 2006) 135.

Bocanegra and his tribunal had overlooked the interrogation of Martira, the *estanquera* who had inquired if Maria Ignacia, while still healthy, was the bewitched girl of Rancho Nuevo.<sup>86</sup> Vallejo

instructed Bocanegra to demand that she “show and that she give reasons for her sayings and presumptions, and moreover that she can ground her assertions,” and that Martira could be the path to finding San Juana and Viviana.

The tribunal subsequently examined and interrogated the *coyote* Martira, but found her to be a recalcitrant, fickle, and poor witness. They were ultimately unable to locate San Juana or her daughter Josephina Viviana, and therefore officially terminated their investigation on February 9, 1776, nearly fifteen months (and sixty pages) after it had begun.<sup>87</sup> The textual record ends without giving any indication of the status of Maria Ignacia or of the Inquisition’s decision as to the true nature of her illness. Without the accused present, they considered the case to have insufficient evidence. Though this is unsatisfactory as a narrative, the case is crucial to demonstrating how epistemological conflicts of understanding truth, nature, and credibility played out in the quotidian reality of a Mexican Inquisition case during the late-colonial period.

## Conclusion

The months-long investigation of one woman’s sickness in San Luis Potosí in the second half of the eighteenth century rested upon the testimony of both *médico* and *mestizo*. These two classifications represent alternative epistemological means of understanding the nature of knowledge and the acquisition of facts during late-colonial Mexico. The first, the testimony of the young *protomedicato* Carmano, embodies the increasing preference given to the empirical in eighteenth-century Mexican understanding. The empirical position, fueled by the developments made in the ‘New Science’ of the late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth centuries, stressed the sensory reception of objective fact as the truest nature of knowledge. Thus, the eyewitness – a person who had actually *seen* and *sensed* a given event – offered the key testimony in a case. This was certainly true if the eyewitness was trained and informed, as the *médico* Carmano was. The second trend, represented by the countless, glossed-over testimonies of *mestizos* who lived with and witnessed Maria Ignacia’s illness, signifies the continued existence of traditional modes of evaluating witnesses. These traditional systems weighed issues such as purity of blood, religious affiliation, lineage, socioracial position (*calidad*), profession, gender, and even marital status in order to determine a person’s validity and value as a witness.

Both *médico* and *mestizo* were brought before the Inquisition in San Luis Potosí to give testimony, and it is crucial that the tribunal thus employed both epistemological frameworks, using empirical

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<sup>86</sup> Hesburgh. Inq.123.45b-46b, “e ynsticcion s.ne la preguas que deberá hacerse respectue m.te a los contente en el caso que contesten a referidas citar, dirigida a que ca darno de razo individuae de sus dichos y presuncions, y demá en que puedan fundar sus aserciones.”

<sup>87</sup> Hesburgh. Inq.123.63a.

eyewitnesses, and traditional *ad hominem* evaluation. The existence and practice of both trends in late-colonial Mexico indicates a willingness on the part of the Inquisition (and of the Catholic Church) to coopt contemporary intellectual and philosophical trends to strengthen their own epistemological hegemony. The particular case of Maria Ignacia ought thus be situated within the wider context of an ecclesiastical effort to maintain epistemological hegemony during a time of intellectual upset and crisis of belief. This is part of Antonio Gramsci's notion of hegemony as a totality of beliefs, values, and societal norms that were regulated and pervasively projected by a dominant power to a subjugate group, which in turn, through their acceptance, strengthened the rule of the dominant.<sup>88</sup> In this way, using this microhistorical analysis as a base, scholars can similarly apply the notion of epistemological hegemony to understand how the early modern Spanish Catholic Church constructed evaluatory systems of spiritual discernment to distinguish between fact and fiction and orthodoxy and heterodoxy, attempting to maintain the sure way to truth during a crisis of credibility. Keitt's heuristic term to describe the religious use of medical knowledge in the seventeenth century, "medical fideism," is an example of Catholic epistemological hegemony. Keitt's notion, however, extends into late-colonial Mexico and remains a true and continued trend of thought for religious intellectuals and inquisitors in the eighteenth century.

By no means did medicine erase superstition, nor is the testimony of this case an example of enlightened *ilustrados* correcting the traditional beliefs and practices of the Church and the Inquisition. The historian Peter Elmer has noted that the "liberal rationalist tradition" within the historiography of medicine and witchcraft has often posited that the rise of science and medicine in the seventeenth century directly resulted in the decline of witchcraft. He writes, "...if science did play an active role in undermining belief in witches and spirits – a view seemingly endorsed by those who lived in the age of Enlightenment – it is perhaps on this later period that historians of science should now focus..."<sup>89</sup> The case of Maria Ignacia occurs in such a later period. Yet this particular inquisitorial investigation demonstrates that rather than the decline of witchcraft, medical discourse merely provided inquisitors with a greater method of discernment. Certainly, the local tribunal's reliance upon Carmano (as *protomedicato tribunal* as well as witness) supports the notion that medical officials and the inquisitors worked harmoniously to achieve the same end of rooting out falsehoods.

At the same time, the persistence of traditional, *ad hominem* estimations of witnesses indicates that although these new philosophical and scientific sources of knowledge greatly impacted the way

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<sup>88</sup>My own understanding of hegemony, however, is more influenced by Susan Kellogg in her article, "Hegemony out of Conquest: The First Two Centuries of Spanish Rule in Central Mexico," *Radical History Review* 53 (1992), 27-46. Kellogg argues that the Spanish conquest of the New World was achieved through the "consolidation of the Spanish cultural hegemony"—the success or failure that Spain experienced instating her cultural values and customs, which were then forcibly encountered, accommodated, adapted, or integrated by natives, ideally producing a replicated Spanish culture in a colonial setting (27).

<sup>89</sup>Peter Elmer, "Science, Medicine and Witchcraft." in *Witchcraft Historiography*, Jonathan Barry and Owen Davies, eds (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 35, 46. For a classic example of the "liberal rationalist tradition," see Chapter XVI, "From Diabolism to Hysteria," in Andrew Dickson White, *A History of the Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom*, Vol. II (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1896), 135-67. White states, for example, "But near the end of the eighteenth century a fact very important for science was established. It was found that these manifestations do not arise in all cases from supernatural sources" (157). White uniformly refers to this as "scepticism."

inquisitors thought, the particular context of *calidad* in colonial Mexico remained a way of classifying witnesses that was deeply ingrained in the inquisitors' mentality. Socioracial and scientific thus operated side by side during the case of Maria Ignacia; by studying both the tension between these epistemological traditions as well as their cooperative aspects, future scholars may be able to discern how these ways of knowing influenced Spanish Catholic notions of tolerance, the eventual rise of secularism in nineteenth-century Mexico, or even *criollo* ideas of proto-independence.

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# *Land, Water, Woman: Place, Identity and Coudrette's Mélusine in Late Medieval Poitou*

By Shana Thompson

Coudrette wrote the epic poem *Mélusine* or *Le Roman de Parthenay* for Guillaume l'Archevêque, Lord of Parthenay, in the early fifteenth century.<sup>1</sup> L'Archevêque traced his ancestry to the Lusignans, an aristocratic family with landholdings in western Poitou, but whose cadet branches ruled in such far-ranging places as Cyprus, Jerusalem, and Armenia. The genealogical romance purports to be a historical account, describing the founding of the Lusignan family, the building of their castles, their acquisitions of land, and the deeds of the sons and grandsons of the titular character, Mélusine, a watery, matriarchal serpent-fairy.<sup>2</sup> Scholars of literature have been the most prolific researchers on the Mélusine romance. They have tended to focus on the earlier prose version of the tale by Jean d'Arras, and on comparative analysis between Mélusine and other analogues in literature, religion, and mythology.<sup>3</sup> When viewed in its wider social context, *Mélusine* has been interpreted as a celebratory heritage of the Lusignans, constructed in order to increase the

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<sup>1</sup>Some disagreement exists about the spelling of this author's name; I have used Coudrette for consistency the majority of my sources. For critical editions of this text, see Coudrette, *Le Roman de Melusine ou Histoire de Lusignan par Coudrette*, ed. Eleanor Roach (Paris: Klincksieck, 1982); Coudrette, *A Bilingual Edition of Coudrette's Mélusine or Le Roman de Parthenay*, Medieval Studies, vol. 20, ed. Matthew W. Morris (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 2003); and Coudrette, *Le Roman de Mélusine*, ed. Laurence Harf-Lancner (Paris: Flammarion, 1993).

<sup>2</sup>On the characterization of Mélusine as a genealogical romance, see, Laurence Harf-Lancner, "La serpente et le sanglier: les manuscrits enluminés de deux romans français de Mélusine," *Le Moyen Âge: Bulletin mensuel d'histoire et de philologie* 101, no. 1 (1995): 66; Tania M. Colwell, "Patronage of the Poetic Mélusine Romance: Guillaume l'Archevêque's Confrontation with Dynastic Crisis," *Journal of Medieval History* 37, no. 2 (2011): 223-28; Christopher Lucken, "Roman de Mélusine ou Histoire de Lusignan? La Fable de l'histoire," in *Mélines continentales et insulaires: actes du colloque international tenu les 27 et 28 mars 1997 à l'Université Paris XII et au Collège des irlandais*, ed. Jeanne-Marien Boivin and Proinsias MacCana (Paris: Champion, 1999), 144; on the role of genealogy in medieval history writing, see Gabrielle M. Spiegel, "Genealogy: Form and Function in Medieval Historical Narrative," *History and Theory* 22 (1983): 43-53.

<sup>3</sup>Donald Maddox and Sara Strum-Maddox, eds., *Mélusine of Lusignan: Founding Fiction in Late Medieval France*, (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1996); Jeanne-Marien Boivin and Proinsias MacCana, eds., *Mélines continentales et insulaires*; Françoise Clier-Colombani, *La fée Mélusine au Moyen Âge: Images, Mythes et Symboles*, (Paris: Léopard d'Or, 1991); Arlette Bouloumié and Henri Béhar, eds., *Mélusine: moderne et contemporaine*, Bibliothèque Mélusine, (Paris: L'Age d'Homme, 2001); Laurence Harf-Lancner, *Les fées au Moyen Âge: Morgane et Mélusine: la naissance des fées*, (Chavannes-de-Bogis: Slatkine, 1984); Philippe Walter, *La Fée Mélusine: le Serpent et l'Oiseau*, (Paris: Imago, 2008).

power and prestige of their l'Archevêque descendants.<sup>4</sup> I will expand this line of inquiry to show that *Mélusine*'s social function was broader. More than propaganda speaking to the powerful male family, the basic premise of my thesis is that *Mélusine* tells a tale of identity, place, and the foundational role of women in the creation of dynastic, land-based legacies. I argue that *Mélusine* represents a metaphor for the unique physical landscape of the Poitevin marshland through her repeated association with water and the imposition of manmade order on the land. Moreover, parallels between Coudrette's characterization of *Mélusine* and certain local historical women suggest the author's intentional association of the fairy with these women. As such, *Mélusine* embodies not only the history, but more particularly the physical landscape of the Vendée region of Poitou in western France, with its predominance of marshy wetlands. I support this argument through analysis of the visual imagery of two documents, emphasizing theoretical models of "landscape" and "place" that arise from cultural geography.

Coudrette was commissioned to write the poetic romance in 1400, shortly before the death of his patron; the work was completed around 1401 for the patron's son and heir, Jean l'Archevêque.<sup>5</sup> Scholars generally agree that Coudrette's poem is based on a prose version of the tale written by Jean d'Arras in 1393 for l'Archevêque's feudal overlord, Jean de France, Duke of Berry.<sup>6</sup> Both seem to have been loosely inspired by the popular Poitevin legend of Mère Lusine, the leader of a roving band of fairies responsible for building the Roman edifices that dotted the countryside.<sup>7</sup>

The manuscripts of this romance that survive today—twenty copies of the poetic version and fifteen of the prose—circulated widely in the French and Flemish courts.<sup>8</sup> The legend became quite popular, and both the prose and poetic versions were translated into English, German, and Spanish.<sup>9</sup> It seems likely—particularly in consideration of the practice of oral readings at court events in late medieval France—that the popularity of *Mélusine* would have facilitated a "trickling down" of the

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<sup>4</sup>Colwell, "Patronage of the Poetic *Mélusine*," 228-29; Matthew W. Morris, "The Romance of Melusine and the Sacralization of Secular Power," *Postscript: Publication of the Philological Association of the Carolinas* 14 (1997): 63-65; Morris, "Jean d'Arras and Coudrette: Political Expediency and Censorship in Fifteenth-Century France," *Postscript: Publication of the Philological Association of the Carolinas* 18 (2002): 35-44; Morris' introduction to *A Bilingual Edition of Coudrette's Mélusine*, 27; for a thorough examination of the reception of the manuscripts of both Coudrette's and Jean d'Arras' tales among the nobility of France and Flanders, see Colwell, "Reading *Mélusine*: romance manuscripts and their audiences c.1380-c.1530" (PhD thesis, Australian National University, 2008).

<sup>5</sup>Colwell, "Patronage of the Poetic *Mélusine*," 215, 225; Harf-Lancner, "La serpente et le sanglier," 65.

<sup>6</sup>For critical editions of Jean d'Arras' prose *Mélusine*, see Jean d'Arras, *Mélusine, roman du XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle publié pour la première fois d'après le manuscrit de la Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal avec les variantes de la Bibliothèque nationale*, ed. Louis Stouff (Dijon: Bernigaud et Privat, 1932); Jean d'Arras, *Mélusine ou La Noble Histoire de Lusignan, Nouvelle édition critique d'après le manuscrit de la bibliothèque de l'Arsenal avec les variantes de tous les manuscrits, présentation et notes*, éd. Jean-Jacques Vincensini (Paris: Librairie Générale Française, 2003); and Jean d'Arras, *A Bilingual Edition of Jean d'Arras's Melusine or L'Histoire de Lusignan*, ed. Matthew W. Morris, 2 vols. (New York: Edwin Mellen, 2007).

<sup>7</sup>Morris, "Introduction," in *A Bilingual Edition of Coudrette's Mélusine*, 15.

<sup>8</sup>Colwell, "Patronage of the Poetic *Mélusine*," 216.

<sup>9</sup>Coudrette's romance was adapted into German in 1456 by the Swiss author, Thüring von Ringoltingen, and into Middle English, evidenced by the manuscript transcribed in Coudrette, *The Romans of Parthenay or of Lusignan*, trans. Walter W. Skeat (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1866); Jean d'Arras' version was translated into Old Spanish in 1489, and printed in Toulouse by Johann Paris and Etienne Clebat; on the Spanish edition, see Ivy A. Corfis, "Empire and Romance: Historia de la Linda Melosina," *Neophilologus* 82 (1998): 571.

official versions of the story to the common people of the region, making Coudrette's and Jean d'Arras' version of Mélusine an important and enduring figure in the popular culture of the Vendée.<sup>10</sup>

Of the twenty surviving manuscripts of Coudrette's work, only two French manuscripts are illustrated, MS français 12575 and MS français 24383. Both were created in the fifteenth century and are now located in the Bibliothèque nationale de France.<sup>11</sup> These will be the focus of my analysis. While many members of the French nobility owned copies of *Mélusine*, the patronage and provenance of these two manuscripts remain unknown, making it more difficult to analyze their meaning and function for their original owners.<sup>12</sup> While no evidence suggests that the illuminators of these works ever personally visited Poitou, aspects of the decorative programs of these manuscripts nevertheless facilitate a reading of the purposeful use of Mélusine as a representation of the Poitevin Marais and suggest that the region held significance for the manuscripts' patrons.<sup>13</sup>

MS français 12575, the earliest surviving copy of Coudrette's narrative, was made in the 1420s or '30s.<sup>14</sup> Written in gothic script with large decorated capitals beginning certain sections, the pages are ornamented with delicate gold and multi-colored vegetal motifs in the margins. Sixteen images attributed to the Master of Guillebert de Metz illustrate the narrative. Throughout the manuscript, the illuminator employed geometric patterned backgrounds and created highly stylized buildings and landscapes. Several of these present a confusing space that is difficult to read, seemingly indoors and outdoors at the same time, and conveying an ambiguous topography.

MS français 24383 was created in the second half of the fifteenth century using a distinctly different aesthetic, with little page ornamentation and fewer, more naturalistic illustrations. The anonymous artist worked in the modern Renaissance style, employing linear and atmospheric perspective to create a clear sense of spatial depth, and providing more detailed landscapes and architectural spaces.<sup>15</sup> Although it contains fewer total images, Mélusine herself is depicted more often in this manuscript than in the first. As there are thirty images between the two manuscripts, it is beyond the scope of this project to examine all of them. The majority of the images—eighteen—

<sup>10</sup>On the oral reading of stories at courtly events, see Joyce Coleman, "Reading the Evidence in Text and Image: How History was Read in Late Medieval France," in *Imagining the Past in France: History in Manuscript Painting, 1250-1500*, ed. Elizabeth Morrison and Anne D. Hedeman (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2010), 53-68.

<sup>11</sup>For an examination of the iconography of the text and images of Mélusine created in fifteenth-century France, England, and Switzerland and their relation to biblical and mythological narratives, see Clier-Colombani, *La fée Mélusine*; for an analysis of all extant manuscripts of Coudrette's text, see Appendix D in Colwell, *Reading Mélusine*, 419-47.

<sup>12</sup>It is possible that MS français 12575 was owned by Philippe de Clèves (1459-1528) at some point after its creation, based on the coat of arms painted below the table of contents (see Colwell, "Reading Mélusine," 479; and A. Korteweg, "La bibliothèque de Philippe de Clèves: inventaire et manuscrits parvenu jusqu'à nous," in *Entre la ville, la noblesse et l'état: Philippe de Clèves (1456-1528). Homme politique et bibliophile*, ed. J. Haemers, C. van Hoorebeeck, and H. Wijnsman (Brepols: Turnhout, 2007), 191-92), or—less likely—his aunt, Marie de Clèves, and her husband, Charles d'Orléans (Morris, "Jean d'Arras and Coudrette," 38-39); for a list of known medieval owners of *Mélusine* manuscripts, see Colwell, "Reading Mélusine," 476-80.

<sup>13</sup>See the explanation of this terminology (Poitevin Marais, Vendée, etc), later in this paper.

<sup>14</sup>Coudrette, *Mélusine*, Ms. français 12575, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France.

<sup>15</sup>Coudrette, *Mélusine*, Ms. français 24383, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France.



do, however, clearly illustrate ideas of place and identity and emphasize the significance of women in shaping the landscape.

Before continuing, a short summary of the tale will be helpful. One day, a young man named Raymondin goes boar hunting with his father's cousin, Aymeri, Count of Poitiers. In a tragic accident, he kills his uncle instead of the boar.<sup>16</sup> In a haze of despair, he wanders through the forest, where he comes upon three beautiful ladies at The Fountain of Soif Jolie.<sup>17</sup> One of them, Mélusine, calls out to him. Claiming to be "an instrument of God," she knows his name, what has transpired, and what he must do.<sup>18</sup> She persuades Raymondin to marry her; as a condition of their marriage, he must agree never to seek her out on Saturdays.<sup>19</sup>

Key to understanding this set of events is the backstory of Mélusine's own lineage. Mélusine is a fairy princess, the daughter of King Elinas of Albany (Scotland), and the fairy Prèsine. In a mode similar to that of Raymondin and Mélusine's marriage, Elinas had broken a promise to his wife, causing Prèsine to flee with her daughters to Avalon. Mélusine and her sisters decided to punish their father for his transgression by locking him in a mountain, for which action Prèsine punished each of her daughters with a curse.<sup>20</sup>

After Mélusine and Raymondin marry, she bears ten sons: Urien, Eudes, Guion, Antoine, Renaud, Geoffroy le Grand Dent, Fromont, Horrible, Thierry, and finally, Raymonnet. All but Thierry—from whom the patron of the manuscripts claimed to descend—and Raymonnet have some sort of physical deformity, suggesting their mother's hybrid lineage. Most of the sons become knights and perform great feats of chivalry, with the exception of Fromont, who becomes a monk at the important local abbey of Maillezais.<sup>21</sup> Unfortunately, his brother Geoffroy le Grand Dent believes that the monks of Maillezais must have bewitched Fromont to make him want to join the monastery. In a fit of terrible anger, Geoffroy burns down Maillezais with all of the monks inside including his brother, although he immediately repents his horrible crime.<sup>22</sup>

After significant successes, the family's fortunes decline after the visit of Raymondin's brother to Castle Lusignan, when he convinces Raymondin that Mélusine's Saturday disappearances indicate infidelity.<sup>23</sup> Thus spurred to spy on her through the keyhole, he discovers Mélusine in the bath with

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<sup>16</sup>Coudrette, *A Bilingual Edition*, lines 262-425; all English and Middle French quotations in this paper come from this edition.

<sup>17</sup>Literally, "pretty thirst," this could also be translated as "pretty desire." Coudrette, *A Bilingual Edition*, 427-99.

<sup>18</sup>Coudrette, *A Bilingual Edition*, 503-645.

<sup>19</sup>Coudrette, *A Bilingual Edition*, 650-67.

<sup>20</sup>Coudrette, *A Bilingual Edition*, 4971-5041.

<sup>21</sup>Maillezais Abbey was founded in western France in the tenth century by Emma, Countess of Blois (950-1005) and her husband, William IV, Duke of Aquitaine (937-994); the only surviving document of its foundation is the chronicle written by Peter of Maillezais in 1067; for an introduction to the monastery and its history, see the proceedings of the 2002 multidisciplinary colloquium held in Poitiers, Cécile Treffort and Matthias Tranchant, eds., *L'Abbaye de Maillezais: Des moines du marais aux soldats Huguenots* (Rennes, 2005).

<sup>22</sup>Coudrette, *A Bilingual Edition*, 3429-3652. Geoffroy does later redeem himself by rebuilding the monastery, and is later buried there, 3543-3634, 5550-564, 5733-40, 6640-647.

<sup>23</sup>Coudrette, *A Bilingual Edition*, 2981.

the long tail of a serpent.<sup>24</sup> In “seeking her out on a Saturday,” Raymondin breaks his promise to his wife, and sets in motion a series of unfortunate events.

Not long after this transgressive discovery, Raymondin learns of Fromont’s fratricide at Maillezais, and publicly blames Mélusine’s serpent-nature for Geoffroy’s horrible crime. Due to the stipulations of the curse that changed her into a serpent, Mélusine is forced to leave her husband forever, but swears to watch over the castle in perpetuity, and returns secretly by night to nurse her infant sons, Thierry and Raimonnet.<sup>25</sup>

As a genealogical romance, Coudrette’s tale employs medieval notions of time and truth by situating the present in dialogue with the past.<sup>26</sup> The story traces the family tree of the Lusignans, from Mélusine through multiple generations, and seeks to define the family as powerful and violent but tied to Christian spirituality.<sup>27</sup> As such, the text is deeply concerned with notions of family identity. However, the author and illustrators define the identity of the family in terms of the Poitevin marshland and moreover define the identity of this marshland by closely intertwining history, geography, and current rulers with the mystical builder, Mélusine.

As mentioned previously, concepts from the discipline of cultural geography illuminate the ways in which the text and images functioned in tandem within the manuscripts’ historical and geographical context: their place. Place, as I employ it, means “a distinctive (and bounded) location” that is “created through acts of naming,” as opposed to space, a more general, abstracted area, lacking a name and identity from the perspective of a particular viewer.<sup>28</sup> As Edward Casey argues, places are not just locations; they are made up of people, ideas, and memories.<sup>29</sup> The human element remains therefore as critical in defining place as its location and topography. “Place” figures prominently in the romance, not only in the genealogical relationships of the family, but also in the way these places are imagined and illustrated. Moreover, locations are named and ruled; structures are built and destroyed. The persistent use of place names not only creates a sense of verity in the narrative, it encourages the reader to create a mental “list map” as he or she moves through the

<sup>24</sup>Coudrette, *A Bilingual Edition*, 3051-074.

<sup>25</sup>Coudrette, *A Bilingual Edition*, 3705-4205, 4365-91, 4051-053.

<sup>26</sup>Robert Maxwell, *The Art of Medieval Urbanism: Parthenay in Romanesque Aquitaine* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2007), 186.

<sup>27</sup>Morris, “Sacralization,” 63-65; and “Introduction” in *A Bilingual Edition*, 6-11. Colwell, however, argues in “Reading Mélusine,” 193-207, that Mélusine’s Christianization is more problematized in Coudrette’s narrative than in the earlier version by Jean d’Arras.

<sup>28</sup>See Phil Hubbard, “Space/Place,” in *Cultural Geography: A Critical Dictionary of Key Concepts*, ed. David Atkinson, et al. (London: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd., 2005), 41-42.

<sup>29</sup>Edward S. Casey, “How to Get from Space to Place in a Fairly Short Stretch of Time: Phenomenological Prolegomena,” in *Senses of Place*, eds. Steven Feld and Keith Basso (Santa Fe: School of American Research Press, 1997), 24-5; see also Yi Fu Tuan’s writings, particularly, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003); for an application of this theory to medieval architecture, literature, urban spaces, and other topics, see Barbara Hanawalt, et al., eds., *Medieval Practices of Space* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000); and Clare A. Lees and Gillian R. Overing, eds., *A Place to Believe in: Locating Medieval Landscapes* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006).

text.<sup>30</sup> And while folktales resembling this legend existed in several areas of Europe, details added by the late medieval authors and illuminators situate these events within the contexts of Poitou, “emplacing” them in its marshy topography.<sup>31</sup>

Examining the text and imagery through the concept of “place” is particularly useful here because in medieval Europe possession of land conferred both power and identity equally.<sup>32</sup> In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, when a sense of national identity was growing in France, parts of Aquitaine and Poitou repeatedly switched hands between the French and English kings, as each gained and lost ground during the Hundred Years' War (1337-1453). As armies marched back and forth over their fields, they altered both physical and political landscapes.<sup>33</sup> The patron of the manuscripts, Guillaume l'Archevêque, lord of Parthenay, was caught up in this change, fighting at one time as a loyal vassal of Edward, the Black Prince, and later as a loyal vassal of Jean de France, Duke of Berry.<sup>34</sup> When the region changed hands via treaty, his allegiance was expected to shift as well. L'Archevêque's case exemplifies the instability and change occurring at this time and place, which demonstrates a lack of consistent borders and power relationships likely causing notions of place and identity in late medieval Poitou to be confused and in a state of flux. I argue that the text and images of *Mélusine* address this issue by seeking to define the Poitevin marshlands and the Poitevins themselves through reference to the region's specific geography and history.

The historic county of Poitou, which now makes up part of the administrative region of Poitou-

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<sup>30</sup>In the famous type of medieval map, the T-O map, the world was divided into sections: Europe, Asia, and Africa. List maps, a subgenre of the T-O map, functioned as sort of associative diagrams, listing places—such as cities—within their respective continents. For more on this, see Evelyn Edson, *Mapping Time and Space: How Medieval Mapmakers Viewed Their World*, The British Library Studies in Map History, vol. 1 (London: British Library Board, 1998); and J. B. Harley, and David Woodward, eds., *The History of Cartography, vol. I: Cartography in Prehistoric, Ancient, and Medieval Europe and the Mediterranean* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987).

<sup>31</sup>For more on this topic, see Laurence Harf-Lancner, *Les fées au Moyen Âge: Morgane et Mélusine. la naissance des fées* (Paris: Champion, 1984), 57, which includes a translation of the first written account of the Poitevin legend by court scholar and translator, Pierre Bersuire. P. Bersuire, Bk 14, Prologue *Reductorium morale*, (Paris: Claude Chevallon, 1521); see also: Jeanne-Marien Boivin and Proinsias MacCana, eds. *Melusines continentales et insulaires: Actes du Colloque international tenu les 27 et 28 mars 1997 à l'Université Paris XII et au Collège des irlandais* (Paris: Champion, 1999); Clier-Colombani, *La fée Mélusine*, 91-150; Jacques Le Goff, “Mélusina: Mother and Pioneer,” in *Time, Work, and Culture in the Middle Ages (Pour un auture Moyen Âge: Temps, travail et culture en Occident, 18 essais)*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 205-22; and Gillian M. E. Alban, *Melusine the Serpent Goddess in A. S. Byatt's Possession and in Mythology* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2003).

<sup>32</sup>Georges Duby, *The Chivalrous Society*, trans. Cynthia Postan (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), 134-48; Howard Kaminsky, “Estate, Nobility, and the Exhibition of Estate in the Later Middle Ages,” *Speculum* 68, no. 3 (1993): 698.

<sup>33</sup>On the beginnings of a national identity in France, see Morrison and Hedeman, “Introduction,” 2; for a more detailed analysis, see Colette Beaune, *The Birth of an Ideology: Myths and Symbols of Nation in Late-Medieval France (Naissance de la nation France)*, trans. Susan Ross Huston, ed. Fredric L. Cheyette (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991). Many authors have written about the Hundred Years War; a good primary source is Jean Froissart's *Chronicles*; secondary sources discussing the war as a whole include Anne Curry, *The Hundred Years War 1337-1453* (Oxford: Osprey, 2002); Robin Neillands, *The Hundred Years War*, revised ed. (London: Routledge, 1990); and Jean Favier *La Guerre de Cent Ans* (Paris: Fayard, 1980); for the war and its effects in Poitou, see R. Favreau, “De la guerre de Cent Ans aux Temps modernes,” in *Histoire du Poitou du Limousin et des pays charentais: Vendée, Aunis, Saintonge, Angoumois*, ed. Edmond-René Labande, *Histoire des Provinces* (Toulouse: Edouard Privat, 1976), esp. 203-16.

<sup>34</sup>Tania M. Colwell, “Patronage of the Poetic Mélusine Romance: Guillaume l'Archevêque's Confrontation with Dynastic Crisis,” *Journal of Medieval History* 37, no. 2 (2011): 218-20.

Charentes, lies along the Atlantic coast of France. It was once a northern county of the Duchy of Aquitaine, and the dukes were also the Counts of Poitou until the first half of the thirteenth century, when Poitou became an independent county.<sup>35</sup> The eastern part of the province, Haut Poitou, is elevated and rocky, and within it lies the capital city of Poitiers. The land falls off steeply towards Bas Poitou, or the Vendée, where lie many tilled fields, the forest of Mervent, the Poiteven Marais or marsh, and finally, the rocky coastline.

In this low country, windmills dot the countryside and canals crisscross the fields, marking the fact that much of the Vendée was once submerged as part of the Gulf of Picton, drained in the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Period in order to create farmland.<sup>36</sup> Springs bubble out from the rocks, and many rivers flow through the region down to the sea. The land is uniquely comingled with the water to form a liminal landscape, created by water's removal. In this region, political power was defined as much by the control of water as by the control of the land.<sup>37</sup>

Significantly, with this real topography and vegetation of the Vendée in mind, the author and illustrators characterize Mélusine as a prolific builder. The manuscript gives her credit for the construction of many towns, beginning with the town and castle of Lusignan—to which she gives



Figure 1. Raymondin Passes the Fountain of Thirst and Is Greeted by Mélusine (MS fr. 24383 fol. 5v) Coudrette, *Mélusine*, Paris: Bibliothèque nationale de France; used by permission.

<sup>35</sup>R. Favreau, "Du temps des ducs au temps du roi," 186.

<sup>36</sup>Mickey Abel, "To Sea and Be Seen: Reconstruction of the Strategic Building Program at Maillezais Abbey," *AVISTA Forum Journal* 20, no. 1 (2010): 12; J. Tarade, "Les temps des troubles (1560-1660)," 262-64.

<sup>37</sup>For an example, see Mickey Abel's discussion of the strategic defensive placement of Maillezais Abbey in her essay, "Emma of Blois as Arbiter of Peace and the Politics of Patronage" in *Reassessing the Roles of Women as Makers of Medieval Art and Architecture*, Vol. II, ed. Therese Martin (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 841.

her name (-lusine becomes Lusignan)—and continuing with Melle, Vouvant, and Saint-Maixent, to name but a few. Her magical building campaign takes place almost entirely within the watery confines of the marshy Poitevin landscape.

This interweaving of water, land, and power can be read in the text and imagery of the *Mélusine* tale. For instance, though *Mélusine* is described as a serpent, she is associated with water from her first introduction in Coudrette's version of the tale, when Raymondin comes upon her at a fountain (Figure 1). In his illustration of this scene, the anonymous artist of MS fr. 24383 depicts the fairy as a noblewoman, sitting with her two sisters in a wide and vacant landscape. Prominently displayed beside them, life-giving water springs from the face of a cliff into the fountain and spills out to become a small stream. It is *Mélusine* who sits closest to the fountain, and her dress—the only article of clothing in the picture to be rendered with deep folds—nearly touches it. The wavering pattern of creases in her skirt, bordered in foamy white ermine, mimics the ripples of water, while the golden-brown color of her dress replicates that of the hilly topography of the land. In this image, the anonymous artist connects *Mélusine* to both the flowing water and the surrounding landscape of Poitou.



Figure 2. Raymondin Discovers *Mélusine*'s Secret (MS fr. 24383 fol.9). Bibliothèque nationale de France; used by permission.



The visual relationship between Mélusine and water is reinforced in a later illustration where Raymondin spies her in her true form, enclosed in a small, blue-gray room, bathing in a round wooden tub (Figure 2).<sup>38</sup> Her curling green and yellow tail fades to a pale, watery blue before joining with her torso, making it appear as if her body were made of the same substance as her bath. Rather than simply being in or near the water, she seems to be a part of it.

In the image of her nightly return to nurse her infant sons (Figure 3), Mélusine's association with water in the text is strong enough that it appears to have inspired the illuminator of MS fr.12575 to depict her with the bifurcated tail of a fish, rather than that of a serpent. Her tender, maternal gesture is juxtaposed with her other-worldly siren's form, emphasizing both aspects of her nature. In showing her as half-fish rather than half-serpent, the image links both of these concepts with the water that makes up much of the Vendée's landscape.



Figure 3. Mélusine nurses Thierry (MS fr. 12575, fol. 89), Coudrette, *Mélusine*. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France; used by permission.

<sup>38</sup>Interestingly, this image seems to have been censored by a later owner, who scraped off the paint that illustrated her breasts and navel; in doing so he or she has—deliberately or not—removed the characteristics that make her a woman and a mother and indicate her natural birth.



Figure 4. Raymondin and Bertrand of Poitiers, Raymondin defines his Territory (MS fr. 24383 fol. 7). Bibliothèque nationale de France; used by permission.

Conversely, Mélusine is also strongly connected to the land. For example, returning to Figure 1—the image of Raymondin's first encounter with his fairy wife at the fountain—Françoise Clier-Colombani has noted that the emptiness of the landscape in this scene suggests a wilderness waiting to be tamed by Mélusine.<sup>39</sup> Coudrette's text tells us that after their meeting, Raymondin is able to acquire land near the fountain by following the instructions she gives him. In the illumination, Raymondin delineates the boundaries of his territory with strips of deer hide (Figure 4). On the left side of this image, the illustrator has depicted Raymondin adhering to Mélusine's plan by asking his cousin, the new Count of Poitiers, for the amount of land that he could enclose with a deer hide, to which he gestures with his left hand. On the right, the artist has extended the walls of Poitiers to surround the scene of boundary marking. In doing so, he has blurred the physical and metaphorical boundaries of the city of Poitiers and the future Lusignan holdings, visually advancing the narrative to the time when Mélusine will build the stronghold and town of Lusignan.

Mélusine's assistance and instruction are instrumental in Raymondin's acquisition of land and power. Not only does her advice win him the rights to his own land, for as the youngest son he

<sup>39</sup>Clier-Colombani, *La fée Mélusine*, 30.

would not have been in line to inherit, but it is she who builds their castle, the town, and the many landmarks and strongholds in the region (see Appendix, Table 1). So while Raymondin claims the power and rulership over this domain, it is Mélusine who takes a leading role in shaping the Poitevin landscape, both metaphorically and topographically.

Mélusine reflects the topography of the Vendée in another way as well. The intermingling of land and water in a blurred borderland between the ocean to the west and the dry land to the east marks this region as a liminal space, literally a threshold, neither here nor there. Liminal figures are described by Victor Turner as “betwixt-and-between,” they are “both this *and* that,” they “are often composites” or “monsters.”<sup>40</sup> Additionally, liminal figures are often separated from their regular place in society, or “structurally invisible” to the group, and may have to undergo “humbling and submission to ordeal.”<sup>41</sup> Mélusine’s nature as a spiritual being is evidenced by her function as a liminal figure: she is neither and both human and beast; she is a magical figure in the physical realm, and she is subjected to punishment through a curse that twice separates her from her family. In depicting her as a liminal figure, the author and illustrators tie the Lusignan family to the spiritual realm and thus enhance their prestige and the power of their dynasty. I argue, however, that the function of her liminal status is broader. It allows her to stand as a quasi-spiritual symbol of this marshy borderland within Poitou.

Cultural anthropologists have demonstrated that liminality is key to understanding medieval Christian spirituality.<sup>42</sup> As Barbara Newman notes, “enclosure, the marking and sealing of boundaries, was . . . a vital symbolic practice in religious life,” making liminality a “rich metaphor” for medieval religious practice.<sup>43</sup> The Master of Guillaume de Metz depicted Mélusine’s liminality most specifically in two images in MS fr. 12575. After she transforms into a dragon, in both text and image, she is separated from her home, her family, and the human world, and yet she continues to play a part in it. In her dragon form (Figure 5), with a green long-necked and bat-winged body, a bestial face, and a long blue tail, she hovers in a sky of silver leaf, visually divided from the physical world of land, home, and family through the use of the dark outlines that delineate worldly space, and through the differences in color and media that convey the transitionally liminal space separating land and sky.

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<sup>40</sup>Victor Turner, “Variations on a Theme of Liminality,” in *Secular Ritual*, ed. Sally Falk Moore and Barbara G. Myerhoff (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1977), 37-38.

<sup>41</sup>Turner, “Liminality,” 36-37, 39.

<sup>42</sup>Barbara Newman discusses this in her article, “Liminalities: Literate Women in the Long Twelfth Century,” in *European Transformations: The Long Twelfth Century*, ed. Thomas F. X. Noble and John Van Engen (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2012), 354-402.

<sup>43</sup>Newman, “Liminalities,” 355.





Figure 5. *Mélusine Leaves Lusignan* (MS fr 12575, fol. 86). Bibliothèque nationale de France; used by permission.

Similarly “betwixt and between,” she returns as a siren to nurse her sons (Figure 3), floating above the floor in a room within the castle that is transformed into an ambiguous, otherworldly space marked by the overlapping of furniture and columns, and the depiction of inner and outer walls within the same image. Though she has returned, she does not seem to be entirely in the rational, physical world, but rather between the physical and spiritual realms. Both artists similarly depict the transformed *Mélusine*’s nightly visits to nurse her infant sons, reinforcing the importance of her role as mother and protector of the Lusignans, while reminding the viewer of her otherworldly, transitional nature.

Thus, while her liminal status and her connection to land and water tie *Mélusine* to the physical geography of the Poitevin Marais, these human elements serve an equally important role in defining place according to familial origins. *Mélusine* exemplifies this aspect of her place through her similarity to important women in the history of the region, namely Saint Clothilde (475–545), wife of Clovis I, the first King of the Franks; Saint Radegund (c. 520–586), a Merovingian queen who founded Saint-Croix, a monastery in Poitiers; and Emma of Blois (950–1105), who as wife of Duke William IV of Aquitaine built Maillezais Abbey. The similarities between the identity constructions of these four female figures by their contemporary biographers suggest the possibility that

Mélusine's character may have been inspired in part by these historical women. It could be argued that Mélusine's identity was purposefully constructed to reflect the region's heritage through the history of its female founders.

Although Mélusine is understood to be a serpent, Coudrette made great efforts to Christianize and sanitize her through his portrayal of the fairy as a good wife and mother, as a religious patron, and through her long profession of faith at her first meeting with Raymondin.<sup>44</sup> Thus Mélusine shares with Clothilde, Radegund, and Emma share their traits of sanctity and the ability to "see" the spiritual meaning in events and places. When we first encounter Mélusine, she tells Raymondin "I am, after God, your best support;/You will be blessed with great fortune/If you believe me truly,/And do not in any way doubt/That I am an instrument of God."<sup>45</sup> Coudrette uses this speech to convince the reader that Mélusine is a good Christian and that she has a special connection to God—despite what we later learn about her physiognomy. This makes it clear that her liminality connects her to heaven rather than hell. Later, when Raymondin follows Mélusine's advice, he becomes a successful lord—a status he loses when he breaks his vow to her—emphasizing the notion that she is trustworthy and a good counselor.

Mélusine's abilities as a visionary and advisor, which flow from her association with the heavenly, spiritual realm, mirror her predecessors' qualities in that all share a connection to God that endows them with the ability to know His plan and to provide good counsel. The clearest example of this commonality is in Peter of Maillezais' depiction of Emma of Blois' discovery of the site upon which Maillezais Abbey was to be founded.<sup>46</sup> A knight in the hunting party that she and her husband William are leading on the island of Maillezais is struck blind after seeing a wild boar run into an abandoned church. As a woman, Emma has special spiritual abilities that allow her to read this event as a message from God, and lead her to build an abbey on the site of the old church. Notably, her biographer describes her as a "wise woman" who has "intuition" and is "managed by God's mercy

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<sup>44</sup>Mélusine's Christianization has also been noted by Clier-Colombani in "Mélusine christianisée: Sainte Venice et Sainte Mélusine," *Mythologie française: Bulletin de la Société de mythologie française* 177 (1995): 39-52; and Matthew Morris in his introduction to *A Bilingual Edition of Coudrette's Melusine*, especially pages 6-11; for the "sanitization" of Mélusine through bath imagery, see Clier-Colombani, "Le bain et ses représentations," in *La Fé Mélusine*, 153-81, especially 158-61.

<sup>45</sup>"Je suys, apres Dieu, tes confors/Tu auras du bien assez fors/Se tu me croies vrayement,/Et ne doubte nullement/Que de par Dieu je ne soye." Coudrette, *A Bilingual Edition*, 615-29.

<sup>46</sup>The full chronicle can be found as Peter of Maillezais (Petrus Malleacensis), *De antiquitate et commutatione in melius Malleacensis insulae et translatione corporis sancti Rogomeri* in *Patrologia Latina*, ed. Jacques-Paul Migne, vol. 146, columns 1247-1272C; several edited versions also exist; see Charles Arnould, *Histoire de Maillezais* (Niort, France: Hachette Livre, 1840); Joseph-Louis Lacurie, *Histoire de L'abbaye de Maillezais depuis sa fondation jusqu'à nos jours* (Fontenay-le-Comte, France: Edm. Fillon, 1852); Louis Brochet, *Histoire de Maillezais* (Paris: Res Universis, 1989); and Louis Delhommeau, ed., *Notes et documents pour servir à l'histoire de l'Abbaye Saint-Pierre de Maillezais, au diocèse de Luçon (Vendée) depuis sa fondation (v. CMLXXVI) jusqu'à son érection en évêché par le Pape Jean XII* (Paris: Delhommeau, 1961).

to reveal [the sign] to us.”<sup>47</sup> Her visionary ability, or “feminine intuition,” allows her to advise her husband of God’s plan, just as Mélusine does in the later tale.<sup>48</sup>

In addition to their shared roles as intercessors, specific details point to the ways that Clothilde, Radegund, and Emma perform their spirituality in the course of their secular lives, creating further parallels to Mélusine’s story. For example, all three women act as good counselors: Clothilde when she converts her husband, King Clovis, to Christianity and convinces him to build many churches; Radegund when she acts as a “peace-weaver” on behalf of her husband; and Emma when she negotiates a peace settlement between her husband and her father and brothers that facilitates the development of the monasteries of Maillezais and Bourgueil.<sup>49</sup>

Stories of the women’s marital strife is another recurrent theme, when like Mélusine they are separated from their husbands in order to enhance their spiritual nature. Radegund, Emma, and Mélusine all leave their husbands. Radegund’s marriage is unhappy from the beginning; she was kidnapped by Clothar after the destruction of her family and raised in his court to be one of his wives.<sup>50</sup> After ten years of marriage, during which time she is said to have slept on the floor, she finally eludes her husband, at first to pray in the privy in the middle of the night.<sup>51</sup> This secretive spirituality is repeated by Mélusine when she sequesters herself in the bath for her weekly transformation. While Radegund eventually retires to live a cloistered life, she continues to play an active role in politics, brokering peace among the constantly warring Frankish royalty.<sup>52</sup> As a model for Mélusine, she, like the mythical serpent fairy, was separated from the world in the cloister and yet still attempts to protect her family from violence. Similarly, Emma’s husband, Duke William IV of Aquitaine, betrays his wife with an illicit affair with the wife of the Viscount of Thouars, causing Emma to separate from him.<sup>53</sup> His penance for this act requires him to retire to a monastery.<sup>54</sup> Raymondin’s betrayal and his penance, joining Montserrat Abbey, seem to mirror this pattern.

All three historical women were known to have performed spiritual acts linked to water. When the builders of the monastery of Notre Dame des Andelys near Rouen asked the queen and founder, Clothilde, for wine, a spring appeared next to the partially built abbey, providing them with water instead.<sup>55</sup> St. Radegund is even more closely tied to water, and specifically to bathing. She is said to

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<sup>47</sup>Peter of Maillezais, *De antiquitate*, 1 [fol. 247 b]; quoted in Abel, “Emma of Blois,” 836-37.

<sup>48</sup>For a discussion on commemoration and the construction of a common past in monastic foundation legends—which in many ways function similarly to *Mélusine*—see Amy Remensnyder, *Remembering Kings Past: Monastic Foundation Legends in Medieval Southern France* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995).

<sup>49</sup>On Clothilde, see Jo Ann McNamara and John E. Halborg, eds., *Sainted Women of the Dark Ages* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1992), 45; on Radagunde, see Jason Glenn, “Two Lives of Saint Radegund,” in *The Middle Ages in Texts and Texture: Reflections on Medieval Sources*, ed. Jason Glenn (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011), 63; on Emma of Blois, see Abel, “Emma of Blois,” 842-46.

<sup>50</sup>Glenn, “Two Lives,” 57; Marie Anne Mayeski, “Baudonivia’s Life of Radegunde: A Theology of Power” in *Women at the Table: Three Medieval Theologians* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2004), 107.

<sup>51</sup>Glenn, “Two Lives,” 60; McNamara and Halborg, *Sainted Women*, 73.

<sup>52</sup>Glenn, “Two Lives,” 60; McNamara and Halborg, *Sainted Women*, 63-64.

<sup>53</sup>Abel, “Emma of Blois,” 845.

<sup>54</sup>Abel, “Emma of Blois,” 850.

<sup>55</sup>McNamara and Halborg, *Sainted Women*, 48.

have performed miracles involving healing baths, and to have saved sailors from being shipwrecked.<sup>56</sup> She is also reported to have emulated Christ by bathing the heads and faces of the poor and leprous.<sup>57</sup> Finally, Emma of Blois was the only woman on an island surrounded by water when she read the sign from God to build Maillezais Abbey. This spiritual association with water, and particularly with bathing imagery, could create a connection in the mind of the medieval reader, viewer, or listener between Mélusine's tale and these female figures.

These traits link the four women to the foundation of important sites within Aquitaine and Poitou. While it is widely known that with her husband St. Clothilde founded the Church of the Holy Apostles in Paris—later known as St. Genevieve—she was also responsible for founding many monasteries, including St. Peter's in Tours, which is in the region of Aquitaine.<sup>58</sup> Slightly more conniving, Radegund convinces her estranged husband, Clothar, to fund the building of the monastery where she would live the rest of her life, St. Croix in Poitiers. With this foundation, she was able to shape the “spiritual and emotional” space of the community through her works, such as the acquisition of holy relics.<sup>59</sup> Likewise, Emma of Blois was described as playing an active, integral role in the foundation of both the powerful abbey of Maillezais and that of Bourgueil in her homeland of the Touraine.<sup>60</sup> As such, each of these women helped to shape the architectural landscape of this region of Western France, a role taken up by the mythical fairy builder.

The ideas of dynasty and blood, central to the genealogical romance of *Mélusine*, also play a part in the similarities between these real women and the fictional Mélusine, who founded the Lusignan dynasty—which is named for her rather than her husband—and who bore a bevy of sons from whom the current rulers of the Vendée claim to descend.<sup>61</sup> She is in a sense the mother of the Vendée. This follows the role of Clothilde, who—as the wife of the first King of the all Franks—is the mother of the French monarchy, described by the Carolingian author of her *vita* as the mother of Roman Emperors and the Kings of the Franks.<sup>62</sup> It also mimics Emma, whose descendants were the Dukes of Aquitaine for at least five generations.

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<sup>56</sup>McNamara and Halborg, *Sainted Women*, 82-84.

<sup>57</sup>McNamara and Halborg, *Sainted Women*, 77-78.

<sup>58</sup>McNamara and Halborg, *Sainted Women*, 43, 48.

<sup>59</sup>McNamara and Halborg, *Sainted Women*, 88-89; Glenn, “Two Lives,” 66; Mayeski, “Baudonivia's Life,” 113.

<sup>60</sup>See Abel's article “Emma of Blois” for a thorough explanation of Emma's role in the foundation of Maillezais.

<sup>61</sup>For a comparison of Mélusine as mother in Coudrette and Jean d'Arras' versions of the story, see Catherine Léglu, “Nourishing Lineage in the Earliest French Versions of the *Roman de Melusine*,” *Medium Aevum* 74, no. 1 (2005): 71-85.

<sup>62</sup>McNamara and Halborg, *Sainted Women*, 50.

An important aspect of these correlated stories is the inherent family violence. The family histories in the hagiographies of Saints Radegund and Clothilde depict both women as daughters of foreign kings who were killed violently by family members. Clothilde's father, king Chilperic of Burgundy, was assassinated by his brother, Gundobad, while Radegund's father was a Thuringian king who, like Chilperic, was murdered by his brother.<sup>63</sup> Similarly, we have already seen that fratricide was a prominent part of Mélusine's family story. Likewise, in Clothilde's hagiography, two of her younger sons—Kings Childebert and Clothar—conspired to kill the sons of her eldest—King Chlodomir—in order to gain Chlodomir's kingdom.<sup>64</sup> This sort of brutality also appears in Radegund's story, when her husband, Clothar, burned his son, Chramn, "alive in a cottage with his wife and children after an unsuccessful rebellion," and had to do penance for his crime.<sup>65</sup> It can thus be argued that Coudrette and Jean d'Arras used fratricide and the burning of Maillezais Abbey, pictured in Figure 6, to tell the tale of the real Geoffroy Lusignan's raids on the monastery.<sup>66</sup>



Figure 6. Geoffroy Burns Maillezais, Mélusine is Insulted by Raymondin (MS fr. 24383 fol. 24v). Bibliothèque nationale de France; used by permission.

<sup>63</sup>McNamara and Halborg, *Sainted Women*, 41 (on Clothilde's story), 60 (on Radagunde's story).

<sup>64</sup>McNamara and Halborg, *Sainted Women*, 47.

<sup>65</sup>McNamara and Halborg, *Sainted Women*, 62; additionally, Radegund herself burns a pagan shrine (87).

<sup>66</sup>I argue that another important way the historical women have influenced the text and imagery of the tale is in the growth and development of empire as it is linked to the female sex. In all three cases, Clothilde, Radegund, and Emma were the means to acquiring land. This influence is evident in MS fr. 12575, as the Master of Guillebert de Metz illustrated three scenes related to the marriages of Mélusine's sons to foreign heiresses, growing the Lusignan empire by way of accumulation of wealth, power, and fecundity by bringing these women into the family and the replication of Mélusine's pattern of patronage. This significance is particularly clear in the depiction of Guyon's arrival at Korykos (fol. 39v), where his wife-to-be, Florie, is identified in the *titulus* by the name of her realm rather than by her given name, as Guyon is, conceptually linking the ideas of "woman" and "land."





Figure 7. Fromont Enters Maillezais (MS fr. 12575, fol. 58). Bibliothèque nationale de France; used by permission.

Two images, one from each of the two illustrated manuscripts, demonstrate this idea quite clearly. Folio 58 of MS 12575 (Figure 7) depicts a man richly robed in blue and ermine enthroned before a group of young men or boys. To the right of his throne, a monk enters the elongated doorway of a church. Inscriptions label the enthroned man as Raymon (for Raymondin), and the monk, Fromont, one of his sons. The image depicts two related scenes from the legend as if they were happening simultaneously. On the left, Fromont, in laymen's clothes, takes his father's hand and begs for permission to become a monk: "I wish to be/a Monk of Maillezais, I say truly;/I want to have nothing else/Ever during my lifetime."<sup>67</sup> Just to the right of Raimondin's throne, Fromont, having received his parents' permission, bears the habit and tonsure of a monk as he enters the

<sup>67</sup>"[J]e veil estre moine/De Maillezais; je vous dy bien;/Je ne veil avoir aultre rien/Jamais a nul jour de ma vie," Coudrette, *A Bilingual Edition*, 2890-93.

Abbey of Maillezais (here spelled Mailleres). Through his decision to collapse narrative time and space, the medieval illuminator has placed the family—including the enthroned lord of Lusignan—in close proximity with Maillezais, visually associating the important Poitevin monastery with Mélusine's family.

Like his predecessor earlier in the century, the anonymous Renaissance artist, in his depiction of Maillezais' destruction (Figure 6), has visually associated the monastery with the family through proximity. On the left side of the frame, Geoffroy le Grand Dent thrusts a burning brand through the window of one of the towers protecting the abbey's walls. Yellow tongues of flame lick up the sides of the fortifications as the monks inside cry out. An interior wall of Castle Lusignan divides the frame, and to its right, Mélusine wilts under the insults of her husband. The composition places Raymondin and his fairy wife in close proximity to the abbey, suggesting the parents' innocence in its destruction. At the same time, the walls of the monastery stand strong, despite the flames, arguably reminding the viewer that Geoffroy, in penance, will rebuild the abbey to be even stronger and better than it had been. Further linking the romance with the history and aristocracy of the region, this episode in the tale appears to be based loosely on the historical figure Geoffroy "le Grand Dent," lord of Vouvant and Mervent, who raided Maillezais Abbey several times in the mid-thirteenth century.<sup>68</sup> Given Maillezais' geographical and topographical setting on an island in the marshy land of the Gulf of Picton, the image creates a strong connection between the line of Mélusine and an important Poitevin institution, further enmeshing the family into the history of the marshy landscape.

The numerous similarities in the stories of the parentage, marital relations, and family violence in *Mélusine* and the histories of its local nobility, as described here, likely facilitated an association between the fairy and the noblewomen in the minds of the story's late medieval audience. Like the authors' use of local place names, this association serves two functions: it both creates a sense of verity in the narrative—through the audience's familiarity with and (likely) belief in the history and hagiographies of these women—and places Mélusine within Poitou's history of female founders.

In summary, the images and text of the two surviving French illuminated manuscripts of the poetic *Mélusine* epic illustrate that the figure of Mélusine—as a female founder with ties to the spiritual realm as well as to the realities of the physical landscape with its predominance of water—serves to represent a particular place, a country of mountains, forests, rivers, ocean, and drained marshland. In the manuscripts created by Coudrette, the Master of Guillebert de Metz, and the anonymous fifteenth-century artist, Mélusine embodies both the history and physical landscape of the Vendée. Because land and lineage together endow their possessor with both power and a

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<sup>68</sup>Like the fictional Geoffroy, he later became a friend of the abbey, and the monks erected a cenotaph in his honor; see Charles Arnould, *Petite Histoire de Maillezais: depuis les temps les plus reculés jusqu'au XIXe siècle* (Monein, France: Pyrémonde/Princi Negue, 2006), 93-95, and S. Roblin, "Le sanglier et la serpente: Geoffroy la Grant'Dent dans l'histoire des Lusignan," in *Métamorphose et bestiaire fantastique au Moyen Age, études rassemblées par Laurence Harf-Lancner* (Paris: École normale supérieure de jeunes filles, 1985), 247-86.

particular identity, a figure that personifies the land and creates a sense of continuity with the past serves as an especially effective symbol and also would seem particularly relevant to the wider populace who inhabited this landscape. As such a figure, Mélusine functions as a symbol of identity and stability in a war-torn land whose place in the international landscape remained in flux.

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## Appendix: Places in Mélusine

Table 1. Places Ruled by the Lusignans and Their Descendants	
Ardennes (in Luxembourg)	Antoine's son builds castles here (2710-2728)
Armenia	Guy marries the crown princess (1812-1855)
Austria	Conquered by Antoine's son (2732)
Bohemia	Brothers free capital from siege, and Renaud marries the crown princess (2168-2680)
Brittany	Conquered by Raymondin (2757-9), Thierry marries here (5531)
Châtelailon†	Ruled by Thierry (5438)
Cyprus	Urien marries the crown princess (1670-1765)
Denmark	Conquered by Renaud (2696)
Forez	Raymondin's father, then elder brother—who convinces him Mélusine is unfaithful—are counts here (205-234, 2982-); taken by Geoffroy when he kills his uncle (3121-3130, 5278-5367)
Famagusta	Besieged capital of Cyprus (1497-1499)
Fribourg	Conquered by Antoine's son (2729-2731)
Guérande (in Brittany)	Geoffroy wages war here (2763), then defeats a giant and is made the lord (3219-3412)
Jaffa, Port of (Israel)	Conquered by Urien's son (1793)
La Marche*	Eudes marries the count's daughter (1902-1904)
La Rochelle*†	Founded by Mélusine (1412); Ruled by Thierry (5441)
Lusignan*†	Castle and town of House Lusignan, built by Mélusine (1305-1387)
Luxembourg	Brothers free city from siege, and Antoine marries duchess Chrétienne (1912-2155)
Mathelfelon	Jean de Parthenay-l'Archeveque is also lord of Mathefelon (6801)
Melle*†	Town and castle built by Mélusine (1394)
Mervent*†	Built by Mélusine (1395); Ruled by Thierry (5438)
Mezieres (in Ardennes)	Antoine's son builds a bridge here (2725-2726)
Morea (Principality of Peloponnesus)	Conquered by Urien's son (1791-1792)
Norway	All kings of Norway descend from Mélusine (6844-6846)
Niort*†	Mélusine builds a castle here (2830-2832)
Parthenay*†	City and castle built by Mélusine (1439-1440)
Pembroke	Count of Pembroke descends from Mélusine (5819-5822)
Pons*†	Built by Mélusine (1413)
[Saint-Cyr-en-]Talmondais*	Mélusine "did works" here (1417)
Saintes*†	Mélusine built a bridge here (1415)
Saint-Maixent*†	Tower, town, and abbey built by Mélusine (1396-8)
Tripoli	Conquered by Urien's son (1795-1799)
Vouvant*†	Built by Mélusine (1395); Ruled by Thierry (5437)

\* Places where Mélusine built

†Places in Poitou

Table 2. Other Important Places in the Narrative	
Avalon	Mélusine's mother flees here with her three daughters when their father breaks his oath (4925-4937)
Canigou (in Aragon)	Mountain on which Mélusine's sister guards treasure, "Promised Land" (5015-5031, 6215-6608)
Maillezais Abbey	Fromont becomes a monk here (2792-2908), Geoffroy burns it down, then rebuilds it and is buried there (3543-3634, 5550-5564, 5733-5740, 6640-6647)
Montserrat Abbey (in Catalonia)	Raymondin becomes a hermit and later is buried here, and Geoffroy endows it (5596-5605, 5755-5759)
Northumberland	Geoffroy defeats a giant here and discovers the treasure and story of his grandparents (33660-3676 4399-5120)
Poitiers	Raymondin's uncle—who adopts him, and whom he accidentally kills—and cousin are Counts of Poitou (147-423)
Rome	Raymondin (5383-5385, 5510) and Geoffroy (5657-5705) make pilgrimage to Rome in Penance and confess to Pope Leo

