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5-2021

## Dies Legibiles I

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### Recommended Citation

(2021) "Dies Legibiles I," *Dies Legibiles*: Vol. 1, Article 1.

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## Dies Legibiles I

### Cover Page Footnote

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# LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

MAY 2021

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Welcome to the inaugural edition of the Dies Legibiles Undergraduate Journal of Medieval Studies! We are thrilled to share this work with you. During our undergraduate careers in medieval studies, we have been able to read, think, and learn about such varied aspects of the medieval world as religion, science, art, and history. But too often those breakthroughs, thoughts, and conversations remain confined to the classroom and the semester. Our hope is that through this journal, undergraduates from any institution can begin to see that their explorations need not be confined to a grading stack or to a final paper, and need not be forgotten about as soon as the bell chimes. Instead, we want to foster a community where students share their learning, teach each other, and recognize the power of their own writing to grapple with the current academic discourse.

Over the course of the year our team has had the honor of reading and engaging with essays written by undergraduates from all over the country, interviewing experts in the field of medieval studies, and reviewing a book written about the medieval English poem *Piers Plowman*. The fruit of all of this exploration is this journal, and we hope that it contains something of value for you, our reader!

To undergraduates: We hope that as you read this journal you are encouraged to continue in your studies of the medieval period. We hope that you are reminded that you are not studying alone, that your work is important, and that you do not need to wait until you have a doctorate to make your voice heard. To professors: We hope that you take the time to delve into these works and learn from them the same way your students learn from you, and that you encourage your students to engage with the community of scholars out there. And to the curious passerby: we hope that you gain something of interest, whether that be a cocktail party anecdote, or an appreciation for the care that students put into their research and their writing.

This has been a collaborative effort between our team and every student who took the time to send in a paper, as well as everyone who told a friend about the existence of our journal. A collaboration between our team and the professors who taught us, who supported us, and who encouraged their students to submit. We are so grateful to have gotten the opportunity to get this project up and running and we hope that as more issues

follow, more conversations will spring up and more undergraduates will cultivate a sense of the value of their own insights.

Gwen Ellis and Alexandra Domeshek  
We proudly present: Dies Legibiles Volume I

## CONTENTS

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<b>An Interview with Dimitra Kotoula</b> Conducted by Gwen Ellis & Stephanie Taylor, Smith College	5
<b>The Taṣrīḥ-e maṣūri and Fünfbilderserie: East and West</b> Rebekah Glenn Ellis, Hampshire College	12
<b>Desde la Burla Hacía la Recuperación: una Exploración del Habla de Negros a Través de las Edades</b> Rose A. Poku, Smith College	36
<b>An Interview with Greek Iconographer Panagiotis Markopoulos</b> Conducted & prefaced by Gwen Ellis, Smith College	49
<b>Locution begets Memory: Spiritual Impetus and the Cosmic Scope of Christian Salvation in The Dream of the Rood</b> Brooks Hayden Rometry, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University	61
<b>Riddling in Old English</b> Olivia Davis, Smith College	88
<b>Review: Arvind Thomas: Piers Plowman and the Reinvention of Church Law in the Late Middle Ages</b> Gwen Ellis and Alexandra Domeshek, Smith College	92
<b>Chivalry and Performance in Medicean Jousts of the 15th Century</b> Emma Iadanza, Vassar College	96
<b>Within Reason's Garden: Dante Alighieri and the Redefinition of Courtly Love</b> Katherine Rabogliatti, Wellesley College	109
<b>Masculinity, Power, and Death: Cleopatra in Boccaccio's De Mulieribus Claris</b> Emily Aguilar, Bryn Mawr College	117

# AN INTERVIEW WITH DIMITRA KOTOULA

*Conducted by Gwen Ellis & Stephanie Taylor  
Smith College*

APRIL 2<sup>ND</sup>, 2021

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Dimitra Kotoula is an art historian, archaeologist, professor, and poet. She studied history, art, and archaeology at the University of Ioannina in Greece, and at the Courtauld Institute of Art in London. She has received numerous grants and fellowships, namely: an AHRB PhD fellowship and research grant from the Dumbarton Oaks Center in Washington DC; a grant from Princeton University; the British School at Athens; and the Academy of Arts, Letters, and Science in Venice.

Her work focuses primarily on Byzantine and post-Byzantine art. She has published on the issues of form and function in Byzantine architecture and art, the sensory experiences of the Byzantines, as well as post-Byzantine iconography and Byzantine depictions of the Last Judgement. If you're a history student of Antiquity or Byzantium, it's likely that you've already encountered some of her work: she was a contributor to the Oxford Dictionary of Late Antiquity. Her current research centers around perceptions of Byzantium in the modern period, beginning in the nineteenth century.

Currently, she works for the Greek Ministry of Culture, and has also been teaching at College Year in Athens since 2010. She was a visiting research fellow at the Center for Hellenic Studies at King's College, London in 2016, and has taught Byzantine art and history at various universities in Greece over the years. In addition to being a prodigious scholar, she is also a poet, and has published two collections of poetry.

**Gwen:** When people imagine “the Middle Ages,” what do they usually think of? How accurate is this general consensus, and would you change anything about it?

**Dimitra:** Ah, yes. Actually, when we talk about the Middle Ages, usually we think of an era full of superstitions, largely with Europe as the focus, with rivalries between various religious groups, mainly the Christians and the Muslims. We also think about an era of darkness, a gloomy period—that’s why in some cases we call them “the Dark Ages.” A period unfriendly for the sciences, the letters, culture. And of course, we believe that people back then were obsessed with religion, and they knew nothing about all the things that nowadays we consider important for our culture, or the arts and sciences.

To be honest, I would change everything [about this perception of the Middle Ages]. This is a very dark image, and not a correct one. It doesn’t do justice to that era. And unfortunately, even the name itself, “the Middle Ages,” suggests that we’re a bit awkward, in a sense—we don’t know how to treat these years which were actually crucial to the formation of modern Europe and the modern world. We call them a bit awkwardly—middle years, or “medieval” era, implying that we had Classical Antiquity, the Greco-Roman world, and then we had a gap in between, and then the Renaissance, the rediscovery of the classical world. In between, it is as if we have a gap, and we don’t know how to name it—like, “okay, the Middle Ages, the medieval era.” So, first of all, even the name has to change, in my opinion. Of course, all these conceptions [about the Middle Ages] that we have are more or less wrong. I can’t talk that much about the Middle Ages, but I can talk about Byzantium, and I can reassure you that things back then were totally different.

**Gwen:** Yeah, stemming off from that—the scholar Maria Mavroudi has written, “Byzantium is... largely absent from general histories of philosophy and science, including those that appeared within the last decade.”<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, many people think that Byzantium didn’t make any new artistic or intellectual innovations, and merely imitated the classical tradition—is this true? Or were they making artistic and intellectual innovations? If so, do you have examples?

**Dimitra:** Yes, it is absolutely true [that Byzantium is absent from histories of philosophy and science]. And unfortunately, this is a cliché that was inherited to our modern world by Edward Gibbon and his cornerstone, groundbreaking work about the decline and fall of the Roman Empire.<sup>2</sup> It is true that from that point onwards [the publishing of Gibbon’s work], Byzantium was seen as an unfortunate successor of the Greco-Roman world that contributed nothing towards cultural development. It just repeated things or copied. Or, at best, preserved the Greco-Roman tradition.

However, the Byzantines offered a lot of things. Actually, Byzantine civilization and culture are quite fascinating. First of all, they challenged the arts and the letters, they challenged the way that the world was looking at things. In contrast to the naturalistic, close-to-nature way of depicting things that the Greco-Roman world used to do, the Byzantines introduced

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<sup>1</sup> Page 36 of “Translations from Greek into Latin and Arabic during the Middle Ages: Searching for the Classical Tradition.”

<sup>2</sup> Gibbon wrote *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, a massive six-volume work, in the eighteenth century.



allegorical viewing. What they did was they questioned human senses as the only trustful way of perceiving the world. That was really huge. They, in a sense, had the courage to propose another way of looking at the world around them. They were pioneers in questioning existing beliefs. And in doing so, they produced really beautiful works of literature and art.

As far as cultural innovations, Byzantine society was quite open to newcomers and to cultural exchanges and interchanges. They always viewed rival cultures as a challenge—instead of being hostile, they always were keen to borrow elements and to develop even further their own culture. That was another very interesting thing about Byzantine civilization and culture—the Byzantine world was a multinational, multicultural world. So, the Byzantines were never afraid of the new, of innovations, of experimentation in the arts and the letters, and culture, too.

Certainly, the Byzantines did preserve the classical literature, the Roman literature, and it was thanks to them that the works of that era still survive. However, they did produce, especially in the arts, alternative ways of looking at things. And in many cases, this way of looking at things demanded the participation of the viewer, which is something very modern. Many of the Byzantine works of art functioned like modern-day installations—they required the participation of the beholder, of the audience in order to function.

**Gwen:** Are you thinking mostly of icons?

**Dimitra:** Yes, I am thinking of icons. We know, for example, of descriptions in texts of so-called “animated icons,”<sup>3</sup> and these actually functioned as installations—in order for the artifact to function, it needed the participation of the viewer, and the viewer was called to respond by the artifact. In that way, a connection was built, and the art had a meaning, a purpose. To build such an interactive relationship with an artifact, it was something very radical for that era. I mean, contemporary artists experiment with that. And it is not without significance that Byzantine art was rediscovered by the avant-garde movements in the nineteenth century. It was these artists who turned their interest to Byzantium, and Byzantine art in particular, because of all these characteristics. They borrowed elements for their own artistic works.

**Gwen:** You already touched on this question a little bit when you mentioned multiculturalism, but what important lessons do you think Byzantium teaches us?

**Dimitra:** Yes, that’s a very good question. First of all, you can learn many things from Byzantium. Byzantium was a millennium-long empire. It lasted up until the fifteenth century, and certainly it knew how to survive; sustainability, and the strength to change according to the circumstances of each era—very important. The Byzantines knew how to

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<sup>3</sup> Icons are devotional images which were, and are, believed to have worked miracles in the physical world and provided a mode of communication between the viewer and God.

adjust, and through that, they managed to survive without losing their identity as the Greco-Romans.<sup>4</sup> This identity, the Roman identity, was rediscovered many times throughout the millennium-long existence of Byzantium. And this is a very important lesson—we have to adjust to any challenge that we face.

Also, the Byzantines were extremely open-minded. In Byzantium, anyone could claim the throne. Constantinople was *the* cosmopolitan city of the medieval world, especially during the year 1000. It was the only city center that was inhabited by all the known nationalities of the world, and it was a city open to newcomers. Byzantine society was an open one.

Also, the Byzantines had a big interest in the arts and sciences. In that sense, they were quite advanced. Also, the role of women was quite crucial for Byzantium. What I mean by that is that there were Byzantine empresses who actually ruled as sole empresses—like Irene, for example. She ruled during Byzantine Iconoclasm,<sup>5</sup> not as a regent to anyone but as a sole empress. Actually, Charles the Great<sup>6</sup> proposed marriage to her, but she turned him down. She was an orphan, by the way, from Athens. And she managed to rule the empire all by herself during a period of crisis. Of course, we also have the anonymous Byzantine women who managed to keep their family industries, their identity, their language, and their beliefs throughout very, very dark years. They had social power, and they had agency. We also have amazing female saints in Byzantium, and ascetics, who produced beautiful texts.

So, I think that endurance, open-mindedness, the ability to adapt to any circumstances, coexistence and tolerance of various national and religious groups, acceptance of differences—all these are lessons that the Byzantines give us today.

**Gwen:** This kind of takes the conversation in a different direction, but how does Byzantium still endure in Greek public consciousness? Does Byzantium still influence Greek, or global, society today?

**Dimitra:** Well, recently Byzantium started to appear quite often in various ways in world culture. There are fashion shows inspired by Byzantium, we have novels published very recently, again, inspired by Byzantium. But I have to admit that Greece is the place where it dominates cultural life. Modern-day Greeks are proud of their Byzantine past. The unfortunate thing is that they put the focus on religion rather than the other aspects of Byzantine culture. Byzantium, in many cases, is misused, because we view it as the lost old glory of Greece. In some cases, in modern Greek reality, we do have attitudes that are not very pleasant. Byzantium is exploited by, mainly, some political groups; they still believe in the old Byzantine glory. Regardless, Byzantium is still very much alive in our contemporary Greek culture, and it is part of the Greek identity. Greece had to fight for that—during the nineteenth century and the years of the formation of the modern Greek state, the classical

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<sup>4</sup> “The Byzantine Empire” is a term which was applied retroactively to the Eastern Roman Empire—Byzantines themselves never called themselves “Byzantine,” rather they referred to themselves as Romans (or, sometimes, Greco-Romans).

<sup>5</sup> A period of time (c. 726–842 AD) in the Byzantine Empire when religious imagery was banned.

<sup>6</sup> Charlemagne (d. 814 AD); the King of the Franks in Western Europe.

past was [considered] the “important” part of Greek history. However, this gradually changed; modern Greeks now incorporate [Byzantium] into their identity.

**Gwen:** Yeah, I remember when we were living in Greece, somebody told me once that every Greek person knew the year 1453<sup>7</sup>—knew exactly what happened.

**Dimitra:** Oh yes. We all know that legend about the last Byzantine emperor who fought during the siege of Constantinople by the Ottoman Turks—that he didn’t die, but he disappeared miraculously, and he’s somewhere frozen, and he will reappear at some point in the future....

[All laugh]

**Dimitra:** And he [supposedly] will claim Constantinople back. I believe that to visit Constantinople is a dream that all Greek people have. We feel that it is still a very familiar city that we want to visit, and if we visit, we will feel at home. It doesn’t have to do with any rivalry between the Greeks and the Turks; it is just a feeling. It [Constantinople] is something that we share with the Muslims.

[...]

**Gwen:** Okay, our final question is: do you have a favorite anecdote or story from the Byzantine Empire?

**Dimitra:** Ah, yes! That is very interesting, a very nice question. I have so many. When I was young, my granny used to tell me various stories like the one about the last Byzantine emperor. They border between reality—truth—and fiction. For example, the story of how silkworms reached Constantinople—there was a group of monks who managed to bring, secretly, silkworms in the sticks that they were carrying with them. They were part of a diplomatic mission to China, and when they came back, they managed to do that, secretly. There are many anecdotes like this one. All these are part of the Greek popular consciousness as regards Byzantium and the Byzantines.

There is also the famous, famous story, which again borders between fiction and reality—more or less real if we believe the historian of the era, Procopius—about Empress Theodora<sup>8</sup>—

[All laugh]

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<sup>7</sup> The year 1453 AD was the year Constantinople fell to the Ottoman Turks and the Byzantine Empire ended.

<sup>8</sup> Many rumors have been spread about Empress Theodora (d. 548 AD), wife of Justinian I. Even her contemporaries painted her as a sexual deviant; this perception has carried through to the modern era. There is much debate about the extent of the truth of these rumors, and Theodora’s life has profoundly influenced the way historians examine and reckon with gender in their work.

**Dimitra:** Yes, she’s a cult figure still! She was a very low-class [that is, impoverished] lady who managed to climb up to the throne. During the Nika Riots,<sup>9</sup> even the palace was at siege, and the emperor Justinian was about to abandon the throne and fly away. It was Theodora, the empress, who actually insisted that they both stay in the palace, saying that, “royal purple is the noblest shroud.” She kept Justinian on the throne, and Constantinople (and, of course, the empire) was saved from a huge crisis. We don’t know how Byzantium, and in general the Mediterranean world, would have developed if Justinian had just gone away. I mean, I like this idea of a powerful woman who never gives up. And I believe that there were many, many Byzantine women like Theodora. Yes, okay, Theodora was the empress, and we know about her—but we also have many anonymous women in Byzantium who maintained their family businesses, kept the economy standing, kept their faith, their beliefs, and their identity.

I think all these anecdotes are based on true facts, and they have quite a lot to teach us.

[...]

I know that this is a difficult era, and we all have to try to find inner power and the courage to remain creative. Maybe this is another lesson that the Byzantines can teach us—even in the gloomiest eras, Byzantium produced beautiful works of art. For example, just before Iconoclasm, there were natural disasters, pandemics (the Justinian Plague), enemies attacking the empire, and the empire’s territory shrunk. The economy was really bad. But, this very gloomy and dark era is illuminated by wonderful works—beautiful metal objects, art. And it is quite amazing to know that. [...] I think that in Byzantium, always, beauty had a mission. It was there to teach you something. Either to encourage you to find another truth beyond beauty, or to speak to the courage of creating art in gloomy eras. In eras where you wouldn’t believe that beauty is possible. It is amazing. Even during, for example, the Crusader era, when Constantinople ceased to exist for nearly 60 years,<sup>10</sup> we have beautiful works of art. We have the earliest example in monumental painting of the cycle of St Francis,<sup>11</sup> a Latin saint of the Western Church—there were artists in Constantinople producing that. It is amazing.... This courage. It is quite exceptional for a culture to be under crisis and, at the same time, have the inner strength to respond to those dark circumstances by producing something beautiful.

[...]

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<sup>9</sup> Riots which began in 532 AD in Constantinople; political factions set fire to a number of public buildings around and including the palace.

<sup>10</sup> During the Fourth Crusade, Latin crusaders sacked and conquered Constantinople. It remained in Latin hands for nearly 60 years.

<sup>11</sup> During the Latin occupation of Constantinople, a cycle of frescoes about the life of St Francis of Assisi were painted in the Church of the Virgin Kyriotissa. These murals are the earliest known example of the St Francis cycle in mural form.

This is the point, not just of studying Byzantium, but history in general—history is not something dead, which we study just because we like it, or it is exciting, or whatever. It is something we study because it gives us the power to respond to modern challenges. We study past civilizations, and we can find there the inspiration and the ways to cope with what we are living nowadays. At the personal level, at the national level, at the global level. We are living in a very difficult world. Very, very challenging. And we have to respond, and we have to endure, and we have to adjust. Within these limitations, we have to remain creative. And when I say creative, I don't mean just taking brushes and painting—I mean to inspire the people around us. To still be kind. To be open to people. Nowadays, when everyone is locked in the house, and we are about to lose contact with others, we have to remain open to them, and kind to them. It's not easy. And I think history inspires us in that sense. That's why we study the past—because we draw parallels to the present, and through that, we can make our lives more beautiful.

# THE TAŠRĪḤ-E MANŠŪRĪ AND FÜNFBILDERSERIE: EAST AND WEST

*Rebekah Glenn Ellis*  
*Hampshire College*

## ABSTRACT

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The five illustrations of the *Tašrīḥ-e Manšūrī*, a fourteenth century Persian Galenic anatomy book, and the collection of medieval European images known as the *Fünfbilderserie*, are strikingly similar; this similarity without an obvious cause has been a mystery to scholars for over a century. I reopen this question first by reviewing the major theories of origin proposed by Sudhoff, O’Neill, and French, and then I illuminate the potential flaws in their theories by examining the text and context surrounding the images in further detail. In particular, I compare the Latin and Arabo-Persian labels of the Vatican Palat. Lat. 1110 bone man to the *Tašrīḥ-e Manšūrī*’s, and conclude that although the images appear similar, on closer examination they are significantly different. The *Tašrīḥ-e Manšūrī* shows 32 bones in the spinal column while the Vatican Palat. Lat. 1110 features only 27. However, the *Tašrīḥ-e Manšūrī* does not illustrate the coccyx, whereas Vatican Palat. Lat. 1110 almost does. I suggest that the superficial similarities may be due to convergent evolution as opposed to a direct route of image transmission. However, if scholars find older Persian images or Byzantine leaves showing the five images, that could lend credence to theories of a shared common origin. A more thorough index of the *Fünfbilderserie* manuscripts would allow for better textual comparisons with Arabic and Persian medical texts, and a serious translation of the *Tašrīḥ-e Manšūrī* would also be useful, as Persian medical language has been neglected in English scholarship.

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“Since the first decades of this century, the drawings in the *Tašrīḥ-e manšūrī* have become the focus of controversy on the origins of the early medieval history of anatomical illustrations.”<sup>12</sup> The *Tašrīḥ-e Manšūrī*, *Manšūr’s Anatomy*, also known as the *Tašrīḥ al-Badan*, *Anatomy of the Body*, is a fourteenth century Persian manuscript written by Manšūr ibn Ilyās

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<sup>12</sup> Gul A Russell, “Ebn Elyās, Manšūr,” *Encyclopædia Iranica*, VIII/1 pp. 16-20; available online at <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/ebn-elyas>.

(d. 1422) which features the first full scale human anatomical drawings known in the broader “Islamic” context. It was often rewritten in later centuries, so there are a number of extant copies, and it focuses exclusively on Galenic anatomy. Not all medieval scholars writing in Arabic were Muslims, and demonstrably not all medical works were written in Arabic, but with these caveats I will use the terms Islamic and Arabic to describe the scholarly network from Egypt to Syria to Iraq to Iran and beyond in the medieval period.

The book’s five illustrations feature humans with no particular genitals in a squatting position, one each for the bones, nerves, muscles, veins, and arteries. These illustrations became famous and were copied into some European editions of the *Canon of Medicine*,<sup>13</sup> written by ibn-Sīnā, who is known to the west as Avicenna; today the pictures often illustrate news articles about Arabic medicine. Ibn-Sīnā’s treatise, full of Greek and Arabic learning, was often reprinted in both the Islamic context and the Christian, and the *Tašrīḥ-e manṣūrī* is arranged into similar sections with an added introduction and conclusion. The *Tašrīḥ-e manṣūrī* also portrays the sutures in the human skull and an unusual image of a pregnant woman and her fetus.<sup>14</sup> While the illustration of the woman is interesting and worthy of further study, as is the accompanying question of Islamic views on childbirth, this paper will instead revisit the open question of the comparable Fünfbilderserie images, many of which are from Europe, and attempt to describe the theories of their origins and the relative validity of each proposed option.

In 1907, Karl Sudhoff found two twelfth century Bavarian documents which contained five very similar anatomical images, which he called Fünfbilderserie, or series of five images. Only three of the thirteen European manuscripts which he identified as part of the Fünfbilderseries have the distinctive feature of the *Tašrīḥ-e manṣūrī*’s “bone man,”<sup>15</sup> where the head is pronated so far back one can also see the face; the *Tašrīḥ-e manṣūrī* also features a pronated head in the nerve illustration. This pose does not seem intuitive, and as such, scholars have speculated as to a common origin of these images. While it is important to note that not all Fünfbilderserie images are a complete set of five images, as they may have more or less, all are based on Galenic anatomy. Less attention has been paid to the accompanying texts and places where they factually disagree, particularly since there are a number of terms in Manṣūr’s text that are highly specialized to a late medieval Persian medical context.<sup>16</sup> The illustrations have received more focus than the images, but most translations of the work, with the exception of “Illustration of the Heart and Blood Vessels

<sup>13</sup> Mohammad M. Zarshenas, Arman Zargaran, and Alireza Mehd. “Mansur ibn Ilyas (1380–1422 AD): A Persian anatomist and his book of anatomy.” *Journal of Medical Biography* 24, no. 1 (2016): 70.

<sup>14</sup> Bethesda, National Library of Medicine, MS P 18 (NLM 9506458), fols 1-39.  
<http://resource.nlm.nih.gov/9406458>.

<sup>15</sup> These three manuscripts are Vatican Palat. Lat. 1110; Munich MS. Lat. 130432 (14th c., no text); and Basel MS. D. II.11 (13th c., bone text in Provençal).

<sup>16</sup> Andrew J. Newman, “Tashrīḥ-i Manṣūr-i: Human Anatomy between the Galen and Prophetic Medical Traditions,” in *La Science dans le Monde Iranien à l’époque Islamique*, ed. Vesel, Ž., H. Beikbaghan, and Thierry de Crussol des Epesse B (Institut Français de Recherche en Iran, 1998): 258.

in Medieval Times,”<sup>17</sup> have been broad overviews instead of paying special attention to the text surrounding the images, which might illuminate common themes across scholarship or discontinuity.

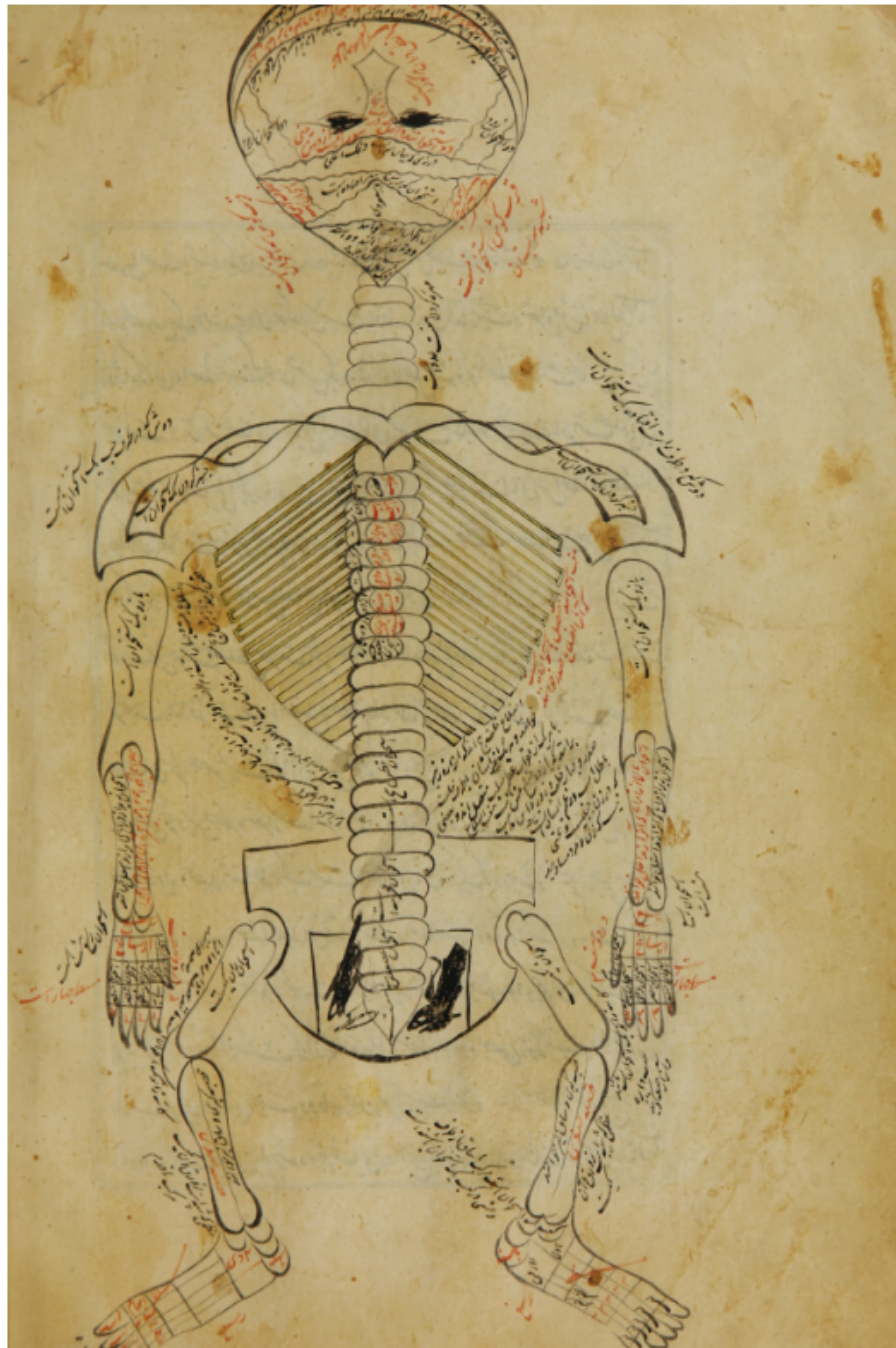


Figure 1: MS P 18, Manşūr’s Bone Man.

<sup>17</sup> Khalili et. al. “Illustration of the heart and blood vessels in medieval times.” *International Journal of Cardiology*, Volume 143, no. 1 (2010): 5-6.



Three scholars have dedicated significant resources to this controversy of origins: Karl Sudhoff, Ynez Violé O'Neill, and Roger French. Each one posits a slightly different plausible explanation. Sudhoff speculated heavily about an Alexandrian origin for both images, although he did not rule out other possibilities.<sup>18</sup> O'Neill postulated that since the text surrounding the Fünfbilderserie manuscripts is so clearly Galenic, and that Galenic ideas could only have come to Europe via Arabic translations in the eleventh or twelfth century, the images must derive somehow from that shared Galenic tradition.<sup>19</sup> She also observes that the European prefaces divide the body into nine parts, five major and four minor, and notes that larger Fünfbilderserie collections reflect this.<sup>20</sup> She suggests that this is due to the work of Constantine the African, who translated part of ibn-Sīnā's *Canon* in the eleventh century,<sup>21</sup> presumably leading to Galenic knowledge being available to the Bavarian monks in the twelfth century, and perpetuating what we now know to be Galenic anatomical inaccuracies.

According to French there was perhaps a Byzantine-Sasanian transmission of some similar images, so the Greeks gave knowledge directly to the Iranians, which filtered to ibn-Sīnā and then later to Maṣūf. No original Alexandrian illustrations with the bone man have been found, nor have early Byzantine-Sasanian leaves, so this remains speculative. French noted in 1984 that "The text accompanying the Persian figures has not been studied by specialists,"<sup>22</sup> and I have as of yet been unable to find a complete translation of the most relevant sections, although Newman has made some translations available.<sup>23</sup> In this essay, I will provide historical context for the *Taṣrīḥ-e maṣūfī*, examine the scholarly debate on origins, and analyze the Fünfbilderserie images and their possible origins by comparing the work of Maṣūf's to the Vatican Palat. 1110 manuscript. I will conclude that, while the similarity of the images is striking, a further examination of the text surrounding them and the context in which the images were produced is necessary to draw a conclusion about the likeliest transmission route. Moreover, unless we find a shared common source or evidence of a continuing scholarly tradition using visual sources, we must also consider the possibility of a convergent evolution.

### Historical Context

There is an occasional tendency to view Arabic scholars as preservers of Greek knowledge who stored it until the West could use it in the Renaissance instead of as

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<sup>18</sup> Ynez Violé O'Neill. "The Fünfbilderserie—A Bridge To The Unknown." *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 51, no. 4 (1977): 543.

<sup>19</sup> Ynez Violé O'Neill. "The Fünfbilderserie Reconsidered." *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 43, no. 3 (1969): 237-238.

<sup>20</sup> O'Neill, "Fünfbilderserie: A Bridge," 542.

<sup>21</sup> O'Neill, "The Fünfbilderserie Reconsidered," 238.

<sup>22</sup> Roger K. French. "An Origin for the Bone Text of the 'Five-Figure Series'." *Sudhoff's Archive* Bd. 68, H. 2 (1984): 144.

<sup>23</sup> See both Newman, "Tashrīḥ-i Maṣūf-i: Human Anatomy," and Khalili et. al, "Illustration of the heart and blood vessels in medieval times."

innovators in their own right. Islamic science was not static; it developed, had discourse, and arguably later fused with the Prophetic medical tradition, which is drawn from the Hadith and contains remedies which are believed to have been used by the Prophet Muḥammad. Ibn Ilyās, a later scholar in this tradition, merged Galenic ideas with some notes from Prophetic medicine,<sup>24</sup> although the earlier Islamic scholars who pushed for more reliance on reason and less on folk knowledge might not have considered that progress. The philosopher ibn-Khaldūn criticized Prophetic medicine as “definitely no part of divine revelation but... something customarily practiced among the Arabs.”<sup>25</sup> Later innovations aside, the overall history of medieval Islamic medicine is vast, and a few figures are particularly noteworthy both for their great influence and for our understanding of Manṣūr ibn Ilyās.

Arabic or Islamic science is called that because of the intense efforts of the ‘Abbāsīd Caliphate to foster learning. The Umayyads, who followed the four rightly guided Caliphs, may have funded some science, but the ‘Abbāsīds, who overthrew them and ruled in Baghdād, paid enormous sums for translations of Greek books, and even Indian and Chinese texts.<sup>26</sup> There is a popular story about this translation movement taking place in the Bayt al-Ḥikmah, or House of Wisdom, a grand library; however, Pormann and Savage-Smith point out that there is no definitive evidence of such a place existing.<sup>27</sup> The majority of the Arabic medical tradition reflects the Greeks more than others, and Galen was particularly popular. The Greek original texts were translated into Syriac or, more commonly, Arabic; the Indian and Chinese texts were sometimes translated first into Persian and then into Arabic.<sup>28</sup> These texts were not translated idly but often commented and improved upon the originals. While many gains were made in astronomy and other sciences, Islamic medical scholars are particularly noteworthy. Men such as al-Rāzī, Latin name Rhazes (d. 925), ibn-Sīnā, or Avicenna (d. 1037), and ibn-Ruṣd, called Averroes (d. 1198), definitively influenced Western medicine.

Galenic ideas regarding humors, pneuma, and heat were generally accepted. Al-Rāzī wrote two popular books, *Kitāb al-Ḥawī fī al-Ṭibb* (The Comprehensive Book in Medicine) and *Kitāb Al-Manṣūri* (Manṣūr’s Book, dedicated to the governor of Rey). *Kitāb Al-Mansuri* includes anatomical descriptions that mostly follow Galen, but there are some important divergences.<sup>29</sup> Alghamdi et al., in a 2016 paper, trace the development of anatomical study from al-Rāzī to Manṣūr. They note that al-Rāzī was the first to state that the laryngeal nerve was both sensory and motor; to describe the connections between arteries at the inferior side of the brain, an area now known as the circle of Willis; and to correct Galen on the

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<sup>24</sup> Newman, “Tashrīḥ-i Manṣūr-i: Human Anatomy,” 266.

<sup>25</sup> Newman, “Tashrīḥ-i Manṣūr-i: Human Anatomy,” 257.

<sup>26</sup> Peter E. Pormann and Emilie Savage-Smith. *Medieval Islamic Medicine*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2007: 36.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> Malak A. Alghamdi et. al. “An Untold Story: The Important Contributions of Muslim Scholars for the Understanding of Human Anatomy.” *The Anatomical Record* 300, no. 6 (2016).

topics of the layers of the stomach and the number of bones in the coccyx, among others.<sup>30</sup> He also “disagreed [with Galen] that the brain, spinal cord and cerebral ventricles were formed in pairs.”<sup>31</sup> Next, ibn-Sīnā correctly stated that some women have two cavities in the uterus and others only have one, contra Galen. However, these corrections were sometimes debated or ignored by later scholars; ibn-Ruṣd, also known as Averroes, did not maintain all these things in his later works on medicine, of which *Al-Kulliyāt fī al-Ṭibb* (Generalities or General Medicine) is the most famous. Others made still more improvements, as al-Baghdādī (d. 1231) did regarding the bones of the lower jaw and the sacrum, which Galen and various Muslim scholars had misidentified. Unfortunately, al-Baghdādī wrote this in a book about the geography of Egypt, not anatomy, so it was perhaps understandably overlooked by the majority of scholars.<sup>32</sup>

One of the most famous advances from Galenic anatomy was made by ibn al-Nafīs (d. 1288), who objected to Galen’s widely accepted idea of nigh-invisible passages of blood from the left to right side of the heart via the lung. Ibn al-Nafīs also predicted that “there must be small communications between the pulmonary artery and the pulmonary vein,”<sup>33</sup> which was first written about in Europe by Michael Servetus 300 years after ibn al-Nafīs died, and proven by William Harvey in 1628.<sup>34</sup> We know that some of ibn al-Nafīs’ work was translated into Latin, but it is unclear if Servetus had access to this particular volume.<sup>35</sup>

This period of scholarship from the eighth to the sixteenth century<sup>36</sup> has been considered an Islamic “golden age,” although others narrow this range to the ninth to twelfth.<sup>37</sup> The Bayt al-Ḥikmah has been likened to a university, and while this view has been dissected, it is certain that the ninth to twelfth centuries produced many scholars, whether Christian, Jewish, or Muslim, whose native languages ranged from Aramaic to Persian to Turkish. The lingua franca of the time was Arabic; the ‘Abbāsids are generally believed to have sponsored scholarship as a political move to strengthen the legitimacy of their rule. The presence, or lack thereof, of human dissection remains a debated topic; ibn-Ruṣd stated that “anyone who undertakes dissection increases their faith in God,”<sup>38</sup> but this could well have referred to animal dissections. After the Mongol invasions and their conquest of Baghdād in 1258, there may have been less funding for the sciences, hence an end to the “golden age.” Other accounts differ as to how disastrous the Mongol invasion was. Some scholars say that:

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Mohammadali M. Shoja and R. Shane Tubbs. “The History of Anatomy in Persia.” *Journal of Anatomy* 210 (2007): 359–378.

<sup>32</sup> Malak et. al, “An Untold Story.”

<sup>33</sup> John B West. “Ibn al-Nafīs, the pulmonary circulation, and the Islamic Golden Age.” *Journal of Applied Physiology* 105, no. 6 (2008).

<sup>34</sup> Pormann and Savage-Smith, *Medieval Islamic Medicine*, 47.

<sup>35</sup> West, “Ibn al-Nafīs.”

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Malak et. al, “An Untold Story.”

<sup>38</sup> Shoja and Tubbs, “History of Anatomy in Persia.”

The Mongol invasion of Persia, which took place in the thirteenth century AD, was one of the most disastrous events in the history of Persia; many crucial cities like Gundishapur [Gondēšāpur], Nishapur [Nišapur], Merve and Ray with large libraries and educational centers were destroyed by the invading Mongols ruled by Changiz Khan. Later, the Mongols conquered Baghdad with eventual collapse of the last Islamic caliphate, the Abbasids. Following the collapse of the Islamic Caliphate, three powers rised [sic] in the region and were based in Persia, Turkey and Egypt. Persia was ruled by Mongols (Ilkhanid dynasty) who in contrast to their predecessors became patrons of science and medicine.<sup>39</sup>

Others contend that since the powers that rose up afterwards, the Ottomans, Persians, and Fatimid Dynasty of Egypt, also sponsored knowledge, the Mongol conquest was not a disaster.<sup>40</sup> Iran was ruled by the Ilkhanids, who fostered prophetic medicine as part of their patronage of the arts and sciences.<sup>41</sup> Astrology also once again gained popularity under the Ilkhanid Dynasty. Tīmūr founded the Tīmurid Empire (1370–1507), and his descendants sponsored scholars such as Manṣūr ibn Ilyās.

The Manṣūr of the *Tašrīḥ-e Manṣūrī*, Manṣūr ibn Muḥammad ibn Amād ibn Yūsuf ibn Ilyās, lived in the late fourteenth to early fifteenth centuries.<sup>42</sup> The National Library of Medicine holds a copy of his magnum opus, which has been completely digitized and is available for free online, that was published in 1488. The original, according to Emilie Savage-Smith, was published in 1386.<sup>43</sup> Manṣūr ibn Ilyās was from Šīrāz, the chief city of the province of Fars. Manṣūr grew up in a scholarly family; his ancestors authored some medical compendiums and books of poetry, and he visited other cities like Tabriz in his lifetime.<sup>44</sup> According to Zarshenas, he also contributed to medical schools in Fars, as Šīrāz was a center of learning; the actual reality of Muslim hospitals will be explored later in this paper. He wrote as many as three noteworthy books, the *Ghiasieh*, *Kefaye Mojahedieh*, and *Tašrīḥ al-Badan*.<sup>45</sup> The *Tašrīḥ-e manṣūrī* was dedicated to Pir Muḥammad ibn ‘Umar ibn Tīmūr, a grandson of Tīmūr, who is known to the west as Tamerlane. The Tīmurid patronage of the arts and sciences was generous, and they sponsored Manṣūr’s books. Given the wide dissemination of extant manuscripts, it was likely used for medical instruction. He did not only focus on Galen, as he ignored Galenic ideas on female sperm,<sup>46</sup> and included some Prophetic medicine alongside his anatomy in the Islamic intellectual tradition, arguably to “influence the Tīmurids to religious tolerance.”<sup>47</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Khalili et. al, “Medieval Heart and Blood Illustration,” 4.

<sup>40</sup> Shoja and Tubbs, “History of Anatomy in Persia.”

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> *Encyclopædia Iranica*, “Ebn Elyās, Manṣūr.”

<sup>43</sup> Emilie Savage-Smith, “Anatomical Illustrations in Arabic Manuscripts,” in *Arab Painting: Text and Image in Illustrated Arabic Manuscripts*, ed. Anna Contadini (Brill, 2007): 155.

<sup>44</sup> Zarshenas, “A Persian Anatomist,” 68.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Newman, “Tashrīḥ-i Manṣūr-i: Human Anatomy,” 265.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 266.

It is important to note that Manṣūr ibn Ilyās lived almost 500 years after al-Rāzī, and almost 200 after ibn al-Nafīs. Manṣūr's work did not, as far as we know, influence Western medicine except for the illustrations which accompanied ibn-Sīnā's canon. Zarshenas and his colleagues, also from Šīrāz, contend that Manṣūr lived and wrote during the "golden age of the medieval Islamic period."<sup>48</sup> Manṣūr was born long after the fall of Baghdād, however, and his writing in Persian is a sign that Arabic's status as *lingua franca* was falling. However, many of Manṣūr's drawings are labelled in Arabic as well as Persian, and as Newman discusses, a comprehensive glossary of Persian medical terminology has not yet been made.<sup>49</sup> I suggest that we abandon the term golden age, as progress is distinctly non-linear and attempting to highlight a specific period as being more advanced than another removes nuance from the conversation.

Many of the great medical books and compendiums produced in the late medieval Islamic context included illustrations, some of abstract knowledge, and most also of anatomical features, like sutures, but they are less detailed than the Fünfbilderserie illustrations. The Galenic curriculum, derived from the antique Alexandrian schools,<sup>50</sup> divided medical knowledge into theory and practice, with theory further divided as physiology, aetiology, and semiotics and practice understood as prophylactics and therapeutics. This division would be represented by branch diagrams in encyclopedias and commentaries. The other form of illustration we find in Arabic books is anatomical illustrations, quite geometric and abstract, in stark contrast to the lush and sometimes even erotic illustrations found in Renaissance anatomies, notably Vesalius'. Savage-Smith notes that the impossible perspective and abstraction seem to be to an earlier taste we no longer have that was arguably cross-cultural.<sup>51</sup> Perhaps naturalism is then a more distinctly modern movement that Manṣūr and other anatomists were creating. Alternatively, less abstract Arabic anatomical illustrations might be sparse because of the religious prohibition against drawing the human figure for most Muslims; however, by the Safavid era (1501-1772), though not necessarily throughout the Tīmurid period, that prohibition had long been flouted in Iran.

Emilie Savage-Smith, in her chapter "Anatomical Illustration in Arabic Manuscripts," from the book *Arab Painting: Text and Image in Illustrated Arabic Manuscripts*, notes that triangles were used for illustrating the ventricles of the brain, stomach muscles, and the bones of the upper jaw.<sup>52</sup> Circles are used for illustrating the structure of the eye, either on its own or as part of the entire visual system. The illustrations of the upper jaw tend to feature a suture in the jaw, or maxilla, that is not actually present in human anatomy, as al-Baghdādī noted when he observed human bones and recorded them in his ill-fated geography book. These sutures are instead found in the skulls of the Rhesus monkey, and

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<sup>48</sup> Zarshenas, "A Persian Anatomist," 68.

<sup>49</sup> Newman, "Tashrīḥ-i Manṣūr-i: Human Anatomy," 258.

<sup>50</sup> Pormann and Savage-Smith, *Medieval Islamic Medicine*, 15.

<sup>51</sup> Savage-Smith, "Arabic Anatomical Illustration," 158.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 147-148.

perhaps also the Barbary Ape Galen likely dissected.<sup>53</sup> Cranial suture diagrams are by far the most frequent, and as mentioned, the *Tašrīḥ-e maṣṣūrī* also shares this diagram, which will be briefly discussed further below in analysis of French's paper. Savage-Smith believes that the pregnant figure was Maṣṣūr's only original contribution; the other illustrations, she posits, were derived from earlier sources.<sup>54</sup> One potential artistic ancestor—and Savage-Smith does stress that this is only of possible relevance—is a fifteenth century Egyptian, Arabic manuscript of a horse's anatomy; the head is pronated backwards, like the heads of Maṣṣūr's bone and nerve men.<sup>55</sup> Other illustrations, albeit much later, suggests that this equine pose might be part of a now-lost tradition, but the evidence is tenuous at best.

### The Question of Origins

While most scholars who have studied the Fünfbilderserie or Maṣṣūr ibn Ilyās consider the question of where the images originated, Sudhoff, O'Neill, and French produced some of the more specific detailed papers in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Sudhoff discovered the earliest Fünfbilderserie manuscripts, coined the term Fünfbilderserie, and produced some of the most important work on that topic beginning in 1907. The earliest set Sudhoff discovered is a Latin text produced by Benedictine Bavarian monks, from 1158, at the cloister of Prüfening near Regensburg,<sup>56</sup> and the other is by another Benedictine Bavarian monk named Conrad, who wrote in 1240 in the monastery of Scheyern. Sudhoff noticed other manuscripts fitting this pattern of five images, often depicting bones, nerves, muscles, veins, and arteries, as he continued to explore manuscripts; the number of Fünfbilderserie sets has increased over time. There is as of yet no definitive index, in part because some manuscripts have been listed incorrectly in the secondary literature, others have moved, and scholars do not necessarily even agree on what constitutes a Fünfbilderserie manuscript. Most, however, share at least one of five images and the distinctly Galenic anatomy.

French's 1984 article gave a working and tentative index of the manuscripts, saying "a review of the secondary literature provides a total of twenty-six known MSS that have one or more features of the 'five figure series'. Of this total a dozen MSS are in Latin, eight Persian, two 'Islamic' without further qualification, and one each Arabic and Provençal."<sup>57</sup> Savage-Smith identified at least seventy sets of Islamic anatomical full figure diagrams, two-thirds of which occur in Maṣṣūr ibn Ilyās' work, but many of these do not have any accompanying text and merely follow the five or six figure pattern of images.<sup>58</sup> The most recent manuscript I am aware of is listed as being part of the Fünfbilderserie is Vatican Palat. Lat.1110, which brings the number of Latin manuscripts up to thirteen and French's total number of manuscripts up to twenty-five; it was documented in 1964. It is not entirely

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 148.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 156.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> French, "An Origin," 147n29.

<sup>58</sup> Savage Smith, "Arabic Anatomical Illustration," 157.

clear if Savage-Smith is including any of the European manuscripts in her count, but in any case, the illustrations following Manṣūr's text abound. The question, then, is whether or not Manṣūr followed a European source for his five images. I will trace the arguments of origin on the Fünfbilderserie chronologically, first with Sudhoff, then O'Neill, then French, and finally the somewhat less emphatic suggestions of other scholars such as Savage-Smith and Michael Frampton.

## Pisa Leaves

According to O'Neill:

Sudhoff believed that the so-called five picture series originated in Alexandria, that its prototype was a short anatomical textbook composed in Greek during the third century, B.C., and that the text and its illustrations must have been transmitted from antiquity via Byzantium to the Bavarian monastery of Prüfening where he thought he had found its earliest copy. According to his theory, the depictions of various organs found on a sheet in Pisa, and those scattered through the Ashmolean codex containing the gorgeous if garish five anatomical drawings must also have originated near the Nile delta.<sup>59</sup>

It is not in question that Alexandria had a notable library, nor that they had a great deal of medical knowledge; Iskander and Pormann both explore this.<sup>60</sup> Sudhoff identified similarities in his early studies due to the squatting posture in many of the figures as well as some similarities in accompanying texts. *Ashmolean Codex 399* contains some squatting figures as well as richly colored drawings of, among other things, a five-lobed liver; its preface discusses nine systems of the body, not just the bones, nerves, muscles, veins, and arteries. Sudhoff maintained that illustrations of these other systems did not bear a relationship to the Fünfbilderserie, but that they could have come from a similar source; the Pisan leaf he found illustrates the stomach, gallbladder, spleen, two illustrations of the heart, a five-lobed liver, the trachea, an enlarged drawing of the liver with six lobes, the lungs, the nose and eyes, intestines, and the reproductive organs.<sup>61</sup> The Ashmolean codex contains similar drawings, but they are not all on one page and have no explanatory text. Based on this comparison, he assumed that the images had come to the West separately and before Arabic works entered medieval Europe.

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<sup>59</sup> O'Neill, "Fünfbilderserie: A Bridge," 542-543.

<sup>60</sup> As this paper is already considering a wide time and geographical range, it seems appropriate to provide references on the Alexandrian medical curriculum instead of devoting significant time to that here; see A. Z. Iskander, "An Attempted Reconstruction of the Late Alexandrian Medical Curriculum," *Medical History* 20 (1976): 235-58, especially pp. 245-46, and also Peter E. Pormann, "Medical Education in Late Antiquity, From Alexandria to Montpellier." In *Hippocrates and Medical Education*: 419-441.

<sup>61</sup> O'Neill, "Fünfbilderserie: A Bridge," 543.

## Translation as Transmission

O'Neill believes these images might, instead of coming from Byzantium, be part of the broader Galenic tradition of the Fünfbilderserie. This is in part due to the Gonville and Caius series, which has nine drawings accompanying the prefacing text which also resemble the Ashmolean drawings. In a later paper on the Fünfbilderserie, O'Neill questions how medieval European scholars would have had access to Galen's ideas, and concludes that it must have been through Latin translations of Arabic texts, either from Spain in the twelfth century or from eleventh century Southern Italy through the work of Constantine the African.<sup>62</sup> Gerard of Cremona, a Spanish translator, translated ibn-Sīnā's *Canon*, but as Gerard died in 1187, if his *Canon* were to be used as a source for an 1158 treatise it would have to have been translated quite early in his life. The *Pantegni*, an eleventh century manuscript, is a more likely source. Its author, Constantine the African, was a colorful figure, whose translations of 'Alī ibn al-'Abbās' (d. 944) book *Al-Malaki* were not necessarily accurate. O'Neill says of his work that, "if unfamiliar words confused Constantine, unfamiliar ideas, especially if expressed metaphorically, must have baffled him still more."<sup>63</sup> However, it seems plausible that Constantine's translations influenced the authors of the early Fünfbilderserie manuscripts, and thus that these were some of the earliest Galenic anatomies in medieval Europe.<sup>64</sup>

## Greeks to Sasanians

French begins his essay by stating that Sudhoff's theory of Alexandrian and Byzantine origin, now eighty years old, still has little to no textual evidence beyond conjecture. Since "to reach the unknown we need some signposts from the known," he considers Galenic works in late antiquity as being relevant to the question of origins. Galen organized his work into five topics, organized into four volumes, for the purpose of teaching students.<sup>65</sup> Galen also, in his various treatises on anatomy, described the sutures of the skull as being similar to capital Greek letters; in Arabic translations, these were seen as symbols and not understood as letters. The Provençal manuscript, Basel D.II.11, has a long text on bones that displays similar symbols, rather than Greek letters; other European texts that discuss the bones are similar to that manuscript in content. Because of this, French concludes that the text accompanying most Fünfbilderserie manuscripts is originally from the Middle East.

He suggests that the images in the Provençal manuscript and others undoubtedly come from the east because of the strikingly similar pronated head. Moreover, in French's

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<sup>62</sup> O'Neill, "The Fünfbilderserie Reconsidered," 238.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 244.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 245.

<sup>65</sup> French, "An Origin," 144.



view this image is a Persian copy of an original transmitted from the Greeks to the Sasanians before the Arab conquest, incorporated into later Arabic scholarship. However, he does not provide evidence of this kind of Persian illustration appearing in Arabic books before the *Taṣrīḥ-e manṣūrī*. Zayn al-Dīn Ismāʿīl ibn Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan al-Jurjānī (d. 1136) wrote a medical encyclopedia in Persian, perhaps the first of its kind, titled *Zakhīrah-i KhvārazmʾShāhī* (The Treasure of KhvārazmʾShāh); it is preserved in several manuscripts. One of these, held by the National Library and Archives of the Islamic Republic of Iran, features five illustrations which look almost identical to those of the *Taṣrīḥ-i Manṣūr-i*.<sup>66</sup> While this could raise the possibility of a long tradition of such Galenic drawings, other copies do not feature these illustrations; the National Library of Medicine holds three manuscripts and references others, and none of these feature such illustrations. One of them, MS P 5, held a loose sheet with colored anatomical figures.<sup>67</sup> It is agreed that this sheet, MS P 5 fol. A, was a later insertion from the eighteenth century.<sup>68</sup> Moreover, in the manuscript held by the Islamic Republic of Iran, the images appear as a series, without reference to the text, unlike Manṣūr's images, which are integrated into the book. As such, I am inclined to say that the appearance of these seemingly earlier illustrations is most likely in fact a later insertion based upon Manṣūr's illustrations, as opposed to an earlier source.

Taking as a given the improbability that any early copies of the *Zakhīrah-i KhvārazmʾShāhī* were illustrated, for both an antique set of Persian illustrations and an Arabic text to have arrived in Provençal France is not impossible, but it stretches plausibility. In fact, French almost seems to stretch the argument to suggest a Persian-Arabic origin for Galenic texts as opposed to a Graeco-Arabic origin. While this may be true in some cases, it seems like a rather large assumption. French suggests that “the cultivation and assimilation of Greek medicine at Jundishapur [Gondēšāpur] and Edessa is well known in outline and provides a route for the transmission of Hellenistic anatomy to Iran and the Persian language,” and as such after the Arab conquest of Iran, Arabs had access to this knowledge.<sup>69</sup>

Like many major works on the *Taṣrīḥ-e manṣūrī*, his paper is quite old, and even scholarship from a decade afterwards complicates these ideas about the Sasanian city Gondēšāpur. Michael Dols, in an influential 1987 essay, “The Origins Of The Islamic Hospital: Myth and Reality,” questioned the supposed role and even existence of the Gondēšāpur school of medicine, located in the Khuzestan province of Iran, entirely. Miri Shefer-Mossensohn and Keren Abou Hershkovitz also appear to support Dol's analysis. What is agreed is that Šāhpūr II (d. 380) established Gondēšāpur and this city had doctors; likely it also had a school, which taught astronomy, theology, and medicine, with an attached

<sup>66</sup> “The Treasure of Khvarazm'Shah,” World Digital Library, March 30, 2015, <https://www.wdl.org/en/item/10608/>.

<sup>67</sup> Savage-Smith, Emilie, “Catalogue: Medical Encyclopedias. Zakhīrah-i KhvārazmʾShāh,” Islamic Medical Manuscripts at the National Library of Medicine, January 15, 2004. [https://www.nlm.nih.gov/hmd/arabic/E11\\_E13.html](https://www.nlm.nih.gov/hmd/arabic/E11_E13.html).

<sup>68</sup> Savage-Smith, Emilie, “Catalogue: Medical Monographs,” Islamic Medical Manuscripts at the National Library of Medicine, January 15, 2004. <https://www.nlm.nih.gov/hmd/arabic/mon6.html>.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 147.

hospital.<sup>70</sup> Eastern Christians were translating Greek texts from Alexandria and Edessa into Syriac at this time, and so could have practiced Galenic medicine and have produced Galenic images in Gondēšāpur, supporting French's transmission route. According to *Encyclopedia Iranica*, "information found in narrative sources concerning the derivation of such knowledge during the Sasanian period from outstanding individual Greek and Indian sources...has substantially been corroborated by the texts themselves."<sup>71</sup> The school, according to the generally accepted narrative, continued to practice scholarship until and after the Arab conquest, but in order for French's transmission route to be plausible, there must have been an active and consistent scholarly tradition using images which preceded the Fünfbilderserie.

"In ad. 787, Jibril ibn Bakhtīshū' (d. a.D. 828) was summoned from Jūndī-Shāpūr [Gondēšāpur] to Baghdād to supervise the founding of a state hospital by Hārūn al-Rashīd,"<sup>72</sup> who was the fifth 'Abbāsīd Caliph, and the hospital was to be built according to the Sasanian model. The Bakhtīshū' family of physicians, who were Nestorian Christians from Gondēšāpur and were well respected by the 'Abbāsīds, might have promoted the idea of a centuries-old intellectual heritage to add to their own status.<sup>73</sup> According to Dols this influence is exaggerated and no Persian sources corroborate the existence of Gondēšāpur's school of medicine,<sup>74</sup> yet some scholars have continued to praise this school.<sup>75</sup> Ibn al-Qifṭī (d. 1248) was the first Arab historiographer to mention Gondēšāpur's school, some 900-1000 years after its founding.<sup>76</sup> Pormann and Savage-Smith cite an infirmary at nearby Susa as being associated with Gondēšāpur.<sup>77</sup> According to the historian al-Tha'ālibī (d. 1038):

Thus, the people of Sūs became the most skilled in medicine of the people of Ahwāz and Fārs because of their learning from the Indian doctor [who was brought to Susa by Shāhpūr I] and from the Greek prisoners who lived close to them; then [the medical knowledge] was handed down from generation to generation.<sup>78</sup>

However, due to a paucity of historical records, political reasons for perpetuating the idea, and existence of neighboring Susa, Pormann and Savage-Smith refer to accounts of a great medical school with continuous influence as "the myth of Gondēšāpur."<sup>79</sup> From this, we can conclude that French's proposed route through Edessa and Gondēšāpur, while

<sup>70</sup> Michael W. Dols. "The Origins of the Islamic Hospital: Myth and Reality." *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 61 (1987): 368.

<sup>71</sup> Lutz Richter-Bernburg and A. Shapur Shahbazi. "Gondēšāpur." *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, XI/2 pp. 131-135; available online at <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/gondesapur>.

<sup>72</sup> Dols, "The Origin of Islamic Hospitals," 369.

<sup>73</sup> Pormann and Savage-Smith, *Medieval Islamic Medicine*, 20.

<sup>74</sup> Dols, "The Origin of Islamic Hospitals," 369.

<sup>75</sup> Mohammad H. Azizi. "Gondishapur School of Medicine: The Most Important Medical Center in Antiquity." *Archives of Iranian Medicine* 11, no. 1 (2008): 117.

<sup>76</sup> Miri Shefer-Mossensohn and Keren Abou Hershkovitz. "Early Muslim Medicine and the Indian Context: A Reinterpretation." *Medieval Encounters*, 19 (2013): 10.

<sup>77</sup> Pormann and Savage-Smith, *Medieval Islamic Medicine*, 20.

<sup>78</sup> Dols, "The Origin of Islamic Hospitals," 377-378.

<sup>79</sup> Pormann and Savage-Smith, *Medieval Islamic Medicine*, 20.

technically possible, may be less reliable than previously assumed. In any case, the Islamic hospital did not spring into being out of thin air, and the Nestorian Christians who participated in the translation movement under the ‘Abbāsids may well have kept books at Gondēšāpur, among other places.

### The Myth of Gondēšāpur and the Reality of Medieval Hospitals

In examining the role of Gondēšāpur in medical situations, it seems appropriate to turn briefly to the question of hospitals in the medieval Islamic context. While Elgood’s claim that “to a very large extent the credit for the whole hospital system must be given to Persia” is debated,<sup>80</sup> some medicine was practiced at Gondēšāpur and certainly was practiced in the ninth century.<sup>81</sup> Dols suggests that Islamic hospitals and perhaps also medical teaching institutions were modelled after the Byzantine Christian *xenodocheion*, which the Church used to provide shelter and care for the needy, and *nosokomeion*, a place specifically for the sick.<sup>82</sup> Syriac Christians who acted as a bridge between Greeks and Sasanians were educated at the city of Nisibis, in modern day Turkey, an institution which was occasionally funded by Sasanian administrators as in the early sixth century.<sup>83</sup> He believes that whatever did exist at Gondēšāpur was not a school, but merely “a seminary like the one in Nisibis, where medical texts were read, and an infirmary where Galenic medicine may have been practiced.”<sup>84</sup> His argument defines a hospital not as “an institution that possessed physicians or medical staff,”<sup>85</sup> but as, “a public charitable institution that affords care to the sick.”<sup>86</sup> While such institutions existed in fourth century Byzantium, his definition is unusually narrow.

Shefer-Mossensohn and Abbou Hershkovits define hospitals as “a place where physicians were present and medical care and cures were administered,”<sup>87</sup> which allows for a broader examination of the formation of these institutions; certainly, many of them were charitable, and physicians would not be physicians if there were no patients, but it dodges the debate about what qualifies as public or charitable. Shefer-Mossensohn and Abbou Hershkovits, under this less-stringent definition, question Dol’s model of hospital history by exploring the Indian-Arab exchange during the ‘Abbāsīd Caliphate, and suggest “considering the Islamic hospital as an institution in its own right and on its own terms.”<sup>88</sup> They examine the three suggested candidates for the earliest Islamic hospitals, and suggest that the two under Hārūn al-Rašīd, one Galenic and one Indian, both could vie for the title. The Indian hospital was founded by the prominent Indian Barmakid family, well known for

<sup>80</sup> Azizi, “Gondishapur School of Medicine,” 118.

<sup>81</sup> Dols, “The Origin of Islamic Hospitals,” 377.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 371.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 374.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 375.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 371.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 370.

<sup>87</sup> Shefer-Mossensohn and Abbou Hershkovitz. “Muslim Medicine and the Indian Context,” 291.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 284.

patronizing the arts and sciences.<sup>89</sup> There are relatively few sources on this fascinating site of cultural exchange, unfortunately; however, the Barmakid hospital was very plausibly modeled after Indian Buddhist hospitals, which have a distinct tradition unlike the organization of Christian hospitals, wherein rulers patronized the institutions as a sign of prestige and charity.<sup>90</sup> Byzantine Christian hospitals had religious goals, while some of those in India were arguably formed out of a sense of duty on behalf of the rulers, or for the purpose of political gain; hospitals in Baghdād seem to better match the latter case.<sup>91</sup>

These hospitals were, of course, far before the time of Maṣṣūr ibn Ilyās; we now return to the question of Maṣṣūr ibn Ilyās' potential interaction with hospitals. Two scholars, Hasan Tadjbakhsh and Willem Floor, examine Safavid and Qajar hospitals, and assume that these later accounts may reflect an earlier reality. There were institutions endowed to take care of the sick and staffed with pharmacists and doctors in Tehran, Qazvīn, Yazd, Ardabīl, Tabrīz, Mašad, and Iṣfahān in the Safavid Era and even as early as 1300.<sup>92</sup> Floor points out that these hospitals did not necessarily serve rural populations, as most of the population of Iran did not live in cities, or work as modern or even research hospitals do.<sup>93</sup> By his later accounts, most hospitals were attached to shrines or mosques, severely underfunded, and the pharmacists could be quite expensive.<sup>94</sup> One might advance the hypothesis that these hospitals were financed by the vaqfs, or inalienable charitable foundations, similar to those which the kings and notable Iranians habitually founded for the institution and founding of mosques, mausoleums, schools, hammans, and other establishments. Tadjbakhsh notes:

However, so far today we only know a few documents (asnād, vaqf-nāma) of this kind, especially from in the Safavid era. Another remarkable case is that of the charitable dispensary established in Tehran by someone under Šāh Ṭahmāsp: at that time Tehran was only a center of medium importance which had developed alongside the ancient city of Rey, and Ḥakīm Yār 'Alī Tihrānī had founded a dispensary there called šarbat-ḥāna-yi ḥayrī in which medicines were offered to the poor.<sup>95</sup>

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 287.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 290-292.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 293.

<sup>92</sup> Hasan Tadjbakhsh, "Hôpitaux et médecins avicenniens en Iran à l'époque safavide," in *Hospitals in Iran and India, 1500-1950s*, ed. Fabrizio Speziale (Brill, 2012): 28.

<sup>93</sup> Willem Floor, "Hospitals in Safavid and Qajar Iran: An enquiry into their number, growth and importance," in *Hospitals in Iran and India, 1500-1950s*, ed. Fabrizio Speziale (Brill, 2012): 38.

<sup>94</sup> Floor, "Qajar and Safavid Hospitals," 45. Floor's overall focus is much later than that of this paper, so drawing conclusions must be done with care, but he demonstrates that the shrines with attached hospitals, while they had endowments, were not necessarily able to collect the income from these investments; as such, what were meant to be pro-bono treatment might instead cost patients.

<sup>95</sup> Tadjbakhsh, "Hôpitaux et médecins en Iran," 31. "On peut avancer l'hypothèse que ces hôpitaux étaient financés par des vaqf (fondation de mainmorte) similaires à ceux que les souverains et les notables iraniens fondaient habituellement pour l'institution et le fonctionnement de mosquées, mausolées, madrasas, hammans et autres établissements. Cependant, nous ne connaissons jusqu'à aujourd'hui que peu de documents (asnād, vaqf-nāma) à cet égard, pour ce qui concerne notamment l'époque safavide. Autre cas remarquable, celui du

Some were called “houses of death,” because, like many early hospitals, people only went there to die.<sup>96</sup> While some notable physicians staffed these hospitals, like ‘Imād al-Dīn Maḥmūd Šīrāzī, a physician of Šāh Ṭahmāsp,<sup>97</sup> it seems likely that most doctors, like Maṣṣūr, were not educated there and served mostly private, wealthy clients. While Maṣṣūr’s book may have been at some of these hospitals, given the severe underfunding, acquiring his book of anatomy likely would not have been a top priority.

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dispensaire de bienfaisance établi à Téhéran par un particulier, sous Šāh Ṭahmāsp : à cette époque Téhéran n’était qu’un centre de moyenne importance qui s’était développé à côté de l’ancienne ville de Rey et Ḥakīm Yār ‘Alī Tīhrānī y avait fondé un dispensaire du nom de šarbat-ḥāna-yi ḥayrī dans lequel les médicaments étaient offerts aux pauvres.” Translations are my own.

<sup>96</sup> Tadjbakhsh, “Hôpitaux et médecins en Iran,” 35. “La maison de mort.”

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 28. According to Floor, “Safavid and Qajar Hospitals,” 40, this esteemed physician was also an opium addict.

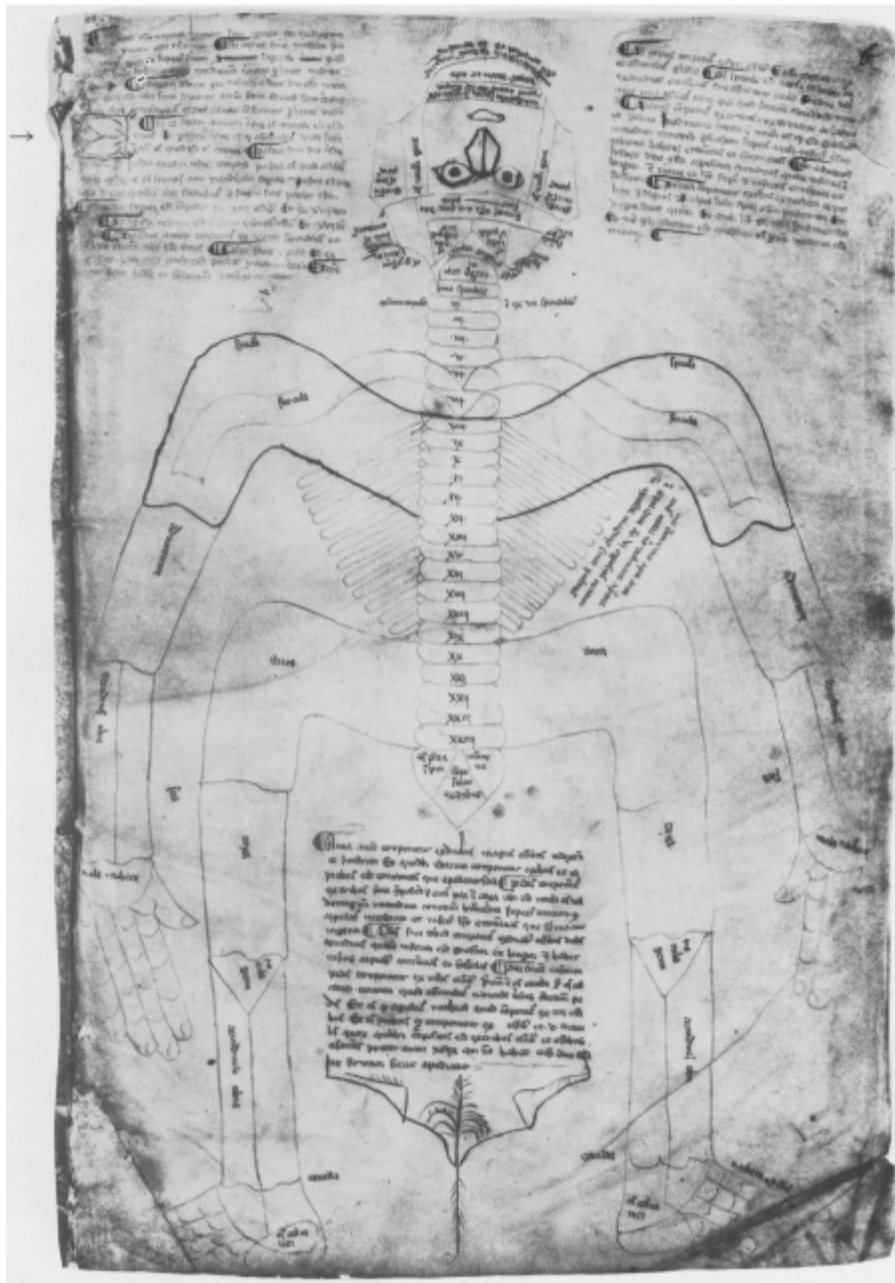


Figure 2: Vatican Palat. Lat. 1110, Bone Man.

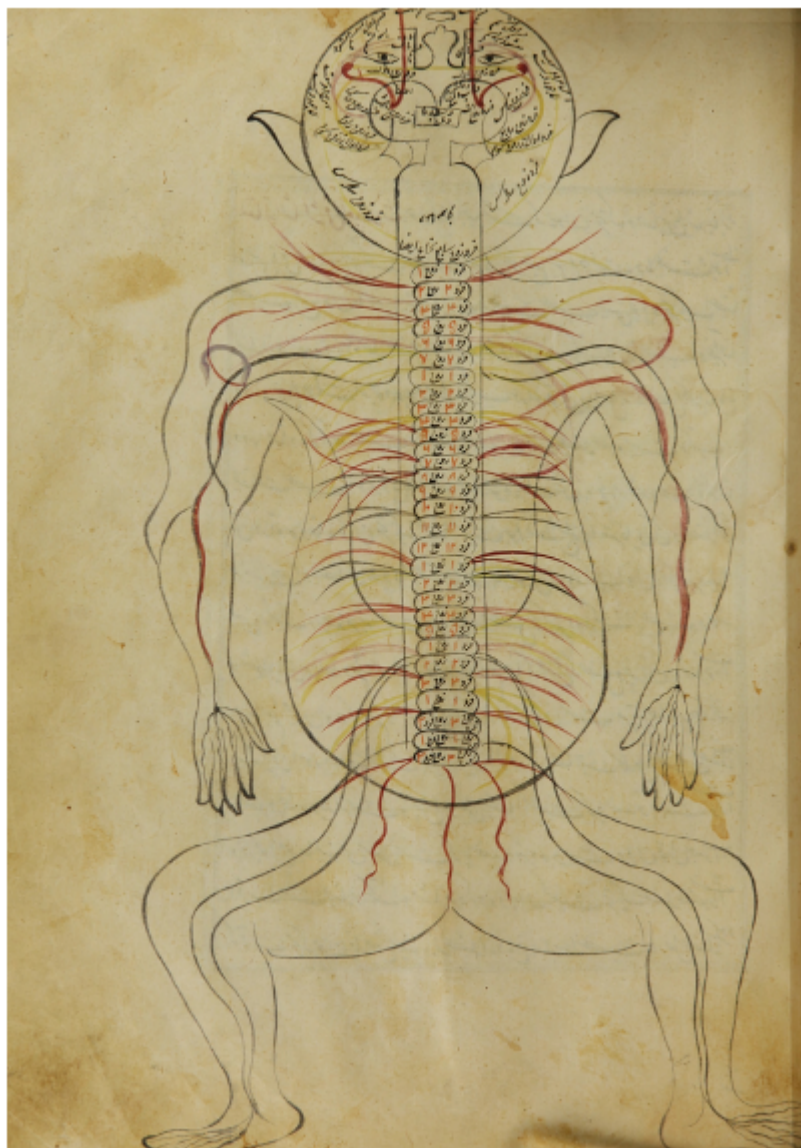


Figure 3: MS P 18, Maṣṣūr's Nerve Man.

### Revisiting Proposed Origins

Maṣṣūr's bone man pictures 32 vertebrae and two bones forming the sacrum, the triangular base of the spine. The coccyx, or tailbone, does not appear to be differentiated. Because of this absence Maṣṣūr's account of the vertebrae is off from modern anatomy by one. Maṣṣūr's nerve man also has the distinctive pronated head and a vertebral column. However, in this case, the purpose of the pronated head is made clear by the labels; the label of the nerves connecting to the eyes reads *اول*, read *awwal* or *aval* in Arabic and Persian, respectively, which means first. The nerves throughout the head are also given ordinal numbers. The label at the base of the spinal column contains the Arabic word *سابع*, *sabah*, meaning seventh. Medieval Arabic and Persian medical terminology diverges slightly from

modern uses, but Manṣūr appears to be labeling the nerves connecting from the eyes and brain to the spine and the rest of the body. Each of the 30 vertebrae depict spinal nerves joined to them. There are 31 nerves of the spine, the last of which is the coccygeal nerve; Manṣūr's omission is, at least, consistent. Earlier scholars such as al-Rāzī did describe the coccyx accurately, but Manṣūr likely just followed the reigning Galenic consensus.

Vatican Palat. Lat. 1110, from the fourteenth century, is one of the few European manuscripts that features a pronated head. Basel D.II.11, a Provençal manuscript that features French's long bone text and the bone man, is sadly unavailable online. Munich MS Lat. 13042 (undated, 14th c.) also shares the hyperextended head.<sup>98</sup> Vatican Palat. Lat. 1110, in contrast to Manṣūr, lists a total of twenty-seven vertebrae. The *prima spondilis*, or first vertebra, is drawn beneath the *paxillus cupitis*, or peg of the head, and *cardo cupitis*, the hinge of the head. The vertebrae are then listed as ii-xxiii, bringing the total to twenty-four. At the base of the spine, the label reads *os postremum spinne, compositum ex tribus*, or final bone of the spine, composed of three bones.<sup>99</sup> The image shows a roughly drawn triangle divided into three smaller triangles, which begin from the base of the final numbered vertebra. The largest and widest triangle is in the center, continuing to the end, and the triangles on the sides do not reach the base of the spine. While this is not an illustration of the coccyx, the division, to my mind, opens up the possibility of its existence. The visual similarity between the two images is undeniable, but the difference between the number of vertebrae and the understanding of the spine's formation is quite pronounced.

## The Originality Thesis

It is worth mentioning that these images may have been developed independently, without transmission from Byzantium or from Arabic sources into Europe. Michael Frampton, after discussing the possibility of a shared origin, states: "My own speculation is that the manuscript illustrations are actually indigenous to twelfth century Western Europe, which was then beginning to assimilate Latin versions of Arabic texts summarizing Galenic and Alexandrian learned medicine."<sup>100</sup> Savage-Smith notes that "nearly every" early culture depicts humans in the squatting pose that unites all the Fünfbilderserie manuscripts, and concludes that Manṣūr's figures either were derived from an earlier European tradition or from a common original source.<sup>101</sup> Frampton also reminds us that there have been no Greek or Byzantine Fünfbilderserie discoveries to date.<sup>102</sup> The long bone text that French identified does seem to likely be derived from an Arabic original, and O'Neill posits several

<sup>98</sup> Savage-Smith, "Arabic Anatomical Illustration," 157.

<sup>99</sup> Loren C. MacKinney and Boyd H. Hill, Jr., "A New Fünfbilderserie Manuscript: Vatican Palat. Lat.1110," *Sudhoffs Archiv für Geschichte der Medizin und der Naturwissenschaften* Bd. 48, H. 4 (1964) offers all the Latin in text, as it is not necessarily legible from the figure. Translations are my own.

<sup>100</sup> Michael Frampton. "Embodiment Theories in Late Antiquity and Early Middle Ages." In *Embodiments of Will: Anatomical and Physiological Theories of Voluntary Animal Motion from Greek Antiquity to the Latin Middle Ages, 400 B.C.-A.D. 1300*, 211-313. Saarbrücken: VDM Verlag Dr Müller Aktiengesellschaft, 2008: 265.

<sup>101</sup> Savage Smith, "Arabic Anatomical Illustration," 158.

<sup>102</sup> Frampton, "Embodiments of Will," 265.



plausible translators who brought Galenic medicine from the Arabic context to the European. However, as to the images, Manṣūr's were made two centuries after the earliest European ones and improve upon the anatomical accuracy. An original ancestor image from the Greeks cannot be ruled out, even as the lack of such an image from our Byzantine manuscripts persists and the outsized legend of Gondēšāpur shrinks. Moreover, we have yet to trace a flow of European manuscripts in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries into Iran, so it is unclear if any of the European Fünfbilderserie manuscripts might have been in his possession. The Arabic labels in a Persian text should not be seen as puzzling, because Arabic had been the lingua franca for centuries; they do not suggest some Arabic origin to the image that deviated sharply from the prior tradition of geometric and abstract anatomical illustration. While the origin of the Fünfbilderserie images is still an open question, I suggest that a convergent evolution, leading to similar images by chance, or even a European origin, are both options worth considering.

### Conclusion

The *Taṣrīḥ-e manṣūri* has been considered significant for two reasons, the first being its status as the first Islamic text with more naturalistic illustrations, and second because of the controversy and mystery surrounding these images. The book itself is distinctly Galenic and follows Galen's division of the body's systems, the bones, nerves, muscles, blood vessels, and arteries. Manṣūr ibn Ilyās lived during the Tīmūrid period and after the fall of Baghdād, which some view as the end of a "golden age," but he contributed to scientific knowledge and his anatomy book and illustrations were very popular. Scholars have suggested that Manṣūr's images were not his own original work, but perhaps reproductions of Alexandrian drawings. Others examining the European Fünfbilderserie manuscripts believe that their text must have been derived from the work of Arab scholars, but fail to offer a convincing argument that the images also came from the east.

The *Taṣrīḥ-e manṣūri* has raised a number of questions for the past century of scholarship; I would like to raise a few more. Shefer-Mossensohn and Abbou Hershkovits's injunction to study Islamic hospitals in their own context holds relevance for the *Taṣrīḥ-e manṣūri*. The use of Prophetic medicine alongside Galen in the book could be interesting for the history of Prophetic medicine's development; much of the scholarship has been focused on pharmacology of certain herbs more than their history. Although Newman began a translation of Manṣūr's greatest work, it has yet to be published; opening the field of Persian anatomy to more English scholars could be quite fruitful. I was unable to place Manṣūr into the context of the Tīmūrid Renaissance as fully as I would have liked, and speculating about what books he might have read, European or otherwise, aside from classics like ibn-Sīnā's *Canon of Medicine*, is difficult. The interchange of knowledge between the Fāṭimids, Ottomans, and Tīmūrids as well as with European powers is worth studying in further depth. Moreover, a thorough index of the Fünfbilderserie manuscripts would allow for useful comparisons of the illustrated anatomical features and the differences in the text. My

analysis of the *Taṣrīḥ al-Badan* and Vatican Palat. Lat. 1110 has revealed differences between the two that have not been explored elsewhere, and a deeper and broader study would allow us to draw firmer conclusions. Ultimately, I suggest that the concept of the Fünfbilderserie, while insightful because of the similarity between the European and Islamic images, is due to either convergent evolution or a shared common source. While I am sympathetic to the idea that these images may have evolved independently, a further exploration both of potential origin images and of the differences between the Christian and Islamic texts might lend more credence to a transmission route and, at last, lead us out of the unknown.

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# DESDE LA BURLA HACÍA LA RECUPERACIÓN: UNA EXPLORACIÓN DEL HABLA DE NEGROS A TRAVÉS DE LAS EDADES

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## ABSTRACT

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Este ensayo se enfoca en el *habla de negros*—una forma de escribir y hablar que representa la manera en que personas africanas y afrodescendientes han hablado en español. Esta forma de hablar inició en el siglo XV con la comienzo de la trata de personas esclavizadas en Portugal y España, y ha viajado con poblaciones afrodescendientes a través del océano Atlántico hasta lugares como Cuba. Este artículo sigue la transmisión del habla de negros desde obras de teatro españolas del Siglo de Oro (XV-XVII) hasta poesía cubana del siglo XX. Específicamente, sostiene que las maneras en que escritores españoles utilizaron el habla de negros en sus obras eran ofensivas y degradantes a personas negras, pero en el siglo XX, hay una recuperación de esta forma de hablar por un poeta afrocubano, Nicolás Guillén. Su manera de rescatar el habla de negros muestra la validez en esta forma de hablar. Además, las traducciones de la poesía de Guillén por poeta afro-americano Langston Hughes, que traduce el habla de negros a un inglés afroamericano, también sostiene la importancia y el valor de la lengua negra.

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Comenzado en el siglo XV en Portugal, el ‘habla de negros’ ha existido en la literatura ibérica por siglos. El habla de negros es una forma de escribir y hablar que representa la manera en que personas negras han hablado el español y portugués. Tiene sus orígenes en la Península Ibérica porque es el primer lugar donde personas africanas fueron enviadas a Europa para ser esclavizadas desde el siglo XV hasta el siglo XVIII. Siendo de lugares diferentes en África, los acentos de los primeros africanos en España y Portugal son

diferentes de los de las personas que hablan el español o el portugués como su primera lengua. Entonces, el habla de negros en la literatura ibérica imita las maneras en que las primeras personas afrodescendientes en la península hablaban.<sup>103</sup>

Aunque el habla de negros existía en el mundo hispanófono y lusofono, en este ensayo, me enfoco en el habla de negros en el español. En particular, sostengo que muchos escritores españoles desde el siglo XV hasta el siglo XVIII usan el habla de negros para burlarse de los afrodescendientes en España. En las obras de teatro que utilizan el habla de negros, escritores blancos crean caricaturas ofensivas de personas negras, y asocian a los negros con esta forma de hablar para marginarlos más. Sin embargo, en el siglo XX, hay una recuperación del habla de negros por escritores afrodescendientes. Con el comercio transatlántico de personas esclavizadas, hay un intercambio de formas lingüísticas, y por eso, personas negras en Cuba, por ejemplo, tienen patrones de habla que son similares al habla de negros.<sup>104</sup> De este modo, argumento que las formas más contemporáneas del habla de negros que existen en la literatura de lugares como Cuba por poetas negros como Nicolás Guillén son recuperaciones de esta forma de hablar. Finalmente, sostengo que traducciones del habla de negros al inglés también restablecen la validez y la autenticidad en la lengua negra. Poetas como Langston Hughes traducen el habla de negros de Guillén a un inglés afroamericano, y esta forma de traducir que mantiene esta lengua negra también recupera el valor literario del habla negra. En sus obras más contemporáneas, escritores negros han recuperado y transformado el habla de negros.

Como explica Ángel M. Aguirre en su ensayo, “Elementos afronegroides en dos poemas de Luis de Góngora y Argote y en cinco villancicos de Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz,” el habla de negros se popularizó a través de las obras de escritores del siglo XVI como Luis de Góngora y Argote.<sup>105</sup> Aguirre explica lingüísticamente las maneras en que Góngora trata de imitar el habla de negros en su poesía. Por ejemplo, explica que Góngora utiliza, “la elisión de la –s en posición final de sílaba,” y que en su poema, “Al Nacimiento de Cristo Nuestro Señor,” Góngora cambia las palabras “vamos” a “vamo,” “vimos” a “vimo,” y “Jesús” a “Jesu.” También cambia el lenguaje cuando sustituye la “r” por “l” en posición agrupada.<sup>106</sup> En el mismo poema, cambia la palabra “esclavita” a “escravita” y “gloria” a “groria.” Estas modificaciones al lenguaje son ejemplos del habla de negros tradicional, y existen en otras obras del tiempo también. Por ejemplo, estas formas pueden ser vistas en el *Entremés de los negros* por Simón Aguado.<sup>107</sup> En su obra, en vez de escribir “señora,” también

<sup>103</sup> Ángel M. Aguirre, “Elementos afronegroides en dos poemas de Luis de Góngora y Argote y en cinco villancicos de Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz,” Centro Virtual Cervantes, 295.

<sup>104</sup> John Lipski, “The Spanish of the Canary Islands,” Seminar class notes, 2.

<sup>105</sup> Luis de Góngora y Argote (1561-1627) era uno de los poetas más renombrados e innovadores del Siglo de Oro en España. Góngora escribía una variedad de poesía (luminosa, oscura, larga, corta), pero su manera de jugar con palabras y escribir en una manera complicada y enrevesada era bastante constante. Sus obras *Polifemo* y *Las Soledades* son unas de sus más famosas. (“Luis de Góngora,” Encyclopædia Britannica).

<sup>106</sup> Aguirre, “Elementos,” 297, 232.

<sup>107</sup> Los *Entremeses* eran pequeñas obras teatrales populares—típicamente cómicas—que ocurrían durante la mitad de una actuación teatral más larga. Por lo general, estaban escritas por un dramaturgo diferente del dramaturgo de la obra más grande. Eran muy típicas en la España de los siglos XVI y XVII. (Peter E

sustituye la ‘r’ por una ‘l’ y escribe “*señola*.”<sup>108</sup> También, quita la ‘s’ desde el final de las palabras. Modifica la palabra “somos” a “*somo*” por ejemplo.<sup>109</sup>

Mucho de la crítica sobre el uso del habla de negros en la literatura ibérica de los siglos XV-XVII (también referido como ‘the Golden Age’/ ‘*el Siglo de Oro*’ de la literatura española) argumenta que autores españoles de este Siglo de Oro representan a personas negras en maneras ofensivas. En su capítulo, “*La poesía negra: Its Background, Themes and Significance*,” la crítica Leslie Wilson argumenta que:

“most of the African-inspired poetry written before and during the Golden Age of Spanish literature should rightfully be referred to as negroid or pseudo-Black poetry. This is because it fallaciously portrays the Black man from a highly superficial point of view. Its primary objective is that of comicity. Little or no attention is given to the great manifestations of the Black people’s soul, their deep emotions and noble sentiments, or even their human dignity.”<sup>110</sup>

*“La mayoría de la poesía inspirada por los africanos escrita antes y durante el Siglo de Oro de la literatura española debe legítimamente ser referido como poesía ‘negroid’ o ‘negro-falso.’ Esto es porque la poesía erróneamente representa el hombre negro desde un punto de vista muy superficial. Su objetivo principal es la comicidad. Casi nada de atención es dada a las manifestaciones del alma de las personas negras, sus emociones profundas y sentimientos nobles, ni tampoco su dignidad humana.”*

Críticos como Wilson dicen que el uso del habla de negros en obras así es deshumanizante. Aguirre, en su artículo, también discute esto, y da el ejemplo del escritor Góngora. Explica que, en su poesía, Góngora típicamente pone a personas negras en posiciones que son solamente humorísticas. Los personajes negros no son humanizados, y la audiencia debe burlarse de ellos. Aguirre también habla de la “representación caricaturesca del habla de negros” por Góngora.<sup>111</sup> Al utilizar el habla de negros, Góngora crea caricaturas en vez de personas reales. Entonces, cuando autores asocian estos personajes negros (que son los objetos de bromas en vez de personas completas) con una forma ‘incorrecta’ de hablar, su dignidad se quita completamente. Esto degrada sus maneras de hablar.

Sin embargo, hay críticos que también dicen que la utilización del habla de negros y las representaciones de personas negras más generalmente en la literatura de este período no son siempre peyorativas. Por ejemplo, el crítico Edward J. Mullen argumenta que Simón

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Thompson, *The Triumphant Juan Rana: A Gay Actor of the Spanish Golden Age* (University of Toronto Press, 2006): 11).

<sup>108</sup> Simón Aguado, *Entremés de los negros* (1602): 232.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> Leslie Wilson, “*La Poesía Negra: Its Background, Themes and Significance*,” in *Blacks in Hispanic Literature: Critical Essays*, 90-104 (New York: Kennikat Press, 1977): 92.

<sup>111</sup> Aguirre, “Elementos,” 311.



Aguado no deshumaniza completamente a sus personajes negros en su *Entremés de los negros*. Explica:

“I would argue that Aguado’s *Los negros* is... more than an example of one-dimensional buffoonery... Aguado opted for a somewhat balanced presentation of blacks, a view in which blacks were neither fools nor incarnations of exotic perfection but richly complex beings.”<sup>112</sup>

“Sostendría que *Los negros de Aguado* es... más que un ejemplo de unidimensional bufanda... Aguado optó para una presentación bastante equilibrada de los negros, una vista en el cual los negros no eran tontos ni tampoco encarnaciones de la perfección exótica, pero seres profusamente complejos.”

Argumenta que los personajes negros en el *Entremés* de Aguado son complejos y también centrales a la historia. Nicholas Jones argumenta lo mismo en la introducción de su libro *The Habla de Negros Palimpsest: Theorizing Habla de Negros*. Explica: “At the turn of the seventeenth century, in 1602, Simón Aguado’s *Entremés de los negros* stages the agentive voices of Dominga and Gaspar, who challenge their white masters by interrogating the institution of slavery and its infringement on the marrying of black slaves.”<sup>113</sup> / “A la comienzo del siglo XVII, en 1602, *Entremés de los negros de Simón Aguado* demuestra las voces agentivos de Dominga y Gaspar, que desafían sus amos blancos para interrogar la institución de la esclavitud y su infracción en el casamiento de los esclavos negros.” Según estos críticos, aun si los negros están esclavizados, tienen agencia, y tienen voces en esta obra. Pues, porque los personajes negros no son simplemente caricaturas o tontos, sus maneras de hablar (habla de negros) no son inherentemente tontas tampoco.

Como Mullen y Jones sugieren, el *Entremés* de Aguado quizás da más agencia a los personajes negros que otras obras del tiempo. Sin embargo, estereotipos sobre la hipersexualización y la estupidez de los negros también existen en esta obra. Como André Belo explica en su análisis del *Entremés*: “Gaspar and Dominga [the Black slaves and protagonists of the *Entremés*] are eventually allowed to sleep together on Saturdays only. [They are given permission by their master.] This condition opens the door to mockery: Gaspar asks his master how many Saturdays there are in each week. Confronted with the frustrating answer of his master, he does not abandon his intention and affirms that for him Saturday is every day of the week”<sup>114</sup> / “*Gaspar y Dominga [los esclavos negros y protagonistas del Entremés]*

<sup>112</sup> Edward J Mullen, “Simón Aguado’s ‘Entremés De Los Negros’: Text and Context,” *Comparative Drama* 20, no. 3 (1986): 232.

<sup>113</sup> Nicholas R Jones, “Introduction: The Habla de Negros Palimpsest: Theorizing Habla de Negros,” in *Staging Habla de Negros: Radical Performances of the African Diaspora in Early Modern Spain*, 1-26 (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2019): 5.

<sup>114</sup> André Belo, “Language as a Second Skin: The Representation of Black Africans in Portuguese Theatre (Fifteenth to Early-Seventeenth Centuries),” in *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance et Réforme*, 3–30 (University of Toronto, 2013): 24-25.

*eventualmente están permitidos a acostarse juntos, pero sólo los sábados. [Reciben este permiso de su amo.] Esta condición abre la puerta a la burla: Gaspar pregunta a su amo cuántos sábados existen en cada semana. Confrontado con la respuesta frustrante de su amo, no abandona su intención, y afirma que para él, el sábado es cada día de la semana.*” En esta parte del *Entremés*, Gaspar, el personaje negro principal, es tan ignorante que no conoce los días de la semana. También, es *muy* sexual: quiere tener sexo con su mujer cada día de la semana, y no tiene vergüenza de hablar abiertamente con su amo sobre su deseo sexual fuerte. El estereotipo del negro inherentemente promiscuo está muy presente. Gaspar es más un tropo de la sexualidad negra que una persona completa en el *Entremés*.

Pues, sostengo que la manera más prevalente en que los negros son representados en el Siglo de Oro en la Península Ibérica es muy ofensiva y no auténtica. En particular, esta inautenticidad es muy clara en la manera que los actores representan a los negros. Belo explica que en el teatro de España de este periodo, “[common] practice was to paint the hands and face of white actors black.”<sup>115</sup> / *“la práctica [común] era pintar negro las manos y la cara de los actores blancos.”* En el Siglo de Oro, los personajes negros no eran representados por personas negras en verdad; en cambio, personas blancas se pintaban el cuerpo y fingían ser negros. Nicholas Jones escribe: “habla de negros speech cannot be separated from the act and practice of blackface performance”<sup>116</sup> / *“habla de negros no puede ser separado del acto y la práctica de la actuación de cara negra.”* Los personajes negros no son auténticos. Son representaciones racistas de la negrura.

También, la inautenticidad de las representaciones de personas negras está presente en la misma habla de negros. Hay argumentos que dicen que el habla de negros escrito por autores ibéricos en el Siglo de Oro es más “parodic speech”<sup>117</sup> / *“habla paródico”* en vez de representación auténtica de las maneras en que los afrodescendientes en España hablan de verdad. Aunque sí hay partes del habla de negros escrita por los autores peninsulares que verdaderamente representan las maneras en que los afrodescendientes en España hablaban al tiempo (por ejemplo: la sustitución del ‘r’ por ‘r’), los escritores también exageren sus formas de hablar para la comedia.<sup>118</sup> Los escritores blancos no formaban parte de las comunidades negras que representan en sus obras, pues sus conocimientos del habla de negros son más percepciones que el habla de negros en verdad. Hay que decir que el habla de negros es real, y para comunidades afrodescendientes hispanohablantes, es una forma verdadera de comunicarse. Sin embargo, para los escritores blancos y peninsulares, su meta no es representar bien el habla de negros en sus obras. En vez de eso, quieren entretener a sus audiencias, y usan el habla de negros para añadir algo diferente del estándar blanco a sus obras.

Los escritores ibéricos asocian el habla de negros con la tontería y humor. Por ejemplo, mientras el habla de negros es hablado por los personajes negros cómicos, los personajes negros que son más ‘serios’ hablan en el español estándar. Belo explica:

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<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>116</sup> Jones, “Introduction,” 26.

<sup>117</sup> Belo, “Language,” 8.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., 9-10.

“this form of speech [habla de negros] was more often used for the comedic characters, whereas the ‘noble’ black characters spoke ‘proper’ Spanish... Black protagonists... appear to represent the exceptional destiny of saints (El Prodigio de Etiopía; El Santo Negro Rosambuco, both by Lope de Vega), men of letters (Juan Latino, by Ximenez de Enciso), or brave warriors (El Valiente Negro en Flandres, by Andrés de Claramonte). In these plays, the black character speaks a “correct” Spanish and is developed to a certain degree of individuation and moral conflict.”<sup>119</sup>

*“Esta forma de habla [habla de negros] era más frecuentemente usado por los personajes cómicos, mientras que los personajes negros ‘nobles’ hablaron el español ‘formal’... Los protagonistas... parecen a representar el destino excepcional de los santos (El Prodigio de Etiopía; El Santo Negro Rosambuco, ambos por Lope de Vega), hombres de letras (Juan Latino, por Ximenez de Enciso), o guerreros valientes (El Valiente Negro en Flandes, por Andrés de Claramonte). En estas obras, el personaje negro habla un español ‘correcto’ y es desarrollado a un cierto grado de individuación y conflicto moral.”*

Entonces, este uso del habla de negros solamente para los tontos y cómicos relega el habla de negros a la inferioridad. Los nobles (que son más humanizados) pueden hablar el español ‘formal,’ pero los tontos hablan el habla de negros. El habla de negros está asociada con la deshumanización, la idiotez, y la comedia.

Entonces, por razón del uso de tropos como la hiper-sexualización de personas negras, la pintura negra en los cuerpos de los actores blancos, los usos inauténticos de la lengua para la comedia, y la relegación del habla solamente a los personajes cómicos, sostengo que el habla de negros en las obras del Siglo de Oro es más una forma de burlarse de los negros que un intento de capturar la realidad. El habla de negros no es una forma de auténticamente representar a los negros por los escritores blancos de la Península. En vez de eso, el habla de negros es una manera para que estos escritores se burlen de los negros y traten de relegar su manera de hablar a la inferioridad.

Aunque el uso del habla de negros en el Siglo de Oro en la península era frecuentemente ofensiva y deshumanizante, hubo una recuperación de esta forma de hablar en el siglo XX. Personas afrodescendientes en el Caribe utilizan estas formas lingüísticas en su poesía, teatro, y literatura también. Cómo explica Robert Nodal, los patrones de habla de los afrocubanos tienen sus raíces en partes de España.<sup>120</sup> Cuando la esclavitud termina en España, muchas de las personas esclavizadas fueron enviadas a países americanos como Cuba para seguir trabajando en la esclavitud.<sup>121</sup> Tiene sentido que los patrones de habla de personas negras en España viajaron con ellos a países como Cuba.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>120</sup> Roberto Nodal, “Black Presence in the Canary Islands (Spain),” *Journal of Black Studies*, vol. I (1981): 87.

<sup>121</sup> Domingo, “La desconocida historia de la esclavitud en España”; Viña Brito et al., *Esclavos: Documentos para la Historia de Canarias*, 34.

Un poeta muy conocido que utiliza el habla de negros en sus obras es Nicolás Guillén (1902–1989). Poeta Nacional de Cuba y activista político, Guillén es conocido por escribir la “poesía negra”.<sup>122</sup> Su poesía afrocubana se enfoca en temas de ser negro o afrodescendiente, y utiliza formas tradicionales de la vernácula negra. Por ejemplo, en su poema “Tú no sabe inglés,” las formas tradicionales del habla de negros están claramente presentes.

*“Tú no sabe inglés*

Con tanto inglés que tú sabía,  
Bito Manué,  
con tanto inglés, no sabe ahora  
desí ye.

La mericana te buca,  
y tú le tiene que huí:  
tu inglés era de etrái guan,  
de etrái guan y guan tu tri.

Bito Manué, tú no sabe inglés,  
tú no sabe inglés,  
tú no sabe inglés.

No te namore ma nunca.  
Bito Manué,  
si no sabe inglés,  
sí no sabe inglés.”<sup>123</sup>

Un ejemplo del habla de negros en este poema es la “elisión de la –s en posición final de sílaba” que existe en el título, “Tú no sabe inglés.”<sup>124</sup> La palabra “sabes” cambia a “sabe,” e “inglés” cambia a “inglé.” Ocurre otra vez en el poema cuando modifica la palabra “más” a “ma,” y “enamores” a “enamore.” Esta forma del habla de negros es verdaderamente auténtica, según André Belo. Aunque muchos autores ibéricos de los tiempos del Siglo de Oro exageran el habla de negros, lingüísticamente, “the weakness of ending consonants”<sup>125</sup> / “*el fñnal débil de las consonantes*” refleja los patrones de habla por los afrodescendientes. Esto

<sup>122</sup> “Nicolás Guillén,” Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes.

[http://www.cervantesvirtual.com/portales/nicolas\\_guillen/](http://www.cervantesvirtual.com/portales/nicolas_guillen/).

<sup>123</sup> Nicolás Guillén, “Tú no sabe inglés,” in *Motivos de son* (1930). [http://www.cervantesvirtual.com/obra-visor/motivos-de-son-1930--0/html/ff47e2c0-82b1-11df-acc7-002185ce6064\\_2.html](http://www.cervantesvirtual.com/obra-visor/motivos-de-son-1930--0/html/ff47e2c0-82b1-11df-acc7-002185ce6064_2.html).

<sup>124</sup> Aguirre, “Elementos,” 297.

<sup>125</sup> Belo, “Language,” 9-10.

se ve en los ejemplos susodichos y también cuando Guillén modifica el nombre “Manuel” a “*Mannú,*” cambia la palabra “decir” a “*desí,*” y cambia “huir” a “*huí.*”

Cuando Guillén utiliza el habla de negros en su poesía, utiliza para tratar de representar a personas negras en una manera auténtica. Como explica el poeta, Guillén quiere “hablar en negro [de Cuba] de verdad.”<sup>126</sup> Para Guillén, esto significa una mezcla de elementos africanos y españoles, porque en su opinión, la cultura afrocubana es una mezcla de estas dos. Por eso, Guillén explica la identidad y la poesía afrocubana como “mulata.”<sup>127</sup> El aspecto español de su poesía es claro: escribe sus poemas en español. El elemento africano también es muy presente: utiliza el habla de negros en su manera de escribir el español. En particular, Guillén utiliza un vernáculo que imita “the orality of lower-class blacks from Havana”<sup>128</sup> / “*la oralidad de los negros de clase baja de la Habana.*” Esta lengua es similar al habla de negros del Siglo de Oro en España. Sin embargo, como alguien afrocubano él mismo, no utiliza esta forma de hablar para burlarse de los afrodescendientes. Mejor, él recupera el habla de negros y muestra que las formas lingüísticas negras pueden también ser poesía. El habla de negros de Guillén es hablada por personas y personajes negros que son complejos, humanizados, y libres. Pues, para Guillén, el habla de negros es algo auténtico e importante para la cultura afrocubana.

En los Estados Unidos, el poeta afroamericano Langston Hughes traduce el poema de Guillén. Como Guillén, Hughes también valora formas negras de hablar, y también utiliza una forma de lengua negra en su traducción. En su capítulo “Havana Vernaculars: The Cuba Libre Project” desde el libro *The Worlds of Langston Hughes*, la crítica Vera M. Kutzinski explica que Hughes traduce el habla de negros de Guillén a un “negro dialect”<sup>129</sup> / “*dialecto afroamericano*” o inglés afroamericano. Hay una multiplicidad de teorías sobre los orígenes del inglés afroamericano, y la mayoría se remontan a los tiempos de la esclavitud transatlántica y antes.

La teoría de ‘pidgin/criollo,’ por ejemplo, viene de los primeros africanos esclavizados en los Estados Unidos al comienzo del siglo XVII. Cuando las primeras personas esclavizadas empezaron a vivir con otros africanos esclavizados en los Estados Unidos, crearon pidgins<sup>130</sup> de la multiplicidad de lenguas africanas hablada por la población. Con el paso del tiempo, el pidgin evoluciona a un criollo (un pidgin más complejo y sofisticado) a través de los niños y descendientes de las personas esclavizadas. Estos descendientes hablan este criollo con el inglés estadounidense estándar (hablado por los esclavistas). Esta ‘inglésitización’ de este criollo es dónde vienen los orígenes del inglés afroamericano.<sup>131</sup>

<sup>126</sup> Salvador Bueno, “Apuntes Sobre La Poesía En La Cuba Del Siglo XX,” *Litoral*, no. 215/216 (1997): 9.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>128</sup> Miguel Arnedo-Gómez, “The Afrocubanista Poetry of Nicolás Guillén and Ángel Rama's Concept of Transculturation,” *Afro-Hispanic Review* 26, no. 2 (2007): 11.

<sup>129</sup> Vera M Kutzinski, “Havana Vernaculars: The Cuba Libre Project,” in *The Worlds of Langston Hughes: Modernism and Translation in the Americas*, 132-83 (Cornell University Press, 2012): 143.

<sup>130</sup> Un pidgin es una lengua modificada que combina dialectos y lenguas variadas.

<sup>131</sup> Faye Z. Belgrave and Kevin W. Allison, “Cognition, Learning, and Language,” in *African American Psychology: From Africa to America*, 247-278 (Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, 2006): 265-266.

Otra teoría es que los orígenes del inglés afroamericano vienen completamente de lenguas africanas. El inglés afroamericano tiene estructuras similares a lenguas como Twi (hablado principalmente en Ghana), Yoruba (hablado principalmente en Nigeria), Wolof (hablado principalmente en Senegal), y Ful (también hablado en Senegal).<sup>132</sup> Una tercera teoría deriva del inglés mismo. Personas esclavizadas que hablaban con sirvientes contratados practicaban un dialecto no normativo del inglés. Esto progresa eventualmente al inglés afroamericano.<sup>133</sup> Como se puede ver, todas las teorías remontan a los años tempranos de la esclavitud y tienen historias únicas. Entonces, sería incorrecto pensar del inglés afroamericano como una versión ‘incorrecta’ del inglés estadounidense estándar; de hecho, el inglés afroamericano es su propia lengua con una gramática e historia única.

Como explica Monica Kaup, ambos Guillén y Hughes tratan de representar “the voices of their people, the vernacular speech and music of the black (under) world, into poetry”<sup>134</sup> / “las voces de su gente, el habla y la música vernácula del mundo negro (bajo).” Entonces, el uso de una lengua negra es una manera para los dos poetas de tratar de representar a personas negras en una manera auténtica. En la misma manera en que Guillén escribe su poesía para sonar más ‘afrocubano,’ Hughes hace lo mismo para sonar más ‘afroamericano.’ Esto se puede ver en la traducción de “Tú no sabe inglés” por Hughes, llamado “Don’t Know No English” en inglés.

*“Don’t Know No English”*

All dat English you used to know,  
Li’l Manuel,  
all dat English, now can’t even  
say: *Yes*.

‘Merican gal comes lookin’ fo’ you  
an’ you jes’ runs away.  
Yo’ English is jes’ *strike one!*  
*strike one* and *one-two-three*.

Li’l Manuel, you don’t know no English  
you jes’ don’t know!  
You jes’ don’t know!

Don’t fall in love no mo’,  
Li’l Manuel,  
‘cause you don’t know no English,

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<sup>132</sup> Ibid., 266.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> Monica Kaup, “‘Our America’ That Is Not One: Transnational Black Atlantic Discourses in Nicolás Guillén and Langston Hughes,” *Discourse* 22.3 (2000): 91.

don't know no English.”<sup>135</sup>

Cuando Guillén quita los finales de palabras, Hughes hace lo mismo: por ejemplo, en vez de escribir “your,” escribe “yo,” cambia “more” a “mo,” modifica “for” a “fo,” y “just” a “jes.” En la gramática del inglés afroamericano, se puede omitir lo consonante final en unas palabras.<sup>136</sup> Hughes hace cosas similares a Guillén otra vez cuando juega con la conjugación de verbos. Por ejemplo, en vez de escribir “you just run away,” escribe “you jes’ runs away.” Esto muestra una forma del inglés afroamericano donde hay una falta de acuerdo sujeto-verbo.<sup>137</sup> También, cuando Hughes cambia “you don’t know any English” a “you don’t know no English,” muestra la parte del inglés afroamericano donde alguien puede tener una negación múltiple: “Two or more negative markers in one sentence may be used in African American English. This may be used to emphasize a point”<sup>138</sup> / “*Dos o más marcadores negativos en una frase pueden ser usados en el inglés afroamericano. Pueden ser usados para enfatizar un punto.*” Como explica Kutzinski, estas modificaciones de Hughes son una forma de escribir en “negro dialect”<sup>139</sup> / “*dialecto afroamericano*” o inglés afroamericano; Hughes muestra la poesía del inglés afroamericana en su traducción del habla de negros por Guillén.

Escribir (y traducir) poesía en una forma que no es ‘estándar’ es un acto político. Como explica Kutzinski, hay autores negros del siglo XX que critican las obras de Hughes y Guillén. Piensan que escribir en el habla de negros o en el inglés afroamericano es ofensiva y deshonra la raza. Por ejemplo, poetas y escritores afroamericanos James Weldon Johnson y Countee Cullen critican el uso del inglés afroamericano en la poesía de Hughes. Piensan que degrada la raza y es reminiscente a los días de la esclavitud en los Estados Unidos.<sup>140</sup> Similarmente, Guillén también recibe críticas por su uso del habla de negros en su poesía. Kutzinski explica:

“Guillén also knew that for many of Havana’s lighter-skinned elite, his [Guillén’s] poems represented “una deshonra ‘para la raza’” (a dishonor for the race), as he [Guillén] wrote in “Sones y soneros,” his satirical piece about the bourgeois “enemigos del son” (enemies of the son).”<sup>141</sup>

*“Guillén también sabía que para muchas de las élites más ligeras de piel de la Habana, sus poemas representaban ‘una deshonra para la raza’ como escribió en ‘Sones y soneros,’ su obra satírico sobre el burgués ‘enemigos del son.’”*

<sup>135</sup> Langston Hughes, “Don’t Know No English,” in *Translations: Federico Garcia Lorca, Nicolas Guillen, and Jacques Roumain*, 81 (University of Missouri Press, 2003).

<sup>136</sup> Belgrave, “Cognition,” 268.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, 267.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>139</sup> Kutzinski, “Havana Vernaculars,” 143.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, 144.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*

Como ya he dicho, históricamente, el habla de negros ha sido utilizada por autores blancos para burlarse de los negros. Entonces, hay personas negras que piensan que la raza debe disociarse de esta forma de hablar. Se adhieren a una política de respetabilidad, y piensan que, si personas negras hablan en la lengua ‘estándar,’ los blancos no pueden burlarse de ellos. Sin embargo, Hughes y Guillén tienen un punto de vista muy contrario sobre el uso del habla de negros. Piensan que pueden representar a la raza en una manera auténtica y que debía ser considerada tan importante como la lengua ‘estándar.’ Cuando Hughes y Guillén utilizan estas lenguas con orgullo, están creando una declaración profunda. Están mostrando que la lengua negra también puede ser arte o literatura. Puede ser el lenguaje de una gente importante y digna. Las políticas de la respetabilidad son quitadas, y los estándares del inglés y el español son cambiados. Muestran que, a pesar de las historias que maltratan a negros y sus formas de hablar, las formas en que las personas negras hablan no deben ser causas de la vergüenza. De hecho, las personas negras pueden recuperar sus maneras de hablar, y pueden ser motivos de orgullo.



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# AN INTERVIEW WITH GREEK ICONOGRAPHER PANAGIOTIS MARKOPOULOS

*Conducted & Prefaced by Gwen Ellis  
Smith College*

## PREFACE — MEDIEVAL AND MODERN ICONOGRAPHY

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Most students of the Middle Ages will encounter, at some point in their academic journey, icons. An icon is a Christian religious image which depicts a holy figure or an event of religious significance. The quintessential medieval icon is the Eastern Orthodox style: deliberately two-dimensional, set against a gold background on a wood panel canvas. When saints are depicted, they typically have large, penetrating eyes which stare directly at the viewer. Medieval icons functioned as devotional tools; pious Christians venerated the holy figures depicted in the icons and communicated with them through the image.

Icons developed in the Late Antique period during the first centuries of Christianity. They were influenced by Roman funerary portraiture, and especially the *fayum* tradition. Fayums were hyper-realistic portraits done in wax in Roman Egypt which were applied to the sarcophagi of the dead. Like Greco–Roman commemorative busts, they immortalized the face of the deceased. When compared against icons, the similarities are remarkable—both fayums and icons place great emphasis on the eyes of the subject. In fayums, the purpose for this emphasis was to establish a link between this world and the next. Through the eyes of the portrait, the dead could see you and you could communicate with them. This philosophy shaped the philosophy of icons: in iconography, the eyes are emphasized because it is believed that the prototype of the image is able to see you through them. Via the eyes of an icon of Christ, one can establish a connection with Him. This would

eventually develop into the belief that by venerating the icon, you venerate the person depicted in it.

Icons grew in popularity into the Middle Ages, and consequently, many Byzantine churchmen grew increasingly anxious about popular use of devotional imagery. Deuteronomy 5:8 reads, “You shall not make any carved likeness, of anything in heaven above or on the earth below,” and Psalm 96:7 reads, “all who venerate carved images shall be put to shame.” In general, the Bible is unswerving in its prohibition of idolatry. How can veneration of paintings on wood panels be reconciled with Scripture? Tertullian (b. 160 AD) writes in his treatise *On Idolatry*, “As soon as the devil had brought into the world the makers of statues, portraits, and every kind of representation... then accordingly every form of art producing an idol in whatever way became a source of idolatry.”<sup>142</sup> Conversely, John of Damascus (b. 675 AD) writes, “What the book does for those who understand letters, the image does for the illiterate...,”<sup>143</sup> and, “by contemplating His bodily form, we form a notion, as far as is possible for us, of the glory of His divinity.”<sup>144</sup> The Second Council of Nicaea (787 AD) asserted furthermore that veneration is not paid to the image itself, but rather to the person depicted in the image. Essentially, a long-standing tension developed between those who believed iconography to be idolatrous and those who believed that iconography functioned as an indispensable educational and devotional tool. Although Byzantine emperors banned icons twice (from 730–787, and from 814–843), their use would eventually be endorsed by the Orthodox Church.

Today, icons remain hugely popular in the Eastern Orthodox world. Orthodox churches are filled with them. They are also a popular tool of personal devotion; many Orthodox believers keep icons in their home. This widespread demand for icons in the modern period has transformed the sphere of icon production. In the Middle Ages, iconographers were specially trained, highly devout men who painted icons by hand. They did every step of the process themselves: the preparing of the wood panel, the mixing of the paint, the drafting, the painting, and the finishing. Nowadays, a vast number of icons are produced in factories. While there are still iconographers who train and work the traditional way, they are now in competition with commercial production.

The following interview was conducted with Panagiotis Markopoulos, a traditional Greek iconographer who trained in the iconographic style of Crete and currently works in Athens. He paints every icon by hand, the traditional way—he mixes the pigments, applies the gold, drafts, paints, and finishes by himself. His workshop is small, but he has many customers from all around the world who prefer his icons to the icons churned out by the commercial factories. The interview explores the philosophy of icons and the role of Orthodoxy in a modern iconographer’s life.

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<sup>142</sup> Caecilia Davis-Weyer, *Early Medieval Art: 300-1150* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986): 3.

<sup>143</sup> John of Damascus, *Three Treatises on the Divine Images*, trans. Andrew Louth (New York: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2003): 31.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, 72.

*Panagiotis' work can be viewed at the following links. We warmly encourage readers to visit his websites:*

<https://www.sites.google.com/site/agiokeri>

<https://www.facebook.com/panagiotis.markopoulosagiografos>



*Panagiotis working on restoring an old icon.*

**MARCH 9<sup>TH</sup>, 2020**

**PANGRATI, ATHENS, GREECE — IN PANAGIOTIS' ICON WORKSHOP**

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**Gwen:** Please introduce yourself: how old are you, what's your occupation?

**Panagiotis:** My age is forty-three. My name is Panagiotis. And my job is to paint Byzantine icons.

**Gwen:** And how do you identify yourself, faith-wise?

**Panagiotis:** As an iconographer.

**Gwen:** Mm. Okay, how did you decide to become an iconographer, and did you always know it was what you wanted to do?

**Panagiotis:** No, it's something that came to my life accidentally. My family is in this work for about fifty years now, but it was not in my plans to do this work. But after some research, something sends me this way. And also, my life, it depends a lot not on living but how I see things in my life. They have to do with my work.

**Gwen:** Do you enjoy it? Are there times when it's difficult?

**Panagiotis:** Yes, yes of course. But even if the work is hard sometimes, if the orders are difficult, not so common, a very big challenge for me... every time I'm asking for something harder.

**Gwen:** To challenge yourself.

**Panagiotis:** Yes.

**Gwen:** And how long did you train for?

**Panagiotis:** I am working since 2000. Twenty years now.

**Gwen:** And you trained in Crete, right?

**Panagiotis:** Yes.

**Gwen:** What did the training involve?



**Panagiotis:** The training, ah, the training [laughs]. If someone is good at painting and all those things, then perhaps it will be easier, but there are some standard layers that you must learn in this work. If you have a good teacher, the training will be about 2 years, or 3. And after that, you can work on your own.



*Progress on one of Panagiotis' icons of Mary and the Christ child.*

**Gwen:** So, I've read that iconographers, at least traditionally, are supposed to be very religiously devout, and lead upright lives- do you feel like that's still the case, and do you feel like you live up to that ideal?

**Panagiotis:** Yes, yes. I'm not thinking like a sheep, okay, I have my own opinions about the things that the church says. I decided for myself. But always I have in the back of my mind the rules of the church.

This kind of school that I'm doing is the school from Crete—it starts sixteenth century, on the island of Crete, and the old iconographers tried to put the language of the Bible inside, in these icons so the people who cannot read can see an icon and understand a lot of things from the Bible. That was the first attempt to do with this kind of school. So that means that the iconographers who do the school from Crete, they don't do things from their mind.<sup>145</sup> We must take the old prototype and try to make it exactly how it was. Because if I change something, I would change the whole language, very big meanings. So, my work is to be a very good copy machine. Nothing else. And also, I must learn how to read the icons, not only in the first layer. So, if you don't believe in the whole thing of the church, it's very hard to try to study these things and accept them. Because they are not all natural things, they don't all have explanations. So, you must believe... or not.

**Gwen:** Do you go to church often?

**Panagiotis:** Not so often, but, for example, the days of Easter I'm going.

**Gwen:** Do you follow any of the various church practices, like fasting, or...?

**Panagiotis:** Yes, but not always so often.

[All laugh]

**Panagiotis:** They are part of my life of course, but we live in a modern world. We have the traditions, and we try to keep them. But I prefer the modern way, which is if you feel okay with yourself, then do it. Or not. For a priest to tell you that you must do it because it's good, or it's right...

**Gwen:** Mm. Do you have a lot of icons in your house?

**Panagiotis:** No.

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<sup>145</sup> Essentially, iconographers must follow iconographic traditions, and not make any of their own artistic interventions or choices.



[All laugh]

**Gwen:** Really?

**Panagiotis:** I have made icons worldwide; I have a lot of customers worldwide. But in my home, I [only] have a very small icon of... Like this one [points], this is my icon in my house [a small icon of Mary]. The whole of my life is icons, so...

**Gwen:** You need a break?

**Panagiotis:** It has nothing to do with if I have them in my home or not.

**Gwen:** Ah. Are there any historical iconographers you admire, or famous icons you really like?

**Panagiotis:** Ah, yes! The best for me, because they are the ones who made this school, is Theophanes from Crete. Also, in the Byzantine museum they have a lot of icons from the sixteenth century... These are the best, for me. I don't accept the modern ones [joking].

[All laugh]

**Gwen:** So, this is a bit random, but there are the two periods of Byzantine Iconoclasm in Byzantine history. And so, I was wondering, how would you respond to the argument that venerating icons is equivalent to idolatry? I know we resolved it like 1000 years ago, but...

**Panagiotis:** Yes. Look, we don't love the icons. We don't pray to the piece of wood. You pray to the person who is drawn on the piece of wood. And this is the red line between *this* school and all the other icons that we have. This kind of school, the school from Crete, it has a lot of symbols. So, if someone knows how to read this kind of icon, then he can understand that these icons are not just a piece of wood with a very good drawing—or not a good drawing—but they have the symbols. The symbols give the meaning. It's like the Bible—it's just a book, but the things inside, the things that have been written, these are the center, these are the focus point. So, it's more important for someone who wants to get into this role, with the church.... First, you must know what is this focus point, how to read this thing, how to explain these things. And not just look at an icon and say 'okay, it's a very good saint, I love this saint because a miracle perhaps happened when I went to a monastery of this saint.' I don't like these things. I just said to the [previous] people who bought icons, first of all, know how to read the icon. What does the icon represent? And if you accept these things, then buy it. If you don't, it's just a good piece of art. So, it has nothing to do with the love of things that makes them idols. But okay, it also depends on the mind of the person. The oldest people [in Greece], they have their mind, their education

is perhaps low, so they don't have a very... big knowledge about what is the iconography or what is their religion.

I have a cross. I don't wear it because a friend of mine put this cross on the hand of St John the Baptist [the relic at Mt Athos], in the monastery. And this for me is a very big blessing. So, I keep this cross, because I don't want to lose it, but this makes this cross something like...

**Gwen:** Like an idol.

**Panagiotis:** Yes. It's a very big mistake. But also, I know that it's a very big blessing for my cross to have touched this piece of the hand of St John the Baptist. Because in this monastery in Athos, they don't open this hand to anyone. It's not for the public. But I had the opportunity to get my cross on this hand.

**Gwen:** Do you think that icons have the power to work miracles?

**Panagiotis:** The icons are a link between this world and, if you believe, the other one. I think the miracles happen from the faith, from inside our heart. We are very powerful beings. So, it's just a tool. Of course, this tool does not work by itself. It has no batteries. It has energy, but... If you believe a lot, and you can make this connection [via the icon], these two [things, together] will become very powerful. So, perhaps... In a lot of people, icons have worked [miracles]. They have made things that the doctors could not explain.



*One of Panagiotis' icons of Mary and Christ.*

**Gwen:** This is a bit random too, but what do you like about the Orthodox Church, and is there anything you would change? Or something you dislike about it?

**Panagiotis:** Ah, the Orthodox Church. These days, they have very big problems. These problems have to do with the people. For example, in Greece, we have a lot of refugees, and a lot of poor people. They don't have a home; they don't have food. So, the focus point of the church is to prepare the souls of the persons [the believers], and not to feed them with food or buy them homes. But, these days, the economic problems, have taken the church away from its main focus point. But also, this is a very good job [doing charity]—we

cannot say ‘don’t do that’ or ‘try only to heal the souls.’ Ah, I don’t have anything to say about the church, because they do a good job. Perhaps for me the only stake is that they have given their energy only to protecting the living people. They leave a very low percent [of their energy] to the soul preparation. So that makes a lot of people leave the church.

**Gwen:** How do you feel about—I know the Patriarch has been meeting with the Pope about a reunification of the Orthodox Church and the Catholic Church. I know it’s kind of a—

**Panagiotis:** Yes, this is a—I don’t have a very good knowledge about the Western type of church. But....

**Gwen:** Do you think it’s a bad idea? Should they stay separate?

**Panagiotis:** Look, we have an icon that shows a ladder. At the bottom, there are the people who try to reach the ladder. At the top is heaven. At the bottom is hell.

**Gwen:** The Ladder of Divine Ascent?

**Panagiotis:** Yes. On the ladder, each one of us is not holding[/supporting] someone [else]. I’m just trying to reach the ladder as a unit [by myself]. So that means that we are alone in this way. For me, aside from the political matters and all these things, perhaps if the two churches become one, a lot of things will change in our world. But this has nothing to do with the focus point of the soul....

**Gwen:** Reaching heaven.

**Panagiotis:** Reaching heaven.

**Gwen:** You think it’s a personal journey?

**Panagiotis:** Yes, yes. Of course, we have a guide.<sup>146</sup> We’re not doing things from how we feel, or what we want. If this [reunification] is to happen, of course it would change a lot of things. I don’t know if it’s good or bad. It’s something. It’s the same thing to have one currency, worldwide. Would this be good or bad? We don’t know. Perhaps if the states have Euro, it would be a bad thing. Also, different things in different countries make different persons, make different thoughts. That makes different people worldwide. This is not bad, for me. If all people became the same, this would destroy the whole image of the planet.

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<sup>146</sup> Essentially, the church guides you towards your own divine ascent. You can’t just follow whatever rules or morality you want.

I'm a very religious person, but I accept all the other religions. If someone came in here and said to me, 'I'm an atheist, I believe in Satan', I don't know, tell me anything you want—I accept it. I'm not going to say to him, 'what did you say, ah, you bad person.' I don't care about that. It's his own life, it's his own soul. If he believes in something other than Orthodoxy, other than Christ, I don't care. It's his own problem. Perhaps he says the same about me. I have friends who don't believe, and they say to me 'ah, you believe in Jesus Christ?' and all those things, and I say 'okay, at the end we'll see who is right.'

[All laugh]

**Gwen:** Okay, I saw a statistic that 97% of Greek people identify as Orthodox. Do you think people are becoming less religious as time goes on? Or more religious?

**Panagiotis:** [Thinks for a while]. Greece is an Orthodox state. A lot of people have gotten out of religion. They don't believe in anything. They go on their way. But also, when someone goes, another one comes. So, it's equal. We don't have to say they don't believe anymore, or it's less, or it's more. There are a lot of schools here in Greece that are Orthodox Christian schools, so they produce new people. But I believe that this cannot be done with force. If you feel something. There are some times in our lives where things happen to us, and these things make the mind search for something else beyond the things that we can see and feel.

Not all things have explanations. I have a customer here that has cancer. She has done everything that the doctor has told her. But her belief is so big that every time that we talk.... Perhaps I have a pain in my hand, and I say 'oh, what pain!' If I ask her how she is, she says 'okay, I am doing my therapy, I am exhausted, I have a lot of pain, but we have Easter [to look forward to]!' You see two different persons: one is suffering with very big problems, the other has a very small problem. And he's crying. But her faith is so powerful. The meds don't do anything now for the pain, but her mind can make a balance. And also, she's not afraid of death. She's very close. But she has so much power[/strength].





*Finished icon of Christ.*

# LOCUTION BEGETS MEMORY: SPIRITUAL IMPETUS AND THE COSMIC SCOPE OF CHRISTIAN SALVATION IN *THE DREAM OF THE ROOD*

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## ABSTRACT

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This analysis of the Old English poem *The Dream of the Rood* and its reflexes in material culture incorporates two major pursuits. The first is a reconstruction of a potential, contemporary impetus for religious experience perceived upon an encounter with any iteration of what I term the Rood-corpus; that is, the extant manifestations of a widespread poem, both temporally and spatially, known to us as *The Dream of the Rood*. This spiritual or religious experience is chiefly predicated on the Rood's retention of memory from its personal involvement in and experience of Christ's Crucifixion. My establishment of this Rood-corpus also provides a (to my knowledge) original hypothesis regarding the a priori archetype that begat our extant versions of the poem. The second pursuit seeks to place *The Dream of the Rood* and the Rood-corpus more broadly in the context of their contemporary and nascent Cross Legends, specifically those that deal with the life of the True Cross before Christ. This second endeavor establishes a grander, more cosmic scope of the Christian salvation story encapsulated within the poem and, following the explication of memory's role in this body of literature, extends the roots of the Rood's memory back into the earliest days of the Bible. The cumulative effect of this study is to illuminate the constellation of meaning present within and surrounding the Rood-corpus and establishing the evocative milieu in which it was encountered.

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*The Dream of the Rood*, perhaps the most famous poem of the Old-English corpus, an alluring and meditative musing on the Crucifixion of Christ, has duly carved out for itself a cherished place in scholarship and the hearts of those interested in the Anglo-Saxon and all that is germane. Laden with potential meaning and invitations to explore every semantic nuance or lexical implication, there has been an immense amount of ink scrupulously spilled over this poem. The great majority of scholarship on this text has sought to uncover the inspirations behind a single poet who composed this literary monument, with a specific focus on his choice to personify the Rood and grant it locution.<sup>147</sup> To borrow coinage from a very fine and instructive example of such scholarship, the *putative milieu* has been established.<sup>148</sup> However, there are two brief instances of the poem in material culture outside of its home in the Vercelli Book, with a nearly 300-year gap between each of their creation, complicating scholarship. One is a runic inscription on the Ruthwell Cross, a standing cross erected as early as the eighth century AD, the other is inscribed on the Brussels Cross, an ornate eleventh century reliquary purported to house a portion of the True Cross. There is a lack of synthesis between scholarship on these two crosses and literary commentary on *The Dream of the Rood*, which often glosses over them with a mere nod to their existence. The present, thus, constitutes an attempt at establishing the *evocative milieu*—that is, a reconstruction of the matrix evocations and implications that might occur to a contemporary believing Christian upon their encounter with any iteration of the Rood-corpus. Whereas most scholarship in the past has been a source study of the poem in the Vercelli Book, I seek to illuminate the constellation of meaning between the poem and these Crosses. This *modus operandi* should allow a flexibility of engagement with this corpus that its nature necessitates, given its lifespan, geographic distribution, and religious content. I seek to accomplish this by explicating two distinct features of the Rood-corpus, most visible in the poem but substantiated by its various reflexes in material culture. The first feature follows the supposition that granting the Rood speech begets a capacity for memory. This is immediately and expressly stated by the Rood in its first spoken words in the poem and substantiated by the simple fact that both the Ruthwell and Brussels Cross inscriptions are in the first-person. Highlighting the notable scholarship on Old-English poetic representations of the mind by Dr. Britt Mize, I hope to establish an impetus for religious experience based on the memory retained by the Rood. The second feature is the cosmic scope of the Christian salvation story encapsulated in the poem. The eschatological elements of *The Dream* are immediately apparent and already expounded by many scholars. However, I seek to place *The Dream of the Rood* in the context of its contemporary and nascent Cross Legends, specifically relating to the history of the Cross before Christ.

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<sup>147</sup> M. Schlauch, “The Dream of the Rood as Prosopopoeia,” *Essential Articles: Old English Poetry* (1968). The classic article in this line of inquiry.

<sup>148</sup> Andy Orchard, “The Dream of the Rood: Cross-References,” *New Readings in the Vercelli Book* (2009): 225-53. This is not to say that it has been exhaustively established, there is always room for more exploration. Orchard does take *The Dream* as a product of a poem that was in wider circulation, ‘cross-referencing’ analogs like the Ruthwell and Brussels crosses, but still operates by referencing the artistry of a single poet.



Following the explication of memory's role in this body of literature, this second observation serves to extend the roots of the inanimate object's memory into the earliest books of the Bible—in some cases into apocryphal expansions of Genesis—rounding out the theological content to encompass the entirety of the Christian story. At the very least this section will serve as a foray into Cross Legends from the standpoint of *The Dream of the Rood*, as scholarship hitherto has overlooked the poem within this context.

### Background

A technical point must be made here about the nature of the material at hand and what I am calling the Rood-corpus. Rood is simply the Old-English word for cross; I will use this term to refer to the cross unless referring to corpora beyond the Old-English tradition for which scholarship traditionally uses the Modern English word 'cross,' such as Cross Legends or True Crosses. As mentioned above, the Vercelli Book constitutes the focal point of scholarship on *The Dream of the Rood*. It is here that *The Dream* appears fully fleshed out in 156 lines of alliterative verse.<sup>149</sup> In brief, the poem begins in first-person narration, where the Dreamer establishes that he had a dream-vision of the Rood. Then the poem transitions into the dream, where the Rood itself speaks and narrates its journey from a tree in the forest to Christ's Crucifixion. Personified, the Rood relays its own suffering in tandem with that of Christ's. After a burial sequence, the Rood is found and glorified as a relic, evocative of its *Inventio* by St. Helena. The text then, after an homily given by the Rood, transitions back to the Dreamer with a call to Christianity and proselytization.

Regarding the Vercelli Book itself, it is housed in the Capitulary Library in Vercelli, Italy, and constitutes one of the four most significant verse manuscripts of the Old English language. Together these four manuscripts constitute nearly the entirety of the Old English poetic corpus. The Book contains 6 verse texts, 23 prose homilies, and a prose *Vita* of St. Guthlac.<sup>150</sup> Probably compiled in the second half of the tenth century, there is a debate regarding the chronology of its content's composition and how the manuscript wound up in Italy. There is no doubt that the manuscript was composed in England, but the language is standardized, preventing an exact pinpointing of location.<sup>151</sup> Important to note, which will be fleshed out later, is that the poem following *The Dream of the Rood* in the manuscript is *Elene* by Cynewulf: a 1,321-verse Old English version of the *Inventio* of the Cross by St. Helena that also includes Constantine the Great's vision and conversion to Christianity in 312 AD.<sup>152</sup> In his 1981 essay "How did the Vercelli Collector Interpret The Dream of the Rood," Éamonn Ó Carragáin emphasized that "we are forced to judge [Old-English] texts by the company they keep" as one of our few windows into how the Anglo-Saxon himself

<sup>149</sup> George Philip Krapp, ed., *The Vercelli Book*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1932): 61-65.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, xi-lxxx.

<sup>151</sup> Michael James Swanton, *The Dream of the Rood*, 4th ed. (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2016): 1-9.

<sup>152</sup> Krapp, 66-102.

would have interpreted them.<sup>153</sup> This approach will be taken with the Vercelli Book in the forthcoming analysis, given the clear harmony of emphasis on eschatology displayed throughout the Book.<sup>154</sup>

Regarding the Ruthwell Cross—most likely erected in the eighth century, it is one of the most famous and complete standing crosses from Anglo-Saxon England extant today. Embellished with biblical symbolism, Latin inscriptions, and inhabited vine scroll, the Cross also crucially displays a runic inscription bearing striking similarities to *The Dream of the Rood*.<sup>155</sup> Below is given a translation from a full reconstruction of the inscription by D. R. Howlett in 1972:

*God Almighty stripped Himself. When He wished to ascend the gallows, brave before all men, I dared not bow, but had to stand fast.*

*I raised up a mighty King. I dared not tilt the Lord of Heaven. Men mocked us both together; I was drenched with blood poured from the Man's side after He sent forth His spirit.*

*Christ was on the Cross. Yet hastening thither from afar noble men came together; I beheld it all. I was grievously afflicted with sorrows; I bent to the men, within reach.*

*They laid Him down, wounded with arrows, weary of limb; they stood (themselves) at the head of His corpse; they beheld there the Lord of Heaven, and He rested Himself there for a time. Amen.*<sup>156</sup>

This four-part reconstruction corresponds to elements within lines 39-45, 48-49, and 52-53 in *The Dream*, though do not match to any specific one in its entirety. This version, like that in the Vercelli Book, exhibits the most oft explored feature of poem—personification of the Rood, or *prosopopoeia*.<sup>157</sup> For linguists and specialists on the paleography of runes, the Cross is of pertinence, as the inscription evinces the Northumbrian dialect of the Anglo-Saxon language and the runes are of a distinct variety.<sup>158</sup> Relevant for this study is that the very existence of this version of *The Dream* betrays at least a 300-year lifespan for some version of the poem, from this most nascent, dialectal manifestation to the poetic and intellectual sophistication shown in the Vercelli Book.

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<sup>153</sup> Éamonn Ó Carrigáin, “How Did the Vercelli Collector Interpret the Dream of the Rood,” *Studies in English Language and Early Literature in Honour of Paul Christophersen* (1981): 63-104.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, 66-67.

<sup>155</sup> Swanton, 9-38.

<sup>156</sup> D. R. Howlett, “A Reconstruction of the Ruthwell Crucifixion Poem,” *Studia Neophilologica* 48, no. 1 (1976): 58.

<sup>157</sup> Schlauch, “Prosopopoeia”; See Cherniss, Michael D. “The Cross as Christ's Weapon: The Influence of Heroic Literary Tradition on The Dream of the Rood.” *Anglo-Saxon England* 2 (1973): 241-52 for another example. Cherniss highlights the traditions of first-person inscriptions on Anglo-Saxon swords as another potential impetus for Prosopopoeia. Personification is equally present in both Old English and Latin riddle traditions.

<sup>158</sup> Swanton, 9-38.

Finally, regarding the Brussels Cross. It is less renowned in the context of *The Dream of the Rood*, though no less an impressive artifact of Christian and Anglo-Saxon history. It bears roughly one line of text, corresponding to lines 44 and 48 in the poem:

Rod is min nama; geo ic ricne Cyning bær byfigynde, blod bestemed.

*Rood is my name. Trembling once, I bore a powerful king, made wet with blood.*<sup>159</sup>

Probably dating from the eleventh century, the Brussels Cross is purportedly a reliquary for the True Cross. The Cross is badly damaged but was once adorned in jewels and silver, and the above inscription was rendered in the Latin Alphabet along its side. There is extensive scholarly debate as to the exact origin of this relic.

Thus constitutes what I term the Rood-corpus; that is, the extant manifestations of a widespread poem, both temporally and spatially, known to us as *The Dream of the Rood*. This conception of a ‘Rood-corpus’ is in order with the conclusion put forth by Andy Orchard in his essay “*The Dream of the Rood: Cross-references*”:

There seems, then, little doubt that generations of Anglo-Saxon authors, in both Latin and Old English, both at the beginning of the period and at the end, converted artistically the matter of the Cross into pious, precious, and precocious verse and prose, and I would argue that *The Dream of the Rood* is crucial (as it were) to our understanding of that process. [...] *The Dream of the Rood* and its reflexes... provide an index of the ways in which some of the finest Old English verse that has survived could adapt and change, in the course of a lengthy journey that may have lasted up to three centuries... transmitted and transmuted... through the minds and mouths of a number of poets to the hands and hearts of a number of sculptors and scribes.<sup>160</sup>

In the following analysis, then, I am not just contending with the Vercelli Book’s *Dream of the Rood*, but also with an abstraction of the poem, an *a priori* archetypal version that begat our extant manifestations forming the Rood-corpus.<sup>161</sup> This archetype, reduced to its most fundamental attributes, is intended to represent the minimum of commonality present in the work of these poets, scribes, and sculptors. There are two key attributes essential to this archetype. The first attribute is the unique personification of the Rood and its ability to speak, displayed in each of our extant manifestations, evincing a retention of memory from its personal involvement and experience of the Crucifixion. This, as mentioned in the

<sup>159</sup> Ibid., 49; see “Old English Poetry in Facsimile,” <https://uw.digitalmappa.org/>.

<sup>160</sup> Orchard, 253.

<sup>161</sup> Swanton, *The Dream of the Rood*, 38-42. See these pages for a technical discussion on the interrelationship between the Ruthwell Cross and *The Dream*. Swanton concludes an *A priori* poem begetting all extant constituents of the Rood-corpus as the most likely explanation for their similarities across such a breadth of time.

introduction, likely represents an impetus for spiritual experience and contributed to the longevity of the Rood-corpus. The second attribute relates to the simple fact that, at all times and in each of our manifestations of the poem, it is intended for us to perceive the *real* Rood, the one which occupied a physical point in time in the Christian story, as the speaker. This, as opposed to literary echo or symbolic abstraction. This second attribute functions more as a presupposition in the forthcoming analysis, especially in the second section where the highlighted Cross Legends operate on the same presupposition, i.e., that there was a physical Rood at some point in time. For the sake of objectivity in looking at my own *modus operandi*, I echo a concern expressed by Éamonn Ó Carragáin in 2010: “the more a poet or storyteller penetrates to the core of Christian tradition, the more his or her poem will echo central Christian traditions of every other period . . . [W]e must beware of arguing that [a particular] echo constitutes a source.” This sentiment can be equally asserted regarding Christian literature surrounding the Cross, or Rood.<sup>162</sup> Yet, it is the unique centrality of the Rood in this literature that enables analysis on these grounds. Indeed, the present is not an attempt at a source study for the Rood-corpus, rather it is to unlock the *evocative milieu* in which contemporaries encountered the corpus, not the *putative* preceding it. As such, I will take *The Dream of the Rood* as it appears in the Vercelli Book as the most poetically and theologically sophisticated manifestation of the Rood-corpus, exploring unique insights betrayed by the text, but in the sense that these sophistications are mere elaborations of features present or perceived in the archetypal version circulating the Anglo-Saxon period.<sup>163</sup>

### Spiritual Impetus—The Rood’s Memory

Hwæt! famously begins the poem, with an immediate invocation of memory. The narrator, that is the dreamer, wishes to reveal the dream that he experienced to the reader. This process of revelation is the first inkling of memory’s crucial role in the poem, introduced with a formulaic construction indicative of a fundamental element of Anglo-Saxon cosmology:

Hwæt! Ic swefna cyst    secgan wylle  
H[w]æt **me gemætte**    to midre nihte (1-2)

*Lo! I the choicest of dreams    intend to tell*  
*what was **dreamed to me**    in the middle of the night*

<sup>162</sup> Brandon W Hawk, “‘Id est, Crux Christi’: Tracing the Old English Motif of the Celestial Rood,” *Anglo-Saxon England* 40 (2012): 44.

<sup>163</sup> Orchard, “Cross-references.” Orchard sees *The Dream of the Rood* as it appears in the Vercelli Book as a more sophisticated version of an archetypal poem, but he does this as he reconstructs a putative milieu for that version’s composition.

‘Me gemætte,’ the verb, often translated as “to dream,” is an impersonal verb that takes the dative.<sup>164</sup> Thus, to the Anglo-Saxon, dreams are something that happen *to* you, not products of an idle and slumbering mind as they are in modern English; rather, dreams constitute some form of revelation. This observation is expounded by Dr. Britt Mize in his body of work concerning poetic representations of the mind in Old English as a container, a container often metaphorically explicated as a trove of sapiential and spiritual treasure.<sup>165</sup> Old English literature is teeming with compound terminology describing the private possessions of the mind as a hoard or chamber, such as *wordhord*, *modhord*, *feorhlocan*, or *feorðlocan*.<sup>166</sup> Often the mental container is represented in a dichotomy between its private possessions and the public who is outside of it, unable to divine what is inside this personal, impermeable barrier. Indeed, in Mize’s essay *The Mental Container and the Cross of Christ*, he analyzes *The Dream of the Rood* as a series of confidential revelations and public disclosures between mental containers. This conception of the container however is not limited to explicit poetic vocabulary describing the mind as such, rather it is alluded to semantically in a number of instances throughout the Old English corpus. It bears reiterating a poignant example highlighted by Mize from the Exeter Riddle 42:

Ic seah wyhte    wrætlice twa  
 ...  
 ...                    Hwylc þæs hordgates  
 cægan cræfte    þa clamme onleac  
 þe þa rædellan    wið ryne menn  
 hygefæste heold    heortan bewrigene  
 orþoncbendum    (1; 11b–15a)

*I saw there creatures, a wondrous pair, [...] which one has, with the mastery of a key, unlocked the bands of the board-gate, which had held the riddle thought-secure against secret seekers, concealed with cunning bonds of the heart.*<sup>167</sup>

An elaborate expansion of the mental hoard imagery where the mind is not explicitly mentioned but implied semantically, the notion of a container is here expanded to a literal chamber of treasure, a cherished hoard which is only unlocked with “a key” of a runic play-on-words earlier revealed in the riddle and enterable via a “hoard-gate.” The subject and answer is a rooster (*hana*) and a hen (*hæn*), two animals which the author *saw* and now retains in memory. Thus, memories are also possessions of the mental container. Crucial for this study is the underlying notion that access to the contents of the mental container is

<sup>164</sup> Swanton, 103.

<sup>165</sup> Britt Mize, “The Mental Container and the Cross of Christ: Revelation and Community in *The Dream of the Rood*,” *Studies in Philology* 107, no. 2 (Spring 2010): 138. Mize has coalesced his work into a book: Mize, Britt. *Traditional Subjectivities: The Old English Poetics of Mentality*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*, 152, 159. Word-hoard, mind-hoard, mind-chamber, spirit-chamber.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*, 137. Adapted from Mize’s translation; Baum, *Riddles of the Exeter Book*.

revealed to others by language, written or spoken, specifically expressed in the first person by the possessor of the container. In the case of the riddle this is emphasized not only by the fact that the reader, regardless of time or place in which he or she encounters the passage, will have unlocked the treasure behind the original poet's hoard-gate upon solving the riddle, but also uniquely hinted at by the fact that the key to do so is itself language (the runic play-on-words). Thus, any instance of language in the first person offers a glimpse into the possessions of the speaker's mental container. The written word can reveal, in the same way that an oral retelling would, these possessions; but written language enables the possessions to be borne into the future in a disassociated manner.

Returning to the poem, following the surprisingly loaded assertion that the dream occurred to the narrator while his compeer *reordberrend* (speech-bearers) lay asleep, the narrative continues with the dreamer painting a picture of his dream.<sup>168</sup> An image of an awe-inspiring Celestial Rood is conjured, rife with metaphors describing the Rood as some form of tree and descriptions hinting at a *Crux Gemmata* appearance.<sup>169</sup> These features will be relevant to the next section. Pertinent to this section, however, is that the celestial apparition of the Rood speaks—specifically introducing its monologue by referencing its memory:

Ongan þa word sprecaŋ wudu selesta:  
þæt wæs geara iu (ic þæt gyta geman) (28-29)

*Then it began to speak words the best wood*  
*“that was years ago (I that still remember)”*

With this revelation, the poem now dawns a chiasmic structure of revealed memories, or more aptly, there is a nesting doll effect of mental containers.<sup>170</sup> The dreamer reveals to us a cherished treasure of his mental container—a dream-vision—a vision which is not the narration of the Crucifixion that composes the bulk of the poem's text. Rather, the dream-vision is simply and strictly the apparition of the Celestial Rood. A Rood which then offers a glimpse into its own mental possessions (arguably the most cherished of mental possessions according to the Christian story), its firsthand experience and participation in the Crucifixion.

The Rood drops into the mental container of the Dreamer, bringing its own memories into the present and revealing them through spoken language, that is, speech in the first person—functioning in the same sense as an oral retelling of Exeter Riddle 42 would. This revelation through language is the crucial link between each manifestation of

<sup>168</sup> Line 3: *reordberrend*; See Mize 143-144, Orchard 230, and Obermeyer, Dennis J. *The Relationship of Theology and Literary Form in 'The Dream of the Rood.'* PhD diss., The Catholic University of America, 2007. Ann Arbor: UMI, 2007. 23 for theories on the word-choice. An epithet for Man in an oxymoronic context, where there is complete stillness as all are asleep, within a poem where the only thing to speak is a talking Crucifix.

<sup>169</sup> Lines 3-10; *Crux Gemmata*, lit. “Jeweled Cross.”

<sup>170</sup> Mize, “The Mental Container and the Cross of Christ,” 163. Mize makes a similar observation in his section III. *The Cross as Mental Object*, in the sense that the Rood has now physically entered the Dreamer's mental container.

the Rood-corpus in material culture. Not simply for the pragmatic reason that poetry necessitates language, as do inscriptions, but that each of our extant examples are written in the first person—i.e., from the perspective of the Rood, with its mental container preserved in like manner to the written version of Exeter Riddle 42. It bears remarking here, then, that the manifestations of the Rood-corpus outside of the Vercelli Book simply relay the perspective of the Rood; there is no dreamer. One might then surmise that the archetypal poem that traversed the Anglo-Saxon period was strictly the Rood's mental container, perambulating through the epoch via written and oral preservation, until a poet's artistry inserted it into the mind of a dreamer.<sup>171</sup>

Language written in the first person not only provides the essential method of memory revelation, but simultaneously the bridge from lifeless text to spiritual reality. It is the nexus of the narrative world and the physical, or the evocative conduit for spiritual experience. To explicate this we need only a simple look at *The Dream of the Rood* in the context of the Vercelli Book, a manuscript constituted by a collection of seemingly disparate texts with homiletic overtones united by an emphasis on eschatology. Ó Carragáin argues on this basis that the manuscript is an example of the well-known monastic genre *florilegia*, anthologies of ascetic texts.<sup>172</sup> Examination of *The Dream* in this context, where we imagine a pious monk poring over the poem in his dimly lit cell, renders the relationship between written first-person language and spiritual experience palpable. The aforementioned nesting doll effect of mental containers within the poem is ultimately encapsulated by the reader's own mind upon reading the text.<sup>173</sup> Using the nesting doll analogy, the structure of the poem is such: the dreamer opens his mental container to us and reveals his dream, wherein hovers the Rood which opens its own mental container and reveals a memory of its life—a memory centered around the Crucifixion.<sup>174</sup> After the physical joining of Christ to the Rood the two increasingly drift apart as the Rood's narration shifts from memory to homily, until the mental container of the Rood is re-encapsulated by that of the dreamer who resumes narration. Himself slowly transitioning from his reaction to the dream marked by first person singular pronouns, to a homiletic summation of the salvific results of the crucifixion for all mankind, marked by first person plural pronouns.<sup>175</sup> (“He redeemed *us* and gave *us*

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<sup>171</sup> Orchard, “Cross-References,” 241-242. Most essays at an archetype generally limit themselves to tangential comments on the shared lexical inventory of the Ruthwell Cross and Vercelli Book's poems. Orchard provides one such case, arguing that the Ruthwell Cross' poem, or rather the sculptor who inscribed it, decidedly focused on the “drama of the Crucifixion itself.” In this context he observes that there is no dreamer, or alternatively, that the dreamer was omitted, should he have been present in the archetype.

<sup>172</sup> Ó Carragáin, “How did the Vercelli Collector Interpret the Dream of the Rood,” 66-67.

<sup>173</sup> Mize, “The Mental Container and the Cross of Christ”. Mize comes to similar conclusions but emphasizes the Rood's exhortation of the Dreamer to verbally share with his compeer *Reordberend* his confidential experience, leaving the idea in the realm of literature. In his conclusion he highlights the potential for reading the poem to induce a private revelation within one's own mental container. This is completely harmonious with my proposition, but more in the sense of abstract individual literary engagement, rather than in the contemporary monastic context vis-a-vis *florilegia*.

<sup>174</sup> Lines 1-27 for the opening of the Dreamer's mental container; lines 27-77 for the Rood's.

<sup>175</sup> Lines 77-156 for the resumption and closing of the Dreamer's enclosure.

life”).<sup>176</sup> Upon finishing reading the poem, which concludes with these inclusive and exhortative words, the contents are now enclosed within the mental container of the reader.

This lengthy exposition of the nested mental containers is intended to show how memories can be borne and transferred via both written and spoken language in the first person. That which was spoken by the Rood, which likely constitutes the archetypal version of the poem, was transferred to the Dreamer’s container by the Rood’s apparition therein; the Dreamer’s to the reader by the simple act of reading. The observation in the above outline of the poem, that the physical joining of Christ to the Rood occupies the center of Rood’s memory, is substantiated both by the Brussels and Ruthwell Crosses, but bears qualification. Barring the Rood’s theologically sophisticated closing homily, the retelling of its memory spans a brief mention of its life as a tree to its *Inventio* by St. Helena, between which is a “kaleidoscopic” and sometimes disorienting encounter between Christ and the Rood.<sup>177</sup> The narrative at this point in the poem is wending and seemingly anachronistic. There are times where we are not exactly sure where Christ is in relation to the Rood, if Christ is already nailed unto it, or he is in the process of carrying it. The Rood, “dares not bow or burst,” as if it already is bearing Christ, but five lines later Christ has only just “embraced” the Rood.<sup>178</sup> This temporal and spatial disorientation is characteristic of dreams. There is a tarrying dance between “he” and “I” and “him” and “me” within lines 33-47. For example, even when the nails are mentioned, they are mentioned by the Rood in the first person singular, referencing the pain caused to it solely.<sup>179</sup> Only upon reading the emphatic phrase “bysmeredon hie *unc butu atgædere*” (they mocked *us both together*) are we certain that the two have physically joined.<sup>180</sup> Immediately afterwards the two drift apart and we are again left with the words of the Rood in the first person singular. This crucial emphatic phrase “*unc butu atgædere*,” typically rendered in modern English as the first usage of the 1<sup>st</sup> person plural in the Rood’s monologue, is in fact a deployment of the archaic dual pronoun—this is the sole moment of joint experience between Christ and Rood in the poem.<sup>181</sup> Tantalizingly, it occurs relating to language—the Rood and Christ’s collective suffering the scorn of men. The memory recounted on either end of this moment is represented as what the Rood saw and endured *solely*, highlighting the primacy given to the Rood’s personal witness to and experience of the Crucifixion. This emphatic statement of co-suffering is reiterated verbatim in the runic inscription of the Ruthwell Cross: “*bismærædu unket men ba atgad[re]*” (Men mocked *us both together*).<sup>182</sup> On either side of this inscription is depicted the heroic Christ mounting the Rood and his removal from it, all of

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<sup>176</sup> Line 147.

<sup>177</sup> Orchard, “Cross-references,” 253.

<sup>178</sup> Line 36; line 42.

<sup>179</sup> Line 47.

<sup>180</sup> Line 48.

<sup>181</sup> Benjamin W Fortson, *Indo-European Language and Culture: An Introduction*, 2nd ed. (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010): 140-152. The dual pronoun is of Indo-European provenance, its Old English reflex occurs selectively and only in literary impassioned scenes, such as in Beowulf’s pre-battle speeches.; see Sikora, Kenneth R., III. “Git vs Ge: The Importance of the Dual Pronoun in Beowulf.” *The Oswald Review* 17, no. 1 (2015).

<sup>182</sup> Swanton, *The Dream of the Rood*, 94.



which is void of first-person plural pronouns, or any other grammatical feature denoting a collective experience. This substantiates that the Rood's personal memory, witness, and experience of the Crucifixion also holds primacy within the archetypal poem that manifested itself as the Rood-corpus. In other words, the archetypal poem *is* the Rood's mental container, revealing this cherished possession—a fact which enables the Rood to pontificate and share its memory of the Crucifixion to the beholder. Indeed, the Brussels Cross, a jeweled relic of the True Cross and chronologically the last manifestation forming the Rood-corpus, bears only the lines relating to 44b and 48 in the Vercelli Book: “Rod is min nama; geo ic ricne Cyning bær byfigynde, blod bestemed,” *Rood is my name. Trembling once, I bore a powerful king, made wet with blood.*<sup>183</sup> The Rood, stating its identity, tells of its personal memory and participation in the Crucifixion, this time on the physical object of Christ's Crucifixion itself, the True Cross.

The notion that language in the first person offers a glimpse into the mental container of the speaker cannot be understated regarding the Brussels Cross. Similar to the statement above that first person language is the bridge from lifeless text to spiritual reality and the nexus of the narrative world and the physical; the physical existence of the True Cross itself functions as a nexus between the abstract and overarching Christian narrative and material reality for the pious Christian. The Rood is not confined to the legends of St. Helena on stiff parchment (an Old English account of which does in fact accompany *The Dream of the Rood* in the Vercelli Book), but rather the relic is a physical attestation of the Christian narrative. For the pious believer, a True Cross relic such as the Brussels Cross carries a spiritual efficacy into the future from its encounter with Christ at the Crucifixion, in other words, *a memory*. This trait of True Cross relics, as exemplified by the many legends of its feats of healing in the medieval period, is, in the specific instance of the Brussels Cross, now intimately intertwined with a body of literature that emphasizes the personal experience and memory of the Rood. What's more is that this corpus of literature had a 300-year lifespan in Anglo-Saxon England; its dialectal and geographical distribution is equally impressive as its temporal, spanning the Northumbrian dialect to Classical West-Saxon, read, told, and retold by unknown numbers of mouths and edified countless souls.<sup>184</sup> In this context it serves to reiterate that the speaking Rood in *The Dream of the Rood* is a Celestial Rood—an abstract apparition bearing all the same scarred and sacred memories that the physical rood, a True Cross relic, endured. Thus, the abstract Rood, the archetypal Rood inhabiting the ether of Anglo-Saxon cosmology, legitimately bears the same memories resulting from physical contact with Christ at the Crucifixion as the True Cross. This is harmonious with the presupposition I proposed for the archetypal poem, where at all times the physical, True Rood, is to be perceived as the speaker.

Memory retained by the Rood at this abstract level also serves to expand the notion from a unique secondary effect of *prosopopoeia*, often glossed over in source studies seeking to establish a *putative milieu* in which *The Dream* was composed, to the *evocative milieu* of

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<sup>183</sup> Ibid., 49.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid. 1-9 for a discussion on the language of the Vercelli book; 9-39 for the Northumbrian dialect on the Ruthwell Cross.

contemporary religious experience. One might posit that within the context of the Cult of the Cross, which flourished in Anglo-Saxon England at this time, there was a substrate of religious understanding that found it natural to perceive memory retained by the Rood.<sup>185</sup> This notion, then, might be perceived to varying degrees within each encounter with a Rood in Anglo-Saxon England: whether it be a fleeting and inarticulate understanding during the liturgy (especially during the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross), an encounter with a True Cross relic, or when one performs the “kinesthetic” cross on oneself for any multitude of reasons. The clearest indication for this idea is that this emphasis on memory has worked its way into each of our manifestations of the Rood-corpus.

In this light, a note must be said about the Ruthwell Cross. The item itself is an outstanding and highly unique piece of insular art from the eighth century, offering much in the way of art history to be explored. What is clear, however, is that the Cross is a “preaching cross.”<sup>186</sup> It is adorned not just by masterfully carved scenes from the life of Christ, these being marked by their appropriate quotations from the Vulgate, but also panels depicting feats of asceticism by the Desert Fathers and acts of the Apostles. In his overview of the object, Swanton states that the Cross’ message is “evangelical, stating the role of Christ in the world of men both historically and eternally. In particular it links the symbol of Christ’s death with the Christ of Judgement, and Nature’s recognition of his majesty.”<sup>187</sup> On the sides of the Cross is carved ornate foliage scroll, typically called the ‘inhabited vine-scroll,’ with alternating side-volutes encapsulating birds and beasts picking at the fruit on the vine. Middle Eastern in provenance, this is the so-called “Tree of Life” motif; its scriptural basis is *John XV. 1–7*, where Christ says *ego sum vitis vera...*, and is also often conflated with *Psalms CIV*, where “the trees of the Lord” are stated to be the refuge of birds and beasts.<sup>188</sup> It is around these foliage panels that the Ruthwell version of *The Dream of the Rood* appears. Swanton offers an excellent quote preceding his description of the Cross:

It is no mere chance that we should find the *Dream* associated with a carefully planned theological programme. The artist of the cross clearly understood the poem to be an integral part of his conception, underpinning and augmenting his meaning in the sculpture.<sup>189</sup>

Maintaining our focus on memory and language in the first person’s ability to share it, in this context *The Dream of the Rood* and the Ruthwell Cross occupy a liminal space between several developments and offer an excellent transition to the next section. All the above explicated features of memory, locution, and notions of the Rood are here displayed on a monument intended to symbolically convey the entirety of Christian history (at least

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<sup>185</sup> Ibid. Swanton offers a section on the ‘Cult of the Cross,’ which generally refers to the surge in Cross symbolism, iconography and veneration in Christian praxis spawning from Constantine the Great’s vision and conversion, and the *inventio* of the Cross by St. Helena in the early fourth century.

<sup>186</sup> Swanton, 13.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid.

Christian history and theology as it centers around and radiates out from the events of the New Testament—it is a proselytizing Cross). The Ruthwell Cross’ art and the foliage scroll accompanying its iteration of *The Dream* display an intimate connection between the Christian salvation story and Nature, or Creation. Indeed, the mere title, the “Tree of Life,” given to the motif displayed on the Cross, presents a unique analogy to the plethora of tree-epithets describing the Rood in the Vercelli Book’s version of *The Dream*, such as “sylvicre treow,” “Hælendes treow,” or “wuldres beam.”<sup>190</sup> These tree-epithets in *The Dream of the Rood*, as well as one tantalizing usage of “middle-earth,” the “all-father,” and the poem’s noticeably heroic Jesus have led some scholars to posit a pagan substrate fossilized within the poem.<sup>191</sup> There have been several who posit the Rood is some echo of the World Tree or *Axis Mundi* conception known to have been held by pre-Christian Germans, citing terms like *gealgtreow* and the sacrifice of Odin, only copied down centuries later in far-away Iceland.<sup>192</sup> While this notion is somewhat exotic and exciting, and I do not deny such a text’s ability to preserve archaisms from a pagan past, in the next section I would like to highlight an entirely Christian tradition which, albeit apocryphal, portrays the True Cross as a literal tree. This tradition is equally premised on the True, physical Rood, which occupied a specific point in time in history. In so doing it will broaden *The Dream*’s narrative to be more comprehensive of Christian history and theology, as well as ground this discussion of memory and locution further in the material culture of Christian Crosses.

### The Cosmic Scope—The Savior’s Tree

There is a curious vein of literature regarding the Life of the Cross circulating medieval Western Europe which has many reflexes in both Latin and vernacular writing, as well as art—all of which display a fair amount of variation but agree on one general theme: that is, the life of the Cross *before* Christ. The most famous iteration of this legend and widely known in our times is from Jacobus de Voragine’s *Legenda Aurea*, written around 1260. Voragine begins the section entitled *Inventio Sanctae Crucis* by referencing the *Gospel of Nicodemus* and an unnamed “apocryphal” Greek source; he presents a few competing narratives that place the material origin Cross of the Crucifixion in the Garden of Eden itself. Adam’s son, Seth, returns to the gates of Earthly Paradise to seek aid for his ailing father. There, he is greeted by the archangel Michael and given either “a shoot from the

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<sup>190</sup> “More wonderful tree,” “Lord’s Tree,” “tree of wonder.”

<sup>191</sup> Obermeyer, 29-32. offers a summary of these arguments. Generally, for each posited Germanic influence, an opposing Christian influence can be identified. He highlights a particularly egregious example in M. D. Faber, “The Dream of the Rood: A Few Psychoanalytic Reflections,” *Psychoanalytic Review* 73.2 (1986): 183-90, where the Rood is seen as a coping mechanism for recently converted pagans.

<sup>192</sup> S. G. Proskurin & П. С Геннадьевич, “Interpretations of the Mythologeme “Tree-Cross” in Old English,” *Journal of Siberian Federal University, Humanities & Social Sciences* (2020): 316-326, offers an exploration on a semiotic level of how generationally, with increasing belief in Christianity and decreasing understanding of the pagan, a pre-Christian world-tree conception might be usurped by various tree or vine symbolism in Christianity.

Tree of Mercy,” or a “branch from the tree under which Adam committed his sin.”<sup>193</sup> This sapling from an Edenic, primordial tree is then planted over Adam’s grave, where it survives into the time of Solomon. Solomon, who admired the tree for its beauty, felled it to incorporate it in a construction of his—yet the tree was illusive in its fit, both too short and too long, so it was cast over a creek to serve as a bridge.<sup>194</sup> There it laid until Queen Sheba one day refused to cross it, prophesying its importance to salvation history. Subsequently, Solomon had the tree removed and buried, until it was excavated and used by the Jews in the Crucifixion. After the Crucifixion, De Voragine’s narrative takes the shape of the well-known *Inventio* legends regarding St. Helena, which actually comprises the bulk of the chapter and is intended to be its focus. This story is also depicted in frescos by the renaissance painter Piero della Francesca in the Italian basilica San Francesco di Arezzo. In the nineteenth century there was extensive scholarship done on the interrelationship between the extant versions of these legends of the Cross before Christ, which range from Welsh to Old Norse, to Middle French and Middle English, as well as Latin prose and poetic adaptations.<sup>195</sup> Our first attested inkling of a life of the Cross before Christ is grounded in the *Vita Adami et Evae*, stretching as far back as the ninth or tenth centuries, but even up into the twelfth century—as seen in Voragine’s tenuous handling of the apocryphal origins of the Cross in Eden, there is a lack of agreement on the nuance of the Cross’ journey before Christ.<sup>196</sup> What is revealed by the extant versions of these Legends is a general desire to connect the mechanism of Christ’s Crucifixion to a meaningful point in the primordial past. This teleological trend culminates in connecting the True Cross back to Adam and The Tree of Knowledge in the Garden of Eden, given it is the impetus for the entirety of the Christian story, and finds its expression in increasingly symbolic placements of the True Cross’ journey in seminal moments throughout the Old Testament—such as the purifying tree cast into the water by Moses in Exodus XV:25, or versions where there are three trees, representing the three crucifixes on Golgotha, which Solomon plants and commands to be bound together every thirty years with silver rings.<sup>197</sup>

As in the *Legenda Aurea*, this literature is also intimately tied in many examples to the *Inventio* of the Cross by St. Helena. Often in these legends there is no distinction between the life of the Cross before Christ and after. The most comprehensive analysis of this material was conducted by Willhelm Meyer in his 1881 *Geschichte des Kreuzholzes vor Christus*, where he argues for vernacular iterations having their roots in a twelfth century Latin original.<sup>198</sup> Scholars since, however, have come to fine-tune Meyer’s arguments; most

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<sup>193</sup> Jacobus De Voragine, *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints*, trans. William Granger Ryan, vol. 1 (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993): 277.

<sup>194</sup> In the *Legenda Aurea*, Solomon seeks to use the tree for his country home, however in most other Cross Legends, the felled wood is intended for the Temple.

<sup>195</sup> Arthur S Napier, *History of the Holy Rood-tree: A Twelfth Century Version of the Cross-legend, with Notes on the Orthography of the Ormulum and a Middle English Compassio Mariae* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and, 1894): xii-xiii.

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*, xiii; also see Meyer, Wilhelm. “Die Geschichte des Kreuzholzes vor Christus.” *Abhandlungen der Philosophisch-Philologischen Classe der Königlich Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften* 16 (1882): 106.

<sup>197</sup> Napier, *Holy-rood Tree*, xxxvi; Meyer 115-116.

<sup>198</sup> Meyer, 106-112.

notably Arthur S. Napier, who in 1894 did so in his introduction to a thitherto unpublished Old English version of the Cross Legend. His arguments essentially restructure Meyer's division of the extant Cross Legends into two categories, one remaining closer to the Latin legend and another which he calls the Rood-tree group—these share distinct characteristics with the accompanying Old English version.<sup>199</sup> Napier critiques Meyer's conclusions that the source for all extant versions of the Cross Legend is the Latin and hypothesizes a now lost archetype from which our extant versions commonly derive. Crucial to this study on *The Dream of the Rood* is Napier's subsequent proposition that the Old English version titled *The History of the Holy Rood-Tree*, which he publishes in facsimile version, originates from an eleventh century original—placing it in the same sunset years of the Anglo-Saxon period in which the Brussels Cross and Vercelli Book were composed.<sup>200</sup> In the context of this historiography, I would like to argue that the Rood-corpus, with its 300-year life-span and unknown number of now-lost variants, represents either a nascent stage in the development of such Cross Legends, or more likely, an echo symptomatic of and fully harmonious with such nascent developments. To do so, I will again treat *The Dream of the Rood* as it appears in the Vercelli Book as an expansion of themes already present or perceived in the archetypal poem that begat the Rood-corpus. This pursuit, I believe, is intrinsically tied to the discussion of memory outlined above. By exploring the life of the Rood before the Crucifixion in the context of the eschatological elements present in *The Dream*, a congruence will emerge that encompasses the cosmic scope of the Christian salvation story lending credence to the notion that the Rood-corpus is harmonious with these Cross Legends.

The clearest reference to the life of the Rood before Christ occurs between lines 27 and 30, the same lines referenced above where the Rood's memory is revealed by its speech:

Ongan þa word sprecað wudu selesta:  
 Ðæt wæs geara iu (ic þæt gyta geman)  
 þæt ic wæs aheawen holtes on ende,  
 astyred of stefne minum. Genaman me ðær strange feondas,

*Then it began to speak words the best wood*  
*“that was years ago (I that still remember)*  
*That I was ahewn at bolt's end*  
*Stirred from my stem strong foes seized me there,*

This passage, directly referencing the life of the Rood before Christ as a tree in a forest, is paralleled by many epithets for the Rood throughout the poem calling it some form of tree, such as: “holtwudu,” “Wealdendes treow,” or “sigebeam.”<sup>201</sup> There is likewise in lines 90-91

<sup>199</sup> See Napier, Chapter IV, xxxv.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid., lviii; Napier argues for the age of the Old English Cross Legend on the grounds of consistent and unforgeable archaisms in the language, which are synonymous with the other texts in the manuscript that are known transcriptions of eleventh century texts.

<sup>201</sup> “Holt-wood,” “the Lord's Tree,” “Victory-tree.”

the statement that “the Lord of Glory honored me then over all wood of the forest.”<sup>202</sup> These constant references to the erstwhile tree-state of the Rood and memory’s primacy in the poem exhort the reader to dwell on the fact that the Rood had a life before it was called upon to fulfill its sacred duty at the Crucifixion. This is intended to have a contemplative effect on the reader, as exemplified by the Rood’s homily after the Crucifixion, where Christians are, like the Rood, called to abandon their role in the mundane and take up their crosses. Yet, relevant to this analysis, it also shows that the life of the Rood before the Crucifixion wields symbolic importance. There is also the mystifying statement in lines 37b-38a where the Rood states that “I could have felled all enemies there,” a statement which echoes the scene unique to Napier’s Rood-tree group, where a woman accidentally sits on the Rood-tree, which subsequently bursts into flames.<sup>203</sup> At the least this statement mirrors conceptions of the Rood’s capacity to do so. Finally, there is the esoteric usage of *stefne* in this passage, where it means “trunk” or “stem,” something most foundational to the nature of a tree and is here used in the context of the Rood being uprooted from that fundament. However, the more common meaning of this word is “voice,” which is indeed employed in line 71 when the “voice of the warriors depart” after Christ is buried.<sup>204</sup> This double entendraic usage is of interest given the explication of the Rood’s speech pertaining to memory in the previous section. This matrix of associations between the Rood, its life as a tree, and Cross Legends before Christ is alluring, but the evidence is disparate. One major connection between *The Dream* and these Legends is that there is an *Inventio* scene in the poem and Cross Legends often encompass the same event, not distinguishing between the Rood’s journey before and after the Crucifixion.<sup>205</sup> This relationship vis-à-vis the *Inventio* by St. Helena is substantiated by the simple fact that the compiler of the Vercelli Book in which *The Dream* appears found it apropos to include *Elene* shortly after it. However, to strengthen this matrix of associations between *The Dream* and Legends regarding the life of the Rood before Christ necessitates looking at the eschatological implications of the Celestial Rood, the Rood which in *The Dream* speaks. This pursuit will substantiate the presupposition proposed above, that always the True Rood is to be perceived.

The Celestial Rood that appears to the dreamer, speaking and revealing its personal memories of the Crucifixion, is an intriguing image that has received much scholarly attention—most highlighting its eschatological implications, an example of which, *‘Id est, crux Christi:’ tracing the Old English Motif of the Celestial Rood* written by Brandon W. Hawk, presents a nuanced genealogy of the motif. The essentials of his study are that over the course of centuries, beginning in the first century after Christ’s death and finding prominent expression in second century AD apocrypha and patristic exegeses, there accumulated a consensus that the *Signum Dei* mentioned in Matthew XXIV:30 as the sign of the Parousia is

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<sup>202</sup> „Hwæt, me þa geweorðode wuldres Ealdor ofer holtwudu.“

<sup>203</sup> “Ealle ic mihte feondas gefyllan, hwæðre ic fæste stod.”; Napier, xxxv.

<sup>204</sup> Orchard, “Cross-references,” 229.

<sup>205</sup> Lines: 75-77.

to be the cross.<sup>206</sup> Hawk demonstrates that this motif was particularly popular and widespread in Anglo-Saxon England and neighboring Celtic lands. There are two common representations of the motif found in literature, the first as a passive banner and the second as an active agent. Hawk qualifies these two versions: “In the former, the cross is carried by angels at the Judgement as a symbol of victory; in the latter, the cross itself floats ahead of Christ as an animate entity—though these two types are not mutually exclusive, and often converge.”<sup>207</sup> Indeed, converge in *The Dream* they do, where semantic ambiguity, a hallmark of good and lasting poetry, allows interpretation of the statement in line 9b, “Beheoldon þær engel Dryhtnes ealle,” as either a literal Angel or an epithet for the Celestial Rood.<sup>208</sup> Hawk concludes his paper by stating:

Although the earliest Christian contexts of the celestial cross are deeply rooted in apocalypticism, in turning to Old English literature we find the celestial cross within more diverse literary settings. Nonetheless, much of the imagery presented derives from Matthew XXIV-XXV, IV Ezra and a general tradition of apocalyptic and patristic thought... the image of the celestial rood derives from early Christian apocalypses and biblical interpretation and was disseminated to Anglo-Saxon England through a variety of materials, especially widely accessible liturgical hymns. As the image spread, its use in Christian materials continued to augment the motif to create a matrix of associations that affect its use in Anglo-Saxon settings; yet, as it manifests in Old English depictions, the motif retains its deep-seated eschatological connections.<sup>209</sup>

Hawk references Latin Hymns in Anglo-Saxon England as an important body of literature for disseminating the concept of the Celestial Rood. Specifically, he points to the hymns *Pange Lingua* and *Vexilla Regis Prodeunt* of sixth century Gallic poet Venantius Fortunatus as culprits.<sup>210</sup> *Vexilla Regis* is crucial for his study due to its opening lines: “Vexilla regis prodeunt, / fulgent crucis mysteria,” which paint a triumphant and shining image of a Celestial Rood.<sup>211</sup> Hawk also notes that in the Durham Hymnal, the Old English interlinear gloss on these lines presents a close literal translation: 'gukfanan cynges forkstreppak / scinao rode geryne.'<sup>212</sup> These hymns are equally cited by others for their importance in the

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<sup>206</sup> Matthæus XXIV:30 „et tunc parebit signum Filii hominis in cælo: et tunc plangent omnes tribus terræ: et videbunt Filium hominis venientem in nubibus cæli cum virtute multa et majestate.“ *And then the sign of the Son of Man will be seen in Heaven: and then all the tribes of the Earth will lament: and thereupon they will see the coming Son of Man in the clouds of Heaven with great strength and majesty.*

<sup>207</sup> Hawk, 56.

<sup>208</sup> Swanton, *The Dream of the Rood*, 107. Swanton discusses possible interpretations for *engel*, potentially it refers to Christ, but this makes no sense at this point in the poem. The best explanation is to take *engel* in the sense of “messenger” and as an epithet for the Rood, or as a part of the subject and described by *ealle*.

<sup>209</sup> Hawk, 72-73.

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

<sup>211</sup> *The banners of the Lord are advancing / the mysteries of the Cross are shining.*

<sup>212</sup> Hawk, 58. *The banners of the King go forth / the mystery of the Rood shines.* (Durham, Cathedral Library B. III. 32; s. xi).

putative milieu of composition for *The Dream*. As hymns sung at the feast of the Exaltation of the Cross and used as examples for teaching at Monastic Schools, their input is indispensable and likely to have influenced the highly literate poet of the Vercelli Book's *Dream of the Rood*.<sup>213</sup> For example, there is a curious stanza in *Vexilla Regis Prodeunt* that presents another extra-biblical instance of tree-language, tying this discussion back to the apocryphal Cross Legends discussed above:

Impleta sunt quae concinit  
David fideli carmine,  
dicendo nationibus:  
regnavit a ligno Deus. (13-16)

*They are fulfilled, which  
David sings with devoted song,  
to be preached to nations:  
God has ruled from the tree.*<sup>214</sup>

The underlined verse above, “Regnavit a ligno Deus,” is supposedly a reference to a controversial line of disputed origin in Psalm XCV. This line is not present in any extant Hebrew version of the psalms, yet as early as St. Justin Martyr (c. 100–156 AD) it is referenced and claimed that the Jews had erased this from their scriptures due to its Christian implications.<sup>215</sup> It is out of the scope of this paper to claim a direct relationship between this specific line and Cross Legends, or its original authenticity (which is dubious), but the claim of Jewish conspiracy to conceal an aspect of the Rood is very reminiscent of the Jewish role portrayed in legends of St. Helena, such as in the *Legenda Aurea*, or the Old English Version *Elene* in the Vercelli Book. In these legends there is a multi-day battle of wits between St. Helena and the Jews of Jerusalem to convince them to reveal where the True Cross is buried. The Jews had supposedly hidden the crosses after the Crucifixion in anticipation of the day when Christians would come searching. In lines 75–77 in *The Dream* there is a very brief reference to the *Inventio*.<sup>216</sup> Thus, these sources highlighted above pertaining to the eschatological, Celestial Rood are equally relevant to the True Cross in *The Dream* and *Elene*. In fact, the very occasion of composition for the hymns cited above presents a unique tie-in not to just the True Cross as represented in literature, but the physical True Cross. That is, these hymns were composed by Venantius Fortunatus for the

<sup>213</sup> Inge B Milfull, “Hymns to the Cross: Contexts for the Reception of Vexilla Regis Prodeunt.” *The Place of the Cross in Anglo-Saxon England* 4 (2006): 54.

<sup>214</sup> Holderness, “The Sign of the Cross,” 355-336.

<sup>215</sup> See Kirkpatrick, *Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*. Commentary on Psalm 96:10. *Biblehub.com*.

<sup>216</sup> In these lines the Rood switches into third person. Translations available online struggle with who the plural is referring to, haphazardly reiterating the “unc butu” statement from line 48 in their translation. The simplest explanation is that when the Rood states in line 73 that “someone felled us,” it is referring to all three Crucifixes present on Golgotha and subsequently found by St. Helena.



*adventus* of a True Cross relic to the Poitiers convent in France, given by Emperor Justin II in 569, only a mere 250 years after the finding of the True Cross by St. Helena.<sup>217</sup>

True Cross relics are inseparable from the *Inventio* attributed to St. Helena, who herself is inseparable from her son Constantine's vision in 312 AD at the Battle of Milvian Bridge and subsequent conversion to Christianity. Indeed, this event is the impetus for the Cross as a symbol in Christianity as a whole.<sup>218</sup> Despite modern scholarship's ability to nitpick the minutiae of Constantine's conversion story, or the validity of the *Inventio*'s attribution to St. Helena, to the Anglo-Saxon of eighth to eleventh century England these narratives were fact and taken wholesale. This is plainly evident in Cynewulf's *Elene* in the Vercelli Book. In this poem, there are two descriptions of the Rood that bear striking similarities. One is in fact another Celestial Rood, appearing as Cynewulf's iteration of Constantine's famed vision before battle, and the other is the True Cross itself. Both are described as a *Crux Gemmata*, i.e., "jeweled crosses." The Celestial Rood in part I lines 88–90 is said to be: "brilliant with ornate treasures, the beautiful Tree of Glory in the vault of the skies, decorated with gold, gleaming with jewels," and the reliquary for the True Cross commissioned by St. Helena in section XII lines 1022–8: "Then she commanded that the Rood be encased in gold and intricately set with gems, with the noblest of precious stones, and enclosed with locks in a silver casket. Unimpeachable as to its origin."<sup>219</sup> In the first quote is another example of tree-language describing the Rood, this time a Celestial Rood, showing that there is equally a tradition of calling the Rood a tree present in *Elene* as well.

Looking back at these so-called *Cruces Gemmatae*, in his essay *Constantinian Crosses in Northumbria*, Ian Wood establishes that by the fifth century in the art and literature of Western Europe the image of the *Crux Gemmata* was synonymous with the True Cross found and glorified by St. Helena. Wood brings up a poignant example of this development in the early fifth century apse mosaic in the church of Santa Pudenziana in Rome, which depicts Christ enthroned in either earthly or heavenly Jerusalem, and behind him is a hill, upon which stands an immense, golden *Crux Gemmata*. The Cross here also has a distinct Celestial Rood appearance. Wood's purpose in his essay is to explore whether a literal *Crux Gemmata* supposedly erected on Golgotha might have provided the impetus for standing crosses erected in Northumbria in the ninth century, something he deems tenuous but plausible. What he does establish however is that the *Crux Gemmata*, as a "cross of the imagination," was for the Anglo-Saxons intimately associated with the relic of the True Cross believed to have been found and glorified by St. Helena in Jerusalem. Wood states, "The *Crux Gemmata* is very closely associated with the wooden cross on which Christ was crucified, nowhere more so than in *The Dream of the Rood*, though descriptions in *Elene* and in Æthelwulf's *De abbatibus* are not far behind."<sup>220</sup> What this means is that by the eighth century, the earliest attested date for a manifestation of the Rood-corpus, and undoubtedly

<sup>217</sup> Milfull, "Hymns to the Cross," 43.

<sup>218</sup> Swanton, *The Dream of the Rood*, 42.

<sup>219</sup> Ian Wood, "Constantinian Crosses in Northumbria." *The Place of the Cross in Anglo-Saxon England* 4 (2006): 6-7.

<sup>220</sup> Wood, "Constantinian Crosses in Northumbria," 12.

by the eleventh, there was a popular consensus among Anglo-Saxons that a *Crux Gemmata* in some way represents the True, physical Rood.

Returning to *The Dream of the Rood* with this matrix of Rood implications established, it is apparent that in *The Dream*, as well as in *Elene*, the Celestial Rood is simultaneously *Crux Gemmata*. That is, the eschatological Rood, the *Signum Dei* before the Parousia first mentioned in Matthew XXIV, is the physical, True Cross. Its first appearance in *The Dream* is described “Eall þæt beacen wæs begoten mid golde; gimmas stodon fægere æt foldan sceatum,” *All that beacon was begotten with gold, gems stood fair at the corners of the Earth.*<sup>221</sup> Thus, the same Rood that physically endured Christ’s Crucifixion reveals itself to the Dreamer with a bejeweled and glorified façade, a post-*Inventio* appearance. This very Rood, uniting all of the disparate aspects of the Rood hitherto mentioned, reveals its memories in the fashion established in the previous section. However, the context of this Rood’s apparition itself connects it to the Cross Legends in which I seek to couch *The Dream of the Rood*. The teleological trend revealed by the extant versions of these Legends is the general desire to connect the mechanism of Christ’s Crucifixion to a meaningful point in the primordial past. The natural culmination of this trend in a society that perceives an active God with an active role in history, a society which recognizes the teleological in everything, is to connect the instrument of the climax of the Christian story to the beginning. Thus, the Rood that begat eternal life, in a sense, must naturally be connected to the Rood that ended it at the beginning of Creation, or in some manner to Earthly Paradise. Looking back then at the context of the Celestial Rood’s apparition in *The Dream*, it is described as appearing before an awe-inspired, idyllic, and Edenic creation. “Beheoldon þær engel Dryhtnes ealle”—this ambiguous line, cited above regarding the apparition of the Celestial Rood, has been taken two ways by editors, both of which work in this context.<sup>222</sup> Either “*all* [of Creation] beheld there the Angel (Rood) of the Lord,” or “*all the angels* of the Lord behold there [the Celestial Rood].” It is a choice between either the entirety of Creation, of which the Angels are a part, or an emphasis on the highest orders of Creation, the totality of the hierarchy of angels beholding there the Celestial True Cross.<sup>223</sup> This clause is finished in line 10 with a reference to the eternity of the Rood, then the Edenic scene encompassing the totality of Creation is even more clearly articulated: “ac hine þær beheoldon halige gastas, men ofer moldan, ond eall þeos mære gesceaft.”<sup>224</sup> Shortly after this comes the twice cited section where the Rood reveals its memory, lines 27–30, exposing the time when it was a living tree, the clearest parallel to the Legends of a life before Christ. Thus, in this short succession of lines we have the Celestial, eschatological Rood, represented as the True Cross, speaking to the entirety of Creation—revealing to them a time when it itself was part thereof. There is here, then, directly preceding the most explicit mention of the Rood’s life before Christ, a semantic implication thereof by this Edenic witness to the Rood’s apparition. This meaning-laden

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<sup>221</sup> Lines 6b – 8a.

<sup>222</sup> Line 9.

<sup>223</sup> Swanton, 107-108. The form of *engel* is singular, yet Swanton provides a number of ways in which past editors have argued for a plurality of angels representing the subject.

<sup>224</sup> Lines 11-12: *But there were beholding holy spirits, men upon the Earth and all this glorious Creation.*

dream-vision is harmonious with the evolution of Cross Legends, the Edenic context of the Rood's apparition representing the general teleological magnetism placing the origins of the Rood in Eden. It is worthy of note then, that the imagery of the Rood before Creation and subjugation of Nature by the Eschatological is equally represented in the Ruthwell Cross. The Ruthwell Cross' version of *The Dream* is inscribed surrounding the east-facing panel, the one which bears the 'Tree of Life' motif, also called inhabited vine scroll. Likewise, the Eschatological subjugates Creation on the north-side, where Christ as Judge is depicted standing on two subdued, fantastical beasts.<sup>225</sup> To round out this reference back to the Rood-corpus' material culture, the Brussels Cross is itself a *Crux Gemmata* and a True Cross. Thus, each version of the Rood in *The Dream*: the eschatological Rood, the *Crux Gemmata*, and the Rood which is tied to Creation, can all be appropriately found in the Rood-corpus' material culture.

Scholars have posited many ways of dividing the poem to dissect its meaning. Aside from the natural tendency to separate the poem by speaker, Dreamer and Rood, various fourfold and fivefold divisions have been put forth.<sup>226</sup> In light of the above analysis, I wish to posit one more. The poem can be divided in half at line 78. The half preceding is a recounting of memory, both Dreamer's and Rood's, within which is a symbolic representation of the Christian salvation story, decreasing in abstraction until the moment of the Crucifixion when it becomes a mere narrative of events. Then, only after the *Inventio* scene, when the Rood is glorified and becomes a *Crux Gemmata*, donning the physical appearance of not just the True Cross, but the garb of the Celestial Rood that kickstarted the dream itself, does the first half end. This event encapsulates all of the versions of the Rood mentioned above into a single item. The second half, beginning manifestly with a change in tone and a direct appellation to the Dreamer by the Rood, "Nu ðu miht gehyran, hæleð min se leofa..." is not just homily, but theological explication of the symbolic events present in the first half.<sup>227</sup> Recalling the observation above that the dream is simply and strictly a vision of the Celestial Rood before "all this glorious Creation," the Rood, after the cited exhortation, then claims in the exact same words that "men over earth, *and all this glorious creation*, will pray for themselves to this beacon."<sup>228</sup> The subsequent theological explication it provides is a clarification of the symbolism and events of the first half:

*Now I bid you, my beloved man,  
that you this sight tell unto men;  
reveal with words that it is the Tree of Glory  
which Almighty God suffered upon*

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<sup>225</sup> Swanton, 13-23.

<sup>226</sup> Obermeyer, *Relationship of Theology and Rood*, 35 provides an overview. Generally, these divisions involve a synthesis of speaker and literary content, some sections being more homiletic or exhortative than others.

<sup>227</sup> Line 78: *now you may heed, beloved man of mine...*

<sup>228</sup> Line 13: *ond eall þeos mære gesceaft*; Lines 82-83: *menn ofer moldan ond eall þeos mære gesceaft, gebiddaþ him to byssum beacne*; Mize, „Mental Container and the Cross“ 163 observes similarly this scene before an idyllic nature, where the *Crux Gemmata* is literal Treasure in the Dreamer's Mental-board.

*for mankind's manifold sins  
and Adam's ancient deeds.*

This clarification clearly contains the seeds of what would become the Cross Legends. The Rood identifies itself with Adam via the deeds performed upon it, “the Tree of Glory,” by Christ. While this point can partially be chalked up to a desire by the poet to write a theologically sound elegy, something also evident in the terminology for Christ throughout the poem that ensures an orthodox Christology, the literary structure of symbol and explication follows a paradigm laid out by St. Augustine.<sup>229</sup> Namely, it corresponds to his discussion of *res* and *signa*, “things” and “signs,” in his *De Doctrina Christiana*. In short, St. Augustine states all signs are things, but not all things are signs. He establishes this to instruct fellow clergy on proper exegetical practices—signs are to be scrutinized properly to reveal proper theology.<sup>230</sup> An example he provides of something that is both thing and sign is the tree Moses cast into the bitter waters to make them sweet, or the stone that Jacob used as a pillow.<sup>231</sup> In *The Dream of the Rood*, the Rood is both thing, a *Crux Gemmata* or True Cross, and sign, which in its own homily it explicates. The relation to *De Doctrina Christiana* has been made regarding the poem before, for example Dr. Calvin Kendall has used the paradigm to illuminate shared implications between *The Dream* and the Ruthwell Cross.<sup>232</sup> However, the observation has not been made in the sense that each of the theological elements explicated by the poem’s closing homilies were symbolically present or expected to be perceived as signs in the first half of the poem. Namely, the Rood itself—glorified through its interaction with Christ, it is *res* made *signa*.

This confluence of *res* and *signa* in the Rood strengthens its tie to Cross Legends, where the *res* of the True Cross is carried back into meaningful moments in biblical history by the scribes who wrote them to make it a *signa*. In *The Dream of the Rood*, the Rood is represented as every ‘thing’ that the True Cross was at some point in time, according to the Cross Legends: tree, crucifix, and relic. Likewise, the Rood as *res* and *signa* is in order with the presupposition laid out at the beginning of the paper, that in the archetypal poem, it was always intended that we perceive the True Cross as the speaker. That is, the Rood as sign and thing.

To conclude this section, which has sought to connect *The Dream* to a literature that emphasizes the earliest stages of Christian history, and in so doing highlight the entirety of Christian history encapsulated within the poem, I would like to bring the eschatological again to the fore. To do so necessitates one final idea from St. Augustine. That is, that words, or language, are uniquely *only* signs: “There are signs of another kind, those which are never employed except as signs: for example, words. No one uses words except as signs

<sup>229</sup> As an example, line 39 states: “Ongyrede hine þa geong hæleð - þæt wæs God ælmihtig” *undressed himself then [the] young warrior - that was God Almighty*, ensuring both the human and divine natures of Christ are accounted for.

<sup>230</sup> Calvin B Kendall, “From Sign to Vision: The Ruthwell Cross and *The Dream of the Rood*.” *The Place of the Cross in Anglo-Saxon England* 4 (2006): 129.

<sup>231</sup> Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana*, liber I caput ii.

<sup>232</sup> Kendall, “From Sign to Vision: The Ruthwell Cross and *The Dream of the Rood*.”

of something else; and hence may be understood what I call signs.”<sup>233</sup> Given the primacy of speech established in the previous section, and its ability to yield the contents of the mental container, it bears noticing that after the exhortation to proselytism by the Rood cited above, the Celestial, eschatological Rood, describes the Judgment in terms of what Christ will “say.”

*Nor may there any unafraid be  
before the words that the Wielder speaks.  
He asks before the many where that one is  
who for God's name was willing of death's  
bitterness to taste, as he there on the Tree did.  
But they then are afraid, and few think  
what they to Christ might begin to speak.*<sup>234</sup>

### Conclusion

My chief desire is that this essay has illuminated the constellation of meaning present within and surrounding the Rood-corpus, with the cumulative effect of establishing the *evocative milieu* in which it was encountered. *The Dream of the Rood*, like the Rood itself which is the nexus between life before and after Christ, constitutes a nexus between Cross Legend and Cross *Inventio*, and a liminal space between an abstract overarching Christian narrative preserved in literature and its manifestations in material culture. It is only natural that the Rood, with its centrality in the Christian story, has wielded the immense gravitational pull that coalesced such a constellation of meanings around it. Yet this Old English literature, with its appearance on such disparate items as the Ruthwell and Brussels Crosses, presents a unique medium for this constellation's exploration. Straddling not only fascinating artifacts of material culture, but a unique emphasis on memory and speech in its literary content, it is no wonder that the Rood-corpus enjoyed such a long lifespan. Broadly speaking, this essay has sought to take the scholar out from within the mind (or mental container) of a single poet, and place them in front of the Rood, wherefrom this constellation of meaning is visible. This is partially done to resurrect a contemporary impetus for spiritual or religious experience sensed upon an encounter with the Rood-corpus, predicated on the personal memory and experience of the Rood at the Crucifixion. Moreover, the Rood's mental container, couched in the teleological trends of its contemporary Cross Legends, brings its memory faculties back to the earliest days of Creation, the days which in the Bible are most latent with meaning—where *signa* are most prevalent. This reveals a grander, more cosmic scope of the Christian salvation story elicited within the Rood-corpus, specifically shown in the dream-vision of *The Dream of the Rood*.

<sup>233</sup> Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana*, liber I caput ii.; Translation from *Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*. <https://faculty.georgetown.edu/jod/augustine/>.

<sup>234</sup> Lines: 110-116.

Both angst for the end-of-days and echoes from their beginning are present in a way which is told from the perspective of one who witnessed the whole thing. This placement of the scholar in front of the Rood also enables an exploration of the fundamental features of the archetypal poem that begat the Rood-corpus. The Rood-corpus, due to its longevity and disparate attestations, is impossible to be attributed to a single poet. However, when looking at the archetype's manifestations within the context of the corpus' *evocative milieu*, it is easy to see why this poem, constituted by the mental container of the True Cross, found itself inscribed on one, the Brussels Cross, or on a "preaching-cross" like Ruthwell. It is only natural that this perambulating mental container, i.e., the archetypal poem, when inserted into a dreaming mind, a place where the impossible is possible, would develop into the hyper-dense yet kaleidoscopic summation of the Christian story known to us as *The Dream of the Rood*. I thank the reader for partaking on this wending and unconventional analysis.

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# EXETER BOOK

## RIDDLE 29

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### ABSTRACT

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A translation of the Exeter Book's Riddle 29. This creative translation goes beyond the literal, offering a more poetic interpretation that plays into and extends the themes and ideas of the original Old English version. Accompanying the riddle and its translation is a short introduction to the Exeter Book for historical context.

### INTRODUCTION

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The Exeter Book (Exeter Cathedral Library MS 3501) is a unique look into Old English, as it is one of only four known poetic manuscripts written in the language—the other three being the Beowulf, Junius, and Vercelli manuscripts. Of these four, the Exeter Book is the largest, best preserved, and likely the oldest. It was written around the year 970 by a single scribe before being gifted to the Exeter Cathedral by Bishop Leofric, who died in 1072. The book contains several long religious poems and short verses, as well as 95 riddles—though the count and numbering of certain riddles has been debated. The translation below is of Riddle 29, as numbered by Kevin Crossley-Holland in “The Exeter Book Riddles,” though the transcription I used is from Peter Baker’s “Introduction to Old English,” where it is labeled “Riddle C.” Baker’s listed solution to the riddle is “Moon and Sun;” my looser translation suggests the more abstract solution of the day/night cycle as a whole, as represented by two creatures, instead of the physical celestial objects.

**RIDDLE C (PETER BAKER'S INTRODUCTION TO OLD ENGLISH)**

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Ic wiht ġeseah	wundorlice
hornum betwēonan	hūþe lædan
lyftfæt lēohlic	listum ġegierwed
hūþe tō þām hām	of þām heresiþe:
wolde hire on þære byrig	būr ātimbran,
searwum āsettan,	ġif hit swā meahte.
Ðā cwōm wundorlicu wiht	ofer wealles hrōf
(sēo is eallum cūð	eorðbūendum);
āhredde þā þā hūþe	ond tō hām bedrāf
wreccan ofer willan;	ġewāt hire west þonan
fæhpum fēran,	forð ōnette.
Dūst stonc tō heofonum;	dēaw fēol on eorþan;
niht forð ġewāt.	Nāenig siþþan
wera ġewiste	þære wihte sið.

**CREATIVE TRANSLATION**

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I saw a wonderful creature,  
 gilder of the star-bright sky-vessel,  
 spill stolen spoils  
 between horns,  
 bringing the luminous wealth  
 to the home  
 of war.  
 She sought sanctuary  
 in that city of silver,  
 to construct herself  
 a chamber with skill,

if she so could.  
Then came over  
the summit of that structure  
a second creature  
(she who was known  
to all earth-dwellers)  
spiriting away  
that illicit gleaming glory,  
winging westward home,  
awakening without her will;  
the feud-flight sustained  
endlessly onwards.  
Dust rose to the heavens;  
dew fell to the earth;  
night departed forth.  
We watchers below  
are left in darkness  
about the journey  
above.

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# BOOK REVIEW: ARVIND THOMAS: PIERS PLOWMAN AND THE REINVENTION OF CHURCH LAW IN THE LATE MIDDLE AGES

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## PREFACE

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The Middle English poem *Piers Plowman* by William Langland was written in the late fourteenth century and survives in around fifty manuscript editions. This (rightly) evokes scholarly interest in the text because such an abundance of physical manuscripts is rare for texts belonging to the medieval period. This textual abundance is indicative of the poem's popularity—it has been said that *Piers Plowman* was the single most popular text in England for a time.

The poem itself is a series of dream visions, and sometimes dreams within dreams. The main character, Will, over the course of his journey, meets and interacts with

personified theological, moral, and social attributes such as Mede and Contricion, Faith, Hope, and Wrong. Through these interactions, the poem paints a new vision of canon law while simultaneously satirizing contemporary social and religious norms.

Langland wrote three different versions of the poem, known as the A-, B-, and C-versions. These three variants appear to revise each other—A was the first edition (dating to the 1360s), followed by B (c. 1377), followed by C (sometime after 1388). A-version has typically been cast as a half-finished draft—it is significantly shorter than B and C, and significantly less refined. B is often hailed as the apex of the poem’s revisional trajectory, whereas C has suffered from the critique that it is not “poetic” enough. Generally, the three versions move towards a progressively sharper rendition of canon law; Langland appears to have refined his thoughts on the subject over time, and modified his seminal work accordingly.

In addition to Langland’s revisions, scribes who copied the poem often made their own interventions: in some cases fusing multiple versions, supplementing the A-version with pieces from the other texts, or even changing the text to suit the preferences of their patrons. The organic process of copying texts makes it difficult to differentiate between Langland’s deliberate literary choices and the intervention of third parties. It also creates a vast web of literary realities; Langland *and* the scribes are both responsible for establishing normative religious behavior via the poem and its stories. Effectively, the entire book production sphere of fourteenth century England operated in conjunction with canon law to enforce Christian modes of thought.

The following review is of Arvind Thomas’ *Piers Plowman and the Reinvention of Church Law in the Late Middle Ages*, a deep and exploratory treatise on the reciprocal relationship between literature and canon law in medieval England as seen in *Piers Plowman*.

For further exploration, we encourage readers to leaf through the scans of British Library MS 35157, a fourteenth century copy of *Piers Plowman*, C-version:

[http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Add\\_MS\\_35157](http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Add_MS_35157)

## BOOK REVIEW

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ARVIND THOMAS, *Piers Plowman and the Reinvention of Church Law in the Late Middle Ages*. University of Toronto Press, 2019.

Arvind Thomas' *Piers Plowman and the Reinvention of Church Law* is a probing exploration of the relationship between the allegorical poem *Piers Plowman* and the rapidly developing concept of canon law in the late Middle Ages. Over the course of five chapters, the book deconstructs Langland's treatment of penance, and the way the poet effectively does the job of regulating Christian normative behavior through the narrative of the poem. Naturally, the book becomes ensnared in the hot-button issue that surrounds *Piers Plowman* like a mist: did Langland intend to critique canon law, or did he aim to re-enforce it? In contrast to the Langland editor A.V.C. Schmidt, Thomas argues that if the first and last confessional scenes are read alongside contemporary confessors' manuals, then both the B and C versions can be seen to stress penitential orthodoxy rather than reform. Of *Piers Plowman's* treatment of the confessions of Mede and Contricion, Thomas writes, "the poem finds fault not with the procedures of canon law but with those entrusted with their implementation."<sup>235</sup>

Asserting a stance, however, on the issue of whether or not Langland favored orthodoxy is not the purpose of this book. Rather, Thomas complicates the debate by proposing that *Piers Plowman* exists neither to reject nor to re-enforce, but instead to *reinvent* canon law. Thomas convincingly argues his point throughout the text, taking up point by point the elements that form the act of contrition and exploring how each is portrayed within the B and C texts of the poem. According to Thomas, medieval canon law was not nearly as static as some scholars make it out to be. In fact, medieval university education encouraged creative interpretation of canon law by its executors. The High Middle Ages were, in essence, a continuous process of interpretation wherein law was "reinvented" every time it was forced to contend with reality; that is to say, canon law was remade every time it was practiced. *Piers Plowman*, in its simultaneous courting and critique of canon law, shapes Christian penitential norms. We must then wonder if the debate over Langland's personal feelings about canon law is truly productive—it is perhaps too simple to say that he favored the orthodox penitential process, and it may be more fair to say instead that *Piers Plowman* existed in dialogue with canon law. Thomas' nuancing of this debate is the crowning achievement of the book, and urges scholars towards a more holistic view of the issue.

While the book's subject matter and language are quite advanced for undergraduate readers, especially those just beginning a foray into medieval history, the introduction summarizes the book's argument beautifully. However, in order to truly appreciate Thomas' thoughts, reading the five main chapters is a must—they provide concrete examples of *Piers Plowman's* reinvention of church law through the characters of Mede, Contricion, Conscience, Covetise, Wrong, and Patience, among others. A student with a particular

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<sup>235</sup> Page 61.



affection for medieval English poetry and its contexts could certainly tackle this text, but those inclined in other directions might struggle. Nevertheless, the book is a wonderfully nuanced approach to long-standing issues surrounding the contextualization of *Piers Plowman*, and a much-needed addition to the field.

# CHIVALRY AND PERFORMANCE IN MEDICEAN JOUSTS OF THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY

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## ABSTRACT

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Jousts and other tournaments have existed in Europe since the early 1000s, but they began to take a different form during the Italian Renaissance, particularly in Florence during the fifteenth century. Rather than serving as demonstrations of military prowess, they became performative events that exhibited the patrons' and competitors' wealth as well as their devotion to the city. Descriptions of these tournaments tended to focus on the spectacular processions and visuals that were put on display during these occasions, rather than on the competitive portion of the event itself. The joust of Giuliano de' Medici in 1475 embodies these characteristics to the fullest, as reflected in the wealth of descriptions in chronicles, letters, and poems that it inspired. Overall, the florid nature of these accounts evince the joust's importance as a spectacle more than a military event, and the attitude to tournaments in Medicean Florence as a whole.

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By the fifteenth century, the tournament had played a part in chivalric culture for more than four hundred years, and was moving away from its origins as a military exercise and towards a more performative display. Jousts, especially in Italy, tended not to focus on a knight's ability to fight, but instead on his courtly manners and the spectacular performance that he sought to create. Indeed, luxury was the focus of these events to such an extent that writers of the time paid little attention to the events or outcome of the jousts, and focused instead on their grandeur. Jousts during the first Medicean era in Florence, such as that of Giuliano de' Medici in 1475, provide a prime example of this, revealing the stylized and

performative nature of such events. In addition to honoring the individual and the city, moreover, the jousts hosted by the Medici blurred the distinction between public and private, which had been pronounced in the previous century, and assisted in the Medici's aspiration towards their place as true "princes" of Florence, rather than simply "first citizens."

Festivals, in the form of both public religious celebrations and private secular ones, had long been a part of Florentine culture. In the thirteenth century, the knights and nobility of the city would participate in "games"—that is, private tournaments—in order to celebrate these events,<sup>236</sup> but these games would often cause chaos for the other citizens. These events were more akin to the French *mêlée*, based on actual military practice, than the later Italian joust,<sup>237</sup> and reflected the emphasis on violence inherent in the chivalric practices of the nobility.<sup>238</sup> Although the *popolo* regretted the militaristic nature of the magnates, which often led to violence against the citizens themselves, they respected the ideals of chivalry, such as the emphasis on honor, piety, and courtly manners. Indeed, even before the expulsion of the magnates, non-nobles had begun to adopt this way of life, as "chivalric ideals and valorization were reaching even beyond knighthood defined in a formal sense as a badge of nobility acquired by dubbing or simply by noble birthright."<sup>239</sup> This was especially the case with those members of the non-noble upper classes who thought it fitting that they be honored—if not for military service, then for some service to the state.<sup>240</sup>

When the magnates were removed from power with the passage of the Ordinances of Justice of 1293, these wealthy non-nobles began to assume a pseudo-noble status that had been previously held by the hereditary nobility. Without their own noble traditions in practice or in name, they continued to emulate the chivalric ideal of the magnates by associating themselves with its ideals.<sup>241</sup> While they sought to avoid the violence inherent in the magnates' knightly values,<sup>242</sup> they still wished to evoke splendor and honor. Holidays and celebrations provided a fine opportunity for this. With the magnates' expulsion, the tradition of hosting games to mark events did not falter: both the individual families of the *popolo* and the city itself adopted the "feudal, personalistic, and private modes (jousts, dances, and *armeggerie*)" that were so commonly used by the *magnati* in their celebrations.<sup>243</sup> Tournaments, however, consistently tended to be public. Even in the Medicean era, jousts

<sup>236</sup> Richard C. Trexler, *Public Life in Renaissance Florence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 217.

<sup>237</sup> Richard W. Barber and Juliet R. V. Barker, *Tournaments: Jousts, Chivalry, and Pageants in the Middle Ages*, 1st American ed (New York: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1989).

<sup>238</sup> Peter W. Sposato, "Chivalry and Honor-Violence in Late Medieval Florence," in *Prowess, Piety, and Public Order in Medieval Society*, ed. Craig M. Nakashian and Daniel P. Franke (Brill, 2017), 102.

<sup>239</sup> Richard W. Kaeuper, *Medieval Chivalry* (Cambridge, United Kingdom; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 123.

<sup>240</sup> Gaetano Salvemini, *La Dignità Cavalleresca Nel Comune Di Firenze* (Firenze: Tipografia M. Ricci, 1896). In fact, beginning in the thirteenth century, the Priors and Gonfaloniere di Giustizia began to award knighthood to both citizens and foreigners who had provided a service, military or otherwise, to the state, such as acting as an ambassador or even for "virtue and devotion towards the People [of Florence]" ("virtù e la devozione di lui verso il Popolo"). Such acts were, clearly, not militaristic, but purely bureaucratic.

<sup>241</sup> Trexler, *Public Life*, 223.

<sup>242</sup> *Ibid.*, 122.

<sup>243</sup> *Ibid.*, 224.

were commonly hosted by the city, rather than by individual families. Nevertheless, they retained the form of their private, feudal forebears.<sup>244</sup> They now became opportunities where young men could display their individual ability, as well as their family wealth, to honor both the city and their families.<sup>245</sup>

With the Medici, however, the distinction between public and private celebrations began to blur. Not only did the character of the events reflect the traditions of the *magnati*, but the Medici began to support them themselves, spending their own money on public events. Indeed, they “[patronized] established communal festivities so lavishly that their communal character was overlaid, and confused with a Medicean quality.”<sup>246</sup> This applied not only to holy days—for example, the public festival for Epiphany<sup>247</sup>—but also to secular events, such as jousts. Indeed, the two most famous jousts in Florence during this era were those of Lorenzo and Giuliano de’ Medici. Although each tournament included other competitors, the two Medici were the main focus. Lorenzo’s participation celebrated his impending marriage to Clarice Orsini; the reason for Giuliano’s is unclear, but it surely was meant to honor a similar event that reflected his manliness and coming-of-age.<sup>248</sup> The family spent lavishly on both, as is evident when reading the contemporary descriptions, as we shall see. That said, it is difficult to discern whether these jousts were hosted by the city or the Medici themselves. In a letter addressed to Lorenzo de’ Medici, Rodolfo Baglioni, Lord of Perugia, mentions that Giuliano’s joust was “ordered by the Most Illustrious Comune,”<sup>249</sup> but there is no other indication of this elsewhere. Writing long after the event, Francesco Guicciardini wrote that his father, Piero di Jacopo Guicciardini, had jousted in 1475 “not through his own will, because it [jousting] was not his practice, but to the satisfaction of Lorenzo and Giuliano de’ Medici, who made an extreme event out of it.”<sup>250</sup> Though

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<sup>244</sup> *Ibid.*, 234.

<sup>245</sup> Kaeuper, *Medieval Chivalry*, 152-153. Here, Kaeuper writes only about honor that derives from chivalry being directed to the *res publica*. Trexler expands on this by discussing the various types of tournament and how they would relate to the public good. The joust was a purely individual event, while the *armeggeria* (armed combat of brigades of men) was communal. This is true in that the *armeggeria* would create bonds between young men and thus between their families, while the joust could not, instead pitting them against one another. However, I would argue that individual jousters did not represent only themselves, but also their families—thus a Medici would represent the whole Medici family, while a Pitti would reflect all Pitti. Therefore, while it did not create community in the same way that the *armeggeria* might, it did honor the city by representing the prowess of the men of its various families.

<sup>246</sup> Trexler, *Public Life*, 423.

<sup>247</sup> *Ibid.* The Medici often associated themselves with the Three Wise Men, and would even take part in the processions that reenacted the Magi’s journey to Bethlehem.

<sup>248</sup> Giuliano would have been twenty-one years old at the time; Lorenzo would have been twenty at the time of his joust in 1468. I have found no reference to an impending marriage for Giuliano in any of the documents relating to the joust of 1475.

<sup>249</sup> Rodolfo Baglioni to Lorenzo de’ Medici, 3 December 1474, in Isidoro del Lugo, *Florentia: Uomini e Cose Nel Firenze Del Quattrocento* (Firenze: G. Barbèra, 1897), 393. Cited by Kristeller in “Un documento sconosciuto sulla Giostra di Giuliano de’ Medici.” “Ho presentito che la Magnificenzia di Iuliano vostro fratello deve giostrare et intervenire nella giostra ordinata per la Ill[ustriss]ma Comunità.” This and all translations mine unless otherwise noted.

<sup>250</sup> From the *Ricordi* of Francesco Guicciardini, in Lungo, *Florentia*, 397. “Giostrassi, non per volontà propria chè non era suo esercizio, ma a satisfazione [sic] di Lorenzo e Giuliano de’ Medici che ne feciono [sic] una istanza [sic] estrema.”

Guicciardini does not state it explicitly, he implies that the joust may have been hosted by the Medici, rather than the state, of which there is no mention. However, the accuracy here might be doubtful, not only because the account was written some time after the joust took place, but also because of what seems to be distaste towards Lorenzo and Giuliano, either on the part of Francesco himself or of his father, who must have recounted it to him. Regardless, this emphasizes how fine the distinction was between public and private patronage when the Medici were involved. Perhaps the citizens of Florence themselves were never truly sure.

However, the identity of the patron could become irrelevant when one was consumed with the splendor of the festival. Indeed, it was the grandeur that was the subject of the event: even the shortest accounts written by chroniclers speak to their luxury. Benedetto Dei, who was alive at the time and very well may have been present at the joust, first records that at the joust of 1475, “there were 22 jousters, very rich in jewels and pearls” before naming Giuliano as victor, and Jacopo Pitti as runner-up.<sup>251</sup> Of course, it surely was not of utmost importance to a chronicler to record the minutiae of a joust, but there is very little note of the events other than the winner.

Other contemporary writers recorded the joust in much more detail, though they still focused on the luxury, rather than the tournament itself. While one anonymous, contemporary account begins by listing the number of lances broken by participants in the tournament, he devotes only one paragraph to this subject, then turns to a much lengthier description of the participants’ entrance processions.<sup>252</sup> Giuliano’s is described with the most detail: his entourage included two men-at-arms, nine trumpeters in matching livery, twelve youths on horseback, three pipe-players, three “sumptuously covered” horses, and various members of his family, including Lorenzo, Piero, and Pierfrancesco de’ Medici, and Guglielmo dei Pazzi.<sup>253</sup> He himself rode

un cavallo covertato di tafectà alexandrino frappato et frangiato intorno tucta  
dipinta di bronconi d' ulivo et fiamme di fuocho ... portava in mano una aste grande  
dipinta d'azzurro, silvi uno stendardo di tafiectà alexandrino frappato et frangiato  
intorno, che nella sommità era un sole, et nel mezzo [sic] di questo stendardo era una  
figura grande simigliata a Pallas vestita d'una veste bianca onbreggiata d'oro

<sup>251</sup> From the *Ricordi* of Benedetto Dei, in Lungo, “Florentia,” 397. “Furno [sic] 22 giostranti, molto ricchi di gioie e perle; e l’ maggiore [sic] onore ebbe Giuliano di Piero de’ Medici, e l’ secondo onore Iacopo Pitti.”

<sup>252</sup> “Carta della descrizione della giostra, qui incompleta, credesi opportuno di dar notizia e riferir qualche passo” in Giuseppe Mazzatinti and Fortunato Pintor, *Inventari Dei Manoscritti Delle Biblioteche d’Italia*, vol. 11 (Forlì: Casa Editrice Luigi Bordinandini, 1901), 27. “M. Giovan Francesco ruppe lanciae secte, cioè cinque in iscudo et due in rotellino ... M. Guasparre ruppe lanciae nove in iscudo ... Luigi Trotto ruppe lanciae 31, cioè 25 in scudo, tre in elmo et in rotellino, una in spalaccio ... Lione di Brembilla ruppe lanciae 22, cioè una in fregia data et in elmo, 17 in scudo, 2 in rotellino ... Giovanni da Parma ruppe lanciae 16; una in scudo, xj [sic] in elmo, tre in scudo senza rompere, una in fregiatura ... Conte da Padova ruppe lanciae 20 in scudo, una in rotellino.” These are the only recorded scores of the joust. There is nothing written about how many lances were broken by Giuliano de’ Medici or Jacopo Pitti, who came in first and second places, respectively.

<sup>253</sup> *Ibid.*, 28. Piero was Lorenzo’s son and thus Giuliano’s nephew, and would have been three years old at the time; Pierfrancesco was Lorenzo and Giuliano’s first cousin. Guglielmo was married to their sister, Bianca.

macinato, et uno paio di stivalecti agucci in gamba; la quale teneva ipiè su due fiamme di tuocho ... Haveva in capo una celata brunita all' anticha: e' suoi capelli tucti atrecciati che ventolavano. Teneva decta Pallas nella mano diricta una lancia da giostra et nella mano manca lo scudo di Medusa.<sup>254</sup>

a horse covered with Alexandrian taffeta and with edging around, all painted with olive branches and flames ... he carried in his hand a great pole painted in blue, a standard of Alexandrian taffeta all fringed and embroidered, atop which was a sun, and in the middle a figure who appeared to be Pallas, clothed in a white dress shaded in ground gold, with a pair of boots on her feet ... [Giuliano] wore on his head a bronze armet in the ancient style; and his hair was all twisted so that it seemed to blow in the wind. He held in his right hand, along with the standard of Pallas, a jousting lance, and in his left hand a shield with the face of Medusa.

The description continues on, and includes aforementioned pearls and precious gems “of great value,”<sup>255</sup> as well as the trappings of his horse and other details, such as the intricacies of his shield and helmet. Yet amongst this grandiose description of luxury, only one line refers to the joust itself. The author writes only that “with these things he jousted, and all lost to him.”<sup>256</sup>

The description of the other participants' costumes and retinues are much to the same effect, though they are all much shorter than that of Giuliano. Of course, this joust was meant to celebrate him. While there were other participants, they were not paid nearly as much attention as the younger brother of Lorenzo, who at this point was already being addressed as “Your Magnificence” by other rules from across Italy and Europe.<sup>257</sup> Perhaps the processions of the other young men were not quite as splendid as that of the young Medici, but it is equally possible that the author did not feel the need to describe them. However, it is worth noting that the least grandiose description is given to those who were mentioned earlier for having broken lances. Giovanfancesco and Gasparre di Roberto da Sanseverino were accompanied by “four men-at-arms: Luigi Trotto, Leone di Brambilla, Giovanni da Parma, and Conte da Padova,” whose participation in the joust is also recorded earlier in the document, as well as “four horsed trumpeters, six horses covered with drapes of various colors, embroidered with silver with the coat of arms of Robert; with squadron captains and men-at-arms.”<sup>258</sup> While this seems quite lavish when read out of context, it provides little detail compared to the page-long description of Giuliano's entrance. It is

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<sup>254</sup> Ibid.

<sup>255</sup> Ibid. “...legatovi perle grosse, diamanti, balasci, rubini et zatùri di grande valuta...”

<sup>256</sup> Ibid. “Et con esso giostrò et tucte si perderono.”

<sup>257</sup> See the letters published in Del Lungo, *Florentia*. Lorenzo is referred to as “V.M.” (Vostra Magnificenza) in every instance.

<sup>258</sup> “Carta della descrizione della giostra,” 29. “Giovanfrancesco e Gasparre, figliuoli di Roberto da Sanseverino, quattro uomini d'arme, cioè Luigi Trotto, Leone di Brambilla, Giovanni da Parma, Conte da Padova; sei trombetti a cavallo, sei cavalli covertati di drappo di vari colori ricamati d'argento con lo stemma di Roberto; con capi di squadre ed uomini d'arme.”

indeed possible that these men did not, in fact, have quite as lavish a procession as the other participants—but does this imply that military prowess and lavish decoration are interdependent? Perhaps—but we can only conclude the procession itself was more valued by this author than the actual acts of violence on which a joust is founded. This is especially remarkable when we consider that there is no detail regarding what Giuliano or Jacopo Pitti accomplished on the field. Indeed, we are given no detail as to how Giuliano won—how many lances he broke, or what happened on the tilts—but are only told of his lavish costume and entrance.

In other accounts, the sumptuous description focusing on the young Medici scarcely changes, as can be seen in a letter sent by Filippo Corsini to Piero Guicciardini regarding the same joust. As noted before, Guicciardini himself was a participant in the joust. Therefore, it would be expected that more descriptive attention would be given to him, as he was the recipient of this letter himself. While the accounts here are much more equal in length, Giuliano is still given the most attention. Perhaps there was not, then, a bias in the anonymous author's description, and Giuliano's entrance truly required more words to be described than any of the other participants.

The narrative that Corsini gives is very similar to that of the anonymous author: he describes Giuliano's entrance, accompanied by twelve youths on white horses, two "veterans," also on horses, and his brother, Lorenzo.<sup>259</sup> Giuliano himself is said to have been dressed "in clothes truly so ornate, with gold and silver together and innumerable rotund, flashing gems clumped on top of one another"<sup>260</sup>—again parallel to the anonymous description. While he does not give as many specific details regarding the procession itself, Corsini describes Giuliano's entrance as "a matter deserving of even the greatest historical dignity," and "a thing the likes of which would have been seen by the greatest commanders [i.e., of antiquity]."<sup>261</sup> Thus, even without telling the reader exactly how the young Medici appeared, he is raised to a level above the other participants—an ideal on par with the ancients, who were so revered by the humanists who circled around the Medici and the other wealthy patrons in Florence at this time.

Indeed, such a parallel would not be uncharacteristic during this era. As we have seen, Giuliano's outfitting itself is an entirely classical allusion: on a very superficial level, the depictions of Pallas on his standard and Medusa on his shield are clear references to classical mythology. Furthermore, his helmet *all'antica* (literally, "in the ancient style") was meant to reflect what artists of this era thought ancient armor might have looked like.<sup>262</sup>

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<sup>259</sup> Paul Oskar Kristeller, "Un Documento Sconosciuto Sulla Giostra Di Giuliano de' Medici," *La Bibliofilia* 41, no. 10/12 (Ottobre-Dicembre 1939), 413-414. "Sequebantur cum equis albis duodecim formosissimi adolescentes ... Ipse vero cum magno egregioque peditatu inter duos veteranos equites sibi ad ludum adiunctos ... Multi deinde nostrorum civium proceres et presertim Laurentius eius germanus vir..."

<sup>260</sup> Ibid. "...vero vestibus ita exornatus nempe auro argentque contestis unionibus magnis atque rotundis gemmis innumeris fulgentibus coacervatim superimpostis."

<sup>261</sup> Ibid., 413. "Mox sectus est Iulianus Medices res quidem vel maximo historico digna cui nihil quod ad summum spectaret imperatorem deesse videbatur."

<sup>262</sup> For an example of a helmet in this style and this era, see the *Sallet in the Shape of a Lion's Head*, ca. 1475-1480; steel, copper, gold, glass, pigment, textile; New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Thus, Giuliano himself was depicted as a heroic youth like those in tales of ancient times, be they mythological or historical. But not only was the joust classical: the event was, too. Corsini portrays the Renaissance joust as a sort of ancient tournament. He refers to it as a *ludus*—a game, such as those games sponsored by the Roman government. Is this, perhaps, a discreet reference to or criticism of the “bread and circuses” provided by the Medici, of which Giuliano’s joust would have been a part, to distract the people?<sup>263</sup> Or is it simply a nod to the fact that, at this time, the Italians thought the Romans “to have been ideally chivalric,”<sup>264</sup> and so attempted to embody that themselves?

Regardless, Corsini does turn to more physical elements of the joust, unlike the other descriptions we have seen so far. For example, he writes that “in Benedetto Nerli there is something especial, in that while his body might be of medium stature, in the concourse he was truly of robust soldiery to the last moment; he submitted to no one.”<sup>265</sup> While he does not specifically tell of the exact moments in which Nerli showed this chivalric valor, he does consider how his height and weight would surely affect how he jousted—thus providing at least some information pertaining to military tactics and violence rather than to pageantry. When he mentions Giuliano in the same section, however, he writes that he, “new and fresh, rose up well; he always bore [his lance] so that even the greatest commander would not desire to see either military knowledge nor anything else in him.”<sup>266</sup> While again comparing him to antiquity, there is no mention of his stature, weight, or performance. Is it left to be assumed by the reader? Or is it instead related to the fact that the outcome of this joust would have already been known, and Giuliano expected to win, regardless of his actual performance in the tournament? Such was the case with Lorenzo’s joust in 1468. Still, however, onlookers were so invested that they prayed for his victory.<sup>267</sup> It is not unlikely that the same thing would have occurred during Giuliano’s, seven years later.

The allusions in Corsini’s letter to classical literature are typical of the humanist style that was popular in Florence during this era. Indeed, the Florentines sought to emulate the Greeks and Romans in everything from painting to government, and saw themselves as the inheritors of the Roman tradition.<sup>268</sup> Jousts in Italy, as we have seen, were affected by this interest in the mythologized past, but a similar phenomenon occurred in northern Europe as well. Even in the early days, “literature had a considerable influence on the tournament,”

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<sup>263</sup> Cecil H. Clough, “Chivalry and Magnificence in the Italian Renaissance,” in *Chivalry in the Renaissance*, ed. Sydney Anglo (Woodbridge [England]; Rochester, NY, USA: Boydell Press, 1990), 29.

<sup>264</sup> Kaeuper, *Medieval Chivalry*, 149.

<sup>265</sup> Kristeller, “Un documento sconosciuto,” 415. “Iacobus autem Pitthius forma corporis procerus non crebris ictibus rem gessit sed raris et illis memorandis concursibus summam pene totius certaminis sibi vendicavis.”

<sup>266</sup> Ibid. “Iulianus novus recensque insurrexit itaque bene semper rem gessit ut neque militandi peritia neque aliqua que ad optimum ducem spectaret vitus ullo pacto in eo desiderari posset.”

<sup>267</sup> Trexler, *Public Life*, 432.

<sup>268</sup> This is expressed in Leonardo Bruni’s *Panegyric to the City of Florence*. Other texts, such as Petrarch’s *Letter to the Shade of Cicero* and Lorenzo Valla’s *Glory of the Latin Language*, both of which can be found in *The Civilization of the Italian Renaissance: A Sourcebook* (Kenneth R. Bartlett, ed.), also provide fine examples of how Florentine intellectuals during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries sought to continue a dialogue with antiquity.



and “chivalric romances provided a literary framework for many occasions.”<sup>269</sup> The romance provided an ideal—thus knights in England and France sought to emulate the heroes of their literature, such as Lancelot and Galahad,<sup>270</sup> just as Giuliano seems to be emulating a classical hero. Indeed, it is from such romances and *chansons de geste* that the focus on courtly love, manner, and ceremony arose. Such works of literature encouraged knights to joust with their ladies in mind: a dame would provide a gentleman with the inspiration for his performance, which he might dedicate to his lady in turn. This tradition continued as jousts developed, and was practiced in Florence as well. Even in the fifteenth century, “conventions of courtly love necessitated a knight selecting as the object of his devotion an unattainable lady, who assisted at his arming.”<sup>271</sup> Giuliano’s joust, for example, was famously dedicated to Simonetta Vespucci. In Angelo Poliziano’s unfinished *Stanze cominciate per la giostra di Giuliano de’ Medici*, written to commemorate the event, Simonetta becomes “the image [that] will make him [Giuliano] yearn to show his valor on the field.”<sup>272</sup> Beyond just this, however, she is deified, raised to the level of Venus and Cupid, creating within her something so ideal that it is practically holy.

*Stanze per la giostra* was not the norm, however. While poems were often written to commemorate jousts—such as Luigi Pulci’s, written for Lorenzo’s in 1468—Poliziano combines this tradition with the humanist interest in classical literature. Indeed, it is written in vernacular rather than Latin, and combines this ancient mythology and epic style with contemporary events and customs. Poliziano uses the occasion of the joust to weave a narrative around his two protagonists—Giuliano and Simonetta. Yet the plot has little to do with the joust. Rather, it places the two in a world of myth and allegory, where Venus and Cupid conspire to make the young Medici submit to love, which he finds “indolent,” “an unseen plague” that “strips [men] of [their] liberty.”<sup>273</sup> Of course, the work was never finished, and it is possible that either the section that described the joust had not yet been written or had been removed. Indeed, in his introduction to the work, Francesco Bausi writes that Poliziano would have edited the poem to give it a new purpose after the death of his two protagonists—Simonetta in 1476 and Giuliano in 1478—and thus removed the section regarding the joust proper. Indeed, it would have become more “eulogistic-allegorical” than celebratory, which made it necessary to “remove the stanzas which indulged on the description of the tournament.”<sup>274</sup>

Nevertheless, Poliziano does continue to follow the conventions of romances,

<sup>269</sup> Barber and Barker, *Tournaments*, 4.

<sup>270</sup> Richard W. Kaeuper, *Chivalry and Violence in Medieval Europe* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 33.

<sup>271</sup> Clough, *Chivalry and Magnificence*, 31.

<sup>272</sup> Angelo Poliziano, *The Stanze of Angelo Poliziano*, trans. David Quint (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1979), II.22.

<sup>273</sup> *Ibid.*, I.13-14.

<sup>274</sup> Angelo Poliziano, *Stanze per La Giostra*, ed. Francesco Bausi, Progetto Poliziano. L’opera 4 (Messina: Università degli Studi di Messina, Centro internazionale di studi umanistici, 2016), 55. “L’originario progetto delle *Stanze* fu radicalmente trasformato; a quel punto, infatti, l’idea di fare delle Stanze un poemetto encomiastico-allegorico svincolato dalla diretta celebrazione della giostra di Giuliano rendeva necessario espungere le ottave che indugiavano sulla descrizione del torneo.”

namely in his treatment of chivalric love. The joust provides Giuliano an opportunity to demonstrate his prowess, for as Cupid says, “only a triumphal palm will win her [Simonetta] for you.”<sup>275</sup> And while this fictive Giuliano had not previously paid his due respect to Love, as would be required of properly chivalric knights, Cupid does commend him for his valor while hunting: “I saw him so ferocious . . . that the woods seemed afraid of him; his comely face had become all harsh, irate, and fiery.”<sup>276</sup> Thus the poem does reflect Giuliano’s physical ability, and does not only create an allegorical figure from his name. Indeed, the second book of the poem tends to have a more militaristic tone than the first, which is more figurative, perhaps because of the implication that this is the section that would have contained the events of the joust, had they been included in the first printed edition of 1484. Poliziano also directly references the fact that a joust can lead to “eternal glory and fame”<sup>277</sup>—certainly personal, but also for one’s family and one’s city, as has already been noted. This certainly reflects the blurring balance between private and public with regard to the Medici, who were becoming “princes” more than “first citizens” of Florence.

While Poliziano’s work is unfinished, a similar work is the *Giostra di Lorenzo de’ Medici*, written by Luigi Pulci to commemorate Lorenzo’s participation in the tournament of 1468. Pulci’s poem, while it does contain some classical allusions, is much more focused on the joust than anything else, even if it does lend more than sixty stanzas to the pageantry.<sup>278</sup> This, of course, follows the same pattern as the prose descriptions mentioned above. Yet Pulci does narrate specific moments of the joust, including when Lorenzo is pushed off his horse and “everyone on the field ran to help him.”<sup>279</sup> But surely even this was idealized. In fact, one scholar has noted that the narrative of Pulci’s poem is taken directly from another prose account, but made more fantastical by adding elements from both mythology and the chivalric romance. Thus, the pageantry itself was an invention of the poet,<sup>280</sup> although moments had been recorded in purely historical accounts.

Yet these poems, much like the jousts on which they were based, were meant to celebrate their protagonists, regardless of what truly occurred on the tilts. Thus, much as we have seen in the anonymous description and Corsini’s letter regarding the joust of 1475, even if the central figure of the tournament did not participate in the traditionally violent, chivalric manner, actually on horseback and breaking lances, he could maintain the ideals of chivalry that had been upheld by members of the *popolo grande* in Florence since the expulsion of the magnates in the late thirteenth century. As important as excellence in the military arts had been in earlier centuries, wealthy Florentines, like the upper class of other Italian city-states, were spending more time on intellectual pursuits than military ones due to

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<sup>275</sup> Poliziano, *The Stanze of Angelo Poliziano*, II.31.

<sup>276</sup> *Ibid.*, II.11.

<sup>277</sup> *Ibid.*, II.19.

<sup>278</sup> Mark Davie, “Luigi Pulci’s Stanze per La Giostra: Verse and Prose Accounts of a Florentine Joust of 1469,” *Italian Studies* 44, no. 1 (1989), 44.

<sup>279</sup> Luigi Pulci, *La Giostra Di Lorenzo de’ Medici* (Firenze: Antonio Tubini, Lorenzo d’Alopa, Andrea Ghirlandi, 1500), “Ne prima in terra il giovanotto fue / che tutto il campo correva aiutarlo...”

<sup>280</sup> Davie, “Luigi Pulci’s Stanze per la Giostra,” 48, 52.

the influence of humanism.<sup>281</sup> This trend continued in the following years, where the joust became more and more stylized, distancing itself from its military origins. Jousts were even held to represent allegorical combat between values rather than between actual men, as in 1490, for example, when the Bolognese hosted a battle between *Fortuna* and *Sapienza*.<sup>282</sup> Yet, even without many vestiges of their original form or purpose, jousts in the fifteenth century reflected a growing interest in material and intellectual culture, as well as honor unrelated to direct violence. While the *popolo grande* in Florence did not completely create a new cultural tradition to suit their needs, they adapted an existing one that they found in the magnates' chivalry. From the amount of documentary evidence relating to these events, we can see how important they were, both for individual honor and that of the state. In the case of the Medici, however, these previously contrasting realms begin to blur to such a degree that even the contemporary reader has difficulty distinguishing them. Nevertheless, they point to the interplay of classical, humanist thought and culture with that of the more recent past, where violence was much more important than it was during the fifteenth century, and mark the beginning of a new performative and extravagant tradition that would come to be characteristic of the High Renaissance, and later the Baroque.

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<sup>281</sup> John M Najemy, "Arms and Letters: The Crisis of Courtly Culture in the Wars of Italy," *Italy and the European Powers*, 2006.

<sup>282</sup> Clough, "Chivalry and Magnificence," 45.

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# WITHIN REASON'S GARDEN: DANTE ALIGHIERI AND THE REDEFINITION OF COURTLY LOVE

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## ABSTRACT & INTRODUCTION

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Dante Alighieri's *Divine Comedy* constitutes one of the most famous disavowals of courtly romance and courtly love in Western literary history. Although the entirety of Dante's *Divine Comedy* can be read as a commentary on the nature of love, he prefigures later writers with the creation of the so-called *anti-roman*, a deliberately stereotypical and critical presentation of common tropes of courtly love in the narrative of the damned Francesca da Rimini in *Inferno* 5. It is in this canto, as well as *Purgatorio* 18, that he most clearly rebukes the contemporary notion of courtly love and redefines it in his own terms. Whereas courtly literature presents love as an overpowering storm that eclipses reason, Dante proposes that true love exists in harmony with free will and rational thought. He critiques the genre of courtly romance as a whole, while simultaneously reconceptualizing and offering his own definition of 'love' that aligns with Christian morality.

In Dante's *Divine Comedy*, Francesca and her lover, Paolo, are situated in the second circle of Hell, home to carnal sinners doomed to be whipped about uncontrollably on the winds of desire for all eternity. Just as they were overcome with desire in life, so too are they unable to exert self-control in the afterlife. When Dante asks about the sinners he sees, Virgil begins to obligingly list the famous lovers that make up the cloud of souls. There are famous ancient lovers, such as Semiramis, as well as literary ones, such as Tristram and Isolt. He separates the historical and romantic lovers from the mundane ones, creating a "pantheon of the literature of love."<sup>283</sup> This list of famous lovers—who were oft the subject of the romances with which Dante would have been familiar—prefigures the introduction of the contemporary couple. They are summoned "per quell'amor che i mena,"<sup>284 285</sup> by the desire that drove them in life and that which still drives them in Hell. Momentarily released from the driving wind, Francesca, accompanied by the silent Paolo, tells Dante the abridged story of their love:

Amor, ch'al cor gentil ratto s'apprende,  
prese costui della bella persona  
che mi fu tolta; e 'l modo ancor m'offende.

Amor, ch'a nullo amato amar perdona,  
mi prese del costui piacer si forte,  
che, come vedi, ancor non m'abbandona.

Amor condusse noi ad una morte.<sup>286</sup>

Francesca situates herself as a passive agent totally at the mercy of love, framing her narrative in the typical plots and allegorical language of courtly literature.<sup>287</sup> Their love mirrors the rules enumerated by Andreas Capellanus in *The Art of Courtly Love* almost exactly. For instance, Francesca's love for Paolo only comes about after he expresses his love for her "bella persona." He loved her first and his love caused hers. To use Capellanus'

<sup>283</sup> John Freccero, "The Portrait of Francesca: Inferno 5," *Fifty Years with Dante and Italian Literature*, special issue of *MLN* 124, no. 5 (2005): 15.

<sup>284</sup> Dante Alighieri, *La Divina Commedia* (Milano: Casa Editrice Hoepli, 1907), *Inf.* 5:77-78.

<sup>285</sup> "By the love that drives them." Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy: Inferno*, trans. Mark Musa (New York: Penguin Books, 1971), 112. All forthcoming translations of *The Divine Comedy* into English come from Musa unless otherwise stated.

<sup>286</sup> Alighieri, *La Divina Commedia*, *Inf.* 5:100-108. "Love, that is quickly kindled in the noble heart, seized this one [Paolo] for the beauty of my body, torn from me: how it happened still offends me. Love, that excuses no one from loving, seized me so strongly with delight in him that, as you see, he never leaves my side. Love led us to one death" (Musa 112).

<sup>287</sup> Donald Maddox, "The Arthurian Intertexts of Inferno 5," *Dante Studies, with the Annual Report of the Dante Society*, no. 114 (1996): 114.



words, “no one can love unless [she] is impelled by the persuasion of love.”<sup>288</sup> This specific rule, number nine, is also one of those that can be more broadly applied to the narrative as a whole and Francesca’s portrayal of love as an overwhelming force.

Francesca continues in this vein, emphasizing her inability to control her reactions in the face of love. This response is represented most prominently by Capellanus’ first rule: “marriage is no real excuse for not loving.”<sup>289</sup> At its core, Paolo and Francesca’s relationship is an adulterous one, and that is at the root of their condemnation. As all courtly lovers must be, Francesca is careful to say that she was seized by “amor, ch’a nullo amato amar perdona,” presenting herself as unable to resist. So possessed, she abandons her marriage vows and begins an affair with Paolo. This line can be directly associated with Capellanus’ twenty-sixth rule for lovers—“love can deny nothing to love”<sup>290</sup>—and is significant because it is here that Francesca implicitly denies that their sin is a sin.<sup>291</sup> If they are subject to the whims of love and if she, specifically, is a passive object, then she is not responsible for her actions.

Dante, however, believes neither in the spontaneity of love, nor that one can be thus at its mercy.<sup>292</sup> One of the most salient examples of this is love’s anaphora, the repetition of the word “amore,” which shows the linear progression from the first feelings kindled in Paolo (“Amor, ch’al cor gentil ratto s’apprende, prese costui...”) to their sin and, finally, to their tragic death (“Amor condusse noi ad una morte”).<sup>293</sup> The fact that there was a progression at all contradicts the idea that love arose spontaneously. Furthermore, Francesca later reveals that their love took root while reading the story of Lancelot and Guinevere, one of the most famous and popular examples of a courtly romance. Francesca casts both the book and its author as the instigator of their affair. Francesca’s speech and the actions described thus belie the idea of a spontaneous love. Their sin was premeditated, enabled by their reading and took for granted the fact that desire cannot be controlled.<sup>294</sup>

Critically, however, the couple does not finish the book. They stop at the moment Lancelot and Guinevere kiss—“quando leggemmo il disiato riso / Esser baciato da cotanto

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<sup>288</sup> Andreas Capellanus, *The Art of Courtly Love*, trans. John Jay Perry (New York: Columbia University, 1941), 185.

<sup>289</sup> Capellanus, *The Art of Courtly Love*, 184.

<sup>290</sup> Capellanus, *The Art of Courtly Love*, 185.

<sup>291</sup> Freccero, “The Portrait,” 23.

<sup>292</sup> Teodolina Barolini, “Dante and Cavalcanti (On Making Distinctions in Matters of Love): Inferno 5 in Its Lyric and Autobiographical Context,” in *Dante and the Origins of Literary Culture*, ed. Teodolinda Barolini (New York: Fordham University Press, 2006), 89. Barolini cites a letter (c. 1304-05) from Dante to fellow poet Cino da Pistoia containing a response to an earlier letter, *Epistola 3* (c. 1303). In the first letter and accompanying poem (“Io sono stato”), Dante maintains that we are under the dominion of love, a belief which is in line with the general themes of courtly literature. The second, however, contains a reversal of that opinion in the form of a poem, “Io mi credea del tutto esser partito,” and a rebuke of Cino for his adherence to the precepts of courtly love. Though Barolini quotes *Epistola 3* and “Io sono stato” in her article, she merely makes note of the second letter’s existence and general content. Thus, I have chosen to cite her, rather than the letter itself, in support of my argument.

<sup>293</sup> Freccero, “The Portrait,” 27.

<sup>294</sup> Manuele Gagnolati and Heather Webb, “Dubiosi Desiri: Mimetic Processes in Dante’s Comedy,” in *Mimesis, Desire, and the Novel: Rene Girard and Literary Criticism*, ed. Pierpaolo Antonello and Heather Webb (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2015), 125.

amante”<sup>295</sup> —after having been brought together by Galehot, a knight who arranged their meeting. In Francesca’s own words, “Galeotto fu il libro e chi lo scrisse.”<sup>296</sup> In casting the book as Galehot, Francesca implies that she fancies herself and Paolo as Guinevere and Lancelot. Moreover, this mimesis and romanticization of an incomplete story allows her to justify her adulterous feelings towards Paolo. Just as Galehot implicitly absolves the fictitious couple of the sin of lust and permits them their love, so too does the book for Paolo and Francesca. Thus, her desire is not so much spontaneous as it is a mimicry of Guinevere’s desire.<sup>297</sup> Francesca creates a self-perpetuating delusion that enshrines her as a literalization of the courtly heroine while simultaneously absolving her of sinful urges.<sup>298</sup> Guinevere and Lancelot, enabled by Galehot, were able to kiss, to lust, and to commit adultery without retribution. Why should she and Paolo be any different? In short, the two couples claim to be so enthralled by love that “every act of [the] lover ends in the thought of [their] beloved.”<sup>299</sup> Herein lies the importance of Paolo and Francesca’s interrupted reading. Had they continued, they would have seen the moment where Lancelot regrets the adulterous affair, repents, and takes religious vows. The romance itself would have guided Paolo and Francesca to understand their sin and the inevitable consequences of their actions. In highlighting this moment and by presenting the book as the source of their love, however, Dante frames Lancelot and Guinevere—and, by extension, Paolo and Francesca—as negative *exempla*.<sup>300</sup>

Dante does not limit his discussion of compulsion versus free will, or his redefinition of love, to this single refutation of Francesca’s claim to innocence. Before Francesca even began to speak, he had already made his first judgement of her and the others in the second circle of Hell by identifying them as those “che la ragion sommettono al talento.”<sup>301</sup> Regardless of any assertions that love “mi prese del costui piacer si forte,”<sup>302</sup> the poet has already said that the carnal sinners, among whom Francesca is counted, subordinate their reason to their *desire*, not love.<sup>303</sup> This distinction becomes important when one considers Dante’s condemnation of carnal sinners in the wider context of the *Commedia*, as well as within contemporary literary tradition. The significance lies in the fact that he does not classify love itself as a sin, rather deliberately identifying desire—a lustful desire—as the sinful element. In fact, the *Commedia* defends the idea of a pure love. There is no “blanket indictment” as there is in the poetry of Dante’s youth or that of his contemporaries, such as Guido Cavalcanti. Dante proposes that what is *called* love might not

<sup>295</sup> Alighieri, *La Divina Commedia*, *Inf.* 5:133-134. “It was when we read about those longed-for lips [Guinevere] now being kissed by such a famous lover [Lancelot]...” (Musa 113).

<sup>296</sup> Alighieri, *La Divina Commedia*, *Inf.* 5:137. “Galehot was the book and he who wrote it” (Musa 113).

<sup>297</sup> Maddox, “Arthurian Intertexts,” 117-8.

<sup>298</sup> Gragnolati and Webb, “Dubbioli Desiri,” 119.

<sup>299</sup> Capellanus, *The Art of Courtly Love*, 185.

<sup>300</sup> Freccero, “The Portrait,” 36.

<sup>301</sup> Alighieri, *La Divina Commedia*, *Inf.* 5:39. “Those who subordinate reason to desire” (Musa 110).

<sup>302</sup> “...seized me so strongly with delight in him...”

<sup>303</sup> Barolini, “Dante and Cavalcanti,” 73.

actually *be* love. This is exemplified in the fact that Francesca's love, or the thing that she calls 'love,' is more properly defined as 'desire' ("talento").<sup>304</sup>

As previously noted, Francesca presents herself as a passive agent upon which love acts. She was, however, certainly not the first to do so. The genre of courtly romance had many adherents. In due- and trecento Italy, the *dolce stil novo* subgenre of courtly literature had taken up the themes of omnipotent love and passive lovers. Dante himself was a former *stilnovista*, and these poets were his contemporaries.<sup>305</sup> Therefore, it is also against them and the style, as well as the concept of courtly love in general, that Dante is reacting. Among his many allusions to various *stilnovisti* in *Inferno* 5, Dante includes an indirect, though no less important, reference to Guido Cavalcanti's "Donna mi prega," a poem which epitomizes the central theme of a lover dominated by love. Dante's characterization of carnal sinners ("che la ragion sommettono al talento") parallels Cavalcanti's characterization of lovers in general ("ché la 'ntenzione—per ragione—vale") (33).<sup>306</sup> Though Dante is not directly quoting Cavalcanti in this instance (though he does in *Inferno* 10), these two lines offer the same information in regard to the damaging effect of unchecked passion, which takes control of a lover's thoughts and actions, thus permitting desire to overpower reason.<sup>307</sup> The difference lies in how each author defines this desire—"intenzione," for Cavalcanti, and "talento," for Dante. In short, to quote Teodolinda Barolini, "what [Cavalcanti] says about love, Dante says about lust," which harkens back to Dante's desire to reimagine the courtly genre's definition of love and to distinguish between love and lust/desire.<sup>308</sup> In referencing "Donna mi prega" in connection with carnal sinners, Dante equates the love about which Cavalcanti—along with countless others, including Capellanus—writes to that of Francesca, which has already been defined as both inherently corrupted and a misidentification of lust.

Unsurprisingly, Dante does not completely absolve himself of blame when it comes to perpetuating this flawed concept of love. Through various quotations, direct and indirect, he acknowledges his own youthful embrace of the *dolce stil novo* and the courtly idea of an all-encompassing, overpowering love. For instance, the "bufera infernal, che mai non resta,"<sup>309</sup> in which the damned souls are caught in the beginning of *Inferno* 5, recalls the beginning of Dante's own "Io sono venuto" where "[l]evasi...lo vento peregrin che l'aere turba" (14-15).<sup>310</sup> The canto and the canzone both characterize passion as a windstorm into which lovers are inexorably pulled. Moreover, the latter goes on to cast the narrator of the poem as the passive object in the sentence where love, carried by "lo vento peregrin," is the subject:

<sup>304</sup> Barolini, "Dante and Cavalcanti," 82.

<sup>305</sup> Laura Ingallinella, ITAS 263: Dante (in English) (class lecture, Wellesley College, Wellesley, MA, September 13, 2019).

<sup>306</sup> "That the intention—as it should be—is valid" (trans. Emma Iadanza). Original Italian as qtd. in Barolini, "Dante and Cavalcanti," 78.

<sup>307</sup> Barolini, "Dante and Cavalcanti," 78.

<sup>308</sup> Barolini, "Dante and Cavalcanti," 81.

<sup>309</sup> Alighieri, *La Divina Commedia, Inf.* 5:31. "...infernal storm, that never rests..." (Musa 110).

<sup>310</sup> "Rises up.... The wandering wind that unsettles the air..." Original Italian and translation as qtd. in Barolini, "Dante and Cavalcanti," 88.

“Amor, che sue range ritira in alto pel vento che poggia, non m’abbandona” (23-25).<sup>311</sup> This structure and sentiment is echoed in Francesca’s description of herself (“Amor...non m’abbandona”) to the same effect.<sup>312</sup> Love is depicted as the active subject while the lover—the narrator and Francesca—is the passive object. Dante’s direct quotation of his early work links the love described in “Io sono venuto” to that of the carnal sinners and Francesca in *Inferno* 5. It is the same, corrupted concept against which he pushes throughout the *Commedia*. He does not excuse himself from criticism, nor does he appear to balk at so blatantly redefining his conception of love.

Despite his early embrace of the *dolce stil novo*, and even before he began writing the *Commedia*, there is a distinct shift in Dante’s canzoni that shows a change in his view of love. Dante most closely prefigures his refutation of courtly love in *Inferno* 5 in his “Doglia mi reca,” likely composed a year or so before he began the *Commedia*, in which he links carnal desire to desire for wealth (avarice). Dante maintains that it all comes back to the same concupiscence and that it is the responsibility of the individual to differentiate true love from carnal desire. By making this connection, he refutes the courtly idea that privileges love over all else, proving that “love is [not] always a stranger in the home of avarice.”<sup>313 314</sup> Dante arrives at this point by setting up a scene reminiscent of Francesca—a gentlewoman who succumbs to an all-powerful love—and arguing that such women “crede amor fuor d’orto ragione” (147).<sup>315</sup> The poet’s use of *credere* is important because it emphasizes that she *believes* her emotion to be outside reason’s garden, not that it is actually outside of it. That is to say, much like Francesca engages in deliberate self-delusion, so does the anonymous gentlewoman in “Doglia mi reca.” She has the power of reason, and yet does not use it to discern that the thing which she calls ‘love’ is in fact lust because, to Dante, “love, properly understood, is inseparable from virtue,” and cannot exist without reason.<sup>316</sup> Thus, we return to the issue at the center of *Inferno* 5: the necessity of distinguishing between carnal lust and true love.

Building upon the discussions of love in “Doglia mi reca” and *Inferno* 5, Dante’s strongest statement in favor of free will and his most explicit disavowal of the idea that love is all-powerful comes after the canto in question. In *Purgatorio* 18, one can find a reworking of Francesca’s assertion that “nullo amato amar perdona [l’amore].” This rebuttal comes when Dante and Virgil have reached the penultimate tier of Mount Purgatory. Just as the second circle of Hell holds carnal sinners, so too does the second-to-last tier of Purgatory

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<sup>311</sup> “...Love, who pulls his nets on high with the wind that blows, does not let me go.” Original Italian and translation as qtd. in Barolini, “Dante and Cavalcanti,” 88.

<sup>312</sup> Barolini, “Dante and Cavalcanti,” 87.

<sup>313</sup> Capellanus, *The Art of Courty Love*, 185.

<sup>314</sup> Barolini, “Dante and Cavalcanti,” 93.

<sup>315</sup> “[she] believes love to be outside reason’s garden.” Original Italian and translation as qtd. in Barolini, “Dante and Cavalcanti,” 95.

<sup>316</sup> Teodolina Barolini, “Guittone’s Ora parrà, Dante’s Doglia mi reca, and the *Commedia*’s Anatomy of Desire,” in *Dante and the Origins of Literary Culture*, ed. Teodolinda Barolini (New York: Fordham University Press, 2006), 64.

house those repentant of that very sin. Virgil linguistically and conceptually flips Francesca's "Amor, ch'al cor gentil ratto s'apprende,"<sup>317</sup> saying,

Onde, pognam che di necessitate  
Surga ogni *amor che dentro a voi s'accende*;  
Di ritenerlo è in voi potestate...<sup>318</sup>

He asserts that even if one must love by necessity ("pognam che di necessitate surga ogni amor che dentro a voi s'accende"), there is always free will that allows one to choose how one reacts to said love or desire ("di ritenerlo è in voi potestate"). In doing so, Dante uses language that, through Francesca, had come to be associated with carnal desire, to show that proper love aligns with reason.<sup>319</sup> Furthermore, he counters her passivity with the notion that free will and reason prevail, and that no one is truly helpless in the face of love.<sup>320</sup>

Therefore, although the entirety of Dante's *Divine Comedy* can be read as a commentary on the nature of love, it is in *Inferno* 5 and *Purgatorio* 18 that he most clearly rebukes the contemporary notion of courtly love and redefines it in his own terms. Whereas courtly literature presents love as an overpowering storm that eclipses reason, Dante proposes that true love exists in harmony with free will and rational thought. The love about which authors such as Andreas Capellanus and Guido Cavalcanti speak is more properly defined as desire or lust, emotions that the lover then calls love in an attempt to justify their sinful nature.

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<sup>317</sup> "Love, that is quickly kindled in the noble heart..."

<sup>318</sup> "Therefore, supposing that every love kindled in you arises by necessity, in you is the power to restrain it..." Original Italian and translation as qtd. in Gragnolati and Webb, "Dubbiosi Desiri," 125. In-text emphasis is mine.

<sup>319</sup> Barolini, "Dante and Cavalcanti," 92.

<sup>320</sup> Gragnolati and Webb, "Dubbiosi Desiri," 125. Though it is outside the current scope of this paper, there is room for expansion upon this point.

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# MASCULINITY, POWER, AND DEATH: CLEOPATRA IN BOCCACCIO'S *DE MULIERIBUS CLARIS*

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## ABSTRACT & INTRODUCTION

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While the Roman Republic collapsed, Cleopatra VII ruled Egypt as the most powerful woman in the world. Nearly 1400 years later, Giovanni Boccaccio wrote *De Mulieribus Claris* to honor women who overcame the limitations of their sex with a *virilis animus*, a “manly spirit.” Cleopatra was a puzzle to Boccaccio: while she undeniably displayed the “manly” characteristics of intelligence and bravery, Boccaccio’s Roman sources portrayed her as an uncontrollable corrupting influence. This paper will explore Cleopatra’s masculinity and power in *De Mulieribus Claris*, specifically through her interactions with men. By comparing Boccaccio’s work to his classical sources and examining the differences between them, we discover how Boccaccio used Cleopatra’s story to articulate his views on women who were not only “masculine,” but *too* “masculine.” Because Boccaccio’s intended audience was educated men, his Cleopatra could not seem to justify female sexuality and ambition,

lest she be seen as a threat to her male reader's power. The result is a vilified and demeaned Cleopatra, who must be destroyed by honorable men.

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Boccaccio wrote *De Mulieribus Claris* between 1361 and 1375, intending it to honor those women who “take on a manly spirit,” despite their “soft, frail bodies and sluggish minds.”<sup>321</sup> Although he claims that he writes for the education of women as well as men in the Preface, he never again addresses women. For this reason, as well as the fact that the text was written in Latin, we can assume it was intended for an educated male audience. Stephen Kolsky argues that the lives of the women were not written for women to interpret as positive or negative examples of female behavior, but instead were written for men to interpret as “a guide to men on how to improve women’s conduct [and] a confirmation of the reader’s own views and sense of maleness.”<sup>322</sup> An overwhelming number of Boccaccio’s biographies treat women negatively. While he claims to honor women who act in “masculine” ways, he sees masculine women as a threat, and portrays the events of their lives in ways that criticize female authority and power. Boccaccio’s biography of Cleopatra is particularly negative because she exemplifies the combination of “femininity, greed, and sexual appetite” that he finds “disastrous for civic stability.”<sup>323</sup>

Before we examine Boccaccio’s portrayal of Cleopatra, it is necessary to review the basic events of her life as told by the classical sources Boccaccio had access to. It is nearly impossible to find a purely objective account of Cleopatra’s life because the vast majority of the ancient sources are Roman and written after Octavian’s war on Cleopatra, and thus portray Cleopatra negatively. We can, however, still outline the main events of her life, and I will provide a brief summary of each period according to the narratives of Cassius Dio, Josephus, Pliny the Elder, and Plutarch before I analyze the corresponding period in Boccaccio’s narrative. Boccaccio’s account of Cleopatra’s life heavily mirrors the ancient accounts, but deviates from them to explicitly condemn Cleopatra’s “masculine” authority.

Cleopatra assumed the throne with her brother Ptolemy XIII in 51 BCE,<sup>324</sup> but by 48 BCE the relationship between the two had completely deteriorated and Cleopatra was in exile in Syria, attempting to raise an army.<sup>325</sup> While Cleopatra was absent from Egypt, the Roman civil war between Pompey and Caesar came to an end as Pompey fled to Egypt for protection and was promptly killed by Ptolemy XIII’s men.<sup>326</sup> When Caesar arrived in Egypt he declared that he would mediate the conflict between Cleopatra and Ptolemy XIII, and Cleopatra returned to Egypt, where she met Caesar.<sup>327</sup> At this point, the ancient sources’

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<sup>321</sup> I quote sources in translation to provide an accessible account of the major similarities and differences in the narratives of Boccaccio and the ancient sources.

<sup>322</sup> Stephen D. Kolsky, *The Genealogy of Women: Studies in Boccaccio’s De mulieribus claris* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2003), 72.

<sup>323</sup> Glenda McLeod, *Virtue and Venom: Catalogs of Women from Antiquity to the Renaissance* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1991), 70.

<sup>324</sup> Duane W. Roller, *Cleopatra: A Biography* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2010), 53.

<sup>325</sup> *Ibid.*, 58-59.

<sup>326</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.

<sup>327</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.



intent to portray Cleopatra as a seductress is especially prominent. Cassius Dio claims that “She put on all her finery...and approached the palace at night... When Caesar saw her and heard her speak, he was immediately captivated.”<sup>328</sup> Here we also find Plutarch’s infamous story of Cleopatra sneaking herself into the palace in a “bedding sack” so that Caesar was “no match for her charm and the pleasure of associating with her.”<sup>329</sup> Ptolemy XIII’s advisors, angry with Caesar’s favoritism towards Cleopatra, started the Alexandrian War, and by the end of the war in 47 BCE, Ptolemy XIII was dead.<sup>330</sup> Caesar returned to Rome and Cleopatra gave birth to his child, Caesarion.<sup>331</sup>

Boccaccio’s account of Cleopatra’s early reign condemns her sexuality. He alters the timeline of Cleopatra’s rise to power so that her first act is to poison Ptolemy XIV, an event that did not actually take place until 44 BCE and was not carried out by Cleopatra herself. In Boccaccio’s narrative, however, Cleopatra is “burning with the desire to rule” and poisons the “innocent fifteen-year-old boy.”<sup>332</sup> This alteration strips Boccaccio’s Cleopatra of any entitlement to the throne; he portrays Cleopatra as a tyrant rather than a queen by birthright. After Pompey’s death, Boccaccio expands on the ancient sources by reporting that Cleopatra seduced Caesar with “little trouble bringing the lusty prince to her bed.”<sup>333</sup> Caesar then gave her the throne of Egypt “as a kind of recompense for the nights they had spent together.”<sup>334</sup> Both Ptolemy XIV’s murder and Caesar’s seduction seem to be motivated by Cleopatra’s sexuality; her lust for both power and men make the two synonymous. Cleopatra gains power by taking it from men, emasculating them by taking Ptolemy XIV’s life and Caesar’s conquest. This is unacceptable to Boccaccio. He does not find the idea of a woman being in power fundamentally dangerous, as he does include positive depictions of female leaders in *De mulieribus claris*.<sup>335</sup> Rather, the problem is that Cleopatra uses her sexual power to take power away from men, and in Boccaccio’s eyes “power assumed as a matter of duty is legitimate, while that acquired through the pursuit of personal ambition is not.”<sup>336</sup> Cleopatra is vilified because she takes her “manly spirit” a step too far; her seizure of power from men is reprehensible to the male readers of Boccaccio’s work, and thus Boccaccio must provide an answer to Cleopatra’s power. Herod, and later Antony, become his answers.

After the formation of the second triumvirate Cleopatra met Antony in Tarsos in 41 BCE, hoping to establish her authority with Rome’s new leadership.<sup>337</sup> Here the ancient

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<sup>328</sup> Cassius Dio, *Roman History* 42.34-35, in *Cleopatra: A Sourcebook*, trans. Prudence J. Jones (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2006), 56-57.

<sup>329</sup> Plutarch, *Life of Caesar* 49, in *Cleopatra: A Sourcebook*, trans. Prudence J. Jones (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2006), 57-58.

<sup>330</sup> Roller, *Cleopatra*, 63-64.

<sup>331</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.

<sup>332</sup> Boccaccio, *Famous Women*, 363.

<sup>333</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>334</sup> *Ibid.*, 365.

<sup>335</sup> For example, Boccaccio writes an extremely favorable biography of Joana I of Naples, who he hoped would be his patron. Boccaccio, *Famous Women*, 466-473.

<sup>336</sup> Margaret Franklin, *Boccaccio’s Heroines: Power and Virtue in Renaissance Society* (Hampshire: Burlington: Ashgate Publishing, 2006), 8.

<sup>337</sup> Roller, *Cleopatra*, 76-77.

sources again emphasize Cleopatra's seductiveness, Plutarch describing Cleopatra as reclining "beneath a canopy embroidered with gold, decked out to resemble a painting of Aphrodite."<sup>338</sup> Cleopatra is depicted as the source of Antony's moral failings: "the love of Cleopatra that befell him was the final ruin...and, if anything good or protective remained, obliterated and destroyed it."<sup>339</sup> Cleopatra invited Antony to spend the winter with her in Egypt, and after a few months of lavish vacation in which the two called themselves the "Inimitable Livers," she gave birth to his twins in the fall.<sup>340</sup> Antony began giving territory to Cleopatra in 37 BCE, including Jericho, where Herod was located.<sup>341</sup> The Roman Parthian expedition began in 36 BCE, and Cleopatra followed Antony to the Euphrates before starting her own tour of her new acquisitions, including visiting Herod in Judaea.<sup>342</sup> Here, after leasing Jericho back to Herod, Josephus reports that Cleopatra "attempted to have sexual relations with the king," but Herod thought "she was making such advances in order to trap him." He wanted to kill her, but his friends prevented him from doing so because "Antony would not tolerate such action."<sup>343</sup>

Boccaccio describes the beginning of Cleopatra's relationship with Antony in much the same way he described her relationship with Caesar, drawing upon the classical sources' negative portrayals. According to Boccaccio, Cleopatra is a seductress who keeps Antony "miserably enthralled,"<sup>344</sup> and uses her sexuality to gain power over Antony. She then uses that power to advance her political goals, "[making] bold to ask him for the kingdom of Syria and Arabia," which Antony then gives her.<sup>345</sup> Cleopatra takes the powerful, "masculine," role in their relationship, persuading Antony to do her bidding through her sexuality. Antony is a "vile"<sup>346</sup> man for being seduced by Cleopatra, and weak compared to Herod.

Boccaccio's account of Cleopatra's visit to Herod largely follows Josephus's account, and uses Herod as a model of what his male readers should do when confronted with a "masculine" woman like Cleopatra. While Antony notices that Cleopatra's request is "excessive and quite inappropriate," he still gives her territories to "satisfy her desire."<sup>347</sup> Herod notices that Cleopatra is trying to seduce him in order to further her own ambitions, and refuses her, ready "to kill her with his sword." This detail of which weapon Herod plans to kill Cleopatra with is absent from Josephus's account, and the phallic connotation of "sword" is clear. Herod's response to Cleopatra's masculine use of her sexuality is an immediate desire to assert his own masculinity. While Herod neither sleeps with nor kills

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<sup>338</sup> Plutarch, *Life of Antony* 24-27.1, in *Cleopatra: A Sourcebook*, trans. Prudence J. Jones (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2006), 102.

<sup>339</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.

<sup>340</sup> Roller, *Cleopatra*, 82-84.

<sup>341</sup> *Ibid.*, 92-94.

<sup>342</sup> *Ibid.*, 95-96.

<sup>343</sup> Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities, Volume VI*, trans. Ralph Marcus and Allen Wikgren (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1943), 303-305.

<sup>344</sup> Boccaccio, *Famous Women*, 365.

<sup>345</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>346</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>347</sup> *Ibid.*

Cleopatra, his recognition of Cleopatra as a villain and his impulse to defend both his and Antony's masculine honor make him a hero for Boccaccio. While Caesar is "lusty"<sup>348</sup> and Antony is "vile,"<sup>349</sup> Herod is a true masculine king, intelligent and brave.

In 34 BCE Cleopatra and Antony celebrated a ceremony known as the Donations of Alexandria, where they divided their territories between themselves and their children.<sup>350</sup> This further destroyed the already hostile relationship between Octavian and Antony, and the propaganda war that would ultimately influence all later Roman sources on Cleopatra began. Octavian's allies depicted Cleopatra negatively, putting the blame for Antony's misdeeds on her alone.<sup>351</sup> This can be seen in Cassius Dio's rendition of Octavian's speech, "Antony himself, twice a consul, many times a commander...who would not weep to see that he...bows before that woman?"<sup>352</sup> Octavian and Antony's triumvirate expired at the end of 33 BCE, and the following year Octavian took the Senate while Cleopatra and Antony raised a naval fleet.<sup>353</sup> Cleopatra and Antony lost the Battle of Actium in 31 BCE,<sup>354</sup> and Octavian invaded Egypt in 30 BCE. Antony's fleets defected to Octavian, and he committed suicide.<sup>355</sup> After Antony's death, Cleopatra had a final meeting with Octavian in which she attempted to defend herself and blame everything on Antony, to no avail. She then locked herself in a room with two attendants, and died. While her physician Olympos' account never mentions a cause of death, later ancient sources such as Plutarch state that she died after offering her bare arm to an asp.<sup>356</sup>

Boccaccio follows the asp anecdote in his account of Cleopatra's suicide, saying she, "determined to die... opened the veins in her arms and placed asps on the wounds."<sup>357</sup> Boccaccio sees her suicide as a good decision, stating that "the wretched woman put an end to her greed, her concupiscence, and her life."<sup>358</sup> While Cleopatra's Roman contemporaries respected her suicide as a noble, dignified way to avoid being further humiliated in Octavian's triumph, Boccaccio respects Cleopatra's suicide because it seems to him to be the first good decision she made. By ending her life, Cleopatra destroys her own greed and lust, preventing her from being more of a danger to society. However, Boccaccio spends comparatively little time on this narrative of Cleopatra's death. He prefers his alternative death scene, where Antony kills Cleopatra with her own poison.

The story of the poison flowers comes from Pliny the Elder's *Natural History*. Pliny reports that Antony feared being poisoned, and Cleopatra played a trick on him by poisoning the flowers in his crown and inviting him to dip his crown in his drink after his taster had already tasted it. Cleopatra stopped him before he drank, and "ordered a prisoner

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<sup>348</sup> Ibid., 363.

<sup>349</sup> Ibid., 365.

<sup>350</sup> Roller, *Cleopatra*, 99-100.

<sup>351</sup> Ibid., 129-131.

<sup>352</sup> Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, 137.

<sup>353</sup> Roller, *Cleopatra*, 134.

<sup>354</sup> Ibid., 139-140.

<sup>355</sup> Ibid., 144-145.

<sup>356</sup> Ibid., 147-148.

<sup>357</sup> Boccaccio, *Famous Women*, 371.

<sup>358</sup> Ibid., 372.

who had been led in to drink it and he promptly expired.”<sup>359</sup> In Boccaccio’s version, however, Antony has Cleopatra “taken into custody and [forces] her to drink the same cup that she had prevented him from imbibing.”<sup>360</sup> Antony defeats Cleopatra with her own trick, negating her “masculine” power and regaining the agency he lost when she seduced him. Cleopatra’s “manly spirit” is her death; there would be no poison sitting in front of her if she did not attempt to play her power game with Antony. By killing Cleopatra, Antony shows that even a woman with a “masculine” spirit can never reach the same level of power as a man; while Antony has been emasculated by Cleopatra, he can still physically overpower her when it counts.

While Boccaccio claims the purpose of his work is to honor women with “masculine spirits,” he ultimately finds Cleopatra’s “masculinity” unacceptable. Cleopatra exemplified the intelligence and bravery Boccaccio praised in his Preface, but she used her sexuality as a means of limiting men’s power and furthering her own ambitions. Cleopatra has a “manly spirit,” but she also has a manly sexuality, which is unacceptable to Boccaccio’s fourteenth century perspective on women. Boccaccio praises the concept of a “manly spirit,” but he also praises Christian women’s “virginity, purity, holiness, and invincible firmness in overcoming carnal desire.”<sup>361</sup> As a sexual pagan woman, Cleopatra could never be the ideal famous woman in Boccaccio’s eyes, even with her “boldness, intellectual powers, and perseverance.”<sup>362</sup> To deal with this disconnect, Boccaccio makes Cleopatra’s masculinity her downfall, thus degrading the idea of a woman with a “*virilis animus*.”

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<sup>359</sup> Pliny the Elder, *Natural History* 21.12, in *Cleopatra: A Sourcebook*, trans. Prudence J. Jones (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2006), 108-109.

<sup>360</sup> Boccaccio, *Famous Women*, 373.

<sup>361</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>362</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

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