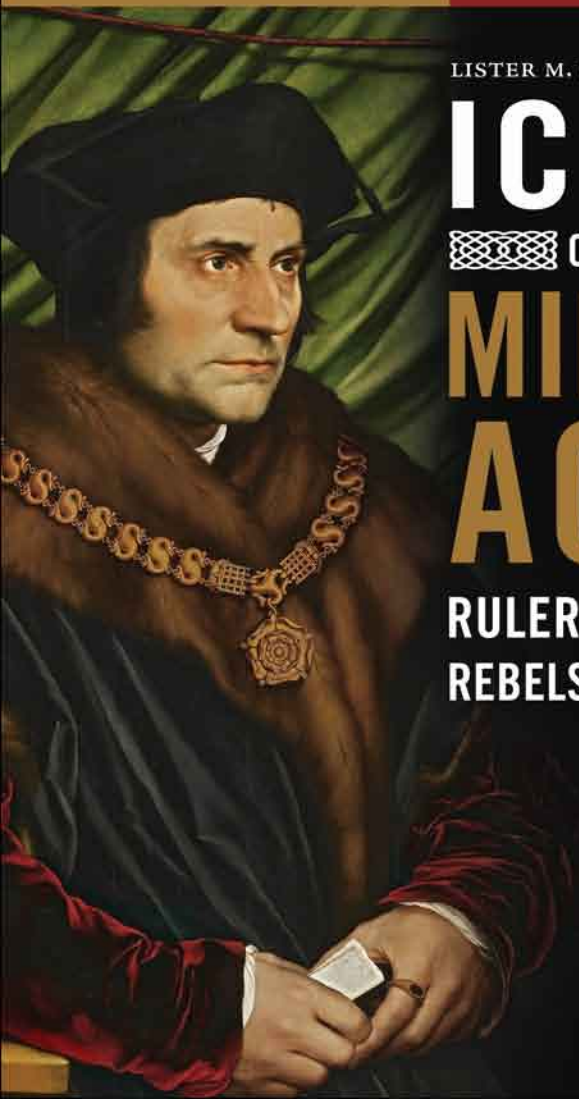LISTER M. MATHESON, EDITOR

ICONS ▨▨ OF THE ▨▨ MIDDLE AGES

RULERS, WRITERS, REBELS, AND SAINTS

How to go to your page

This eBook contains multiple volumes. Each volume has its own page numbering scheme, consisting of a volume number and a page number, separated by a colon.

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ICONS OF THE MIDDLE AGES

Rulers, Writers, Rebels, and Saints

Volume 1

Lister M. Matheson, Editor

GREENWOOD

ICONS OF THE MIDDLE AGES

ICONS OF THE MIDDLE AGES

Rulers, Writers, Rebels, and Saints

Volume 1

Lister M. Matheson, Editor

GREENWOOD

Wha's like us? Damn few, and they're a' deid!

[Old Scottish Toast]

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Series Foreword

Worshipped and cursed. Loved and loathed. Obsessed about the world over. What does it take to become an icon? Regardless of subject, culture, or era, the requisite qualifications are the same: (1) challenge the status quo, (2) influence millions, and (3) impact history.

Using these criteria, ABC-Clio/Greenwood introduces a new reference format and approach to popular culture. Spanning a wide range of subjects, volumes in the Greenwood Icons series provide students and general readers a port of entry into the most fascinating and influential topics of the day. Every title offers an in-depth look at up to 24 iconic figures, each of which captures the essence of a broad subject. These icons typically embody a group of values, elicit strong reactions, reflect the essence of a particular time and place, and link different traditions and periods. Among those featured are artists and activists, superheroes and spies, inventors and athletes, the legends and mythmakers of entire generations. Yet icons can also come from unexpected places: as the heroine who transcends the pages of a novel or as the revolutionary idea that shatters our previously held beliefs. Whether people, places, or things, such icons serve as a bridge between the past and the present, the canonical and the contemporary. By focusing on icons central to popular culture, this series encourages students to appreciate cultural diversity and critically analyze issues of enduring significance.

Most importantly, these books are as entertaining as they are provocative. Is Disneyland a more influential icon of the American West than Las Vegas? How do ghosts and ghouls reflect our collective psyche? Is Barry Bonds an inspiring or deplorable icon of baseball?

Designed to foster debate, the series serves as a unique resource that is ideal for paper writing or report purposes. Insightful, in-depth entries provide far more information than conventional reference articles but are less intimidating and more accessible than a book-length biography. The most revered and reviled icons of American and world history are brought to life with related sidebars, timelines, fact boxes, and quotations. Authoritative entries are

accompanied by bibliographies, making these titles an ideal starting point for further research. Spanning a wide range of popular topics, including business, literature, civil rights, politics, music, and more, books in the series provide fresh insights for the student and popular reader into the power and influence of icons, a topic of as vital interest today as in any previous era.

Preface

Icons of the Middle Ages: Rulers, Writers, Rebels, and Saints is the result of a quickie conception, an elephantine gestation (with intermittent health problems), and a difficult birth. Nevertheless, we believe that the resultant offspring will prosper and go on to serve a useful role in life and society.

The present two volumes describe the lives and afterlives of a wide variety of larger-than-life medieval men and women who have affected and influenced deeply the modern world and the imaginations of those who live in it, whether we realize it or not. Many of these outstanding characters have exerted lasting significance and presence in the popular imagination (in literature, film, television, art, and so on). Some, such as Saint Francis of Assisi, have become powerful symbols of good for many people; others, such as Vlad Dracul of Wallachia and King Richard III of England, have become archetypal symbols of evil. An iconic physical artifact—the castle—and an iconic military practice—siege warfare—have also been included as important symbols of life in the Middle Ages. The castle is a once-proud manifestation of power that is still visible throughout Europe, although often much decayed or ruined. The siege of a castle or stronghold was a common military operation during the Middle Ages; it had its own equipment, rules, and procedures that were well known to and widely practiced by medieval warriors.

The 18 biographical chapters treat individual characters, with the exception of three cases in which two individuals are so closely or inextricably linked that they "go together like bread and butter"—Abelard and Heloise, Robert the Bruce and William Wallace, and King Arthur and Merlin. Each biographical chapter is longer than the usual journal article, averaging about 15,000 words, but shorter than a full-length biography. The contents of each biographical essay vary somewhat according to the topic, but all chapters focus on the iconic quality of the figure(s). Almost all the essays deal first with the "real" life and deeds of its chosen character(s), before moving on to the afterlife and influence of the character(s) in society, literature, film, and other media. The exceptions are "King Arthur and Merlin" and "Robin Hood,"

who stand apart as primarily literary/cultural rather than historical figures—though we must remember that King Arthur was generally accepted as historically real, with a factual biography, until the mid-seventeenth century and that Robin Hood may be the only figure in the *Dictionary of National Biography* who never existed (currently in the online version under "Hood, Robin [*supp. fl.* late 12th–13th cent.], legendary outlaw hero."

The two chapters "Castles: Medieval Icons of Power, Wealth, and Authority" and "The Siege: An Iconic Form of Medieval Warfare" are longer, about 25,000 words, and provide detailed discussions of the development and evolution of their subject in the Middle Ages. The two chapters illustrate why castles and sieges can also be considered iconic symbols of the medieval centuries.

Although some chapters do include endnotes for those interested in accessing the scholarly literature, we have deliberately kept the tone of the essays conversational because these volumes are intended to be accessible to general readers, advanced high school students, and introductory college undergraduates. We hope to capture the imaginations of our readers sufficiently that they would like to know more about the remarkable people included in *Icons of the Middle Ages*. To this end, "Further Reading" suggestions are usually given after each chapter, offering details of important studies and texts that are generally available in print or online. *Icons of the Middle Ages* also includes an introduction discussing what is meant by the term "icon" and a detailed subject index to allow readers to access information within the chapters quickly and easily.

Acknowledgments

The preparation and assembly of *Icons of the Middle Ages* have been eye-openers in several respects. As always in collaborative projects, the prime acknowledgments are to the individual contributors, a mixture of seasoned old pros and up-and-coming younger scholars (they can each decide to which category they belong), all cheerful, reliable, and professional.

John Wagner of ABC-Clio deserves particular mention for his constant encouragement, assistance, and occasional whip-cracking during the preparation of these volumes, especially when the editor was paraphrasing Émile Littré's comments in 1880 after the publication of his monumental—indeed *iconic*—*Dictionnaire de la langue française* (published 1863–73; completed in 1873 after nearly 30 years of work): "Combien de fois, quand j'étais au plus fort de mes embarras, n'ai-je pas dit, moitié plaisantant, moitié sérieux: 'O mes amis, ne faites jamais de dictionnaire!'"

Finally, let me thank my partner and colleague, Tess Tavormina, for listening to my concerns, offering valuable advice, and hitting upon the brilliant subtitle of this work.

Lister M. Matheson

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Introduction

ICONS

The constituent parts of the title of this book, *Icons of the Middle Ages: Rulers, Writers, Rebels, and Saints*, bear some explication and close reading. In its use here, "icons" is a very new term indeed and reflects the modern age, its psyche, and its fascination with celebrity. Consider some recent instances of "icon" in the press: "Then there is [Barry] Bonds, 46, never a media darling and hardly a sympathetic figure, but a looming icon in this city" (*New York Times*, March 21, 2011);[1] "An icon of old and new Hollywood, she [Elizabeth Taylor] defined modern celebrity—and America couldn't take its eyes off her" (sub-headline, *USA Today*, March 24, 2011, 1A); "PopEater's Rob Shuter recently reported that Lindsay Lohan wants to drop the 'Lo' in 'LiLo' and transform into a new pop icon known simply as Lindsay" (online post at PopEater.com);[2] "A great track . . . leads out onto an astonishing landscape, one that over the years has, deservedly, achieved iconic status" (*Scotland Magazine* 54, Paragraph Publishing Ltd., March 2011).

These excerpts represent very new senses of the noun *icon,* covered by what the *Oxford English Dictionary Online* defined in a draft addition of March 2001 as: "A person or thing regarded as a representative symbol, esp. of a culture or movement; a person, institution, etc., considered worthy of admiration or respect. Freq. with modifying word."[3] The first quotation for this sense in the *OED* is from a magazine article of spring 1952 ("a national icon . . . the American Mr. Moneybags"), followed by five further illustrative quotes, all from newspapers or magazines (1975: "institutional icons such as the ICC and CAB"; 1980: "Defining his *icons* as cultural phenomena, Wolfe [etc.]"; 1988: "an icon for young Indian intellectuals, the 32-year-old Ramanujan"; 1995: "An American icon, the pickup truck"; 2000: "Hollywood's female gay icons Jodie Foster, Susan Sarandon and Jamie Lee Curtis." This sense of the noun is paralleled in the adjective *iconic,* first quoted from *Newsweek* in 1976, with three later magazine and newspaper instances.

The quotations in the *OED* are positive in connotation, but it is clear from the recent citations given above that the sense is expanding: Barry Bonds and Lindsay Lohan are difficult to be "considered worthy of admiration or respect." Wikipedia tries hard to distinguish all sorts of sub-varieties of the modern celebrity sense of *icon*: "pop icon" is distinguished from "cult icon," and has its own entry, as do "cultural icon," "secular icon," and "gay icon," while "political icon" cannot be far behind. And we haven't even touched on the second widespread, new, late twentieth-century sense in computing: "A small symbolic picture of a physical object on a computer screen, *esp.* one that represents a particular option and can be selected to exercise that option" (see *OED Online*)! The earliest, original senses of *icon*—"an image; a portrait; an illustration in a book," "a solid image; a statue," "a simile"—have become obsolete. A philosophical sense of "a sign that represents its object by sharing some common character" is surely restricted at best. Apart from its recently acquired senses, only the sense of "a representation of a sacred personage" in the context of the Greek or Russian Orthodox Church has survived in common parlance.

The lesson is that *icon* and *iconic* have indeed become overused terms, often used indiscriminately and gushingly to denote "a famous (or, by extension, an infamous or even a notorious) person or thing." The expansion in meaning and use are largely driven by the advertising and entertainment industries through print media and the Internet. But such is the development of language, reflecting societal changes and tastes; the *icon,* so to speak, once out of the bottle will never be put back in again.[4]

ICONS OF THE MIDDLE AGES

Very strictly speaking, the term "the Middle Ages" refers to Europe and denotes the historical period between the decline in the fifth century and fall in succeeding centuries of the Roman Empire in the West to the fall of Constantinople to the Islamic Ottoman Turks in 1453, or to the beginning of the Renaissance in the fourteenth century. The dates, however, are elastic and have ranged widely between circa 500 and, in the case of England, the accession of Henry VII in 1485 or even Henry VIII in 1509. Other subsections have been introduced: the emotive term Dark Ages for the period between the decline of the Roman Empire and the appearance of vernacular written documents; the Early Middle Ages (the fifth century to ca. 1000); the High Middle Ages (ca. 1000 to the end of the thirteenth century); and the Late Middle Ages (ca. 1400 to around the end of the fifteenth century).

Our present set of icons lived in that medieval age, though not all in the European West. The dates of their historical lives range from King Arthur and Merlin (seen as "real" figures) in the late fifth to mid-sixth century to Sir Thomas More, born in 1478 and executed in 1535, a man who spans and links the medieval and early modern ages. The set is necessarily very selective, and many other figures might have been included, such as Alfred the Great, Thomas

Aquinas, Attila the Hun, Augustine of Hippo, Avicenna and Averroës, Roger Bacon, Frederick Barbarossa, Elizabeth Bathory, El Cid, Giotto, Pope Innocent III, Pope Joan, Kubilai Khan, Murasaki Shikibu, Nostradamus, Saint Patrick, Prester John, Richard the Lionhearted and Saladin, and Minamoto Yoritomo. All can be considered as icons—our limited selection is representative and not all-inclusive.

RULERS, WRITERS, REBELS, AND SAINTS

Our icons are a mixed bag of the good, the bad, and the downright ugly (at least in behavior). All are highly complex characters, and it is sometimes difficult to pigeonhole them. King Arthur, Robert the Bruce, Charlemagne, Chinggis Khan, Eleanor of Aquitaine, Richard III, and Vlad III Dracula were all rulers, but Robert the Bruce and, arguably, Richard III and Vlad Dracula could be viewed as rebels. Abelard and Heloise, Geoffrey Chaucer, Dante, Hildegard of Bingen, Maimonides, and Thomas More were all writers, but all might also be considered rebels against political, societal, and/or literary norms and conventions. William Wallace was a rebel (though one person's insurgent and rebel is another person's freedom fighter and patriot), as were Joan of Arc and Leif Eriksson the adventurer. Thomas Becket, Francis of Assisi, and Joan of Arc were rebels but also saints. Although the alliterative subtitle does not stretch that far, Richard III and Vlad Dracula, both rulers, became the archetypal rogues and ruffians of history and legend. The castle could be a symbol of pride and security, but it could also be a symbol of domination and oppression: the whitewashed walls and colorful heraldic banners versus the oubliette, dungeon, and torture chamber. The siege was a common event in medieval warfare, as rulers and armies sought to capture castles and other strong, fortified places that were common aspects of medieval life.

All of our human icons are remarkable characters whose lives, deeds, and legends have outlasted them. Even though they lived (or, in some cases, were thought to live) many centuries ago, all remain potent and viable in the present age.[5] They deserve to be remembered, celebrated, and pondered as role models, good and bad, for modern times. An interviewee in the *Times of India* remarked in 2009 that "Today's kids don't actually know the relevance of a Che Guevara or even a Jim Morrison for that matter. T-shirts are sold in plenty emblazoned with these icons. But, how many of these teens know the real story? How many of them know why these icons are who they are?"[6] The present work is an attempt to rectify that situation for our "Icons of the Middle Ages."

COVERAGE IN THE CHAPTERS

The individual chapters give the basic outlines of the lives and careers of their various figures and an overview of their subsequent reputations, influence,

and appearances in high or popular culture. Lives and careers can usually be summarized pretty effectively, but we have had to be very selective with regard to later impact and manifestations. There are simply too many instances, already existing and appearing daily, to be listed or described, and every reader will be able to add more examples from personal knowledge. Random illustrations are as follows: John Wayne, hopelessly miscast as Genghis Khan, in *The Conqueror* (directed by Dick Powell, 1956);[7] an episode of the TV drama *House* titled "Brave Heart" (2009); "Camelot," a new Starz 10-episode series started April 1, 2011 ("Sword, Sex and Sorcery," *Vogue*); the made-for-TV "Beyond Sherwood Forest" (directed by Peter DeLuise, 2009);[8] John Steinbeck's *The Acts of King Arthur and His Noble Knights* (1976), his retelling of Malory's *Morte Darthur*; Robert Nye's scabrous tour-de-force *Merlin: Darkling Child of Virgin and Devil* (1978); Joan of Arc in Nye's *The Life and Death of My Lord Gilles de Rais* (1990); a made-for-TV version of *The Lion in Winter,* starring Patrick Stewart and Glenn Close (directed by Andrey Konchalovskiy, 2003); the King Arthur Flour Company; the fact that Ivan the Terrible admired Vlad Dracula, and Josef Stalin admired Ivan, *ergo. . . .* We encourage you to come up with your own examples of the ongoing modern engagement with these "Icons of the Middle Ages."

NOTES

1. Online ed.: http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/22/sports/baseball/22rhoden.html.
2. http://www.popeater.com/2011/03/28/lindsay-lohan-last-name/#comments.
3. Second edition, 1989; online version March 2011. http://www.oed.com.proxy2.cl.msu.edu/Entry/90879 (accessed 1 April, 2011). Earlier version first published in *New English Dictionary,* 1899.
4. See Suzy Freeman-Greene's article, "Nothing and no one are off limits in an age of iconomania," *The Age* (Melbourne, Australia), online ed., September 15, 2009: http://www.theage.com.au/opinion/society-and-culture/nothing-and-no-one-are-off-limits-in-an-age-of-iconomania-20090914-fntq.html.
5. In the style of the TV show *Deadliest Warrior*: Could Vlad Dracul make (literal) mincemeat of Muammar Gaddafi? Could Leif Eriksson sell a bridge in Vinland to Donald Trump? Could Chinggis Khan outgeneral George S. Patton? Does Richard III outshine Richard Nixon for villainy (though both came to a bad end)? Does Francis of Assisi outsaint Mother Teresa? Do Geoffrey Chaucer and Dante Alighieri outwrite Peter Ackroyd and Matthew Pearl?
6. July 1, 2009. Online ed.: http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/Potpourri/The-past-beckons/articleshow/4720309.cms.
7. "John Wayne—An American Icon Collection" is coincidentally but unsurprisingly advertised on the same webpage: http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0049092/. We should also mention the Russian-made film *Mongol: The Rise of Genghis Khan* (dir. Sergey Bodrov, 2007), a far more accurate retelling of the khan's story.
8. From a plot summary by Anonymous: "A cursed girl who can change into a ferocious dragon is used to find and pacify Robin Hood," http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1331323/plotsummary.

An illustration from a fourteenth-century French manuscript depicts theologian Peter Abelard tutoring his student, Heloise. Abelard was a scholastic philosopher during the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries. He and Heloise developed an illicit love affair that produced a child. Heloise eventually retreated to a convent, and Abelard was castrated by representatives of her uncle, the canon Fulbert. (The British Library/StockphotoPro)

Abelard (1079–1142) and Heloise (ca. 1090–1164)

Jan Bulman

INTRODUCTION

Abelard and Heloise are among the most famous figures of the Middle Ages. Their lives intersected with many of the preeminent persons of their day, some of whom were their supporters, and many of whom were not. We have a record of their lives that is most uncommon in its detail for any medieval person—we even know some of their most intimate personal feelings. Most of this knowledge comes from Abelard's famous autobiography, *Historia calamitatum* (*The Story of My Misfortunes*), written around 10 years before his death. In it, we read of his arrogant confidence in his intellectual abilities, the sharply competitive world of the twelfth-century schools, his passionate affair with Heloise that resulted in Abelard's brutal castration at the hands of Heloise's relatives, the subsequent separation of the two lovers, and the condemnation of Abelard's theological work on the Trinity at the Council of Soissons in 1121. The most well-known collection of letters from the Middle Ages are the eight letters (including the *Historia calamitatum,* which was also in the form of a letter), written in Latin, exchanged between Heloise and Abelard after they were forced to separate following Abelard's brutal mutilation. For many, the lives of the famous couple seem to embody classic dichotomies: faith versus reason; free inquiry versus church repression; carnal lust versus divine love; novelty versus tradition. Yet, to simplify their story by putting it in terms of simple sets of opposites is to consign them to triteness. The lives of Heloise and Abelard encompass many aspects of what some historians identify as the twelfth-century renaissance, a period on the cusp of the high Middle Ages that witnessed cultural, political, and economic transformations spurred by an intellectual revitalization that produced the zenith of medieval culture.

ABELARD'S EARLY LIFE AND EDUCATION

Abelard was born in 1079 in the small village of Le Pallet, about 10 miles from Nantes in the Duchy of Brittany. Baptized Peter, he received the name Abelard only as an adult, perhaps as something of a jest that referred to his large size and girth. His father, Berengar, was a knight and a landholder, and although it cannot be determined whether his family was of Breton origin, Berengar was probably a minor Breton noble, perhaps a castellan or a knight who guarded the castle of Le Pallet in exchange for a small landholding. Rather than accept his inheritance as the eldest son, Abelard rejected the privileges and military glory that his heritage might have brought him and did not become a knight, but instead pursued his intellectual interests as a cleric. For young Abelard, the path to fame was through learning, and he describes himself as using the arms of dialectical reasoning, rather than the conflict of warfare, to gain trophies.

Le Pallet was near the boundary with Anjou; as such, it was not too far from the towns in the Loire valley where a tradition of learning and

composition of Latin poetry flourished. In Abelard's day, schools taught a curriculum that consisted of the trivium (grammar, dialectic, and rhetoric) and the quadrivium (arithmetic, music, geometry, and astronomy). The trivium was dominated by dialectic, a discipline that stressed the science of discourse, commonly thought of as logic. In the first half of the twelfth century, the study of logic was based on the first two treatises of Aristotle's work *Organon*, called *Categories* and *Interpretation,* and Porphyry's *Isagoge,* along with a commentary by Boethius. Most of the *Organon*, which was important to the development of medieval theology known as scholasticism, was unknown in Western Europe during Abelard's day. Although he would not be the first to do so, Abelard's goal was to fuse human logic with Christian revelation to understand Christ as the *logos,* the ultimate logical truth. He believed that through logical discourse directed toward the most logical of religions, all humankind would embrace Christianity.

   Determined to pursue the study of dialectic, Abelard left his small village while in his teens. By the 1090s, Abelard was in Loches, where he studied with one of the foremost masters of logic of the time, Roscelin of Compiègne (ca. 1050–ca. 1125). Because there is only one letter to Abelard that can be positively attributed to Roscelin, most of what historians know about Roscelin's thought comes to us indirectly, from what others wrote about him. Roscelin was involved in a controversy with another leading intellectual of his day, Anselm of Canterbury, that mirrored to some extent the intense dispute between Abelard and Bernard of Clairvaux some years later. Anselm attacked Roscelin for his Trinitarian theology, which attempted to apply logic and grammar to understanding the Trinity. Based on what others wrote about his thought, it seems that Roscelin held that universals were mere words with no reality and that when we speak of the Trinity as one nature in three persons—that is, as a universal—we speak out of habit of thought. Therefore, the single unity of the divine trinity has no reality because universals have no reality beyond words. To Anselm and others, even if Roscelin's ideas could not be proven explicitly heretical, his methods were. Anselm wrote a refutation of Roscelin in 1092, after which Roscelin went to England and then perhaps to Rome. By 1098, Anselm had provided a revised version of the refutation to Pope Urban II, claiming that it was heresy to use logic as a tool of theology and that dialecticians who believed universal substances were only words should be silenced. Roscelin's ideas about understanding ancient texts as words, not as things, influenced Abelard's own thought, although, later in his life, Abelard wrote contemptuously of Roscelin's logic and theology. Perhaps because Abelard disagreed with Roscelin's interpretation of universals, or perhaps because Roscelin wrote a contemptuous letter (his only surviving work) to Abelard mocking his castration, Abelard does not acknowledge that he studied under Roscelin; he fails to mention Roscelin at all in his *Historia calamitatum.*

What Are Universals, and Why Do They Matter?

Although the problem of universals was not addressed solely by medieval philosophers, the question of universals drew sophisticated and extended debates in the Middle Ages at a level of intellectual rigor not equaled since that time. Universals are signs common to several things or natures signified by a common term. For instance, think about two red balls. Redness of the red balls is a universal term because it signifies a repeatable entity with certain natures or characteristics predictably found in all red balls. Nominalism holds that all universals are mere names, not realities, and that only particular entities or events have reality. Realism, on the other hand, holds that universals have reality. The problem of universals arose from the third-century neo-Platonist philosopher Porphyry. Porphyry wrote a work called the Isagoge, *an introduction to Aristotle's* Categories *in which he asks, are universals independent of the mind or are they conceptions of the mind? Furthermore, if universals are independent of the mind, are they corporeal or incorporeal? If they are incorporeal, do they exist separate from physical things or within them? To use the example of the red balls, is the redness something that exists independent of the mind, and, if so, is redness a tangible entity or does it exist within the ball?*

In the Middle Ages, difficulties arose when the problem of universals was applied to understanding of the Trinity. Based on what others wrote about his thought, Roscelin subscribed to a nominalist view, holding that mere habit of speech prevented us from describing the Trinity as three entities or three substances. If the three substances were truly one entity, we also would have to believe that the Father and the Holy Spirit had become incarnate with the Son.

*Abelard wrote a commentary on Porphyry in which he asked whether universals were things (*res, *in Latin) or words (*verba*). It seems that Abelard tried to seek a middle position between nominalism—like that of Roscelin—and realism—like that of William of Champeaux—holding that both particular objects and universal concepts are real.*

ABELARD'S EDUCATION IN PARIS

Around 1100, at about 21 years of age, Abelard made his way to Paris to study in the great cathedral school of Notre Dame under William of Champeaux (ca. 1070–1122). At this time, Paris was not yet the intellectual center of Europe, a position it would enjoy from about the thirteenth century as the great medieval university of Paris came to dominate the disciplines of higher learning, especially theology. In fact, for Abelard, Paris comprised little more

than the Île de la Cité, the small island in the Seine River that would eventually hold both Notre Dame Cathedral and the royal palace and tower of King Louis VI. In 1100, one would be hard-pressed to describe Paris as a city at all; large town would be a more accurate description. Orleans, in the Loire valley, was more important than Paris was; it was larger, with a cathedral school of its own that was better known for Latin literary studies than for the study of dialectic. No doubt this was why Abelard did not remain in the Loire valley but instead traveled northward to the valley of the Seine, or as he writes in his *Historia calamitatum*, into France. (Just as Paris was a fraction of its present size, twelfth-century France was limited to the region immediately around Paris in the Seine valley, a region known as the Île-de-France.) Abelard was drawn to Paris because, he said, the discipline of logic flourished there and William of Champeaux—archdeacon of Paris, canon of Notre Dame, and counselor to King Philip I (1052–1108)—was its most famous teacher.

Paris in Abelard's Day

Paris had been a Roman foundation of the first century B.C.E. called Lutetia, which had been built near the site of an even older Celtic settlement of the Parisii tribe. Lutetia was typical of most towns in the Roman Empire, with a bathhouse, aqueducts, and a theatre, and as a prosperous trading center it spread southward from the Île de la Cité up to what is now the Sorbonne on the Left Bank. However, the decline of the Roman Empire in Western Europe brought stagnation, contraction, and decay to its cities. When Abelard arrived in Paris, he would have found a town that had pulled back into a much more defensive position. Much of the landscape was still in ruins after a particularly ferocious Viking raid in 885 that had left the town burned and scarred. Fortified houses and walled monasteries became the dominant architecture. The royal palace at the west end of the island was still being rebuilt during Abelard's lifetime. The impressive cathedral of Notre Dame de Paris that dominates the Île de la Cité today was not begun until 1163, 21 years after Abelard's death. A large Romanesque cathedral of Saint Stephen that was located just behind the site of the present-day cathedral lay in ruins, never to be rebuilt as the influence of Notre Dame increased.

To the south, the Petit-Pont bridge, rebuilt in stone around 1120, linked the Île de la Cité with the Left Bank. To the north, a new bridge, called the Grand-Pont, and a fortified gate, called the Châtlet, connected the Île to the Right Bank. The old northern bridge was demolished by about 1116. On the Right Bank of the Seine was an emerging commercial quarter, and on the Left Bank was the student quarter. Today, only two buildings from Abelard's day survive. One is the tower of the church at Saint

Germain-des-Prés and the other is the chapel of Saint Aignan, north of Notre Dame cathedral on the Île de la Cité.

As a cathedral canon, William of Champeaux was allowed to collect revenue from his own property. A canon was a considered minor clergy, and in the twelfth century, the church was involved in an ongoing reform movement to ban clerical marriage and enforce celibacy among the minor clergy, although recurring papal decrees on the subject suggest that reform had not been fully realized. William of Champeaux was a champion of papal efforts of reform, and in the early 1120s, he worked on behalf of Pope Innocent II to resolve the conflict between the church and the German emperor over papal reforms that resulted in a settlement called the Concordat of Worms. William was the head of the cathedral school; he had studied under one of the great masters of the day, Anselm of Laon (ca. 1055–ca. 1117). During Abelard's lifetime, "master" was a title denoting respect that was often attached before the names of those who had graduated from prestigious schools, or the men who taught at those schools, although use of the title was quite fluid and it may have been applied to a master craftsman as well. Master William of Champeaux adhered to the system of thought called realism, because he believed that universals are real.

Abelard was drawn to William of Champeaux at the cathedral school in Paris because his fame and mastery in logic were well known. Abelard seems to concede William's eminent reputation indeed was merited when he writes that William was the supreme master both by reputation and by fact. Yet, rather than apply himself to learn at his teacher's knee, Abelard pursued a course that would become a lifelong pattern of behavior for him; his seemingly relentless and reckless disregard for prudence repeatedly overturned his hard-won victories. Abelard never seemed to lack self-confidence, and perhaps it was never his intention to learn from William, but rather he meant to engage him in intellectual combat, defeat him, and enjoy the spoils of victory, which in this case would be to oust William and become a master at the school of Notre Dame. Nonetheless, Abelard seems to grasp that his habit of acquiring enemies, whom he claims were jealous of his superior intellect and growing reputation, cost him dearly, and, in fact, he sees his conflict with William as the beginning of his misfortunes.

The arena in which Abelard fought was the classroom, where instruction was carried out by two methods: *lectio* and *disputatio*. With *lectio* (from which we get the English word "lecture"), students heard the master read from recognized authorities. *Disputatio* favored dialogue and debate, with masters and students working through difficult problems through logical argumentation that relied on established authorities to uncover truths and eliminate contradictions. *Disputatio* was not an empty exercise in logic; its effective intellectual goal was not merely to tear down an opposing argument, but also to erect a stronger one that could bring the mind closer to the truth and eliminate error and contradiction. Abelard, never one to downplay his abilities, writes that he excelled at *disputatio*—both as a student, when he

challenged and defeated his masters in dialectical combat; and as a teacher, when he stimulated lively debate among his avid students. In Paris, Abelard refuted William's arguments, earned what he described as the master's violent dislike, and alienated his follow students, who saw Abelard as a disrespectful young upstart. In his *Historia calamitatum* Abelard writes that he defeated his master in dialectical disputation by presenting a clear logical argument that forced William to modify his views on universals. Abelard forced William to amend his position, which held that the fundamental nature of all humanity was essentially the same and individuals were distinguished only by "accidents" or differentiated modifications beyond their common nature. Abelard handed William a humiliating defeat by arguing the absurdity of this position, which did not allow that individuals could be genuinely different from one another. Abelard had arrived in Paris as a virtual unknown and severely tarnished the great master's reputation; he writes that the master's lectures fell into disrepute.

Yet, the conflict with William of Champeaux does more than prefigure Abelard's combative nature that would set so many against him; it also anticipates Abelard's preoccupation with logic as a means of linguistic analysis. In Abelard's view, one that was not shared by William of Champeaux, logic should be directed toward understanding how *concepts* were expressed in words, not toward *things*, which should be addressed by physics or metaphysics. The dual purpose of logic was the study of language and the study of the relationship between language and the things it tried to express. For instance, for William of Champeaux and many of his contemporaries, descriptions such as "red" had an independent reality that all red things share. Abelard rejected that notion, but he did not go so far as to claim that descriptions were mere words without meaning beyond themselves. Instead, Abelard held that universals such as redness do not exist on their own but that descriptive words like *red* have a real, unchanging meaning, just as matter has a form, but form cannot exist without matter. Therefore, for Abelard, language was both psychological and physical; it vocalized a sound, but also what that sound signified, both as a concept and as a thing (in Latin, *sensus* and *res*).

Abelard's ability to challenge and to defeat his master in dialectical contests earned him the open hostility of William and the jealous resentment of other, more experienced—though less gifted—students. Although William was not vanquished entirely, his reputation as a teacher never again held the same preeminence, and Abelard's career was launched.

ABELARD THE TEACHER

In about 1102, Abelard left Paris to establish his own school at Melun, just south of Paris, but far enough away to reduce the likelihood that William could obstruct his goal of establishing himself as a master. Abelard described Melun as a fortress and royal seat of the king, but it seems likely that Abelard

had other reasons for locating his school in Melun. Although he does not mention it in his autobiography, Abelard secured the support of Stephen of Garlande (ca. 1070–ca. 1148). Like William, Stephen was a canon of Notre Dame de Paris, but unlike William, he occupied a less canonically pure status, for he was both a knight and a cleric. Stephen also appears to have had the support of the king; he had been nominated by King Philip to the episcopal see of Beauvais in 1101, but his nomination was blocked by the powerful Ivo of Chartres (ca. 1040–1115) who complained to the pope that Stephen was unfit for the position because he was an adulterer, an excommunicate, and an illiterate layman. Ivo, much like William, was a vigorous supporter of the papal reform movement that sought to end clerical marriage and concubinage and to reduce the role of the laity in church administration. Although Ivo's accusations should not be taken completely at face value, they draw a portrait of a man who benefited from royal favor and enjoyed lay and clerical privileges. With the security of royal authority behind him, Stephen protected Abelard and saw to it that the school in Melun was established, despite the antagonism of William, thereby extracting a small measure of revenge against the reformers who had blocked his episcopal nomination. It was not the last time that these two powerful men would wrestle, with Abelard as an incidental participant and beneficiary.

Abelard remained in Melun until about 1104. The young, irreverent teacher's prestige attracted many students. The brilliant reputation of young Master Abelard lured former rivals and enemies in Paris away from the school of William of Champeaux. In the highly competitive world of the twelfth-century schools, reputation of the master was the central attraction for students; the prestige of the master, rather than the institution of the cathedral school itself, drew them. No doubt emboldened by success, Abelard decided to move to Corbeil, which was nearer to Paris and the site of another royal residence. He was creeping steadily closer to his rival, William, and to his ultimate goal of becoming the master of the cathedral school in Paris. However, he seems not to have stayed there for long because he suffered a sort of breakdown—an illness, in his words—from overwork. He abandoned his teaching, left France, and returned to Brittany. Now in Brittany, distant from the intellectual center of Paris, Abelard writes that some of his students followed him; such was the extent of his reputation.

Reputation of Masters and the Cathedral Schools

In the twelfth century, learning was on the rise in Europe. At the forefront of the wave of new learning were the cathedral schools. In the early Middle Ages, teaching was usually done by monks in a monastic setting. However, beginning around 1100, mirroring a shift that was taking place within the church as a whole, cathedral schools more often than not

became the leading centers of intellectual activity. The transfer of intellectual leadership from monasteries to cathedrals came about for a number of interrelated reasons. First, in general, monasteries were tradition-bound institutions with long histories dedicated to preserving existing knowledge through activities such as copying of texts, but by the twelfth century many people regarded monasteries as out of touch with the new commercial and urban life that was developing across Europe. Beginning in the twelfth century, the most innovative minds were turned toward speculative theology, logic, and legal studies, and the proponents of the various approaches to these disciplines were often fierce intellectual rivals. Although there were exceptions, such as the monastery of Saint Victor in Paris, monastic learning was concerned with maintaining liturgical purity and piety, clearly out of step with the new vitality of the cathedral schools.

The teachers at the cathedral schools, the masters, were scholars who attached themselves to an episcopal church that was wealthy enough to support their educational endeavors by providing a regular stipend. In the expanding urban centers of the early twelfth century, some cities in northern France became centers of learning where students came to study the trivium and the quadrivium, drawn by the reputation of the master, not the city in which they studied. For instance, often a student would write that he had studied with a particular master, but fail to mention the place in which those studies occurred. Because reputation of a master was critical to attracting students, the cathedral schools of Abelard's day can be said to be de-institutionalized—they were not attached to institutions as the monastic schools had been, but rather a school thrived or failed by virtue of the master and his reputation. This situation does not last for long. By the beginning of the thirteenth century, new institutional ties were being created, as teaching came to be licensed and eventually attached to an institution called the studium, *known today as the university.*

His illness and retreat to Brittany was only a temporary setback. Abelard returned to Paris around 1108, ready to begin again as William of Champeaux's student. In his absence, William had joined the canons regular at the monastery of Saint Victor outside the Île de la Cité, where he had established a school to continue teaching. Although Abelard suggests that William joined Saint Victor only to increase his reputation for piety and thereby gain promotion to a higher prelacy, there is no evidence that William's motive was quite so self-serving. The canons regular of Saint Victor followed a reformed rule of Saint Augustine, and perhaps William's goal had been to pursue a reformed clerical life. In any case, the school at the abbey of Saint Victor became quite influential, contrary to the overall trend through the twelfth century in which the most important sites of learning were cathedral, not monastic, schools. William's

departure for the abbey of Saint Victor may have seemed like a victory for Abelard, but their rivalry, and the pattern of adversarial interaction between them, continued. Abelard once again engaged and defeated his teacher in at least one contest of disputation. The ebb and flow of their struggle continued as Abelard was placed at the head of the study of dialectic at the Paris cathedral school, only to have William of Champeaux undercut his position there through his considerable influence. Once again Abelard had to depart for Melun, but in 1109 William withdrew from Paris for Saint Victor's and Abelard rushed back to Paris hoping, he writes, to be reconciled with William. If peace was truly his goal, Abelard was to be disappointed. William used his influence once again to block Abelard from acquiring a teaching position at Notre Dame and installed a handpicked master to take his place there after leaving for Saint Victor's, so Abelard was obliged to establish a school and teach at Montagne Saint Geneviève on the south bank of the Seine. The dean of the abbey of Saint Geneviève was Abelard's patron, Stephen of Garlande. Students from Saint Geneviève and Saint Victor engaged one another in contests of disputation.

Abelard and the Garlande Family:
The Enemy of My Enemy Is My Friend

Abelard never mentions the Garlande family in his Historia calamitatum. *Yet, it seems likely that this influential family acted as his protector and patron during the hostilities centering on the twelfth-century cathedral schools. There were four Garlande brothers, and all of them were influential at the highest levels in secular and religious governments. In particular, Abelard probably made an alliance with Stephen of Garlande (ca. 1070–ca. 1148), who was a close advisor first to King Philip I (1052–1108) and then to King Louis VI (1081–1137). Stephen held the positions of chancellor (an administrative head, similar to a cabinet minister) and seneschal (a top military office and head of the royal household) to the king, but at other times, he and his family were out of favor with the monarch. Therefore, the fortunes of Abelard's career mirrored the vicissitudes of Stephen of Garlande's political career.*

The Garlande family's rise to prominence came about in spectacular fashion, because King Philip had marital difficulties. Philip had set aside his wife Bertha of Holland, mother of the future king Louis VI, and in a fit of passion married Bertrada of Montfort even though at the time she was married to Count Fulk V of Anjou (1043–1109). Bertrada's brother, William of Montfort, was the bishop of Paris between 1096 and 1103. There was fierce opposition from many prominent churchmen. The powerful Abbot Suger of Saint Denis vilified Bertrada as a seductress, and others hurled accusations of sorcery. Ivo of Chartres, who had written important

compilations of canon law that were instrumental in the Church's evolving definition of marriage in the twelfth century, led the official opposition to the marriage. In fact, Ivo refused to officiate at the bigamous marriage, and the royal displeasure with the churchman's opposition was expressed by having Ivo imprisoned for a time. The Garlandes, on the other hand, were in support of the king's marriage arrangements, and they benefited handsomely from royal gratitude. By 1105 Stephen was Philip's chancellor.

When Abelard came to Paris for the first time, Stephen was an archdeacon of Paris, which carried responsibilities for revenue collections but not many clerical duties. He was also a knight. He had a large chapel and a house near the cloister of Notre Dame. But it was after his nomination by Philip I to the episcopal see in Beauvais that Stephen's enemies emerged. The nomination was blocked by Ivo of Chartres, who objected to Rome that Stephen was unsuitable for the episcopate because he was an adulterer, an excommunicate, and an illiterate layman. Although there is no evidence to confirm or discredit these salacious accusations, Ivo's charges certainly stem from his support for the papal reform movement that since the last century had affected relations between church and state. Born from the desire of the papacy to remove lay interference in what it regarded as church matters, papal reform was particularly concerned with eliminating lay nomination to high clerical positions such as archbishops and bishops and clerical marriage, and these concerns are reflected in the charges that Ivo levied against Stephen. William of Champeaux also was closely associated with the reform movement, and he was an ally of Ivo. Therefore, the rivalries between Stephen of Garlande and William of Champeaux were often played out in arenas peripheral to that of papal reform, such as in the career of Peter Abelard.

Many of the central events in Abelard's life correspond to political successes, failures, and machinations of his patron. So, when Abelard to set up his school at Melun, where the king also had a residence, he writes that he had the help of certain powerful enemies of William. The time when Abelard moved his school from Melun to Corbeil corresponded to the period when the Garlande family had broken ties with the king. Abelard's retreat to Brittany due to illness—brought on, he says, by overwork—was also the period when the Garlandes were out of royal favor; when he returned to Paris from Brittany and William had left for Saint Victor's, the Garlandes once again were enjoying royal esteem. Stephen of Garlande was the dean at the church of Saint Geneviève, where his family owned vineyards and where Abelard established his school. On the outskirts of Paris, Saint Geneviève answered to the king, not to the canons of Notre Dame. When Abelard achieved his goal and became the master at Notre Dame in Paris after 1109, it coincided with the zenith of the Garlande family's influence. When Abelard went to study theology at Laon, the bishop of Laon owed

his office to Stephen. By 1127, Stephen had spent his royal favor and was dismissed from all his royal offices, and although he managed to earn the good graces of the king once again, he fell permanently from power in 1137 with the death of Louis VI. Stephen retired to the abbey of Saint Victor around 1140, around the time that Abelard was prosecuted for heresy at the Council of Sens.

Although Abelard provides no direct insight into the political intrigues that may have directed the success of his career, it seems likely that the intense hostility between William of Champeaux and Abelard can be interpreted within the context of competing political factions. Certainly, Abelard did not agree with William on the matter of universals, but he does not attack William's intellectual abilities with the same contempt that he reserves for Roscelin of Comiègne and Anselm of Laon. Therefore, while they were certainly rivals, the level of Abelard's disagreement with William did not rise to the same level as that of Anselm, whom he rudely disrespected, claiming he was completely lacking intellectual merit.

Once again, Abelard returned to Brittany, this time because his mother was about to enter a convent. His father had already entered a monastery. It was not an uncommon practice for the laity, as they neared the end of their lives, to enter a monastery, often motivated by the desire to ease their transition to the next world through dedication to a spiritual rather than a secular life. Furthermore, in this way parents could retire to monastic life and supervise the distribution of their property to their heirs during their lifetimes. Abelard does not comment on his parents' motives, but for a child to return to his parents' former home on the occasion of their leaving for a monastic life, as Abelard returned to Le Pallet, also was a common practice. Although he had forsworn any claim to familial property when he left Le Pallet for a life of study, confirmation by anyone who might also have a claim to the property was prudent.

ABELARD THE STUDENT OF THEOLOGY

Abelard returned to France in 1113—not to Paris, but to Laon, where he turned from studying dialectic to studying theology. At this time, Abelard was about 33 years old, and essentially, he was starting over again. Although it was often applied to interpretation of scripture, dialectic was essentially a secular discipline, while theology (*divinitas,* in Latin) was dedicated to understanding religion and could lead to a career in the higher clergy. Abelard began to hear the lectures of Anselm of Laon (ca. 1055–ca. 1117), who along with his brother Ralph was master at the cathedral school. Anselm was a powerful man. Because of his renown as a master (he had taught William of Champeaux), and because he was the dean and chancellor of the cathedral,

important church offices gave him control of the cathedral's business concerns. Once again, Abelard's familiar pattern emerged; as he had with William of Champeaux, Abelard developed intense contempt for Master Anselm. The audacious Abelard disrespected the prestige of his master by skipping lectures and complaining that the master lacked active critical intelligence and could give students only practiced and memorized responses. In fact, Abelard anticipates the modern phrase "the lights are on, but nobody's home" when insulting his teacher: he writes that the fire Anselm kindled filled his house with smoke, but shed no light.

The study of theology at the school of Anselm of Laon was undertaken in ways that were just beginning to become systematized. Anselm's school pointed the way that eventually led to the systematization of the *Glossa ordinaria,* a multivolume compilation of commentaries on the Bible produced at the end of the twelfth century. The *Glossa ordinaria* (Standard Gloss) was a compilation of excerpts from the church fathers and other authorities that were inserted in the lines between scriptural texts or in the margins. The *Glossa* served as a kind of condensed running commentary on scripture, especially the passages that were difficult to interpret. Anselm of Laon was especially dedicated to commenting—that is, glossing—on the Psalms and the Epistle to the Romans, which were copied and distributed throughout Europe as analytical tools for biblical study.

In schools like the one in Laon, students heard the master lecture while they took notes. Of course, medieval learning was based on manuscript sources, and the taking of adequate notes—or any notes at all—must have been challenging indeed. Students might employ a wax tablet and a stylus for this purpose. A wax tablet was made by hollowing out an indentation or trough in a wooden (or perhaps ivory, if one were wealthier than the average student) board and then filling it with wax. The wax was sufficiently soft so that a stylus could be used to scratch notes that were intended to be of a temporary nature, as opposed to the more permanent medium of parchment and ink. When the notes were no longer needed, the top layer of wax could be scraped away with the broad end of the stylus, leaving enough wax underneath to begin a new set of notes. Typically, two or more tablets were joined together to form a diptych, and students were generally said to carry a diptych in their belts. Despite the wide use of wax tablets, writing in classrooms must have been difficult; there were no facilities at the schools approaching the dedicated copying centers of the monasteries known as *scriptoria*.

Teaching methods at Laon can be discerned in Abelard's description of his lecture on Ezekiel. Fed up with what he regarded as the pedestrian level of lecture provided by Anselm, Abelard allowed himself to be persuaded by other students to provide his own lectures on the ambiguous and complex prophecy of Ezekiel. Abelard writes that all who heard his first lecture and gloss acclaimed it, so much so that students appealed to him for two more lectures. Abelard writes in the *Historia* that students clamored to hear his lectures and to write notes on his insights into the difficult text, such was the pinnacle of

his scholarship. Two of Anselm's senior students, Alberic of Reims and Lotulf of Lombardy, were not impressed with Abelard's erudition, however. They both would have successful careers of their own, but throughout their lives, they never had Abelard's effrontery to lecture on theology without what they considered proper training. They would pursue Abelard throughout his life; Alberic was the prosecutor at Abelard's condemnation in Soissons in 1121. However, in 1113, Alberic had to be content with simply convincing Anselm to expel Abelard from his school, which he did on the pretext that if Abelard, unschooled as he was in biblical exegesis, should err in his theological interpretation, then Anselm would be held responsible. Nonetheless, Abelard had demonstrated that he could deliver lectures on theology superior to those of Anselm, even though his specialized training was much more limited than the master's was.

Although Abelard was once again at odds with a master whom he ridiculed through his arrogant self-confidence, his reputation as a master of exceptional abilities was now well established. Furthermore, his ambition to be placed in charge of the school at Notre Dame was within reach. William of Champeaux had taken up residence as the bishop of Châlons-sur-Marne in 1113; this was significant because as bishop of Châlons he became the patron and supporter of the reform-oriented Cistercian monastery of Clairvaux and its famous abbot Bernard of Clairvaux. No doubt Bernard had learned of Abelard's fierce insubordination from William, and Bernard would become one of Abelard's most intense and powerful critics. However, Bernard's opposition was in the future. From about 1114 until about 1116, Abelard had realized his goal. He became a canon and chair of the faculty at the cathedral school at Notre Dame de Paris; as a teacher of logic, he was at the apex of his fame and renown. Yet, throughout his life, Abelard did not take care to protect his hard-won triumphs, and, through his own rash actions, he seemed to throw away his achievements. It was about this time that he met and fell in love with Heloise.

HELOISE

Heloise had come to Paris from the royal convent of Saint Marie in Argenteuil, where she had been raised, about six miles northwest of Paris. In Paris, she lived under the guardianship of her maternal uncle Fulbert—a canon of Notre Dame, as Abelard newly was. Little is known about her birth family, although she wrote in her letters that she was of low social standing. Yet, when a girl entered a convent such as the one at Argenteuil, a sizable dowry was usually paid, which would have excluded most girls of modest means. Rather than being from a family of humble standing, it seems more probable that Heloise was of illegitimate birth. In the necrology of the convent of the Paraclete, where Heloise died, her mother's name is recorded as Hersindis, but her father's name is not noted, although he may have been

from the Montmorency or the Beaufort family. Heloise was probably born around 1090, in which case she would have been about 11 years younger than Abelard was. Heloise came to Paris around the same time that Abelard became a canon and head of the school at Notre Dame; she may have been drawn to Paris and the household of her uncle by Abelard's reputation, which was quite far-reaching. Living with her uncle within the cathedral cloister would have put her in close proximity to an important intellectual center and to one of the most illustrious masters of the day. Although it was quite uncommon for women to be educated at all, Fulbert intended to continue her education in Paris and Heloise acquired a reputation for her extensive knowledge of Latin, Greek, and Hebrew. Abelard calls her *nominatissima,* "the most renowned," for her exceptional abilities in reading and writing.

In his *Historia,* Abelard acknowledges that his pride and overconfidence caused him to give in to his physical desire for Heloise. Events leading up to his success in Paris suggest that Abelard flourished in times of crisis and, at least for the moment, he had vanquished his rivals, and his students followed him with enthusiastic devotion. Perhaps he longed for the stimulation of an adversarial challenge. Whatever the case, Fulbert was anxious to give his niece access to the best teacher available, and so he agreed to allow Abelard to reside in his house and to tutor Heloise. Never lacking in self-confidence, Abelard makes it clear he resided in Fulbert's house fully intending to seduce Heloise, who, he was certain, would find his intellect and physical attractiveness irresistible.

HELOISE AND ABELARD

Heloise and Abelard became passionate lovers, and although Abelard had previously been dedicated to philosophy, intellectual pursuits became tedious, and in his infatuation with Heloise he composed love songs that celebrated his passion for her. None of these love songs survive, although some historians believe that some of the songs written by Abelard—and perhaps Heloise as well—are preserved in the *Carmina Burana,* a collection of poems and dramatic texts from the early thirteenth century. Many of these love songs circulated, and Heloise recalls later that the compositions were "on the lips of everyone" because of their sweetness and melody, which was hardly conducive to keeping their affair a secret. Recklessly driven by what he later describes as lustful desire rather than selfless devotion, Abelard neglected his students, and soon their clandestine affair was widely known. As a result, Fulbert learned of their affair and had them separated. Nevertheless, the lovers thwarted his efforts to keep them apart and they continued to meet in secret. When Heloise became pregnant, Abelard brought her to his family in Le Pallet disguised as a nun, and there she bore a son, whom she named Astralabe, after the scientific instrument the astrolabe.

Astrolabe: What's in a Name?

In about 1118, Heloise gave birth to a son, whom she named Astralabe; Abelard writes that Heloise selected the name. The astrolabe was an instrument used to locate and predict the positions and risings of the sun, moon, planets, and stars and to tell time. Astrolabes were known in ancient times, and they were introduced into Western Europe from Islamic Spain during the eleventh century. The device consists of a metal disk (called a mater) that holds one or more smaller plates (called climates) that are of latitude-specific design. The plate is engraved with a stereographic depiction of circles marking the azimuth and altitude and the celestial sphere above the local horizon. The rim of the largest disk is usually engraved with the hours of the day and degrees of arc. Above the disks is a rotating framework with the projection of the ecliptic plane and several bright stars (called a rete). As the rete is rotated, the stars and ecliptic move across the projection of the coordinates over the climate. In other words, the astrolabe is a flat representation of the celestial sphere that imitates the motion of the heavenly bodies as seen from a representation of a particular horizon and horizon coordinates. To name a child after this instrument was unusual at a time when children typically were named after saints. Some historians have suggested that the name was intended to reflect the desire on the part of the boy's parents to understand the universe, to evoke the lovers who called each other the sun and the moon, or simply to draw attention to their nonconformity. Unless heretofore-unknown evidence emerges, we will never know what was intended by the choice of this unconventional name.

As for the course of Astralabe's life, a bit more is known. A Latin poem offering advice to Astralabe is attributed to Abelard. When Heloise returned to Paris from Le Pallet, she left the child with Abelard's sister, who likely raised him. In 1144, as the abbess of the Paraclete, Heloise wrote to Peter the Venerable asking him to find Astralabe a prebend, which was a stipend or portion of the revenues from a cathedral allocated to a canon for his support. Because of the unusual name, there are few Astralabes in surviving twelfth-century documents, and therefore, when the name appears, it stands out. An Astralabe appears as a canon at Nantes Cathedral in 1150 and as an abbot of the Cistercian monastery of Hauterive in the modern Swiss canton of Fribourg from 1162 to 1165. The death of a "Peter Astralabe, son of our master Peter" is inscribed in the necrology of the Paraclete.

Abelard tried to defuse Fulbert's anger over the affair by apologizing and claiming that he was powerless before the supremacy of love. These must have seemed like lame excuses, since Abelard himself acknowledges that he

had planned to reside in Fulbert's house for the very purpose of seduction. To further reduce Fulbert's anger, Abelard offered to marry Heloise, but he proposed a secret marriage, in order to not jeopardize his present and future career prospects. Abelard writes in his *Historia calamitatum* and Heloise confirms in her own correspondence with Abelard many years later that she was strongly opposed to the idea of marriage. She cogently argued against the marriage, demonstrating sophisticated analysis and argumentation—enhanced, no doubt, by the study of logic and philosophy with her tutor. She asserted—rightly, as it turned out—that Fulbert's anger would not be appeased by a marriage, and therefore, the union would hinder Abelard's stellar career trajectory and not pacify her uncle. As a master of the school of Notre Dame, Abelard was a cathedral canon, and while canon law did not explicitly prohibit marriage, for a master to marry would have been quite unusual and an insurmountable obstacle to higher church office. Further-more, Heloise drew on her extensive knowledge of classical literature—from authors like Pythagoras, Socrates, and Seneca—to support her opinion that married life, with its attendant domestic obligations of parenting, cleaning, and drudgery, was not compatible with the elevated life of a philosopher and a scholar. To tarnish the bright star of Abelard with the dirt of a common life, she wrote, would be obscene, and she implored him to live as the ancient philosophers did: in purity of intellectual pursuit, as a cleric and a canon. Furthermore, in a well-known passage from a letter she wrote to Abelard after his castration, she declares that even if the Roman emperor Augustus (63 B.C.E.–14 C.E.) proposed to marry her, she still would prefer to be Abe-lard's whore, because wedlock represents chains, and love should be freely given and received, based only on the lovers' devotion. In other words, her love for Abelard was based on love only, and the legality of marriage could add nothing to the strength of her feeling.

MARRIAGE AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

Despite her opposition, Heloise and Abelard were married, although to main-tain the secrecy of the marriage, the couple remained apart and rarely saw each other. Fulbert had agreed to keep the marriage a secret, but he began to speak openly about the union, which Heloise continued to deny vehemently, no doubt hoping to protect Abelard. Realizing that Heloise would not cor-roborate his (true) story, Fulbert reacted angrily. To protect Heloise from her uncle's abuse, Abelard suggested that Heloise flee to the convent of Argenteuil where she had been educated and that she should be clothed as a nun, al-though he is careful to point out in his *Historia* that she did not wear a veil. To retreat to a monastery, but not as a nun who had taken monastic vows, was not unusual. Men and women in religious houses often were of diverse status; some lived within the walls and followed the rules of the monastery, but they need not have taken monastic vows and perhaps never intended to

do so. While she was thus safely away from her uncle's anger, Abelard continued to visit her in Argenteuil, although privacy was not afforded to the couple and Abelard discloses in a later letter that at one time they made love in a corner of the refectory, the hall where the community took their meals. He also writes that he forced himself upon her against her will.

In Paris, Fulbert was enraged because he believed that Abelard intended to set Heloise aside by forcing her into the convent, thereby freeing himself of the inconvenient marriage. In 1117, Fulbert sought vengeance for the perceived insult. He arranged to have Abelard attacked by a group of men while he slept. Abelard was brutally beaten and castrated, in effect ending his luminous career in Paris as a master. The brutality of the act, not to mention its illegality, was shocking even in those times. Abelard writes in his *Historia* that his own reaction was one of shame, because he had given over to lust and carnal pursuits, and humiliation, because he was now a eunuch. He was certain that God was justified in delivering the severe punishment. The attackers were men closely associated with Fulbert; two of them were subsequently caught, castrated, and blinded. After the crime, Fulbert himself suffered a brief period of disgrace and forfeited his property temporarily. With their marriage effectively ended by the castration, Abelard asked Heloise to become a nun at the convent in Argenteuil, where she eventually became the prioress. Out of shame rather than religious conviction, Abelard became a monk.

ABELARD'S TRIAL AND CONDEMNATION AT SOISSONS

After his castration, at about 40 years of age, Abelard left Paris and entered monastic life at the monastery of Saint Denis; at Abelard's command, Heloise became a nun at Argenteuil. Abelard writes in his autobiography that he desired to withdraw from the world that had bestowed so much acclaim and animosity upon him. If this was indeed his intention, Saint Denis was hardly a remote place to find seclusion. It was a wealthy monastery, very near to Paris, with close ties to the monarchy. In the twelfth century, the monastic ideal of withdrawal from the world to seek a secluded life of prayer was contrasted with actual practice, in which monks and abbots were often respected and prominent men. In fact, three of the most influential abbots of the twelfth century were Suger the abbot of Saint Denis, Peter the Venerable the abbot of Cluny, and Bernard the abbot of Clairvaux. All three men are connected with Abelard, although when Abelard came to Saint Denis, Suger was not yet the abbot there. It is not clear why Abelard chose to enter Saint Denis; perhaps it was the monastery's close connection with the French crown, which was favorably disposed toward Abelard's patrons at the time. Perhaps he desired a close proximity to Heloise at Argenteuil. However, it seems unlikely that Abelard sought the peaceful retreat from worldly affairs that he suggests in his *Historia*.

Whatever his purpose may have been, the peaceful life in the cloister eluded him, and he returned to learning. He reopened a school at a priory belonging to the monastery, and the throng of students, still enthralled by his scholarship and now with an almost devotional dedication, followed him as they had done before in Paris. Abelard provides several reasons for his return to teaching. He claims that Adam the abbot of Saint Denis begged him to resume teaching for the glory of God and to help the poor, rather than for money and prestige, as he had done before. Moreover, he writes that once again, he had made enemies of those around him by condemning the lax and degenerate lifestyle of the abbot and monks at Saint Denis, and so they were anxious to divest themselves of the troublesome critic. Abelard had not lost his proclivity for antagonism.

Moreover, Abelard was not finished with controversy, and the enemies he made earlier in his life proved to be lasting ones. Around 1120, Abelard's first master, Roscelin of Compiègne, wrote a highly critical letter to Abelard, mocking his castration (for example, Roscelin refused to address him by the masculine name of Peter, since he wrote that he was no longer of that gender) and criticizing his theological teaching. Furthermore, Roscelin claims that after putting the monks of Saint Denis through a great deal of trouble to find suitable accommodations for his new school, Abelard took the money he earned there and delivered it personally to Heloise. No evidence exists that Abelard visited Heloise at this time, who had taken the veil at Argenteuil, and Roscelin's accusation cannot be verified. Likely the bitterness in Roscelin's tone can be attributed to Abelard's request to Gilbert the bishop of Paris, who had punished Fulbert after Abelard's attack by having Fulbert's property seized, to convene an assembly to judge whether Abelard's writings on the Trinity were heretical, as Roscelin had charged. Abelard asked that the council decide the matter and discipline either Roscelin or Abelard. It seems, however, that Abelard's strategy against Roscelin failed, because Abelard, not Roscelin, was put on trial—not in Paris, but in Soissons in 1121.

Abelard describes the trial in his *Historia,* but he makes no mention of Roscelin; instead, he lays the blame for the trial at the feet of the enemies he had made in his rise to fame: Alberic of Reims and Lotulf of Novara, the pupils of Anselm of Laon whom Abelard had encountered some eight years earlier while studying theology. The work for which he was put on trial was his first treatise on theology, his analysis of the Trinity known as *Theologia summi boni.* Exposition of the nature of the Trinity was a topic fraught with potential for heretical drift. In fact, Roscelin himself had been condemned in 1092, also at Soissons, because he had apparently suggested that the three elements of the Trinity, the three persons as theologians refer to them, were separate deities. The conceptual nature of the Trinity requires a subtle and careful mind to stay within the bounds of Christian orthodoxy, which states that the godhead comprises three persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The three persons are equal, and compose a single deity, as Christian monotheism demands. The central element of Christianity is the belief that the Incarnation

of God the Son on earth was when Jesus took on a human body and nature, living and suffering as a man to conquer human sin. Thus, the nature of Jesus and the Trinity is a complex topic, and even with careful exposition, one ran the risk of falling afoul of the ecclesiastical authorities.

Yet, the exercise of caution was never part of Abelard's nature. In *Theologia summi boni* he uses logic, his sharpest intellectual tool, to address the problem of the Trinity. He writes that only dialectic and philosophy can lead to a full understanding of the complex subject. He posits that Christ can be understood by distinguishing names, which is in keeping with his understanding of Christ as *logos* or word. He assigns the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit different natures: power, wisdom, and goodness, respectively. Abelard was most open to criticism with his allocation of power to the Father, which his enemies suggested assigned a superior role to that person and was, therefore, heretical. In Abelard's day, the legal framework for defining and trying heresy was not yet fully developed, and so those who sought to attack Abelard at the Council of Soissons for his controversial use of logic in theological exposition had to resort to a strategy that would prevent the most gifted logician of the day from gaining the upper hand.

In March 1121, Abelard was summoned to appear before the Council of Soissons, which was convened by Cardinal Cono of Palestrina, a papal legate, or representative from the pope to France and Germany. The cardinal was a supporter of the papal reform movement and a close colleague of William of Champeaux. In his *Historia,* Abelard makes it clear that Alberic and Lotulf were behind the summons, because they were now masters themselves and they used their influence over Ralph the archbishop of Reims, who presided over the council. Alberic and Lotulf served more or less as prosecutors during the council, although getting the charge of heresy to stick proved difficult. Using logic in the service of theology was not inherently heretical, so Abelard writes that the two began their attack before he even arrived in Soissons, by spreading the false rumor that Abelard was expounding that there was more than one God. The strategy of disinformation was sufficient to stir up anger among the clerics and people of Reims, and Abelard and a few students narrowly escaped being stoned by the populace upon their arrival in Soissons. However, Abelard had prepared a strategy of his own. He went immediately to Cono, the papal legate, and gave him a copy of the *Theologia,* stating that if, after reading the book for himself, Cono had found anything in it that was wrong, he was prepared to be corrected. Cono demonstrated his antagonism to Abelard by refusing his request and was instructed to go before the council, or, as Abelard writes, before his enemies. Abelard writes in his *Historia* that he sought to influence the outcome in his favor by preaching in public about the Trinity before the council met, and that all who heard him were impressed by his interpretation.

Many high-ranking ecclesiastics, including Geoffrey the bishop of Chartres, Thierry of Chartres (master of the school of the same city), and Adam the abbot of Saint Denis, attended the Council of Soissons. William of Champeaux may

have been present, although the surviving records do not verify his presence. The accusations of heresy against Abelard were not the only business of the council, which was convened primarily to promote and to implement further the papal reform agenda of wresting control of ecclesiastical offices away from the laity and the prohibition of clerical marriage to churchmen above the rank of subdeacon. The charges against Abelard were put off until the final day. Abelard writes that the council could find nothing objectionable in the *Theologia*. He must have felt particularly vindicated when Alberic of Reims believed he had found a passage in the book that was heretical, only to have Abelard soundly refute his accusation by pointing out that the passage was, in fact, a quote from the magisterial church father Augustine of Hippo. Geoffrey the bishop of Chartres, who was an ally of Abelard's patrons in the Garlande family, spoke in support of the logician, first proposing that Abelard be allowed to defend his ideas. When this was not allowed, Geoffrey proposed the time-honored strategy of all committees: that the matter should be postponed until another committee at Abelard's monastery of Saint Denis could examine the issue. Although Cono at first agreed to this proposal, Alberic and Lotulf saw this for what it surely was: a move to defuse the situation and to bring the matter to a favorable resolution on Abelard's behalf in his own diocese. Saint Denis was in the diocese of Sens, and the archbishop Henry Sanglier was a cousin of Stephen of Garlande. Unwilling to let this happen, Alberic and Lotulf sought out Ralph the archbishop of Reims, who presided over the council, and the legate Cono, whom Abelard describes as not as learned as he should have been. Perhaps not Abelard's equal in logic, Alberic and Lotulf were adept at behind-the-scenes maneuvers, and they tailored their persuasion to the egotism of each man. To the archbishop, they spoke of the shame that would be cast on him if the case were moved to another set of judges and the danger that would result if Abelard escaped in this manner. To Cono, they maintained that Abelard should be condemned because, at the very least, he had read publicly from his book and allowed for it to be copied without papal or other ecclesiastical approval. Cono was convinced to condemn the treatise and have Abelard imprisoned in a monastery.

Geoffrey of Chartres informed Abelard of the decision. Abelard was summoned before the council, and without any further debate on the matter, he was ordered to throw his treatise into the fire, an act that was intended not so much to suppress the *Theologia* as to symbolically discredit the work and humiliate its author. Abelard writes that Master Thierry of Chartres shouted out in protest, but the archbishop ordered him to be silent. To further his humiliation, Abelard was ordered to recite the Athanasian Creed like a schoolboy—and even given a copy of the text should he not remember it—because it contained a statement about the equal omnipotence of the three persons of the Trinity. Furthermore, he was confined to the nearby monastery of Saint Médard.

About ten years earlier, when Abelard was a master at Saint Geneviève, a student named Goswin challenged Abelard over his irreverence for established

authority, and the two entered into a heated disputation. Goswin went on to become the prior of Saint Médard. Goswin's biographer wrote of the confrontation with Abelard, the only source for the encounter, claiming that Goswin got the better of Abelard in disputation. The biographer's purpose is to present his subject in a favorable light, and the incident cannot be confirmed elsewhere, so the veracity of the account is unknown, but it suggests that a there was a history of hostility between the brash logician and Goswin abbot of Saint Médard. Nonetheless, Abelard's confinement at Saint Médard lasted only a few days, and he was allowed to return to Saint Denis—where Abelard writes that he was widely detested.

ABELARD'S RETURN TO THE MONASTERY OF SAINT DENIS

Back at Saint Denis, Abelard applied himself to the monastery's renowned library. The sizable library and scriptorium (the writing room where monks copied texts by hand) at Saint Denis offered him an enhanced opportunity to access a comprehensive collection of texts that had influenced the development of religious doctrine, especially the Latin church fathers; the collection at Saint Denis exceeded even that of the school at Notre Dame in Paris. These authorities had shaped religious thought since the earliest days of the church, forming a body of scriptural interpretation that was second in authority only to the Bible itself. Abelard's command of these works likely was started at the extensive library of Saint Denis; his facility with these authorities is demonstrated clearly in his famous work *Sic et non* (*Yes and No*), which he probably began at Saint Denis. This work shows Abelard's logical mind striving to resolve the inevitable contradictions among these authorities. In effect a work of comparative scholarship, *Sic et non* presents sets of disputed theological and scriptural propositions and then puts forward quotations and citations arguing contrasting positions—hence, the title *Yes and No,* or, as we might say today, "on one hand, but on the other hand." Abelard proves, and then disproves, about 158 questions by citing the church fathers, scripture, church councils, and reason. For instance, he proposes a problem, such as "that God can do all things and against this," and then systematically presents authorities supporting each side of the proposition. Abelard writes in the preface that his purpose is not to undermine authority by pointing out contradictions, which can arise from any number of benign reasons such as words with different meanings, shifts in meaning when texts are taken out of context, or even scribal errors. Abelard does not try to reconcile the conflicting authorities, and *Sic et non* is, effectively, a sort of notebook in which he has collected sentences to illustrate two sides of difficult questions. It seems likely that following his condemnation at Soissons, Abelard realized that henceforth he would have to support his arguments not simply with logic and reason but with past authorities' opinions as well—in effect, precedent.

Abelard describes in his *Historia* how once again he invited controversy when he disputed the identity of the presumed founder of the monastery of Saint Denis. Saint Denis was among the most prestigious monasteries in France, owing in large part to its presumed illustrious founder. It was believed that a third-century bishop of Paris, Saint Denis, was martyred in 270 and the abbey of the same name was founded on the site where the famous martyr was believed to have been buried. Over time, the martyred saint came to be known as the patron saint of France, and his tomb became an important pilgrimage site, generating considerable income, as well as prestige for the monastery. The name Denis is rendered in Latin as Dionysius. In the Middle Ages, knowledge of ancient history often was quite sketchy, and Dionysius the early bishop came to be confused with another famous Dionysius from the Acts of the Apostles. This Dionysius was converted to Christianity by Saint Paul and then believed to have become the first bishop of Athens, the site of his conversion. In fact, the two were separated by more than two centuries, but the misidentification endured. The situation was complicated further by a third Dionysius, this one known today as an anonymous theologian and philosopher from the late fifth or early sixth century called Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, but in Abelard's day he was believed to be the same Dionysius who was converted by Saint Paul. Therefore, medieval scholars had conflated the first-, third-, and sixth-century Dionysiuses as the same person. Abelard, who had been working his way through Saint Denis's extensive monastic library, came across a sentence in a work called *The History of the English Church and People* (by the eighth-century English scholar known as the Venerable Bede) that he claimed contradicted the monks' belief that Dionysius had been the bishop of Athens. To the annoyance of the monks, Abelard claimed that Bede had placed Dionysius not as the bishop of Athens, but as the bishop of Corinth. The outraged monks claimed their belief was based on the findings of their ninth-century abbot Hilduin, and they flatly declared that Bede was a liar. Abelard, now most willing to rely on authority to support his position, asserted that Bede carried much more weight than Hilduin and was recognized by the entire Church. As the dispute continued to grow, Adam the abbot of Saint Denis viewed the incident as an attack on France and seemed to be preparing to send Abelard before the king on a charge of treason. Abelard writes in his *Historia* that he endured the blows of fortune and the wickedness of the monks, and, declaring that the entire world had conspired against him, he fled Saint Denis in secret under cover of night, resolving to remove himself from France (the Île-de-France).

THE PARACLETE

Abelard's flight from Saint Denis was spurred by the animosity of the monks and Abbot Adam, but also by his rejection of what he considered their disregard for the austerity demanded by the Benedictine Rule. Writing in the

Historia that he was horrified by the monks' wickedness and feeling that the whole world had conspired against him, Abelard arrived at the priory of Saint Ayoul in the town of Provins in the county of Champagne. He probably chose Saint Ayoul because its prior, Radulphus, was a friend of his, and the count of Champagne, Thibaud II, was an acquaintance as well. Abelard's goal was to set up a school and monastery in Champagne, and he no doubt had hoped that these allies would help him. Champagne was already home to the monastery of Clairvaux, which under its famous abbot Bernard was bringing prestige, money, and people to the county. Another monastery headed by a well-known abbot would have raised the profile of the already wealthy county even further. However, as was the pattern his entire life, Abelard had left a trail of enemies behind him, and his former abbot Adam of Saint Denis would not absolve him for running away, nor would he allow the troublesome Abelard to live as a monk wherever he chose, despite Thibaud's petition to Adam on Abelard's behalf. A monk took a vow of obedience to his abbot, and Abelard was left without options. Adam demanded that Abelard return to Saint Denis under pain of excommunication. Yet, shortly afterward, on February, 19, 1122, the abbot of Saint Denis died and was succeeded by Suger, who, like Bernard of Clairvaux, Peter the Venerable, and Abelard himself, would become a seminal figure of the twelfth century. Abbot Suger also was not inclined to grant Abelard's request, but the intervention of Abelard's powerful patron, Stephen of Garlande, at this time the seneschal of France, secured the permission he sought. Confirmed in the presence of the king, Abelard was allowed to quit Saint Denis and to place himself under the authority of another monastery, and in fact go to any solitary place he wished, as long as he did not bring disrepute upon Saint Denis.

And so, Abelard relocated once again, this time to a secluded site in the parish of Quincey, near Nogent-sur-Seine, still within the county of Champagne. Abelard busied himself constructing a small dwelling from mud, sticks, and reeds, with the intention of living as a hermit. He dedicated the primitive structure to the Holy Trinity, surely a reference to his condemnation at Soissons. However, Abelard writes that his fame and the enthusiasm of his students would not allow his withdrawal. They flocked to him en masse from Paris, and the tents and huts of his adoring students destroyed the seclusion he had sought. Although Abelard asserted that he sought comfort in the solitude of a hermit, he soon resumed teaching students again because of his acute poverty. If this was the case, his fortunes were reversed by the influx of students, and a new oratory made of stone and wood replaced the original oratory of mud and wattle. He consecrated the new oratory to the Paraclete. "Paraclete" was an unusual, but surely a personally significant, name for the oratory. Paraclete is a Greek word, meaning one who helps or assists; but in the Bible, it is used to mean the Holy Spirit as comforter (in Latin, *consolator*). Paraclete often figures in theological discussions about the Trinity to describe how God is revealed in the world and his part in salvation. Paraclete, or Holy Spirit, is the third person of the Trinity. Abelard may well have chosen the name as a show

of defiance for the condemnation at Soissons, but he writes in the *Historia* that the Oratory of the Paraclete was an outward manifestation of the Holy Spirit that he believed resided within him.

Moreover, although many of Abelard's works are difficult to date with certainty, it seems that his time at the Paraclete was one of the most prolific periods in his life. He defiantly reworked the book that he had been forced to burn at Soissons, this time calling the work *Theologia Christiana*. He may also have written *Sic et non* (his work presenting conflicting theological quotations), *Tractatus de intellectibus* (glosses on the late third- or early fourth-century philosopher Porphyry of Tyre), the *Soliloquium* (an internal dialogue between Peter and Abelard), the *Collationes* (dialogues between a philosopher and a Jew, and between a philosopher and a Christian), and works on grammar and rhetoric that do not survive. Clearly, Abelard was better suited to the life of a writer and teacher than to that of a hermit, and he remained teaching and writing at the Paraclete from about 1122 to about 1127, one of the longest periods of sustained scholarship in his life. To allow him more time to study, his students took over the running of the Paraclete. Abelard writes that pupils were drawn by his superior reputation as a teacher, igniting the jealousy and criticism of his rivals once again.

However, these attacks mark a departure from past criticisms, which had come from rival schoolmasters or students. Now, they originated with those whom Abelard contemptuously refers to as those who boasted that they had restored the purity of the lives of monks and canons regular. Most historians believe that Abelard is referring to Bernard of Clairvaux as the monastic reformer and Norbert of Xanten as the reformer of the canons regular. Both men were associated with the reform movement, and Abelard writes that they preached avidly against him and his supporters. It does seem that the winds of change were blowing against Abelard and, perhaps more importantly, his patrons. Stephen of Garlande, who was the seneschal of King Louis VI and an archdeacon of the cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris, once again had fallen out of royal favor. He had intervened on Abelard's behalf to secure permission to leave Saint Denis, thereby helping to make the Oratory of the Paraclete a reality. Although it is difficult to trace precisely what led to Stephen's fall from grace, it seems likely that he had attracted the hostility of many of the reformers who objected to his personal wealth and temporal power, which they saw as inconsistent with the office of archdeacon of Notre Dame. Stephen's fall resulted in his removal as the seneschal; his property was confiscated, his great house on the Île de la Cité was demolished (though the chapel was spared), and his vineyards near the abbey of Saint Geneviève on the Left Bank, where he was dean and Abelard had established a school, were uprooted. Although Abelard was in Champagne and, as a supporter of the Garlande faction, Count Thibaud could accord him a certain amount of security, sometime between 1125 and 1127 Abelard left the sanctuary of the Oratory of the Paraclete, accepting an invitation to become the abbot of the monastery of Saint Gildas in wild and pirate-infested western Brittany.

ABELARD AS ABBOT OF SAINT GILDAS

The monastery of Saint Gildas mirrored its wild habitat: the monks there were undisciplined and unruly; they did not live a communal celibate life as demanded by the Benedictine Rule, but instead openly supported concubines, fathered children, and neglected to protect the monastery's property from the predations of an aggressive local magnate. No doubt monastic discipline had broken down long before Abelard arrived, and the monks were determined to maintain the status quo. Abelard struggled against the disorderly monks for ten years, apparently placing himself at risk of physical attack from the recalcitrant monks. In his *Historia,* he writes that by trying to reform the obstinate monks, he feared that he would not escape with his life; yet, if he ignored their undisciplined conduct, so obviously at odds with their vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, he feared for his eternal soul. Indeed, the monks of Saint Gildas tried to murder their reform-minded abbot by poisoning the sacramental wine, and Abelard had to resort to threats of excommunication, which would compel the worst offenders to leave the monastery. He forced the worst of them to swear to leave the monastery, but when they tried to flout their oath, Abelard enforced it with the support of a council composed of the count Conan III, a papal legate, and bishops. Nonetheless, corruption in the monastery ran deep, troublemakers remained, and eventually Abelard was forced to live outside the monastery.

Abelard's abbacy at Saint Gildas must have ranked among the one of the lowest points in his life. His enemies had seriously undermined his passion for the study of logic and theology, his pursuit of Heloise had disastrously ended in castration, and he found himself the target of hostile monks far from the intellectual center of France. Yet, while he was at Saint Gildas, Abelard's life once again intersected with Heloise's. At Argenteuil, Heloise's considerable abilities had been directed toward the administration of the religious community as its prioress, and her reputation had grown as a result. In a bid to expand his own monastery's holdings and secure a point of access to the Seine, Abelard's formidable enemy, Abbot Suger of Saint Denis, aggressively attempted to oust the nuns from Argenteuil. In 1129, Suger produced a forged charter purporting that King Louis the Pious, the son of Charlemagne, had given Argenteuil to Saint Denis some 300 years earlier. He also claimed that the nuns at Argenteuil were engaging in immoral sexual activity. Heloise and her nuns were expelled, and their convent was taken over by the monastery of Saint Denis (ironically, the monastery where Abelard first took monastic vows). Since no provisions were made for them, Abelard offered to the displaced nuns the Oratory at the Paraclete, where they established a new religious house with Heloise as the abbess. Pope Innocent II confirmed the donation in 1131.

THE LETTERS OF HELOISE AND ABELARD

After his flight from Saint Gildas, Abelard wrote *Historia calamitatum*. About this time, the two former lovers began a correspondence, although around 15 years had passed since they were separated. Heloise initiated a correspondence with Abelard, likely after she had read his autobiography, which is written in the form of a letter addressed to an unnamed friend, although likely this was simply a stylistic choice on Abelard's part. Heloise wrote to Abelard not to revive their past love, which she remembered in every detail, but she implored him to give her the small comfort that he owed her by establishing this minimal contact. Thus her first letter begins by chastising him for his silence in the years since the attack—because, in fact, she reminds him, they are still married. Although she complied with Abelard's wish that she become a nun, from this correspondence with Abelard we know that she had been reluctant to do so. She writes that she "changed her habit"; that is, she took the veil and became a nun only to demonstrate that Abelard possessed her body and her mind. Yet, her transformation to religious life was superficial; her habit and religious life did not mask her enduring love, which she would not sublimate. In her correspondence with Abelard, although about 15 years had passed since Abelard's castration, she still writes of her love for him in the present tense and by obeying his will (that she become a nun), she writes that "now [that I am a nun], even more I am yours." For Heloise, Abelard's inability to make love to her as he once did is of no difference. She writes that he is obligated to her by a debt that even transcends the sacrament of marriage because of the depth of her love that knows no bounds. She closes the letter by referring to him as her only love.

Lost and Found Letters?

Sometime around 1470, in the monastery of Clairvaux, a monk named Jehan de Vepria copied a collection of love letters from the twelfth century. The art of letter writing, or in Latin ars dictaminis, *was a subfield of the discipline of rhetoric, one of the subjects studied in the trivium, and it was an important and valued skill honed by educated persons after years of practice. Letters were a means of communication across long distances, a way to preserve essential information, and a type of literary convention, bound by very particular rules of composition and structure. To master the complicated art of epistolary rhetoric, theoretical treatises and model letter collections were produced for purposes of instruction based on imitating various forms, parts, and language of letters. Formularies were collections of model documents, either public or private, somewhat akin to the modern form letter.*

The text copied by Jehan de Vepria was given the name Epistolae duorum amantium (The Letters of the Two Lovers) *in 1974 by its modern editor Ewald Könsgen. Könsgen suggested that the letters in fact may have been written by Heloise and Abelard during their affair. Since Könsgen first raised the issue, other historians, especially Constant J. Mews, have attempted to demonstrate that in fact the correspondence is that of the two famous lovers, although not all historians agree with Mews's assertion. These are not the well-known letters that have been attributed to the pair, which were written between about 1133 and 1138, long after the tragic events in Paris. (There has also been some debate about the authenticity of these letters, although most historians agree that they are authentic.) That letter collection consists of eight letters that most historians attribute to Heloise and Abelard; they were probably collected at the Paraclete and first appear in the early 1280s in Jean de Meun's version of the* Romance of the Rose. *The* Epistolae duorum amantium, *if indeed they were authored by Heloise and Abelard, were probably composed over a period of about one year, between late 1115 and some time in 1117. Although the text of the letters lack firm references in which to place their context, some of the letters may have been composed before Abelard took up residence in Fulbert's house, and they seem to end as the relationship breaks down, perhaps when Abelard learns of Heloise's pregnancy.*

Because the letters cannot be positively attributed to Heloise and Abelard by virtue of their content, historians have tried to rely on similarities in vocabulary and style between the love letters and works known to have been written by Abelard and Heloise. Although the controversy over authorship continues, these letters are nonetheless especially valuable for gaining insights into attitudes toward love, a blossoming topic among twelfth-century educated men and women.

In the twelfth century, love was emerging as an important theme in secular and religious literature. Today, we take for granted that love is an acceptable motif in literature; we have literally centuries of writers who have approached the subject in their works. However, in Heloise's day, love—its emotions and consequences—was a theme that was being newly explored in Latin and vernacular literature. Although romantic love certainly was a favored theme of troubadour poets who wrote and performed their works in courts across southern France, the love founded in friendship and the comradeship among men who had chosen a religious life was an emerging theme in twelfth-century writing as well. Heloise's frank description of her love for Abelard in her letters, especially in her early letters, should be viewed within this context of expanding awareness and description of human emotion. Nonetheless, Abelard's reply to her letter does not invite romantic images of love. He opens the letter

as an abbot (he was still the abbot of Saint Gildas) addressing an abbess and is coolly detached. Heloise possessed a clever and sophisticated intellect; she could not have mistaken his tone, yet in her next letter to Abelard, she continues to write of her love, describing her sexual frustration, putting her situation in unmistakable terms. She became a nun because she loved Abelard, not God, and it was impossible for her to be truly dedicated to religious life because she loved only him. Her profession is insincere in the extreme, she writes, and those who admire her religiosity see only her outward behavior—privately, she is driven not by love of God, but by love for Abelard, and she feels the hypocrisy deeply. She knows God cannot forgive her, because her denial of God is deliberate and intentional; she asks only that Abelard forgive her.

Her deliberate tone must have shocked Abelard into a more meaningful response; in his second letter to her, he speaks more directly to her personal despair, but his tenor likely was not what Heloise had hoped from him. Abelard apparently had limited appetite for Heloise's nostalgia, and he rejects her attempt to relive the past. For Abelard, love of Christ, not physical love, should be the object of their desires. He reproaches her for what he calls her "perpetual complaint against God" and tells her that God's punishment—or his mercy—has freed them from the bonds of physical desire and opened to them boundless promise of divine love. Their earlier behavior, their lovemaking during Lenten season in the refectory of Argenteuil, and their disguising Heloise as a nun when she traveled to Brittany had mocked God, yet in his mercy he had not punished them but freed them. Abelard downplays their former love and his mutilation. He maintains that their love was really lust, which led them to sin; divine love would lead them to love Christ, who had truly suffered, as Abelard had not. Therefore, he urged her to discover her own beauty as the bride of Christ, which her religious life now gave to her. By alluding to Heloise as a bride of Christ, Abelard was drawing on a familiar image from the Middle Ages, which linked the union of the bride and her husband to the religious joy of the union between the soul and God, Christ to his church. This was not carnal human love between men and women, but the pure ideal divinely inspired love. When she became a nun and took her vows, Heloise did become the bride of Christ, and Abelard reminds her that this is indeed her refuge. As Heloise had passionately expressed her love for Abelard in her letters, his reply could not have been welcome. He basically claims that he never truly loved her, and that his desire for her was rooted in sexual lust, and therefore was a sin against God.

Bride and Bridegroom

Imagery of the bride and bridegroom in religious writing may seem startling, but in fact, it is a very old image, one that finds its source in scripture. The imagery intends to evoke not the physical union between the sexes, but sustained spiritual union on a plane that could not be experienced in the conventional physical sense. The Old Testament book the Song of Songs

(also known as the Song of Solomon and Canticles) is a collection of eight erotic love poems that provided the language for Christian medieval writers to describe spiritual love of Christ for his church. Bernard of Clairvaux, Abelard's harsh critic, famously wrote a work titled A Sermon on the Song of Songs, *which was a commentary on the Song of Songs, in which he reveals the soul as the bride of Christ. Humankind, he wrote, was created in God's likeness, and therefore the soul's love for God was mirrored in the loving bride giving herself to the Divine Bridegroom. Another source for the image of bride and bridegroom in religious writing, one that was often cited in tandem with the Song of Songs, was from the Apocalypse or the Revelation of Saint John the Divine, which is an account of the end of the world as a fulfillment of God's plan. The description offers an image of new creation of heaven and earth following the destruction of the world, in which a new Jerusalem descends from God in heaven like a bride adorned for her husband. Thus, the metaphorical language of the union of the husband and bride represented the realization of religion.*

In the subsequent letters, Heloise states her resignation to their fate, and her recognition that they now must live as brother and sister, as Abelard wrote they must. Their correspondence thereafter concerns matters of faith and the administration of the Paraclete, rather than, as Heloise initially had encouraged, their passionate love for each other. No doubt the abbess realized that if their correspondence was to continue, she had to approach it on Abelard's terms. Abelard served as spiritual director for the women at the Paraclete, and the correspondence between Heloise and Abelard reflects her questions on the best way to oversee the religious house of which she was now abbess. As their benefactor, Abelard preached to raise money for the nuns and even visited the Paraclete on occasion, prompting further malicious rumors from the controversial monk's expanding list of enemies. Surely, Abelard now saw Heloise only as a sister in Christ, and he writes that his castration ensured that the former lovers' contacts related to issues regarding the proper administration of the Paraclete. Eventually, Heloise poses a series of questions to Abelard concerning the place of women in religion, the will of God, the nature of sin, and the source of right and wrong. In his fourth letter to Heloise, Abelard lays out a rule by which the nuns should live, since the standard monastic rule, the Rule of Saint Benedict, was written as a guide to the communal lives of monks and often was imperfectly suited to regulation of a convent.

The Authenticity of the Eight Letters

The eight letters of Heloise and Abelard have figured prominently in their enduring fame because they reveal with startling intimacy the private

emotions and inner thoughts of the famous couple. Most historians hold that Abelard wrote Historia calamitatum *(usually regarded as the first letter) and that the subsequent correspondence between Heloise and Abelard was composed by the party to whom the letters are ascribed—which is to say, Heloise wrote letters to Abelard and he wrote letters to Heloise. Medieval letter writers often kept copies of the letters they wrote and, in some instances, edited them for circulation as an epistolary collection. In the decades following Heloise's death in 1163, an unknown person made a copy of the letters, which were probably left in a manuscript in the library of the Paraclete, and a copy came into the hands of the poet Jean de Meun. In the 1270s, he translated them into French and inserted the story of Heloise and Abelard into his poem* Roman de la Rose (Romance of the Rose). *Therefore, the earliest attestation of the letters cannot be dated before the late thirteenth century, some 150 years after the letters were written. Perhaps for this reason, some historians have raised concerns about the authenticity of the letters.*

A few historians, although not the majority of them, assert that the letters are literary fiction composed solely by Abelard himself. In other words, Abelard wrote all eight letters himself, perhaps based on an actual correspondence between the former lovers that has not survived, writing first as himself, then adopting the voice of Heloise in the response that he wrote, thereby creating a fictitious exchange and a work of literature. Those who hold this view contend that Heloise never would have expressed the irreligious opinions contained in her letters. In fact, that any woman of the Middle Ages, much less an abbess of Heloise's renown and dedication, could have given written expression to the unconventional opinions, sensual longings, and self-reflections contained in the letters seems highly unlikely to these historians. Indeed, writers in the Middle Ages generally did not write of their personal emotions, and for a woman to have done so is quite extraordinary.

Furthermore, assigning authorship of all letters to Abelard strips Heloise of the intellectual vigor that is apparent in her letters. Contemporaries of Heloise such as Peter the Venerable, Hugo Mettelus, William Godel, and Hugh Matel spoke of her learning. William Godel attributes to Heloise expert knowledge of Greek and Hebrew letters, an accomplishment that was almost unknown in her day by men or women. Moreover, Abelard himself, the greatest master of the age, writes that she stood supreme in the extent of her learning. Although it cannot be determined with certainty, it seems likely that Heloise did not lack the erudition to have composed the letters attributed to her.

Others have suggested that neither party wrote the letters at all, that in fact the letters are an imaginative product written after—perhaps more than a century after—the deaths of Heloise and Abelard. Most scholars reject this hypothesis. Based on meticulous investigation of details within

Abelard's letters, they have shown that likely no forger could have imitated Abelard's writing so thoroughly.

Barring a heretofore-undiscovered twelfth-century manuscript that contains or refers to the letters, the controversy over their authorship will never be resolved. Indeed, the discussion over the authenticity of the letters figures prominently in how we view Heloise and Abelard themselves. Was Heloise an inferior intellect to Abelard's brilliance, incapable of original thought? Does the correspondence demonstrate the exceptional qualities— philosophical, religious, and literary—of the fateful couple? How one answers these and other questions points to whether one accepts the authenticity of the letters themselves.

ABELARD'S RETURN TO TEACHING AT SAINT GENEVIÈVE

Even as Abelard was assisting Heloise with the Paraclete, his life was changing yet again; after more than five years as abbot, he left the unruly monks at Saint Gildas and once again returned to teaching in Paris. Well-known twelfth-century intellectual John of Salisbury writes that he heard Abelard's lectures at Saint Geneviève in 1136, although it seems likely that Abelard had returned to Paris a few years before then, perhaps around 1133. Saint Geneviève was outside the actual city limits of Paris, and, therefore, Abelard as master was beyond the jurisdictional reach of the bishop of Paris. Abelard's return to Paris at this time was probably precipitated by the return once again to royal favor— this time as chancellor—of his patron and protector, Stephen of Garlande in late 1132. The school was located on land that belonged to the abbey of which Stephen of Garlande was dean, which perhaps gave Abelard the confidence to take up the role of schoolmaster once again. Abelard had not been a master in Paris for about 15 years, and in the intervening period, the city had become a beacon of learning for masters and students alike. John of Salisbury writes that students were drawn to Abelard as the most exciting and accomplished teacher—that he was famous and admired by all. Abelard's return to Paris marks likely his longest period of uninterrupted teaching. From about 1133 to about 1140, he was probably teaching logic and theology, and this time, although his students were as enthusiastic about their charismatic master as ever, Abelard's rival teachers, while probably not in accord with many of his ideas—he was refining his ideas on the Trinity—did not attack him as Alberic had in 1121. This time, the attacks on Abelard would come not from the masters of the schools but from William of Saint Thierry, Thomas of Morigny, and Bernard, the powerful abbot of the Cistercian monastery of Clairvaux.

THE COUNCIL OF SENS AND ABELARD'S DEATH

Bernard's hostility toward Abelard went back at least to his days at the Paraclete, when, during a visit to the convent in 1138, Bernard had corrected

Heloise and her nuns on the version of the Lord's Prayer that they were reciting. The correction was a minor one, centered on whether one followed the version of the Lord's Prayer from the gospel of Saint Matthew or that of Saint Luke; Bernard preferred the latter. Rather than letting the criticism pass, Abelard took issue with Bernard over this relatively insignificant matter, and he wrote to the great abbot disputing the recommendation and impertinently pointing out that Bernard's own monastery had committed at least six such minor deviations from orthodox practices. It was certainly an impolitic confrontation, but Abelard's life was replete with ill-considered brashness. Bernard's animosity toward Abelard stemmed from more than an argument over this minor irritation; the two men differed fundamentally over the proper approach to religion. The clash between Abelard and Bernard grew from a fundamental disagreement over their approach to theology. Abelard held that rationality was the foundation of theology, while Bernard insisted that only through faith, founded not in rational intellectual processes but on an unreasoned spiritual leap, could humankind know God and his will. For Bernard, it seemed that Abelard's reliance on logic might attack the great mystery of faith.

The movement to silence Abelard began in the Lenten period of 1140. William of Saint Thierry, who had been present when Abelard first had been condemned at the Council of Soissons in 1121, wrote to Bernard accusing Abelard of general evils and specific heresies relating to Abelard's interpretation of the Trinity and the concept of sin and redemption. Abelard's ideas on the nature of the three persons of the Trinity had led to his condemnation at Soissons, and it seems that in the intervening years he had been reworking the condemned book. His interest in the question of sin goes back to his early days in Paris with Heloise, when the two lovers engaged in philosophical dialogues. We should remember that Abelard held that words themselves were not necessarily an accurate guide to truth: that they could distort the reality rather than define it, producing empty meanings. In a similar vein, Abelard's philosophy of intention, or intentionalism, asserted that right or wrong actions were predicated on the intentions of the person committing the acts, not on the actual results of those acts. The only true guide to morality was the intention of the soul, because sometimes an outward act of wickedness might produce a good result, and likewise an act of goodness might result in an evil outcome. Therefore, only interior motives, which can only be identified by the soul and cannot be falsified, can determine the moral value of an action. There is no consensus among historians as to whether Abelard's ideas were heretical or contrary to church orthodoxy of his day, but most agree that Abelard's views were not anti-religion or anti-clerical. However, around this time, he suffered a kind of guiltiness by association, as one of his students from Paris, Arnold of Brescia, was overtly subversive, advocating radical ideas like the abolition of church property.

A few months later, in mid-Lent 1140, Thomas of Morigny also attacked Abelard's ideas as heretical, citing many of the same sources William of Saint Thierry had cited. Bernard was keenly aware that Abelard had built his reputation by defeating his opponents in public disputation, and he was anxious to avoid a public confrontation with the feisty logician. On the other

hand, Bernard was at his strongest in one-on-one encounters, drawing on his immense gravitas and authority. Bernard's prominence depended on reprimanding Abelard in such a way that confirmed the great abbot's prestige and demonstrated that Abelard was subject to his judgment, and so he met privately with Abelard. According to Bernard's biographer Geoffrey of Auxerre, Abelard agreed to accept Bernard's corrections, although other sources disagree with this statement. Whatever the truth of the matter, shortly after the meeting with Bernard, Abelard requested of Henry the archbishop of Sens that either the matter should be determined at the upcoming large church council or Bernard should withdraw his accusations. For his part, Bernard now took actions to garner support, preaching against Abelard to students in Paris and denouncing Abelard to Pope Innocent II in Rome, urging him to move against the heretic.

The Council of Sens that was convened on June 2, 1140, was a large affair. Although he did not play a role in the proceedings, King Louis VII of France attended. Louis's father had died about three years earlier, resulting in the final fall from grace of Stephen of Garlande, who was no longer chancellor, although his replacement was an ally. Others in attendance included Henry the archbishop of Sens; Hugh the bishop of Auxerre, Bernard's relative and biographer; Geoffrey the bishop of Chartres, who had spoken in Abelard's favor at the Council of Soissons; and Thibauld the count of Champagne, Abelard's supporter but also a patron of Bernard's monastery at Clairvaux. The auspicious occasion, attended by so many of the luminaries of the day, was held not simply to address the charges levied by Bernard against Abelard, although the dispute between the powerful and influential abbot and the famous master must have loomed large in the minds of many in attendance. In 1140, a formal judicial procedure to try heretics had not yet been established under canon law, so technically the council was not a trial, although it certainly has that flavor. The chief prosecutor, essentially, was Bernard of Clairvaux.

Bernard must have recognized that defeating Abelard in a disputation before the council would be difficult, so instead he turned to a strategy that drew on his personal dignity and authority. The night before the council convened, Bernard assembled a private meeting of almost all of the bishops in attendance plus the archbishops of Sens and Reims. The men met in an informal atmosphere that Bernard dominated by reading out the 19 propositions or supposed heretical teachings of Abelard one at a time and then inviting the assembled bishops to condemn the charges. Although Hyacinth Boboni, an official from the papal court who would be elevated to the papal throne as Pope Celestine III in 1191, opposed Bernard, the impressive abbot prevailed in securing the support of most of the bishops; the bishops agreed to condemn the 19 heretical propositions.

The following day at the council, Bernard gave a striking presentation (described by Henry the archbishop of Sens). He held up a copy of Abelard's *Theologia Christiana* before the assembled and declared that he would expose all the charges as either absurd or heretical. Then Bernard began to enumerate

the questionable propositions, which the bishops had agreed to condemn the night before. The propositions were essentially identical to those in the letter from William of Saint Thierry to Bernard of the previous year. Abelard was given three options: deny them, defend them, or correct them. Abelard instead chose to bring the proceedings to a halt by appealing to the judgment of the pope, and he and his supporters departed the council. Writing of events after the fact, Geoffrey of Auxerre describes Abelard as confused; his reason had left him. It is impossible to know whether Abelard was indeed confused by events or whether, perhaps, he was ill. However, it is just as likely that he saw the papal appeal as a way to avoid Bernard's trap and sidestep the condemnation that he recognized was the inevitable outcome of the council.

Pope Innocent II and Abelard had met when Innocent had approved the transfer of the Paraclete to Heloise at the dedication of the abbey church of Morigny in 1131. Yet the situation with Innocent was complicated. As a cardinal, he had worked with William of Champeaux, Abelard's former master and rival, to negotiate the Concordat of Worms in 1122, which ended the protracted controversy between the German emperor and the papacy, a classic conflict between the proper roles of church and state. During the papal election in 1130, because of a split among the cardinals, one faction elected Pope Innocent II and the other elected Pope Anacletus II, thereby creating what was termed a dual election. The party supporting Anacletus took control of Rome, forcing Innocent to flee the city and take refuge in France. Bernard of Clairvaux and Geoffrey the bishop of Chartres supported Innocent over Anacletus, and their prestige and influence drew the support of the French bishops and King Louis VI. Anacletus died in 1138, and the Second Lateran Council in 1139 asserted that Innocent was the rightful pope, ending the dual election. Therefore, Pope Innocent II was deeply in debt to Bernard for his support of the contested papal throne.

Abelard had appealed to the pope, although no condemnation had been actually pronounced by the council, an irregularity to be sure. Abelard, now in his sixties, set off for Rome. After he departed, the council indeed condemned Abelard's allegedly heretical writings. Yet Bernard was not pleased with the outcome; he, the archbishop of Reims, and the French bishops moved preemptively to influence the pope by writing to him, linking Abelard with the rebellious Arnold of Brescia and cautioning the pope and other cardinals not to be swayed by Abelard. To supplement the epistolary campaign, Bernard sent his secretary, Nicholas of Clairvaux, to deliver the letters to Innocent and his curia.

Although he was determined to pursue his appeal in Rome, on his way there Abelard stopped off, probably to rest, at the great Benedictine monastery of Cluny in Burgundy. The abbot of Cluny, Peter the Venerable (ca. 1092–1156), took in the troubled Abelard and tried to assure him that papal justice would not fail. Around 1128, Peter the Venerable had engaged in a dispute with Bernard of Clairvaux over the virtues of the Cluniac monasteries over Cistercian ones. Cluny had been founded in 910 as a reformed monastery; its founding

charter explicitly placed it under the authority of the pope, thereby limiting lay influence in the affairs of the abbey. Dedicated to independence from lay control and emphasizing performance of the liturgy, Cluny inspired dozens of daughter houses across Europe; these subsidiary houses were a kind of federation that answered to the abbot of Cluny. The Cistercians, on the other hand, were of a much more recent foundation in Abelard's day. Emblematic of twelfth-century religious piety, the Cistercian order sought to return to the religious life laid out in the Rule of Saint Benedict, rejecting the developments monasteries such as Cluny had undergone over the centuries. As such, the Cistercians tended to emphasize an austerity that Bernard of Clairvaux asserted the Cluniacs lacked. Bernard had rebuked Peter the Venerable for Cluny's laxity.

Meanwhile, within six weeks of the Council of Sens, Pope Innocent II in consultation with bishops and cardinals had ruled against Abelard's appeal, condemning him for his malicious doctrines and teachings that were contrary to the Catholic faith. A sentence of perpetual silence was imposed on the heretic, and his defenders and followers were excommunicated. Furthermore, Abelard and Arnold of Brescia—although there is no evidence that Abelard was in communication with Arnold at this time, it seems that the seed that had been planted by Bernard had taken root—were to be confined to separate religious houses and their books burnt. Despite the condemnation, Peter the Venerable wrote to Innocent describing how he and Abbot Rainard of Cîteaux of the founding Cistercian monastery had guided a reconciliation between Abelard and Bernard at Clairvaux after advising Abelard that he should take correction from the abbot of Clairvaux if he had written or said anything that deviated from orthodoxy. Furthermore, Peter wrote that Abelard wished to make Cluny his home and to refrain from teaching. Mentioning his age and weakness, the abbot of Cluny wrote that he hoped Abelard would not be forced out of the monastery, rather that he be allowed to spend his remaining days in the shelter of the great monastery in Burgundy.

Abelard was surely ill at this time, perhaps suffering from cancer. He was allowed to remain at Cluny, although, out of consideration for Abelard's declining health, Peter the Venerable moved him to the small priory of Saint Marcel near Chalon-sur-Saône, not far from Cluny and still in Burgundy, but where the climate was more moderate.

Although this was to be Abelard's final journey, he remained intellectually active until his death. He wrote to Heloise a final letter, his so-called confession of faith, which he begins by naming her as his sister in Christ who had once been dear to him in the world, a reminder that his love for her was spiritual, not carnal. He affirms his Trinitarian orthodoxy and his confidence in faith as his refuge: "The storm may rage but I am unshaken, though the winds may blow they leave me unmoved; for the rock of my foundation stands firm." Peter the Venerable informed Heloise of Abelard's death in 1142 in a letter that is remarkable for its kindness and affection. He tells Heloise that her husband, he "who was yours, he who is often and ever named and honored as the

servant and true philosopher of Christ" was active until the end, reading and engaging in philosophical discussions. To comfort Heloise in her loss, Peter wrote, "And so Master Peter ended his days. He who was known all over the world for his unique mastery of knowledge. God cherishes him in his bosom, and keeps him there to be restored to you through his grace at the coming of the Lord." Abelard had requested that his body be sent to the Paraclete, a request that was honored, although at the time of his death he was a monk of Cluny and should, therefore, have been buried there.

HELOISE'S LATER LIFE

Peter the Venerable continued to correspond with Heloise and visited the Paraclete on at least one occasion, probably when he brought Abelard's body for reburial. Heloise wrote to him in thanks and reminded him that he had agreed to send a document of absolution to be placed over Abelard's tomb, which he did. He also wrote an epitaph, praising Abelard as "our Aristotle, prince of scholars." Peter also offered to find a prebend in a great church for "your Astralabe," presumably the son of Heloise and Abelard, who would have been in his twenties. There is no definitive record of what became of Astralabe, although there are tantalizing but inconclusive clues as to what may have been his fate. The name was uncommon, and so any mention of an Astralabe stands out in the records. Astralabe was the name of a cathedral canon at Nantes in 1150, and of an abbot at the Cistercian monastery of Hauterive in Fribourg from 1162 to 1165, where the necrology lists "Peter Astralabe son of our Master Peter," although it is not possible to know irrefutably whether these mentions refer to the son of Heloise and Abelard.

Peter the Venerable never read the eight letters exchanged between Heloise and Abelard, and he assumed that she had set aside her desire for the physical love of her husband in favor of her new life as a nun. Had he read their letters, he would have realized that Heloise had not surrendered her yearning for physical closeness and refrained from writing about it only out of obedience to Abelard. She acknowledged in her second letter to Abelard that her inner life, her soul, in which her intention dwelled, had not embraced the religious life, and so before God she deserved no praise. Heloise lived another 22 years after Abelard's death, until about 1164. During this final third of her life, she further demonstrated her considerable abilities as the abbess of the Paraclete. When she died, the convent had given life to six daughter houses and owned considerable properties in the valley of the Ardusson, the small stream on which the Paraclete was situated. In all, Abelard had provided the nuns with a rule that established a uniform liturgy between Paraclete and her daughter houses, a hymnal (Heloise had complained to Abelard that there were no hymns to honor women who were neither virgins nor saints), and a series of six *planctus*, or laments on biblical themes.

THE FINAL RESTING PLACES OF ABELARD AND HELOISE

Heloise was buried next to Abelard in the abbey church at the Paraclete, the small oratory that had been built by Abelard's students in the early years after his arrival there. Beginning soon after her death, their remains contributed significantly to their enduring fame. In 1204, an anonymous poet wrote that when the tomb was opened to receive Heloise's body, Abelard raised his arms and clasped her in an embrace. A new oratory was built, and the bones were moved from the dampness of the original tomb (caused by the proximity of the Ardusson stream) to positions on either side of the high altar. By 1621, a more impressive monument was constructed for the famous couple, below an altar that was atop a stone with a carving depicting the Three Persons of the Trinity that Abelard had supposedly commissioned. As with so much else in France, the Revolution changed the circumstances of the dead lovers. Their bodies had been moved twice before then, in 1701 and 1780, each time to a more prestigious location in the Paraclete, but in 1791, the Paraclete was dissolved, the building abandoned, and the buildings sold and eventually demolished. Heloise and Abelard were moved to the church of Saint Laurent in nearby Nogent-sur-Seine, where they reportedly attracted visitors, although revolutionaries had vandalized their tomb in 1794. By 1800, the couple was on the move again, this time to Paris. Alexandre Lenoir had been instructed by the Assemblée Nationale to preserve artifacts from religious institutions that had been destroyed in the Revolution. Therefore, the remains of Heloise and Abelard were moved to the Musée des Monuments Français, where they stayed from 1800 to 1817.

In 1817, the remains were moved for the final time, to Père Lachaise Cemetery, originally called Mont Louis, in an effort to raise the prestige of the 10-year-old cemetery, which had struggled to attract the attention of well-heeled Parisians because it was considered too far east of the city. The bodies, still in what Lenoir believed was Abelard's original tomb, were installed under a large Gothic Revival canopy. Père Lachaise today is a cemetery to the famous, the final resting place of notables like Oscar Wilde, Jim Morrison, Honoré de Balzac, Sarah Bernhardt, Georges Bizet, Maria Callas, Frédéric Chopin, Jacques-Louis David, Molière, Édith Piaf, and Richard Wright. Today, the tomb of Heloise and Abelard attracts many visitors; most Parisian travel guides recommend a visit and often mention the tomb of the famous couple. On most days, flowers are found surrounding the full-sized effigies, left by admiring moderns who feel they know the celebrated couple through their extraordinary letters. What is actually in the tomb is uncertain. The last abbess of the Paraclete reported in 1792 that Abelard's body had been completely reduced to dust except for the skull, which she described as unusually large.

THE ENDURING LEGACY

Why have Heloise and Abelard captured the public imagination for nearly 900 years? Although any single explanation is certainly insufficient, a likely

reason is that their story is so amenable to differing interpretations. At least from the time that the anonymous poet wrote of Abelard reaching out in death to embrace his beloved as she was interred next to him, only about four decades after Heloise's death, poets have been preoccupied by their tragic yet enduring love. The great medieval poet Jean de Meun was so taken with the letters of Heloise and Abelard that he translated them from Latin into French and inserted them into his continuation of the *Romance of the Rose*. In 1717, the English poet Alexander Pope published a poem titled "Eloisa to Abelard." Written as a letter from Heloise to Abelard after his castration and their separation, Pope's intent was to give voice to Heloise's torment over her love for Abelard that could no longer be expressed. Her dreams of their lost love haunt her, and in her anguish, she pleads not for forgiveness but to forget.

Lines 207–10 of Pope's "Eloisa to Abelard" are quoted in the 2004 film *The Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, from a screenplay by Charlie Kaufman, and the title itself comes from line 209. In 1999, Kaufman had also borrowed Pope's poem for the film *Being John Malkovich*, this time as a puppet show featuring the two lovers. Other film adaptations from literature include *Stealing Heaven* (1988), based on Marion Meade's book of the same title. Directed by Clive Donner, the film is clearly produced for modern sensibilities: it is packed with erotic scenes. It is no surprise that the film is largely devoted to Abelard's first Parisian period, when he met and seduced Heloise. The book also served as a model for the 2002 opera by Stephen Paulus, with a libretto by Frank Corsaro, that was commissioned by the Juilliard School in New York.

The tragic love story of Heloise and Abelard has also made the transition from novels to stage play. Irish scholar Helen Waddell's novel *Peter Abelard* (1933) was used as the basis for Ronald Millar's play *Heloise and Abelard* (1970). The book enjoyed considerable success and brought a balanced presentation of the lovers' story to a general audience. The play based on the book was produced first in a small London staging in 1969, starring Diana Rigg and Keith Mitchell, and then on Broadway in 1971 in a larger production.

On the operatic stage, the New York Opera Repertory Theatre put on a 1984 production of an opera titled *Abelard and Heloise*, scored by Robert Ward and with a libretto by Jan Hartman. Enrico Garzilli's *Rage of the Heart* is a musical play based on the Heloise-Abelard love story, with a symphonic score and lyrical songs (copyrighted 1971–95). It was produced in 1997 in Providence, Rhode Island, and, according to the official website (http://www.rageoftheheart.com/index.php), a new production is being planned in Germany. An 11-track CD is available, and the lyrics are given on the website.

Incidental cultural references to Heloise and Abelard are far too numerous to relate here, but they range from Mark Twain, Robertson Davies, Henry Miller, J. D. Salinger, and Leonard Cohen to a 2004 episode of the TV series *The Sopranos* ("A Sentimental Education"). The endless fascination with the lovers stems in part from their tragic love, yet the full story is more complex than the merely sensational. On the eve of the emergence

of medieval universities, their lives intersected with some of the towering figures of their day: the indomitable Bernard of Clairvaux; Peter the Venerable, abbot of the influential monastery of Cluny; scholar and diplomat John of Salisbury. Furthermore, Abelard's innovative philosophical ideas on universals, the application of dialectic to the study of theology, his willingness to use propositions to sort out contradictions, and his conviction that language was the chief concern of logic were startling in their originality. With Heloise, he articulated an ethical system that placed the moral value of actions on the intention of the individual, rather than on the outcome. Heloise was renowned for her learning, and her knowledge of languages and letters is demonstrated in her correspondence. Therefore, to reduce the lives of Heloise and Abelard simply to their love affair may trivialize their contributions as mirrors of the twelfth-century renaissance, but it remains central to the fascination that they have produced over the centuries in the popular imagination.

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Merlin tutoring Arthur, from the *Roman du Roy Meliadus de Leon-noys*, about 1352. (British Library/Art Resource, NY)

King Arthur and Merlin

Stephen T. Knight

INTRODUCTION

The story of Arthur, exploring the possibilities and the fragilities of secular power, is vigorously alive after a thousand years. It originates in early Welsh mythic story and has long been disseminated in richly varied ways in trans-national cultures. It is not a basis of a historical or biographical tradition: the idea of a "real King Arthur" derives from modern obsessions with identity—personal and national—and will be discussed in the context of other modern realizations of the myth.

Medieval Arthur stories have two major formations. In Arthurian romance, Arthur is a largely offstage overlord, dispensing chivalric honor to the individual knights who are focal to each story; in Arthurian saga, he is himself central as the emergent, triumphant, and finally tragic, though always mythic, king. The Round Table is a linking mechanism, the base for the separate knights of romance, the guarantor of their values, and the domain of their glory; then its fall is the marker of Arthurian tragedy. Merlin has no real role in the single-hero stories, but in the Arthur-focused tragedies his knowledge both helps establish the king and foresees worse days to come. Guinevere tends only to be part of the honorific context for the romances, with an exceptional role as Lancelot's beloved in his own romance: this double role also makes her central to the tragic saga as love and duty, both honorable in different ways, come into inevitable conflict.

THE EARLIEST TEXTS

The two earliest Arthurian texts exemplify the two forms of romance and saga. In *Culhwch and Olwen,* a Welsh prose story dating in large part from about 1000, Arthur is a tribal lord, chief of the princes of the island of Britain—never a king: Wales did not then, and scarcely does now, envisage such centralization—who assists his nephew Culhwch to win the beautiful daughter of the terrible Ysbaddaden, chief giant of the island of Britain. Interweaving folklore, comedy, and myth (a wise salmon, a teasing wedding-preparation test, and a ferocious giant boar who was once a wicked prince), this archetypal pattern of single-hero story was later sophisticated, and also simplified, into French feudal romance.

Another Welshman, Geoffrey of Monmouth, produced the original Arthurian saga in about 1136. The idea that he was a Breton draws merely on his criticism of the Welsh and his praise of the Bretons, a judgment naively unfamiliar with the incisive attitudes of writers, notably Celtic ones: the clerics who wrote the early Welsh saints' lives at times ridicule Arthur to aggrandize their church. Geoffrey's *History of the Kings of Britain* offers in fine Latin prose an origin-legend for Celtic Britain, founded by the Trojan exile Brutus, and rich in elaborated narrative and royal shenanigans. Arthur's glory is the focal moment before the British are swamped by the Saxons: as a result the

Norman conquest of Arthur's enemies is implied by Geoffrey to be a justified anti-English vengeance. Like any Norman king, Arthur boldly leads heavy cavalry against the whole of Europe, builds castles and cathedrals to confirm and ratify his triumph, and in equally Norman fashion suffers the treason of his family members.

For Geoffrey of Monmouth, Merlin is behind Arthur, if at some distance. Under this name are combined the Welsh Myrddin, a sixth-century forest exile and visionary (quite possibly a historical prince of Celtic Cumbria, remembered in Wales), and the late fifth-century myth of Ambrosius, a wonderful sub-Roman boy. As the archetype of knowledge in service of, and so inherently opposed to, power, Geoffrey's Merlin outwits the pro-Saxon Vortigern and his doltish advisers, and then skillfully serves Uther, Arthur's father, building Stonehenge as a war memorial to the British dead in the anti-Saxon wars. He also prophesies the Celtic *reconquista* of Britain, long awaited in Wales, but though he arranges Arthur's conception, he never actually encounters the mythic king.

Arthur succeeds Uther when young, seizes his kingdom, defeats France, builds a great capital at Caerleon, and responds to insults from Rome by humiliating it in war. In this hubristic process, future figures of romance like Gawain and Kay lead Arthur's columns in ferocious fighting, described in the Latin tradition of martial writing. But as Arthur is to seize Rome like his Celtic ancestor Brennus, he hears that Mordred (here just his nephew) has seized his own capital and queen. He hurries back, fights his usurper and—the first appearance of a crucial part of the myth—may or may not have died.

ROBERT WACE AND CHRÉTIEN DE TROYES

Geoffrey's story was amazingly popular, surviving in some two hundred Latin manuscripts and translated across the European languages. The crucial transmission was into French verse, in about 1155, by the Channel Islander Robert Wace. The saga he transmitted interacted with orally transmitted Celtic hero stories—Breton as well as Welsh, like those transmitted in the mostly non-Arthurian lais of Marie de France—as Chrétien de Troyes created his Arthurian romances by the 1170s, assuming the existence of the saga structure and richly elaborating it by exploring with suggestive genius the genre of single-hero adventure. Unlike the essentially communal and tribal epic lord, the romance hero rides and fights alone, testing his own inner resources and gaining love. Not just any amorous individual, he is the son of a great lord or king, and he will enjoy not only the beauty of the lady he loves but also the kingdom she happens to inherit.

Chrétien's poems are lucid, deeply imaginative, and subtly varied. *Yvain*—alias "The Knight with the Lion"—is the archetype, as a king's son gains, loses, and through his suffering (and with the help of a lion) regains his lady—and so his land. *Cligès,* the first, is a more classically oriented story of love lost

and found, while the powerful, enigmatic *Lancelot*—also de-individualized as "The Knight of the Cart"—both realizes and idealizes the hero's love for Guinevere. *Erec and Enide* reverses the hero-alone story, showing a husband becoming too uxorious for honor, but finally he, and indeed she, will regain a contemporary balance of gender and power, in which the male is officially in charge. In the unfinished, and so presumably last of Chrétien's extraordinary repertoire, *Perceval,* deheroized as "The Story of the Grail," a naive knight from North Wales learns a deeply moral rather than blandly chivalric lesson in the context of a "grail," an object that seems clearly, if also obscurely, Christian in its thematic connections.

These potent stories would reverberate for centuries. They symbolically project the concerns of the newly peaceful, newly rich medieval world that also created superb cathedrals and manuscripts. Women like Chrétien's sponsor Marie countess of Champagne now played major cultural roles, and *fin amor* recognizes their power, if from a male viewpoint, just as Morgan la Fée represents their threat to masculinity. The lonely knight, winning Arthur's praise and a land outside royal power, seems to represent the dukes and counts of France, powerful vis-à-vis the weak but still glorious central king: even more materially it has been suggested the heroes are also fantasy figures for the landless warriors who were in substantial numbers generated by the new practice of restricting inheritance to the eldest son.

Many writers followed Chrétien in the single-hero romance, in many languages, if without his genius, and new story-threads were attracted to this sprawling world of Arthurian narrative. The story of Tristan and Isolde came into French from Celtic (Drwst is quite probably a Pictish prince, and Cornwall has a memorial stone that appears to honor him): their fated tragic love inspired a great German poem by Gottfried von Strassburg and would interweave with the Arthurian story and be the source for the royal adultery of Guinevere and Lancelot. Another major implant was the story of the Holy Grail. Chrétien's tenuous symbol of a knight's need for charitable morality soon becomes a chalice secreting the blood of Christ, and the intense popularity of this idea appears to respond to the Western loss of the Holy Land after the catastrophic battle of Hattin in 1187: it appears that Chrétien's supple and mysterious narrative, which can hardly post-date that event, provided a matrix to displace the spiritual trauma. The Grail story asserts that something was indeed saved from the ruin. It is here, somewhere in the West, but we can find it only through our own perfection, and by implication our regular attendance at Mass.

Chrétien's continuators of *Perceval* made the Grail more mainstream Christian, but the key event was when in about 1200 Robert de Boron generated a back story for the Grail, in which the chalice arrives from the Holy Land with the crucifixion witness Joseph of Arimathea. Robert also wrote a *Merlin* that linked this Christian continuity to the arrival of Arthur and gave his vizier the capacity to foresee Christian teleology. Though Wolfram von Eschenbach's German *Parzifal* (ca. 1205) drew grandly on Robert de Boron, in

the French developments both Merlin as the devil's-son-turned-Grail-prophet and Perceval as the holy-fool-turned-Grail-achiever were to be replaced with the perfect knight Galahad as by about 1220 the story was reshaped in more austerely Christian mode as the *Queste del Saint Graal.*

THE VULGATE

More fully within the Arthur story was the development of Chrétien's *Lancelot* into a massive prose epic. French and Breton, never British, in setting as well as in courtly and chivalrous themes, this story joined the Grail and the *Mort Artu,* the final tragedy, as the major elements of the Vulgate or *Lancelot-Grail,* in which the separate hero stories, now massively expanded, were by about 1225 consolidated into a great Arthurian saga that embraces the French feudal efflorescence of single-hero romances in the new medium of secular demotic prose narrative, an Arthurian parallel to the originary narratives of the new European nations, and a validating gift of the new administrative clerical class to their lordly secular employers.

First in this massive Vulgate collection comes the *History of the Holy Grail,* reworking Robert's Grail prequel; then his *Merlin* was both expanded and made more secular. No Grail prophet now, Merlin helps Arthur develop and defend his kingdom until he himself disappears through the power of Vivian, both an image of the new authority of the courtly lady, like Chrétien's own countess, and also a sign of the lord-pleasing idea of the inherent vulnerability of knowledge on its own. Then follows a massive set of Lancelot's honorific adventures in war and love; next the *Quest of the Holy Grail* shows through Galahad's perfection how chivalry makes sinners of the knights, especially Lancelot; and finally the *Mort Artu* reveals how the tragedy is linked to the sins that have been exposed in the heavily moralized Christian Grail story.

There is no one authoritative version of the Vulgate, just a mass of manuscripts with overlapping texts. Some scholars argue there was a full revised "Post-Vulgate," but in fact this has no textual entity other than a version of the *Merlin* notable for its darker tone, in keeping with the *Queste*—and probably just a rewriting in the light of that saintly intervention. Here Balin and Balan figure fraternal violence, Merlin is a sex-pest whom Vivian disposes of fiercely, all ends bleakly, and the Arthurian tragedy to come is regarded with some complacency. Though rare in manuscripts, this version is well-known in the English tradition, simply because Malory chose it as the source for his opening sequence, but the concept of a complete "Post-Vulgate" is a modern scholarly invention, remarkably unchallenged. It relies on nothing more than the revised *Merlin* and two stray Spanish and Portuguese texts that develop the role of Merlin as a from-the-grave prophet after his entombment by Vivian.

The Vulgate's massively influential combination of single-hero romance and Arthurian saga was much transmitted and translated, often in reduced and locally varied form. An example is the English *Arthur and Merlin,* a poem

of about 1300 that cuts back the France-focused action of the Vulgate and simplifies the British history to suit an English viewpoint: Arthur eventually fights not the Saxons, the actual and in this nation-building context embarrassingly British-hostile ancestors of the English, but very remarkably—and still in Britain—the Saracens.

THE ARTHURIAN LEGEND IN ENGLAND

This re-politicizing, and re-nationalizing, of Arthur meshes with other important English versions. Two massive alliterative sagas in English drew intimately and independently on Geoffrey of Monmouth, if through Wace: Lawman's *Brut* from about 1200 and the anonymous late fourteenth-century alliterative *Morte Arthur* are epic celebrations that appropriate Arthur from his originary Celtic Britain to be a king of an imagined and racially united English kingdom. Lawman has the boldness, or perhaps the effrontery, to assert finally that Arthur might return after his mysterious passing "to help the English"—not what the Celtic "chief of the princes of this island" would have had in mind.

   In the late medieval period Arthur had a specific political role in Britain, appearing in many chronicles, often with Merlin's support, as an archetype of British, and often just English, kingship. He also had Europe-wide status, being enlisted as one of the three Christian worthies, ranking with Charlemagne, who was the founder of the Holy Roman Empire, and Godfrey of Bouillon, who conquered Jerusalem on the First Crusade. That grandeur led to Arthur's being used as a mythic validator for English kings—Edward I appears to have built a real Round Table; Edward III installed Arthurian culture at court; Henry VII, claiming a Welsh right to the throne, named his eldest son Arthur, though Renaissance scholarship also nudged the name toward the classically named star Arcturus, and the Tudor affiliation to Arthurian glory has been overstated by some scholars.

SIR THOMAS MALORY'S *MORTE DARTHUR*

Linking medieval and modern Arthurian traditions stands Sir Thomas Malory. Varied medieval literary traditions are gathered in his *Morte Darthur* (1485), drawing on French and English work, and once more combining many romance narratives inside the saga frame. He starts by condensing the post-Vulgate *Merlin* but follows it, as no French source does, with the story of Arthur's war on Rome taken from the English alliterative *Morte,* without its tragic ending. Then he fills the massive middle of his book with a very short Lancelot romance out of the huge French prose *Lancelot,* apparently invents a Gareth romance, and then drifts into the Tristram story. After many pages

he abandons this to start a powerful final sequence. The Grail story asserts the Christian virtues as in its source, the *Queste* (perhaps linking with, even explaining, Malory's choice of the highly Christian post-Vulgate *Merlin* to begin), but it also elevates Lancelot who, though a moral failure, is still "the best earthly knight." The last two sequences are the "Lancelot and Guinevere," a skillfully assembled and invented sequence that shows the steady darkening of events around the lovers, though also maintaining their inherent nobility, then "The Death of Arthur" retells the familiar story with some fine new speeches in which characters reflect on their situation. The whole culminates in a calm—and so highly memorable—account of the mysterious passing of Arthur and, staying with Lancelot to the end, shows how he and Guinevere atone for their sins.

Both a very late manuscript and a very early printed book, with a driving coordinate narrative style that can also pause for subordinated subtlety, especially in the late speeches that Malory adds, his hugely influential Arthuriad is not a single unity, nor is it simply didactic in its meanings. Its creative multiplicity has given it enormous impact over time, though there was a fallow period as Malory, like Arthur, became somewhat recessive from the time that the Renaissance scholar Polydore Vergil rejected the historical claims of Geoffrey of Monmouth and the Puritan Roger Ascham found Malory contained "bold bawdry and open manslaughter."

KING ARTHUR IN THE RENAISSANCE AND POST-RENAISSANCE

There were some Renaissance reformations of Arthur, like Spenser's moralized Prince Arthur in *The Faerie Queene* (1590–96), who represents the "Magnanimous Man," the sum of all the allegorical virtues that the knights represented, but he is basically outside the narrative, replaced as warrior and romantic hero by his equal, Arthegal, and as glorious monarch by Gloriana—or Elizabeth—herself. Neither Thomas Hughes's Senecan tragedy *The Misfortunes of Arthur* (1587) nor Michael Drayton's Arthurian topographic myths in *Poly-Olbion* (1612) had real impact: Jonson, Milton, and Dryden all considered an Arthurian epic but saw the error of such non-classical thoughts, though Dryden did produce the fine early opera *King Arthur the British Worthy* (1691), with even finer music by Henry Purcell. This stimulated Richard Blackmore, a literary-minded doctor memorably described by Pope as "the everlasting Blackmore," to produce in 1695 and 1697 two pro-Whig epics, *Prince Arthur* and *King Arthur,* which turgidly validate the new Protestant king, William of Orange, who knighted him. A Tory response was the comedy of Fielding's *Tom Thumb* (1730), in which the tiny hero comes to the court of Arthur and his queen, Dollalolla, and all ends in burlesque massacre. Eliza Haywood turned it into a musical comedy in which Merlin rescues Tom Thumb when the cow who swallowed him succumbs to the wizard's emetic magic.

KING ARTHUR IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

Even after these embarrassments, neither Arthur nor Merlin was quite forgot-
ten, especially on the stage, and by the end of the eighteenth century scholars
like Thomas Warton and Joseph Ritson and anthologists like Thomas Percy,
Thomas Evans, and George Ellis had transmitted the materials of the tradi-
tion to a reviving interest: three reprints of Malory appeared in 1816–17. But
the English Romantics saw little value in a medieval tradition that was not
based in personal moral authenticity: an interesting effort to rewrite Malory
in verse like Reginald Heber's *Morte D'Arthur* (ca. 1810) was uncompleted,
while Wordsworth in *The Bridal of Triermain* (1813) and Scott in *The Lady
of the Lake* (1810) made Arthurian characters, especially Merlin, the enemies
of morality. But Arthur did have some positive role in the period. Cornish,
Welsh, and Scottish writers found him and Merlin useful to validate a sepa-
rate identity, and some little-remembered English texts offered Arthurian ad-
venture in the far north—including the Arctic and the Northwest Passage.
John Dee had drawn this idea from Arthur's Norman-Viking adventures in
Geoffrey of Monmouth to justify Elizabethan claims, and the Arctic Arthur
thrived in Richard Hole's *Arthur, or the Northern Enchantment* (1789), John
Thelwall's *The Fairy of the Lake* (1801), Charles Milman's *Samor, Lord of the
Bright City* (1818), and, grandest and most Northwest Passage–connected of
all, Bulwer Lytton's stanzaic epic *King Arthur* (1848).

   Interesting as these activities are, it was Tennyson who brought Arthur back
to vigorous life. His scholarship and his feeling for the death of Arthur Hal-
lam led to the "Morte Darthur" in 1833, and he long planned the discontinu-
ous epic that started with four poems in 1859, to be completed as the 12 *Idylls
of the King* in 1885, ending with the still Hallam-connected "The Passing
of Arthur." As he began the great work, Tennyson drew on the Vulgate for
"Merlin and Vivien" and the Welsh Mabinogion romances for what would
be "The Marriage of Geraint" and "Geraint and Enid" (originally one long
idyll), but his major source was Malory, selecting episodes to explore aspira-
tions and, mostly, failures. Arthur is a moral monarch with no real enemies
except human weakness: most of his supporters are derailed by temptation,
whether sexual (as with Merlin, Pelleas, and Tristram), mystical (as with Gala-
had), or simply the attractions of indiscipline (as with Gawain, Pelleas, Balin,
and Balan). But for male weakness in general, the ultimate blame is sheeted
home to women like Vivien, Ettare, and Isolt, and the central errant figure of
Guinevere, whose infidelity is made, in Arthur's own and almost completely
unforgiving voice, the main cause for tragedy.

   Tennyson reestablished the Arthurian theme in terms of a masculinist, mor-
alist, and royalist myth that had failed in the face of modern fallibility and
sensuality, but the poem's text and imagery richly creates the sensual world
that it sees as the bane of all goodness. Many conservative writers in Britain
and the United States reworked these themes, usually clumsily, especially in
verse plays around 1900: poets such as T. S. Eliot and David Jones were to see

both Tennyson and Arthur as old-world and used the myth only in referential ways, but, through working in the modernist fragmentary mode, their treatment was also potent. The strongest anti-Tennysonian voice was Mark Twain in *A Connecticut Yankee at King Arthur's Court* (1889). In *Yankee,* Arthur is at first a cruel fool, and Twain's illustrator, Dan Beard (1850–1941), depicted the mean-minded Merlin as Tennyson himself. But Twain also projected his satire of medieval and modern England into a critique of the United States. The final battle is a Civil War version of Camlan, as the Yankee, rich in both technology and self-confidence, slaughters the whole chivalry of England and Arthur is finally seen not as a feudal bully, but as a valid human spirit, a royal individual.

KING ARTHUR IN THE MODERN AGE

Arthur the man, trying to be a good ruler in time of conflict, is central to twentieth-century versions of the myth, and his efforts and struggles dominate the thematic action as never before. Crucial to this is Merlin as the humanist educator of this modern human king. The idea of an educative Merlin had been around for some time, especially as a containment of the bearded druid-bard that non-English Romantics, from Wieland to Emerson, saw as Merlin. Yet it is learning, not magic, that empowers Arthur's education: a key development is the long poem *Merlin* (1917), by the American Edwin Arlington Robinson, in which Merlin is a highly intelligent person, not a seer or magician, who leaves his beloved and equally human Vivien to watch helplessly as the world of the Arthur he has mentored falls tragically apart. Robinson was well aware of the context as the United States set itself to send men to face the brutalities of modern war. This kind of Arthurian tragedy was more fully realized through Malory's narrative by T. H. White, writing between 1936 and 1941. In White's prequel *The Sword in the Stone* (1938), Merlin trains Arthur in natural knowledge, and so he grows up to know that Might should not be Right—but fails to achieve his dream of an educated liberal order as the tragic events slowly build up in three books based on Malory and with their own nobility of tone. White, writing like Robinson in the darkness of war, confronted the problems in his final volume *The Book of Merlyn,* which argues fractiously about human limitations and, like White himself, places more faith in the world of nature. Antihumanist and prophetic of ecology, an avatar of Orwell's contemporary dark fantasies, this last book was not published until 1977 and still haunts Arthurian writing as a version of the tragedy without the consolation of either Christianity or literary elegance.

Both the imaginative charm of White's first book and the sweep of the full Malorian series of *The Once and Future King* (1958) stimulated many stories, often for juveniles, most retaining faith in Arthurian values. Authors like Catherine Christian, Victor Canning, and Mary Stewart continued the combination of single adventures in a saga frame, often published in series form. These reworkings can be highly original, like Susan Cooper's *The Dark Is*

Rising series (1965–77); they can involve fantasy and time-travel, mix in elements of Celtic magic, bring Americans to Arthurian Europe, or even relocate the story to America. So they continue the tradition of Hawthorne and Twain in reshaping European myth to have modern meaning in the United States, and often showing a greater precision in history, geography, and especially names than the more casual British writers feel the need to offer.

Arthurian film has been less rich than fiction. *A Connecticut Yankee* was often adapted, usually for children, with notable successes starring Will Rogers and Bing Crosby, but adult Arthurian films are relatively few, and his name in the title is even rarer: kings seem to appeal less in the United States than England, and the story is locked into an unappealingly dark ending. Some Arthurian films acquire positive endings: *The Knights of the Round Table* (1954) leaves Perceval to carry on in the light of the Grail; in *First Knight* (1995) Lancelot and Guinevere simply inherit the kingship and the future; the 1999 television series *Merlin* makes Arthur's death a secondary event as the magician acquires final happiness with a rejuvenated Nimue. Tragedy was avowed in Robert Bresson's French *Lancelot du Lac* (1974), but its brutal ending was one of the many Arthurian sonorities mocked in *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* (1975).

Another strand in Arthurian modernity has been the idea, or fantasy, of the historicity of Arthur. Though some scholars had, since Gibbon, long suspected some truth behind the ninth-century *Historia Brittonum*'s account of Arthur's battles with the Saxons, it was R. G. Collingwood in 1935 who first argued forcefully that Arthur was a Roman-British leader who held up the Saxon advance for some time, and so made Britain neither fully Germanic nor fully Celtic (and also conveniently linked the British Empire back to Rome). The appeal of an un-Teutonic Britain was especially evident after the Nazi period, and fiction developed the Collingwood concept vigorously. John Masefield offers in *Badon Parchments* (1947) a strictly archival account, while Rosemary Sutcliff's *Sword at Sunset* (1963) is a highly effective novel treatment of this modern English ideology in which Arthur has supplanted as a national founder the genuinely heroic, but apparently inappropriately Germanic, King Alfred.

A tide of Dark Age quasi-historicist novels, weaving romance, Celticism, and mysticism into military and sometimes sadomasochistic detail, have flowed recently from male authors like Parke Godwin, Bernard Cornwell, and Stephen Lawhead. Variation of this masculinization started with Marion Zimmer Bradley's long and scholarly feminist rewriting in *The Mists of Avalon* (1981): that produced various spinoffs, and Sharan Newman and Persia Woolley have also feminized the tradition. The most recent visual versions seem to accept as now canonical a mix of history, myth, women, and children. The 2009 British television series *Merlin* not only makes the lead figure a wise juvenile—not a bearded ancient—but blends in medievalism, Celticity, and helpful children of both genders and several ethnicities.

Similarly, while the film *King Arthur* (2004) asserted Arthur and his warriors were Sarmatians from southwestern Russia (but with the traditional names), its narrative mixed the Romano-British concept, a wise woodland Merlin, and a glamorous young warrior Guinevere. As the film ends with Arthur's marriage and rise to rule, it is able, with no sign of a *Morte,* to deploy his name in the title.

If many modern versions prefer the simplicities of romance to the scope and sonority of Arthurian saga, there is also the recurrent chatter of the "real King Arthur" industry. A personalized version of Arthurian historicism remains an ineluctable interest of television and print journalism, offering topography, maps, dates, and speculative statements from scholars and non-scholars in a quest for the real, historical Arthur. But King Arthur has been in the underworld before. The early Celtic saints' lives belittle his merely secular powers; early modern English ideologues made him a mere validator of dubious incomer kings, fighting cardboard Saracens across his former land; from Milton to Wordsworth, Arthur and Merlin were lay figures of a distastefully royal and Catholic past. But like all great mythic heroes, he has the power of return, in a new form, with new meanings for new contexts, and it seems rational to expect many substantial returns for Arthur. He remains the king of an enormously rich literary tradition that is itself in truth the reality of this dynamic, changing, and deeply revealing myth.

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**APPENDIX: WILLIAM CAXTON'S PREFACE TO HIS EDITION
OF SIR THOMAS MALORY'S *MORTE DARTHUR***

Lister M. Matheson

William Caxton's preface to his edition of Malory's *Morte Darthur* (Westminster, 1485) offers a fascinating glimpse into how late-medieval and later reading and listening audiences approached the story of King Arthur.

Caxton relates how (unnamed) "noble and divers gentlemen" have come to him to demand why he hasn't printed the stories of the Grail and King Arthur. The printer sets himself up as a straw man for one of the gentlemen to knock down when he remarks that various people do not believe that Arthur ever existed; the gentleman offers proof after proof that Arthur had indeed been real, and the printer has to concede the case. That Caxton is simply playing devil's advocate is suggested strongly by the fact that he had printed the full history of Arthur in his published *Chronicles of England* (1480 and 1482) and John Trevisa's translation of the *Polychronicon* (1482). Caxton's copy-text of the latter work had omitted a vigorous defense of Arthur's historicity that appears in other copies of the work; he seems to be making restitution here in his preface for that earlier omission, which occurs in one of the chapters of the *Polychronicon* to which he makes direct reference.

The kinds of proof that the gentleman adduces are interesting: some are references to written sources, which could, of course, be false or fictitious, while others are to physical objects, which could, of course, be fakes or forgeries. (Ah! the difficulties of establishing true facts in pre-Internet days!)

Caxton's comments on the themes and emotions in Malory's *Morte Darthur* constitute the best short summary ever written of the work's range and scope. His coy remark that we are at liberty to believe what we will in the work is disingenuous in the context of the previous arguments.

The following text constitutes the bulk of Caxton's preface, with modernized spelling and punctuation. A few Middle English words that do not have direct modern descendants are printed in italics; these, and some archaic words or usages, have following glosses in brackets.

> After that I had accomplished and finished divers [various] histories, as well of contemplation as of other *hystoryal* [historical] and worldly acts of great conquerors and princes, and also certain books of examples and doctrine, many noble and divers gentlemen of this realm of England came and demanded [asked] me many and oft-times wherefore that I have not do made and imprinted [caused to have made and printed] the noble history of the Saint Greal [Holy Grail] and of the most renowned Christian king, first and chief of the three best Christian and worthy, King Arthur, which [who] ought most to be remembered among us English men before all other Christian kings.

For it is *notoyrly* [famously] known through the universal world that there are nine worthy, and the best that ever were, that is to wit [know] three paynims [pagans], three Jews, and three Christian men.

As for the paynims, they were before the Incarnation of Christ, which were named, the first, Hector of Troy, of whom the history is come [has come down] both in ballad and in prose; the second, Alexander the Great; and the third, Julius Caesar, Emperor of Rome, of whom the histories are well known and had.

And as for the three Jews, which also were before the Incarnation of Our Lord, of whom the first was Duke Joshua, which brought the children of Israel into the land of behest [promised land]; the second, David, king of Jerusalem; and the third, Judas Maccabaeus—of these three the Bible rehearseth all their noble histories and acts.

And sith [since] the said Incarnation have been three noble Christian men *stalled* [installed] and admitted through the universal world into the number of the nine best and worthy, of whom was first the noble Arthur, whose noble acts I purpose to write in this present book here following. The second was Charlemagne, or Charles the Great, of whome the history is had [available] in many places, bothe in French and English, and the third and last was Godfrey of Boulogne, of whose acts and life I made a book unto [for] the excellent prince and king of noble memory, King Edward the fourth.

The said noble gentlemen instantly required me to imprint the history of the said noble king and conqueror King Arthur and of his knights, with the history of the Saint Greal, and of the death and ending of the said Arthur, affirming that I ought rather to imprint his acts and noble feats than of Godfrey of Boulogne or any of the other eight, considering that he was a man born within this realm and king and emperor of the same, and that there are in French divers and many noble volumes of his acts, and also of his knights.

To whom I answered that divers men hold opinion that there was no such Arthur and that all such books as are made of [about] him are feigned, and fables, because that some chronicles make of him no mention nor remember him no thing [not at all, nothing], nor of his knights. Whereto they answered, and one in special [especially] said that in him that should say or think that there was never such a king called Arthur might well be *aretted* [attributed] great folly and blindness. For he said that there were many evidences of the contrary.

First, ye may see his sepulture in the monastery of Glastonbury, and also in *Polycronicon* [a work by Ranulph Higden, translated into English by John Trevisa and printed by Caxton in 1482], in the fifth book, the sixth chapter, and in the seventh book, the twenty-third chapter, where his body was buried and after [later] found and translated into the said monastery. Ye shall see also in the history of [by] Boccaccio, in his book *De casu principum* [*Of the Fall of Princes*], part of his noble acts and

also of his fall. Also Galfridus [Geoffrey of Monmouth] in his British book recounteth his life.

And in divers places of England many remembrances are [exist] yet of him—and shall remain perpetually—and also of his knights. First, in the abbey of Westminster at Saint Edward's shrine remaineth the print [survives the imprint] of his seal in red wax, closed [enclosed] in beryl, in which is written "Patricius Arthurus, Britannie, Gallie, Germanie, Dacie Imperator" ["Noble Arthur, emperor of Britain, Gaul, Germany, Denmark"]. Item, in the castle of Dover ye may see Gawain's skull and Cradok's mantle, at Winchester the Round Table, in other places Lancelot's sword and many other things. Then, all these thynges considered, there can no man reasonably gainsay [deny] but there was a king of this land named Arthur.

For in all places, Christian and heathen, he is reputed and taken for one of the nine worthy, and the first of the three Christian men. And, also, he is more spoken of beyond the sea—more books made of his noble acts than there be in England, as well in Dutch, Italian, Spanish, and Greek as in French.

And yet of record remain in witness of him in Wales, in the town of Camelot, the great stones and marvellous works of iron lying under the ground and regal vaults which divers now living hath seen. Wherefore, it is a marvel why he is no more renowned in his own country, save only [except] it accordeth to [agrees with] the word of God which saith that no man is accepted for [as] a prophet in his own country.

Then, all these things foresaid alleged [declared, adduced], I could not well deny but that there was such a noble king named Arthur, and reputed one of the nine worthy and first and chief of the Christian men.

And many noble volumes are made of [about] him and of his noble knights in French, which I have seen and read beyond the sea, which are not had [available] in our maternal tongue—but in Welsh are many, and also in French, and some in English, but no where nigh [nearly] all.

Wherefore, such as have late [recently] been drawn out briefly into English I have, after the simple cunning [knowledge, ability] that God hath sent to me, under the favor and correction of all noble lords and gentlemen, *enprysed* [undertaken, enterprised] to imprint a book of the noble histories of the said King Arthur and of certain of his knights after [according to] a copy unto me delivered, which copy Sir Thomas Malory did take out of certain books of French and reduced [summarized] it into English.

And I, according to my copy, have done [have caused to] set it in imprint, to the intent that noble men may see and learn the noble acts of chivalry, the gentle and virtuous deeds that some knights used in those days, by which they came to honor, and how they that were vicious were punished and often put to shame and rebuke.

Humbly beseeching all noble lords and ladies, with all other estates (of what estate or degree they are of) that shall see and read in this said book and work, that they take the good and honest acts in their remembrance—and to follow the same. Wherein they shall find many joyous and pleasant histories and noble and renowned acts of humanity, gentleness, and chivalries [chivalrous deeds]. For herein may be seen noble chivalry, courtesy, humanity, friendliness, hardiness, love, friendship, cowardice, murder, hate, virtue, and sin. Do after [according to] the good and leave the evil, and it shall bring you to good fame and renown.

And for to pass the time, this book shall be pleasant to read in—but for to give faith and belief that all is true that is contained herein, ye are at your liberty. But all is written for our doctrine [teaching] and for to beware that we fall not to vice nor sin, but to exercise and follow virtue, by which we may come and attain to good fame and renown in this life, and, after this short and transitory life to come unto everlasting bliss in heaven, the which he grant [may he grant] us that reigneth in heaven— the blessed Trinity. Amen.

Then, to proceed forth in this said book, which I direct unto all noble princes, lords and ladies, gentlemen or gentlewomen, that desire to read or hear read of the noble and joyous history of the great conquerour and excellent king, King Arthur, sometime king of this noble realm (then called Britain), I, William Caxton, simple person, present this book following, which I have *enprysed* [undertaken, enterprised] to imprint. And [it] treateth of the noble actes, feats of arms, of chivalry, prowess, hardiness, humanity, love, courtesy, and *veray* [true] gentleness, with many wonderful histories and adventures.

[Caxton goes on to describe the division of the volume into 21 books, containing 507 chapters, and the contents of each book.]

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Illustrated page from the early fourteenth-century *Chronicle of England* by Peter of Langtoft, showing King Henry II arguing with St. Thomas Becket. Henry touches his left hand with his right forefinger as if admonishing Archbishop Becket, who stands holding a staff with a cross, and gestures back. Becket was murdered by Henry's men in 1170. (The British Library/StockphotoPro)

Thomas Becket (1118/1120–1170)

Emily Z. Tabuteau

INTRODUCTION

Thomas, usually called Thomas Becket, rose from relatively humble beginnings to the archbishopric of Canterbury, an office he held from 1162 until his murder in 1170. Although he had risen in part through the patronage and friendship of King Henry II of England, who appointed him to the archbishopric, Thomas is famous largely for his quarrel with Henry over the proper relations of archbishop and king, of church and state. This "Becket controversy" vexed not only England but all of western Europe for most of a decade and has figured in discussions about the proper relations between religious institutions and governments ever since. The murder was such a cause celèbre that Thomas was canonized just two years after his death.

BECKET'S FAMILY BACKGROUND

Thomas's father, Gilbert Becket, was a London merchant and landowner of sufficient standing to entertain middle-level lords, one of whom, Richer de l'Aigle, became an early patron to his son. Gilbert was born in Normandy, perhaps in Rouen, the capital, but more probably in a small settlement called Thierville (because he once chatted with Archbishop Theobald—his son's predecessor at Canterbury—about their common place of origin, and Theobald was certainly from Thierville). Gilbert's social status was not particularly high, though he was not a peasant. In England he would have counted as part of the ruling class merely by virtue of being French-speaking and of French origin. His wife was also from Normandy. She was known both as Matilda and as Roheise, in an example of a sort of double-naming of women not unusual among Norman families in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.

The Name "Becket"

In the twelfth century, it was common to have only one name (e.g., Thomas), and most last names were little more than nicknames. "Becket," usually spelled "Beket" in the twelfth century, seems to have been the nickname of Thomas's father Gilbert. The name undoubtedly comes from the French bec, *which might be the nickname for a man with a beak-like nose (*becquet *in Norman French could mean a small bird) or refer to a small stream (*bec *in Norman French. Thomas himself never used the name. While he was in Archbishop Theobald's household, he was called Thomas of London; in the writs of Henry II between 1154 and 1162, he appears as Thomas the Chancellor; and when he became archbishop, he was known as Thomas of Canterbury. According to one of the early accounts of his*

murder, one of his murderers entered the cathedral demanding to know "Where is Thomas Becket, traitor to the king?" but this is the only time the nickname is used for Thomas in any twelfth-century source. That it comes from (or was put into) the mouth of a murderer suggests that, in the eyes of his enemies, the nickname denoted Thomas's relatively lowly origins.

Some of Thomas's relatives, however, did use the name. His sister Agnes, for example, was known as Agnes Becket even after she married. This, in turn, suggests that "Becket" was recognized as the archbishop's family name and that it is, therefore, not inappropriate to use it for him despite the lack of contemporary usage. The form "à Becket," however, is an affectation dating from the sixteenth century and should not be used.

Gilbert was well established in London by the time of his son's birth, and the family lived in a large house in Cheapside, then a fashionable area for merchant families. Exactly what trade or trades he followed is not known, but he became prominent and prosperous enough to serve as one of the sheriffs of London for a while, perhaps in the 1130s. He lived into the 1140s, at least, but may have lost much of his wealth in his later years because of fires that destroyed his property. Matilda died before her husband, probably about 1140.

The Legend of Thomas's Saracen Mother

There is no warrant for the late, romantic story that Thomas Becket's mother was a Saracen princess whom Gilbert met on Crusade: he was supposedly her father's prisoner, whom she helped to escape. Knowing only two English words, "Gilbert" and "London," she then followed him back to England, where they were married. The tale first occurs in a manuscript compiled about a century after Thomas's death. The story provides a major element of the plot of Thomas Costain's 1945 novel, The Black Rose, *which became a 1950 movie of the same name. In the introduction to the novel, Costain says, "The story itself grows out of a legend, a most beguiling and romantic legend which is found in a very few old English histories. . . . [I]t concerns an English crusader, who later became the father of Thomas à Becket, and an Eastern girl who knew just two words of English. It is pure legend, of course, but it has always seemed to me too engaging a tale to be buried away between the covers of forgotten histories; and so I have borrowed it and adapted it to my needs."*

BIRTH, SIBLINGS, AND EARLY LIFE

Thomas appears to have been Gilbert and Matilda's only surviving son. They also had at least three daughters who survived into adulthood. Two of those daughters, Agnes and Roheise, married, though their husbands' names are not certain, and both had children. In the 1160s, they and their husbands and children suffered greatly at the hands of Henry II because of his anger at Thomas. The third daughter, Mary, entered a nunnery; in 1173, King Henry II appointed her abbess of Barking Abbey. It is possible that there was a fourth daughter who was the mother of Agnes's eventual heir, Theobald of Helles (or Hulles), because Theobald called himself Saint Thomas's nephew but did not refer to Agnes as his mother. All told, Gilbert Becket had at least seven grandsons, two of whom became priests, and two great-grandsons.

Thomas was born on December 21, probably in either 1118 or 1120. December 21 was the feast day of Saint Thomas the Apostle, after whom the future archbishop was probably named. Indeed, it is likely that it was the fame of Saint Thomas of Canterbury that popularized the name Thomas among the English, for the name was not common in England or Normandy before the late twelfth century. Little is known about Thomas's early life. His biographers, even the earliest ones, are interested primarily in his career as archbishop and tell us little about anything before 1162, and medieval sources about the lives of children, even the children of monarchs, are usually sparse and uninformative. There are a few stories, typical of the lives of saints, about his mother's dreams of his future greatness and about events in his early childhood that prefigured it.

EDUCATION IN ENGLAND AND PARIS

Given his later career, Thomas must have received a relatively good education. Even if he had been intended to follow his father's career, he would have needed to read and write—at least French and probably Latin—and calculate figures in Roman numerals, no mean task. In fact, he seems to have been destined for a clerical career from relatively early on, and to advance through the ranks of the clergy he would need not only Latin but training in theology and law. In his adolescence Thomas lived and studied at the priory of Merton for a while and also attended one or more grammar schools in London. He would have learned aristocratic manners—and he became notorious for his aristocratic demeanor—from Richer de l'Aigle, who used the Beckets' home as his London residence. The story was later told that Thomas once nearly drowned when he fell into a millrace while out hawking with his patron.

Probably when he was in his early twenties, Thomas spent time in Paris, whose schools, just then developing into a university, were the center of theological study in twelfth-century Europe. It seems to have been a brief period, however, and Thomas certainly did not complete the course that would have

entitled him to call himself *magister* ("master"), a title that conveyed that its holder was adept in Latin, theology, and Roman law. How well- or ill-educated Thomas was became a matter of controversy once he had been elevated to the archbishopric, and the debate has never ceased: his supporters portray him as fully capable of reading and writing the best Latin and of holding his own in theological and legal debate; his detractors portray him as struggling in all these matters, as dependent on his loyal clerical staff for the production of the sort of elegant, rhetorical Latin documents his position demanded, even as overly influenced by some of his supporters because he was not educated enough to fully understand some of the underlying issues in his quarrel with the king. Similarly, his supporters portray his departure from Paris as due to changing circumstances at home: his mother's death, his father's difficulties, the need for him to begin a career. His detractors, in contrast, portray him as never having intended to study seriously: Paris was, at most, a sort of finishing school intended to give him the polish he needed to make a career in the world, and he soon got bored with study. Certainly, some aspects of Thomas's later career suggest that he knew that he was somewhat deficient in the niceties of written and spoken Latin.

EARLY CAREER

Once he had returned to London, Thomas entered the household of a merchant named Osbert Huitdeniers ("Eight-pence"). Osbert and Thomas were related, perhaps through Thomas's mother. Thomas kept Osbert's accounts for over two years. If, as his name suggests, Osbert was a moneylender, the years Thomas spent in his service must have provided him with practical expertise of great value to employers in the developing economy of the twelfth century. Life in London in the early 1140s would also have provided an education in national politics because this period saw the height of the rivalry for the throne between King Stephen (r. 1135–54), nephew of King Henry I (d. 1135), and Henry's daughter Matilda, "the Empress." London was in the thick of events, and an intelligent, ambitious young man would have learned much by observing the ins and outs of the struggle for the throne.

In the middle 1140s, certainly by 1146, Thomas left Osbert's household and entered that of Theobald, archbishop of Canterbury. The archbishop of Canterbury was the highest church official in the kingdom of England: the only other archbishop was at York, but York was in the north, was relatively poor, and had only one suffragan (that is, subordinate) bishop, whereas Canterbury was located close to the center of power, was extremely wealthy, and had nearly 20 suffragans in England and Wales. Moreover, while all bishops were among the great lords of the land, Canterbury, by virtue of his leadership of the church and his wealth, was the most prominent of them. Like all great lords, he expected to be consulted by the king on important matters, he regularly attended the royal court, and the king expected his loyal support of

royal policies. In the conflicted politics of the 1140s, a successful archbishop needed to be a consummate politician. Theobald was.

An active archbishop required a large staff, some of them based in the cathedral church of Canterbury but many of them traveling with him as he moved about the country. Like all great landowners and lords at this time, the archbishop and much of his household were itinerant rather than residing primarily in one place. When he joined Theobald's household, Thomas became a member of an elite group of highly able functionaries in one of the major centers of power, secular as well as religious, in England. It is no accident that, of the members of Theobald's household, four later became archbishops and another six became bishops. Thomas initially was one of the second tier of the archbishop's officials, but he rose rapidly. Theobald allowed him to study law at Bologna and Auxerre for a while. He accompanied Theobald to the Council of Reims in 1148 and represented the archbishop at the papal curia several times. In late 1154, Theobald made him archdeacon of Canterbury. All over Europe, the twelfth century saw the rapid advance of administrative techniques, and this was as true for the church as for secular governments—or even truer. As bishops developed the administration of their dioceses, the archdeacon emerged as the most important official engaged in the day-to-day management of affairs. To be archdeacon of Canterbury was, therefore, to be in some sense the second in command to the most important person in the kingdom after the king himself. Because Thomas had neither important family connections nor important patrons promoting his career, his rise must be credited to his administrative skills and, no doubt, his ability to ingratiate himself with his superiors.

ROYAL SERVICE AS CHANCELLOR

The next step in Thomas's advance made him the second in command to the king himself. The long struggle for the throne that had sputtered on through most of the years since the death of King Henry I finally came to an end in 1153–54 through, first, King Stephen's designation of his rival Matilda's eldest son, Henry, as his heir and then, conveniently, Stephen's death in the next year. Thus, in 1154, King Henry II ascended the throne at the age of 21. By this time, Henry had been functioning as duke of Normandy (his mother's ancestral land) for five years or so. He had inherited his father's county of Anjou in 1151. In 1152, he had become duke of Aquitaine, a province that constituted approximately a quarter of the area of the kingdom of France, by virtue of his marriage to Eleanor duchess of Aquitaine, the divorced wife of King Louis VII of France (see the chapter on her). Because control of Normandy brought with it hegemony over Brittany, by the time he became king of England Henry was the ruler of most of western France, an area substantially larger than that belonging directly to the man from whom he held all these territories, the king of France. From his late teens on, Henry had taken over leadership

of the effort to oust Stephen from England and restore the direct line tracing from his grandfather, Henry I, through his mother to himself. He had led several inconclusive military campaigns in England, but he had relatively little experience of the kingdom. The civil war and Stephen's ineffectual government of the kingdom had weakened governmental institutions put in place by Henry I and his predecessors and had created what felt to contemporaries like chaos (though England was actually, by comparison with most areas of the Continent, relatively peaceful and well governed even during Stephen's reign). Henry came to the throne determined, as he often said, to restore conditions in England to their state "on the day when my grandfather was alive and dead." To do so, however, he needed help from men familiar with English institutions and practices. A few of his grandfather's officials were still alive, and several of them reentered royal service under Henry, but they were not enough. To help out, Theobald made the king a gift: only three months after promoting him to the archdeaconry, he gave Thomas to Henry to be his chancellor.

The Chancery

The chancery of England had developed out of the writing office of the late Anglo-Saxon kings, which produced many of the documents issued by those monarchs. Under William the Conqueror (r. 1066–87) and his sons, William II (r. 1087–1100) and Henry I (r. 1100–35), as more and more acts of government came to be written, the chancery and its head, the chancellor, became increasingly important in the government of England. Most especially, the Norman kings of England and their chancellors developed the writ—a terse written directive from the king usually addressed to a subordinate official and instructing him to perform some action—into a major means of communicating orders from the center to the localities. Modern judicial writs such as habeas corpus, certiorari, and mandamus are the descendants of these instruments; but from the twelfth century through the end of the Middle Ages writs served much wider functions than just moving judicial cases through the courts. Like most other aspects of government, chancery had deteriorated during Stephen's reign, but even at the end of the reign it was producing writs as well as the more formal documents of government. Thomas therefore took over a going concern, though one that needed modernization and the restoration of its efficiency.

The Chancellor

While the chancery was, by 1154, an indispensable element of English government, the chancellor was not necessarily the most important official in England next to the king. Under Henry I, an official called the chief justiciar had developed as the king's second-in-command. That position had vanished

under Stephen, but it was revived by Henry II, and for much of his reign the chief justiciar functioned as what one modern scholar has called the king's alter ego. The twelfth century was, however, an age when the person was more important than the office; and while Thomas was chancellor few would have doubted that he was the single most important adviser and companion of the king. Not only did he restore the chancery to efficient functioning, but he took on responsibilities that did not necessarily have anything to do with writing the king's documents. He often accompanied the king on his journeys around the country and to the Continent. He hunted with him. He went on diplomatic missions for him. Thomas's embassy to King Louis VII of France in 1158 was famous in its day for the magnificence of the ambassador's equipage and the imperiousness of his approach to his mission. Indeed, though he was in clerical orders, he even accompanied the king on several military campaigns—and allegedly even fought in them.

FRIENDSHIP WITH THE KING

Henry and Thomas rapidly became fast friends. Henry may have seen in his chancellor a surrogate father. Thomas was 13–15 years older than Henry, about the same age as Henry's own father, Geoffrey Plantagenet count of Anjou, who had died three years before Henry became king. Thomas certainly threw himself wholeheartedly into the role of adviser and companion to the king, to such an extent that his critics have sometimes accused him of betraying Archbishop Theobald just as, in their eyes, he later betrayed the king. The reason for this accusation is that it is sensible to assume that Theobald had more in mind than the restoration of good government in England when he sent Thomas off to become Henry's chancellor. He probably hoped that Thomas would be a spokesman for the interests of the church in the heart of the king's household. If so, he must have been disappointed because, at those points where the king's interests did not seem to run directly with those of the church, Thomas supported Henry without apparent qualm, sometimes even taking the lead in measures that the church saw as against its interests. Thomas's defenders see these actions as attempts to maintain a balance between the interests of the church and the interests of the state.

Younger Husbands and Older Wives

Most royal and aristocratic marriages in the Middle Ages were arranged to advance the interests of the families of the spouses. Love, compatibility, and even age were not important considerations. Both Henry II's father and Henry himself married women who were considerably older than they were.

Geoffrey count of Anjou (Henry II's father) and Matilda were married in 1128, when Geoffrey was only 15 years old. Matilda, who was then 26, was

*already a widow: in 1114, when only 12 herself, she had become the sec-
ond wife of Emperor Henry V, but she bore him no children. After Henry V
died in 1125, Matilda's father, Henry I, king of England and duke of Nor-
mandy, arranged for her to marry the young count of Anjou in order to
forge an alliance with the ruler of this area that had long been a competitor
and enemy of the duchy of Normandy.*

*Before he ascended to the throne of England, Henry of Anjou married Elea-
nor duchess of Aquitaine in 1152, when he was 19 and she was about 30.
Eleanor had been married to Louis VII of France since 1137 and had given
him two daughters. Louis, however, wanted sons, and he and Eleanor did
not get along at all. With permission of the pope, the marriage was annulled
in 1152 on grounds of consanguinity—that is, that Louis and Eleanor were
too closely related to have married in the first place. Consanguinity was
an often-used excuse for dissolving marriages in an era when the church
believed strongly that marriage was for life. That, however, left Eleanor in
a predicament. As duchess of Aquitaine she was the greatest prize on the
twelfth-century marriage market. Any enterprising man who could kidnap
her and force her into marriage would thereby come into control of a signifi-
cant portion of the kingdom of France. Indeed, the tale is told that, on her
progress back from Paris to the capital of Aquitaine, Bordeaux, at least two
French lords attempted the feat. For this reason among others, Eleanor had
prearranged with Henry, whom she had probably met only once, to marry
him as soon as she was free of her first marriage. Although they were at
least as closely related as Eleanor and her first husband, they were married
a bare eight weeks after Eleanor's first marriage was annulled.*

*Though Geoffrey and Matilda had three sons in three and a half years,
and Henry and Eleanor had at least five sons and three daughters, both
marriages were, perhaps not surprisingly, famously unhappy. After the
birth of their third son, Geoffrey and Matilda spent very little time together.
Eleanor went so far as to support the revolt of her sons against their father
in 1173–74. As a result, Henry threw her into prison and kept her there
until his death in 1189. The play* The Lion in Winter, *by James Gold-
man, produced on Broadway in 1966 and made into a movie in 1968
and a television film in 2003, depicts, in somewhat heightened form, the
relations among Henry, Eleanor, their sons, and the young King Philip II of
France in the aftermath of the sons' revolt against Henry. Matilda survived
Geoffrey by 15 years, and Eleanor survived Henry by an equal period.*

ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY

Theobald had been made archbishop in 1139. He had managed to protect
the interests of the church quite well both against deliberate encroachments

by the warring Stephen and Matilda and against depredations traceable to the relative absence of effective royal government during the "anarchy" of Stephen's reign. Although Theobald welcomed Henry's accession with great hopes, having a strong monarch on the throne, while it made defense against depredations by private parties easier than under Stephen, only increased the possibility of royal encroachments on what the church saw as its rights and privileges. Still, on balance, Henry and Theobald got along relatively well. Indeed, in light of the dramatic events to come, a certain amount of nostalgia for what in retrospect looked like the minimal church-state quarrels of Theobald's archiepiscopate is not surprising in some of the surviving sources of the twelfth century.

Theobald died in April 1161, giving Henry the opportunity to name a new archbishop of Canterbury. At this point, Henry made what is usually counted the greatest mistake of his life. He decided that Thomas should be the new prelate and ensured that the monks of the cathedral chapter, who were the formal electors of archbishops of Canterbury, would choose him. The "election" occurred in May 1162. At the time, it undoubtedly seemed to Henry like a brilliant stroke. This was a man whom he knew, trusted, and probably even loved, who had spent more than seven years faithfully carrying out royal policies, who could be expected to carry into his new position a sympathetic understanding of what the king needed and wanted from the church in his kingdom.

Appointment of Bishops in the Twelfth Century

In the earlier Middle Ages, important church officials such as bishops and abbots were often appointed by kings and other local secular rulers. From the middle of the eleventh century, the so-called Investiture Controversy raged over the attempts of several successive popes to challenge these practices. The English side of the controversy, in which Archbishop Anselm was pitted against Henry I, was resolved in 1107 by the establishment of a set of rules to which, usually, only lip service was paid. The initial demand made by papal reformers was that bishops and abbots (and abbesses) be elected in the manner envisioned by the earliest generations of church leaders—that is, bishops by the faithful of their dioceses and abbots and abbesses by the monks or nuns of their convents. This rule was observed to some extent in the case of abbots and abbesses, though in elections to head an important institution the monks or nuns often came under a good deal of pressure to elect a specific person. In the case of bishops, the letter of the rule may have been observed but the spirit was certainly violated. In practice, to speak of England specifically, the king appointed every bishop in the kingdom: having decided whom he wanted in the see, he would send a writ to the cathedral chapter, the monks or canons who served as the clergy of the cathedral, ordering them to elect that person.

The faithful of the diocese had no say in the matter at all, and any cathedral chapter that flouted the king's command was in for serious, prolonged trouble. In the most dramatic example, in 1205 a majority of the members of the chapter of Canterbury refused to elect King John's nominee, leading to—among other things—eight years of increasingly oppressive attempts by the king to force them to accept his candidate, Pope Innocent III's placement of an interdict on England, the pope's excommunication of the king, and a plot against the king's life on the grounds that, as an excommunicate, he was not owed allegiance from anyone. The quarrel was resolved in 1213, when the king again promised free elections, a promise repeated in the first clause of Magna Carta when John was forced to agree to it in 1215. Nevertheless, for as long as the church in England remained subordinate to the church in Rome, it was effectively the king who named bishops, subject only to the veto of the pope, which he rarely exercised. When in the 1530s King Henry VIII wrenched the Church of England out of its allegiance to Rome, even this vestige of outside control disappeared. Bishops of the Church of England are to this day still, in form, appointed by the monarch.

Thomas was certainly, at the time of his appointment, less acceptable to the church as archbishop than he was to the king. Though he would have taken the minor clerical orders at the latest when he entered Theobald's household and Theobald consecrated him a deacon before appointing him archdeacon of Canterbury, Thomas was not a priest. None of the offices he had held had required him to be able to exercise the "cure of souls"—that is, to minister to the faithful, so he had never celebrated the Mass, never heard a confession, never administered any other sacrament. Unlike every other archbishop since the Conquest, he was not a monk, which displeased the monks of the chapter of the cathedral church of Canterbury because the archbishop was automatically their abbot. He was, moreover, by no means the most obviously qualified candidate for archbishop. Many, perhaps all, of the English bishops probably thought they were more qualified. Conspicuously, this was true of Gilbert Foliot the bishop of London, who had probably been expecting the promotion to Canterbury for years. Gilbert subsequently became, in part at least out of disappointment, one of the leaders of Thomas's opponents among the English clergy.

Even Thomas, it is said, advised Henry that appointing him was a bad idea, but Henry would not take no for an answer. Consequently, Thomas repaired to Canterbury, where he was ordained a priest on June 2, 1162, and consecrated archbishop the next day. He celebrated the Mass for the first time in his life immediately after his ascent to the highest clerical office in the land. In August, he received from the pope the *pallium*, the stole of office bestowed on archbishops to symbolize the delegation of papal jurisdiction to them.

FRICTION AND CONFRONTATION
BETWEEN BECKET AND KING HENRY

Henry's hopes for a compliant archbishop were bitterly disappointed, for Thomas began, almost immediately after his appointment, to oppose the king on a wide variety of matters. At some point early in his archiepiscopate, he ceased to function as chancellor. Some sources report that he formally resigned after he received the pallium, sending the great seal of England to Henry, who was in France and who was incensed when he received it. Then Thomas turned his attention to the estates of the archbishopric, many of which had been granted out on unusually favorable leases to the king's men and to men of local importance in Kent. Some lessees had been in place for so long that there was a danger that their families would come to consider the estates their hereditary property. Thomas revoked all these agreements and took the estates back into his direct control. He also demanded from the king custody of three castles—Rochester, Hythe, and Saltwood, the last of which was to become the base of operations of his opponents during his exile and his murderers in the days before and after the murder—and lordship over a man named William de Ros, who owed the service of seven knights. These actions not only irritated the king but turned many of the great families of Kent against the archbishop.

Thomas was not entirely successful in securing control of these estates. In 1163, the constable of England, Henry of Essex, who had fled from a battle in 1159, was tried on charges of cowardice and convicted; among the estates Henry seized as a result was the castle of Saltwood, which Henry of Essex held from the archbishop. The king appointed Ranulf de Broc its custodian, and de Broc and his brothers quickly emerged as the most determined of Thomas's opponents in Kent. Later the same year, the royal court found that Roger de Clare held Tonbridge directly from the king, not from the archbishop, and also that William de Ros was the king's direct vassal. King and archbishop also quarreled about Thomas's appointment of a priest to the church of Eynsford. When the lay lord of the estate, William of Eynsford, who claimed to be a direct vassal of the king, objected, Thomas excommunicated him. He then refused for quite a while Henry's order to absolve William; by the time he gave in, Henry was angrier than ever.

Thomas also opposed Henry in matters having little or nothing to do with Canterbury or his religious duties. Most notably, at a council in July 1163, Henry proposed that he collect directly an age-old levy known as the sheriff's aid rather than continuing to allow it to be paid to the sheriffs themselves. Thomas opposed him and declared that no such payment would be made by his estates or any church lands. Henry backed down, but he was furious.

To Henry, and to those who, through the ages, have supported him, Thomas was needlessly confrontational about matters that were of little importance until he made them so. From the point of view of Thomas and his supporters, the underlying issues in these matters would have made it necessary for

any man of principle in Thomas's position to take the stands he took. In the reform atmosphere of the mid-twelfth century, it was inappropriate for a prelate to remain the servant of the king, so Thomas *had* to surrender the chancellorship if he was to be able to present himself as a reforming archbishop. He needed to be a good steward of his church in its material as well as its spiritual dimension and therefore could not allow its lands to remain in the hands of inappropriate men, men who either had no right to what they held or were trying to convert Canterbury's estates to their own permanent control. Even in the matter of the sheriff's aid, Thomas was opposing the conversion of a customary but free-will offering to the local authorities into a national tax. One of Thomas's modern adherents notes that, on this last point, "it is likely that he was voicing the opinion of every baron in England." If so, it was a rare instance in which Thomas's actions were widely popular.

Why wouldn't or couldn't Thomas be the kind of archbishop the king hoped for? This is the central conundrum of the whole affair, for there is nothing surprising about Henry's reaction to his archbishop's opposition or, indeed, about Thomas's actions once he had so angered the king that he had put his own life in danger. Thomas's critics then and now have often cited careerism as the explanation for his changes of allegiance, noting that he changed sides not once but twice. As Theobald's servant, he had supported the church against the state, but when he became Henry's chancellor, he supported the king against the church. Then, once he had attained the archbishopric, he adopted the position of radical support of the church against the king. The argument goes that his chief purpose was to advance his own interests and that, to do that, he needed to ingratiate himself with his superiors. The problem with this explanation is obvious: while the first two allegiances he adopted did serve to advance his career, the third, taken to the extreme to which he took it, was self-evidently counterproductive. It is hard to imagine that a man whose principal purpose was to rise to great importance and, presumably, wealth, would so rapidly paint himself into a corner from which the only escape was exile, poverty, or death. A more sympathetic interpretation argues that Thomas had to conceal his real view of the relationship of church and state while he was Henry's chancellor but that, once he had become archbishop, he was free to act on his real sentiments: having risen to the highest office to which he could rationally aspire—the only higher office in the church was pope, and that would have been an unrealistic ambition—he had no reason to conceal his true beliefs. Moreover, in an age when almost everyone was brought up to believe that God expected them to perform loyal service to their superiors, there would be nothing shameful in adapting one's attitudes to fit one's circumstances. The simplest explanation of all is that Thomas, as he claimed and as many of his biographers report, underwent a religious conversion once he was appointed archbishop.

There must also have been other psychological factors in the developing quarrel. It is likely that Thomas, having reluctantly agreed to accept the position of archbishop, was well aware of how his appointment would look to many: that he would appear to be an unqualified, time-serving lackey of the

king, the purpose of whose appointment was to make sure that the church would do the king's bidding without protest. To demonstrate that this was not the case, he would need to show, as soon as possible and as spectacularly as he could, that he was independent of his former patron and capable of confronting him. Therefore, he would need to seize on whatever issues came to hand, even if they were not the most cogent ones for his purpose. On Henry's side, the disappointment must have been colossal. A man whom he thought of as a close friend and trusted adviser was suddenly and inexplicably opposing him on all fronts. He felt betrayed. And Henry was not a man to suffer frustration patiently.

In the aftermath of the meeting in July 1163, Henry apparently decided to bring the confrontation to a head and lay down the rules once and for all. He had been brought up to believe—however unrealistically—that during the reign of Henry I, England had been an entirely peaceful and easily governable place. When he came to the throne, he declared his intent of restoring conditions in England to their state "on the day when my grandfather was alive and dead." He had been relatively successful on the secular side: England was a marvel of good government by comparison with its Continental and Celtic neighbors. Now the time had come to bring the church into line. He began to demand that the leaders of the church recognize that he was entitled to all the ecclesiastical rights that he alleged his grandfather had had.

Several major developments over the last quarter century made this demand difficult for the church to accept. Internally, in England the church had largely gone its own way for much of Stephen's reign, and its leaders were reluctant to give up the autonomy that, to many of them, was the norm under which they had grown up as churchmen. Externally, in the Western church in general, the claims of the papacy for its own powers and for the independence of the church from lay interference in its affairs, which had been developing since the mid-eleventh century, had continued apace through the years when England was involved in civil war. Moreover, in that period canon law, the law of the church, had grown by leaps and bounds. Most especially, an Italian monk named Gratian had produced the first great book of canon law; it had rapidly become an easily available, well-organized textbook for those who needed to make legal arguments about church matters. English churchmen, therefore, were both unaccustomed to regular, strong royal interference in the affairs of the English church and armed with new tools for resisting royal demands they thought inappropriate.

At a council at Westminster in October 1163, Henry secured from the bishops, led by Thomas, an agreement in principle that he was entitled to his grandfather's rights over the church, though they added the proviso "saving our order," which undercut the significance of their concession. Henry retaliated by removing his eldest son, also named Henry, from Thomas's control and depriving Thomas of all the lands he had received in his capacity as chancellor. Nonetheless, had Henry been content with the bishops' vague agreement, there might never have been a "Becket controversy." Unfortunately for

the peace of the kingdom, however, Henry decided that he wanted the bishops' agreement to this principle recorded in writing—and with specifics. He therefore summoned the bishops to join him at Clarendon, one of his favorite hunting lodges, in late January 1164. Quite a few of the great lords of England who could be expected to support the king's efforts to put pressure on the church were also summoned to attend. Once everyone had arrived, Henry presented the bishops with a document, known as the Constitutions of Clarendon, listing 16 particular rules he claimed had existed in his grandfather's day. He demanded that the bishops set their seals to the document in recognition that these rules still applied.

THE CONSTITUTIONS OF CLARENDON

The bishops were, to put it mildly, rocked back on their heels by what they read. Many of the statements of the Constitutions of Clarendon violated their understanding of the proper relations of church and state. It should be noted, however, that not all of the provisions were controversial. Even Thomas found a few innocuous: in 1166 at Vézelay when he formally declared the whole document quashed, he explicitly condemned only half of its provisions. When, in 1165, he presented the document to Pope Alexander III for his condemnation, the pope declared that some of the provisions were bearable. Later he specified six clauses that could be tolerated.

The clauses of the Constitutions of Clarendon can be grouped under a number of rubrics. Two clauses concern communications between the church in England and the church as a whole, specifically, with the pope. Clause 4 forbids archbishops, bishops, and priests from leaving the kingdom without the king's permission and provides that the king can require them to give sureties that their travels would in no way result in harm to the king or the kingdom. Clause 8 provides that cases in church courts may be appealed from the archdeacon's court to the bishop's court and thence to the archbishop's court but can not go any further—that is, can not be appealed to the pope; instead, such cases should be sent to the king for him to settle. From Henry's point of view, it was only sensible to maintain oversight over contacts between churchmen in England and the wider church, especially the pope. To members of the clergy, however, these restrictions were a gross interference with the freedom of the church to manage its own affairs and with the ability of the church in England to participate in the governance of the larger institution. It is no wonder that the pope was perhaps even more offended by these two clauses than Thomas was.

A second set of clauses concerned areas of law in which the question was whether a case should be tried in a church court or the king's court. Under the Anglo-Saxons, both ecclesiastical cases and lay cases had been heard in the same courts. When a lay case was before a court, laymen presided and decided the outcome. When the matter was ecclesiastical, a bishop presided.

By the later eleventh century, such a situation seemed wrongheaded to the reforming papacy and its supporters. It was one of the reasons that Pope Alexander II supported William of Normandy's attempt to conquer England. In recompense for that support, shortly after 1066 William issued an order separating church courts from lay courts. As a result, by the mid-1160s, despite or perhaps because of nearly a century of attempting to work out where the line should be drawn, questions involving which kinds of cases should be tried by church courts and which by lay courts were often very hard to answer. William I had insisted that all cases involving land be tried in lay courts, even if both parties were clerics; and he and later kings recognized certain issues as belonging to the church courts, not only allegations of sins but such matters as the validity of marriages and the legitimacy of children. Nonetheless, a large gray area remained, and several clauses of the Constitutions of Clarendon attempt to address them.

Clause 11 baldly states the rule established by William the Conqueror: ecclesiastics who hold land directly from the king hold their lands as baronies, and disputes about those lands are to be decided in the king's court. Moreover, the great men of the church are to take part with the lay barons in judgments of the king's court unless a judgment involves execution or mutilation as a punishment. This was one of the clauses to which the pope did not object. Equally categorically, clause 15 maintains that all cases involving debt belong in the king's court. To the laity, debt was a matter of property. Because debts were normally secured by oaths, however, and oaths were promises to God, the church regarded violations of such oaths, like all oaths, as matters of sin, justiciable in church courts. Thomas specifically condemned both these clauses at Vézelay.

In contrast, clause 9 modifies William's rule in one particular respect. It assumes that, if a case arises about land held by a member of the clergy by the typical clerical tenure, known as free alms because it required no secular services, the case should be tried in the church court rather than a lay court. The clause explicitly contemplates the situation in which the suit is between a layperson and a member of the clergy and the layperson alleges that the land is held not in free alms but by one of the types of tenure characteristic of laypeople ("lay fee"). In those circumstances, the court that is to try the case cannot be determined until the question of the type of tenure is settled. What clause 9 says is that, if such a dispute arises, the sheriff is to empanel a jury, put its members on oath, and ask them whether (*utrum* in Latin) the land was held in lay fee or free alms. The jury's verdict would determine which court tried the case. This "assize utrum" is generally recognized as the earliest known of the four "petty assizes" in existence by the end of Henry II's reign—and the creation of the petty assizes is one of the reasons why Henry II is often accorded the honor of inventing the common law of England. In this instance, of course, if the Constitutions of Clarendon are right in what they claim—that the practices they describe were in fact the practices of Henry I's

reign—the honor for creating the "assize utrum" belongs to Henry I or an even earlier king.

Clause 1 provides that cases involving patronage ("advowson") over churches should be tried in the king's court even if both parties to the dispute were clergymen. In the eyes of the king and other laypersons, advowson was a valuable property right like any other income-producing aspect of owning land, and cases about it properly belonged in the same court that tried other cases involving property. To the church, however, advowson was a spiritual matter. It included the right to nominate the priest of the church, subject to the bishop's approval, and the priest exercised the cure of souls and ministered to the needs of parishioners. Therefore, to churchmen, disputes about advowson should be adjudicated in the same court that tried other spiritual cases. This is one of the clauses Thomas specifically condemned at Vézelay.

Clauses 13 and 14 require the two jurisdictions to help and not to interfere with each other. Clause 13 provides that the king will punish any lay magnate who interferes with a prelate's ability to administer justice and requires the prelates to assist the king against anyone who tries to prevent the king from administering justice. Clause 14 forbids the practice whereby people whose goods had been forfeited to the king prevented them from being seized by moving them to a church or churchyard. Pope Alexander III found both these clauses tolerable, and Thomas did not specifically mention either one at Vézelay.

A third set of clauses of the Constitutions concerned instances in which the church might be seen as interfering between the king and his vassals. Clause 2 provides that churches on lands held directly from the king could not be permanently granted away without the king's permission. It was common practice in the twelfth century for a layperson who controlled a church on his or her estate to give the church to a neighboring abbey as a pious act, a practice the church encouraged because it both enriched the church and solved the problem of laypersons interfering in church affairs by exercising control over individual churches. Any such grant permanently diminished the value of the estate, however, since the lord or lady who had given away the church no longer enjoyed lucrative rights over it. Henry did not want his tenants impoverishing themselves in this way, at least not without his permission. Alexander III found this clause acceptable, and Thomas did not specifically mention it at Vézelay.

The other clauses that concern relations between the king and his vassals concern excommunication and interdict. Excommunication was the church's power to exclude misbehaving individuals from the community—to put them out of communion with good Christians—as a method of pressuring them into conforming to the strictures of the church. No good Christian was to have anything to do with an excommunicated person: he or she was literally to be shunned. Moreover, the excommunicate could not attend Mass or receive any other sacrament or be buried in consecrated ground. Interdict

was a method the church used to put pressure on a recalcitrant person by depriving everyone living on that person's lands of most of the consolations of the church: church bells were not be rung; no processions could be held; only minimal church services could be performed; no burials could be performed in consecrated ground. Clause 7 provides that no major tenant of the king should be excommunicated, nor should his or her land be interdicted, without the king's or the chief justiciar's permission. Clause 10 allows minor tenants of the king, residents of towns and peasants on his manors, to be put under interdict without permission but requires the permission of the king's agent in the town or manor before such persons could be excommunicated. It continues that, if the king's agent fails to act, the king will punish him and the bishop may use all ecclesiastical methods of coercion against the original miscreant. Clause 5 provides that in order to receive absolution and thereby be restored to the fold, an excommunicate should only have to provide surety that he or she would abide by the judgment of the church, not take an oath or provide surety covering all his or her actions for the rest of time. Thomas specifically condemned the first two of these clauses at Vézelay but did not mention the last.

In addition, the Constitutions included a few miscellaneous but not unimportant items. Thus, clause 16 requires that any serf who wishes to become a member of the clergy get his lord's permission to do so. This was necessary because all members of the clergy were, by definition, free men, and entering the church was, therefore, a way for ambitious and able, or simply rebellious, young serfs to escape their inherited condition. Neither the pope nor Thomas objected to this requirement. Clause 6 concerns accusations against laymen in the courts of archdeacons: to ensure that false accusations are not brought there, the clause requires that the accusations be supported either by the testimony of reliable witnesses or, if witnesses are too scared of the potential accused to bear witness, by oath of 12 reliable men empaneled as a jury by the sheriff. This clause is, incidentally, one of the earliest pieces of evidence from England of an institution like the grand jury that Henry was to introduce into English criminal procedure two years later. Thomas specifically condemned it at Vézelay, but Alexander III declared it unobjectionable.

To Thomas, the two most offensive clauses undoubtedly were clauses 3 and 12. Clause 12 addressed the basic issue that had roiled relations between church and state over the preceding century—namely, how important churchmen were to be selected for their offices. It provided that when a prelate—archbishop, bishop, abbot, or prior—died and his office thereby became vacant, the king was to take the estates into his own hands and thereby acquire all the revenues of the position. He was then to assemble the "greater persons" of the church and hold an election for the new prelate in his own chapel, in his presence and the presence of all the "greater persons" of the church. Not only that, but the newly elected prelate was to do homage and fealty to the king for the estates of the church before he was consecrated as bishop or abbot or prior. This set of provisions benefited the king in two

ways. First, while the church was vacant he collected its revenues, and the bishoprics and abbeys of England were richly endowed with estates. Their revenues could greatly swell the king's coffers. Second, these rules, while paying lip service to the idea that prelates should be elected by the clergy, gave the king a great deal of control over who became a bishop, abbot, or prior in England. He would be present on his own ground for the election and could, at least when the king at issue was Henry II, expect to be able to overawe the assembled clergy into choosing the person he wanted. Not only that, but the new prelate was expected to swear his fidelity and subordinate himself to the king by homage before he was consecrated: by implication, if the king refused to accept the fealty and homage, the elect could not be consecrated. This last provision had been the subject of a fierce dispute between Henry's grandfather and Saint Anselm, archbishop of Canterbury, which was settled in 1107 when Henry I agreed that he would require only fealty (an oath of loyalty), not homage, which could be seen as demeaning because it was a recognition of subordination, and also that he would not require that fealty be sworn before the elect was consecrated into his position. Henry II was now choosing to regard his grandfather's concessions as merely personal and not binding on his successors.

"CRIMINOUS CLERGY"

In Thomas's eyes, clause 3 of the Constitutions of Clarendon was the most inflammatory. It concerned "criminous clergy"—that is, members of the clergy who committed crimes. Even in the modern age, when entering the ministry is a voluntary act of adults, members of the clergy have been known to commit crimes. In the Middle Ages, a significant percentage of the population—it has been estimated as 2 percent—consisted of members of the clergy, and many of these men had taken clerical orders for reasons that had little to do with vocation or virtue. As noted, entry into the church was a way for serfs to escape a life of drudgery. The church was also used to place children for whom aristocratic parents had no other use. Sons were often put into monasteries when they were too young to have any say in the matter (as were daughters into nunneries) or were sent off to train to be priests when they were still young. All formal schools were church institutions, and all students in them were considered to be in minor clerical orders. Schooling was a way for ambitious parents to ensure that their sons would be able to make good careers in administration, church or lay, and in business. For all these and other reasons, the church was full of people who were no less likely to misbehave than the general population.

Yet the church's rules about how to deal with members of the clergy who committed crimes were widely seen as inadequate, both as to proof and as to punishment. As to proof, the church used compurgation, which meant that an accused man was allowed to prove his innocence by swearing that he had not

done the act and bringing with him a specified number of "oath-helpers" who also swore that he had not done it—that is, that they believed him when he swore. This was an age-old method of proof. It had been the principal method used by the Anglo-Saxons and had persisted, though it was supplemented after the Norman Conquest by the judicial duel, also known as trial by battle. Members of the clergy, however, could not be asked to fight to prove their innocence, so compurgation remained for them the chief method of proof. By the middle of the twelfth century, however, all the old-style methods of proof, whether compurgation, trial by battle, or trial by ordeal, were coming into disrepute. In an age when philosophers were busy reviving advanced human thought, the idea that the only way to prove something in court was to rely on God to point to culpability or right seemed outmoded. Moreover, in England there had recently been several scandals in which clerics alleged to have committed crimes, including murder and rape, had been acquitted by the old procedures even though "everyone knew" that they were guilty.

The other aspect of the treatment of criminous clergy that was objectionable to many by the middle of the twelfth century concerned punishment. The church was not supposed to shed blood, and members of the clergy were not supposed to be subject to corporal punishments, which made the use of the usual punishment for crimes—execution—impossible. Members of the clergy who were convicted of crimes were, therefore, usually imprisoned by their bishops, a punishment that seemed utterly inadequate to many laypersons of the time. Given how many clerics there were in society in the mid-twelfth century, it is not surprising that disputes about jurisdiction over their crimes were common. In 1163 alone, three separate cases aggravated the deteriorating relations between the king and the archbishop.

The third clause of the Constitutions of Clarendon attempts to deal with at least the problem of punishment. Its language is, probably deliberately, murky. Here are two translations of the clause:

> Clergymen charged and accused of anything shall, on being summoned by a justice of the king, come into his court, to be responsible there for whatever it may seem to the king's court they should there be responsible for; and [to be responsible] in the ecclesiastical court [for what] it may seem they should there be responsible for—so that the king's justice shall send into the court of Holy Church to see on what grounds matters are there to be treated. And if the clergyman is convicted or [if he] confesses, the Church should no longer protect him. (Stephenson and Marcham, no. 30)
>
>   Clerks cited and accused of any matter shall, when summoned by the king's justice, come before the king's court to answer there concerning matters which shall seem to the king's court to be answerable there, and before the ecclesiastical court for what shall seem to be answerable there, but in such a way that the justice of the king shall send to the court of holy Church to see how the case is there tried. And if the clerk

be convicted or shall confess, the Church ought no longer to protect him.
(Douglas and Greenaway, no. 128)

What was Henry demanding here? If the language of the clause is deliber-
ate, then it appears that the king's court could determine which "matters"
were "answerable" in which court. Moreover, if the case was to be tried in
the church court, agents of the king would observe the trial in order to ensure
that procedures were properly carried out. Although Henry does not seem
to be requiring that some novel form of proof be used, the mere presence
of lay overseers in a church court was an affront to the independence of the
clergy. Even more outrageous in Thomas's eyes was the last provision: that,
if the accused was found guilty, he was to be turned over to the lay authori-
ties to be punished as though he were a layman, which meant, in practice,
to be executed. In the eyes of the clergy, priestly status could not be undone.
A misbehaving priest might be "defrocked"—that is, ordered not to exercise
his powers as a priest or to wear the clothing that denoted clerical status—but
he was a priest nonetheless. The anointing of priests was as indelible as that
of kings; indeed, it was the model for the anointing of kings. By extension, all
clerical status was considered to be permanent, though those in lesser orders
could be released from their status by higher clerical authorities. In the eyes
of Thomas and his supporters, in short, no member of the clergy could be de-
moted to lay status—much less at the demand of a secular authority.

Clerical Orders

*In the medieval Western church, there were seven levels of clerical orders.
The four minor orders were porter, lector, exorcist, and acolyte (subdeacon).
These orders could be conferred very early in life. For example, all students
in schools at higher levels than the village were considered, during the
course of their study, to be clerics in minor orders. Only receipt of the first
of the major orders, deacon, committed the recipient to continue to live as
a cleric for life. The two higher major orders were priest and bishop. Only
these last two orders could exercise the cure of souls.*

For whatever reasons, and they are mysterious, in all his arguments against
the Constitutions Thomas chose to make his stand primarily on the issue of
criminous clergy. He argued that expulsion from the ranks of the clergy was suf-
ficient punishment for a cleric convicted of a crime, that to add on any additional
punishment was to punish twice for the same crime, and, citing various biblical
texts, that such double punishment was forbidden. Some of his arguments sug-
gested that even a defrocked cleric could not be subjected to a corporal punish-
ment. At other times he seemed to admit that once a man had been expelled
from the clergy, he could, for a second or later offense, be treated as a layman.

ROYAL JUSTIFICATIONS, EPISCOPAL CAPITULATION, AND A CHANGE OF MIND

More broadly, the question can be raised whether Henry's claim is correct that the 16 practices described in the Constitutions were in fact the practices of his grandfather's reign. Two clauses state—and to some extent amplify—rules known to have been established by William the Conqueror, namely, clause 4, forbidding English clerics to travel outside the kingdom without the king's permission, and clause 11, stating that ecclesiastical tenants of the king are members of his court and cases concerning their lands are justiciable in his court. Clause 12, in contrast, appears to go back to practices Henry I had abandoned in 1107. There is, however, no doubt that the earlier Henry had been able to place the men he wanted into positions of power in the church, so the degree to which the Constitutions misrepresent the actual practice of Henry I's day is a moot question. Otherwise, it is difficult to determine what the practices of Henry I's day were. Sources for twelfth-century England are relatively abundant, but for the first half of the twelfth century they do not address most of the issues raised in the Constitutions, so that avenue of evaluation is not available. All that can be said is that, in the whole long dispute about the Constitutions, their opponents, Thomas's supporters, never alleged that Henry II had invented the rules he attributed to Henry I.

At Clarendon, however, there scarcely was time for reasoned arguments, whether from history or from theology. Instead, the bishops were subject to strong political pressure and even threats of violence if they did not accede to the king's wishes. The rage of any twelfth-century king of England was a fearful thing: kings used the threat or actuality of their anger as a technique of government, and Henry was a master at the art of pressuring people into doing what he wanted. He was assisted at Clarendon by some of the lay lords. Gilbert Foliot, supporter of the king though he later was, described the bishops as "all enclosed in one chamber" for three days and menaced by "all the princes and nobles of the realm" who "blazed up in the greatest anger, roaring and brawling" and threatening them with bodily harm if they did not agree to the king's demands. Nevertheless, the bishops held out in unison, though some of them probably already were on the king's side and others were clearly very frightened, fearing that the king might go so far as to accuse them of treason, exile them, and confiscate their estates. Then, suddenly, Thomas announced that he would accept the Constitutions, though he managed to get the king to agree that he could postpone setting his seal to them. The bishops were nonplussed but followed their leader in his capitulation to the king.

Satisfied for the moment, Henry allowed Thomas and the other bishops to depart from Clarendon. Scarcely had he left, however, than Thomas announced that he had been wrong to give in to the king's threats, no matter what the physical dangers of the moment. He declared that the Constitutions were a grave violation of the liberties of the church, that he was withdrawing his agreement to them, and that all his fellow bishops were to do the same.

To signify the gravity of the sin he felt he had committed in agreeing to the Constitutions, he donned sackcloth and ashes, the traditional garb of the penitent sinner seeking absolution for serious sins. The bishops understandably felt betrayed and abandoned by their leader. Despite their qualms and fears, they had held out against the king's threats until Thomas caved. Now he had changed his mind yet again, and he expected them to brave the king's anger by reversing their stance, too.

ACCUSATIONS AGAINST BECKET AT NORTHAMPTON

Henry's fury was titanic. From then on it was war, almost literally to the death, on Thomas and anyone who supported him. It took the king a while to organize his stroke against the archbishop, which became public at a council held at Northampton in October 1164. Once again, Henry summoned Thomas, the other bishops, and the great lords of England to meet him. His specific purpose was to prefer a hodgepodge of charges against Thomas, from the petty to ones so grave that they might carry a sentence of death. Among other things, Thomas was accused of having lined his own pockets while he was chancellor—even though he had had the foresight, when Henry appointed him archbishop, to secure a pardon for any acts he might have committed while chancellor. Initially, Thomas tried to secure a postponement of his trial on the grounds that he had not been advised of the charges in time to prepare his defense. Again, however, as at Clarendon, the king and the lay lords resorted to pressure and threats against Thomas and the bishops in an attempt to secure a favorable outcome. Perhaps what Henry wanted was for Thomas to resign and retire into a monastery or overseas, leaving the way clear for him to appoint a more accommodating prelate. What he got, however, was Thomas's defiance.

The council's deliberations, which were little more than a trial of Thomas, began on October 8, a Thursday. The climax was reached the following Tuesday. By this time, it had become clear to Thomas that Henry intended to destroy him. He began the day with a meeting with his suffragan bishops in which he complained of their failure to support him, appealed to the pope against a possible criminal verdict against him, and ordered the bishops to excommunicate anyone who laid violent hands on him. He then celebrated a Mass whose introit was "Princes did sit and speak against me," after which he proceeded to the castle dressed in his most formal archiepiscopal vestments and carrying his own archiepiscopal cross. Normally, when an archbishop made a formal procession, a member of his staff carried his cross before him. For Thomas to carry the cross himself was apparently the equivalent of throwing down the gauntlet. The action caused outrage not only among the laymen present but even among at least some of the bishops. Gilbert Foliot muttered, but not so low that others could not hear, "He always was a fool." Details of what happened thereafter are unclear, because none of the writers

on whom we depend was present and all had to rely on the confused recollec-tions of those who were. Thomas apparently spent the day in an antecham-ber to the room where the king was meeting with the lay barons and most of the bishops, while various emissaries attempted to negotiate some solution to the issues. Tempers flared on all sides and eventually, when confronted by the justiciar and several other barons, Thomas declared that the proceedings were illegitimate and, to shouts of "traitor" and "perjurer," stomped out.

There was one last attempt later in the day to find a solution by which the king and the archbishop could be reconciled, a proposal by the bishops of London and Chichester for Thomas to pledge two of the Canterbury manors as surety for payment of the fines assessed against him; but Thomas indig-nantly rejected this. Early the next morning, Thomas left Northampton and made for the coast in stealth and disguise. His flight was probably arranged in advance, though he may have hoped that he would not have to resort to so drastic an action. Three weeks later, on November 2, with a few companions, he boarded a small boat at the port of Sandwich and sailed for the Continent, landing on the beach at Oye in Flanders. In leaving England without the king's permission, of course, he violated clause 4 of the Constitutions of Clarendon. He also began six years of exile on the Continent. When he finally returned to England, he would live only about a month.

BECKET IN EXILE

Thomas was joined in exile by many of his staff, some of whom had ac-tually preceded him in fleeing. Probably the most important to the unfold-ing of events were Herbert of Bosham and, arriving somewhat later, John of Salisbury. John was one of the great political theorists of the twelfth century, author of the *Policraticus* (1159). He and Thomas had worked together in Archbishop Theobald's household, and this work was dedicated to Thomas. The *Policraticus* actually argues that a tyrannical ruler may be assassinated, hardly a common idea in a period when the usual teaching was that God placed rulers in their positions and the faithful were required to suffer in patience even their most high-handed actions. Despite this, John often tried to tone down the heat of Thomas's actions and statements in the course of the quarrel with Henry. Herbert of Bosham was another university-trained theologian and writer. Of all Thomas's companions, he was perhaps the most adamant in insisting on the complete independence of the church from in-terference by secular authorities. He clearly wrote some of Thomas's most important letters as the archbishop pursued his quarrel with Henry over the six years of exile and may have been especially responsible for Thomas's most vociferous pronouncements and dramatic actions.

By appealing to the pope and fleeing to France, Thomas became a player, sometimes little more than a pawn, in a diplomatic game that had been going on at least since Henry became king of England in 1154. The major par-ties were Henry, King Louis VII of France, who was Henry's overlord for his

French domains (as well as his wife's former husband), Pope Alexander III, and Frederick Barbarossa the Holy Roman Emperor, whose quarrels with Alexander had led him, by 1164, to advocate the right to the papal throne of an "antipope." Indeed, in the course of the years of Thomas's exile, Frederick supported no less than three men in sequence as pope instead of Alexander. In the very complicated diplomacy of these years, Louis and Henry, as overlord and overly powerful vassal, formed one axis of tension, and Alexander and Frederick formed the other. Because Alexander needed the support of other monarchs against Frederick's attempts to oust him from the papacy, Henry had a strong card to play: if Alexander supported Thomas wholeheartedly, Henry would side with Frederick and recognize the antipope as the rightful pope. Louis, however, found Thomas very useful: by supporting Thomas against Henry he could blacken his vassal's reputation by publicizing his maltreatment of a man of the cloth. Louis also offered Alexander refuge from Frederick, who, in 1164, was in military control of most of the Italian peninsula, including the city of Rome itself. Indeed, in 1164 the pope was residing in the French town of Sens. In the crosscurrents of diplomacy as it came to be structured from the moment of Thomas's flight on, the usual alliance was Louis and Thomas against Henry, with Alexander supporting them as passively as he could and Frederick hovering in the background hoping to detach Henry from Alexander if the pope went too far in his support of the archbishop.

Emperors, Popes, and Antipopes

In the early Middle Ages, popes were elected by the clergy and people of Rome, often with much interference from outsiders. From time to time, disputes meant that two men at a time claimed to have been chosen. The title used for the ones who, in the long run, failed to vindicate their claims is "antipope." In 1059, the power to choose the next pope was given to the College of Cardinals, but this hardly ended the phenomenon of antipopes. Indeed, the heyday of antipopes coincides with the period of the greatest conflict between popes and emperors over control of the church, of Rome, and of Italy. Between 1058 and 1138, there was an antipope more than half the time. Later, the Emperor Frederick Barbarossa supported four men successively against Alexander III (pope 1159–81): antipopes who called themselves Victor IV, Pascal III, Callistus III, and Innocent III. Thereafter, the phenomenon of antipopes disappears until the fourteenth century.

Naturally, therefore, once in France Thomas went first to the court of King Louis. With his departure from England, he passed in one moment from being one of the richest men in western Europe to being so poor that it was often a question how he was to support those who had accompanied him or pay for even the most basic necessities of life, his food, lodging, and travel. Louis

was quite generous despite the fact that he himself was none too rich and had many calls on his purse. Thomas then traveled to Sens, where the pope had already entertained an embassy from Henry, whose members had been disappointed by Alexander's failure to grant what they wanted. Thomas may have offered to resign his office into the pope's hand, but, if he did, the pope restored him. He certainly presented Alexander with a copy of the Constitutions of Clarendon, which both he and the king's main supporter in the papal curia, William the cardinal of Pavia, then expounded. At the end of the day, the pope ruled that, while none of the constitutions was ideal, some were tolerable. Neither now nor at any time later, however, did the pope issue a written ruling against the intolerable customs.

After his visit to the pope, Thomas and a few companions took up residence at the Cistercian abbey of Pontigny, in Burgundy, which was not part of the domain of either king. He did not become a monk, although he adopted monastic garb while he was living at Pontigny. He lived in the abbey for about two years, until threats by Henry against the Cistercian order in England made it prudent for him to leave. Thereafter, Thomas and his small household made their base an abbey just outside of Sens, although they moved around a good deal. Throughout the years of exile, many of Thomas's supporters had to be accommodated elsewhere in France and Flanders.

KING HENRY'S ANGER

Back in England, Henry, thwarted of his revenge against Thomas, took his anger out against Thomas's family members and his supporters and tenants on the estates of Canterbury. He confiscated all of Thomas's possessions as well as the possessions of all the clerics who had followed him into exile and declared that Thomas had forfeited the archbishopric, whose possessions were entrusted to Ranulf de Broc, already one of Thomas's principal opponents in Kent and at the king's court. Ranulf, in turn, entrusted the actual administration of the archdiocese to his brother Robert, a member of the clergy. It was decreed that no one was to help the archbishop in any way, not even by prayers. At the same time, Thomas's relatives, the members of his household who had not fled the country, and their relatives as well as the relatives of Thomas's companions in exile were arrested. A few bought their way back into the king's favor, but most—probably several hundred persons—were forced out of the country and had to be sheltered at Pontigny or elsewhere.

DIPLOMATIC MANEUVERINGS, PERSONAL MEETINGS, AND RECONCILIATION

The diplomatic negotiations of the years from 1165 through late 1170 were conducted primarily by means of letters, a remarkable number of which

survive or can be reconstructed from the details given in surviving replies. Thomas and his supporters kept up a barrage of correspondence intended to prevent Louis, Alexander, or any other Continental authority from abandoning or decreasing their support for him. He wrote repeatedly to the bishops who remained in England—conspicuously, none of them followed him into exile—to urge them to remain steadfast in his support and not to let Henry run roughshod over the church in his absence. He also tried as best he could to keep in touch with supporters in England and prevent them from giving in to despair or to Henry. Henry's chancery poured out equally voluminous amounts of material intended to encourage Louis, Alexander, and others to accept his case against Thomas and abandon him. After Thomas excommunicated several of his opponents in 1166 and 1169 and they appealed to the pope against his sentences, dealings with the papal court about the validity of these sentences added substantially to the volume of correspondence. The ins and outs of all this correspondence and the diplomacy it represents are too complicated for us to follow here.

Gilbert Foliot's Indictment of Thomas

The most famous contemporary denunciation of Thomas occurs in a long letter to him from Gilbert Foliot written in 1166. It describes the origins of the quarrel from the point of view of a bishop who sided with the king throughout. Its principal point is that the matters at issue were relatively unimportant: "[T]here is no dispute between us regarding faith, nor regarding the sacraments, nor morals. . . . The entire dispute with the king . . . is about certain customs which he claims were observed, and enjoyed by his predecessors, and he wishes and expects to enjoy. . . . As very many people say, and the whole history of the realm testifies, he did not himself set up these customs: this is how he found them." The quarrel needed never have become serious and would not have if the personality and actions of the archbishop had not exacerbated the situation beyond the king's bearing. "For what cure is useful that heals one wound, and inflicts one far greater, far more dangerous?" In the most famous passage in the letter, concerning the capitulation at Clarendon, Foliot exclaims, "Who fled? Who turned tail? Who was broken in spirit? . . . Let [God] judge on what account we could not be turned by the threats of princes; let him judge who fled, who was a deserter in the battle. . . . [T]he leader of the army turned tail, the commander of the battlefield ran away, the archbishop of Canterbury departed from the common counsel and association of his brothers." Foliot also expresses his—and other bishops'—sense that Thomas had put them in an impossible position: "You bent the knee at Clarendon, took to flight at Northampton, changed your dress and hid for a time, and secretly left

the king's lands, and what did you achieve? What did you gain in doing this, except to evade studiously that death which no one had deigned to threaten? . . . The sword which you have thrown away hangs over us."

The major moments in the attempts to resolve the dispute were those when meetings between Henry and Thomas were arranged. All the parties professed—despite all evidence to the contrary—that the quarrel could most easily be solved if the two protagonists could just get together and talk out their differences. Repeatedly, therefore, meetings were attempted. The first was scheduled to take place at Angers on Easter 1166, but it did not come off, though Henry met with John of Salisbury, Herbert of Bosham, and another of the archbishop's clerks. In November 1167, papal legates moved back and forth between Henry in Normandy and Thomas just beyond the border, but nothing notable came of this attempt. Again in July 1168, a proposed meeting between Henry and Thomas at La Ferté-Bernard failed to occur. At Montmirail in early January 1169, Henry and Thomas actually met but wound up quarreling even worse than before, to the disgust of the French king and the papal legates in attendance. A month later, Thomas was nearby while Henry and Louis tried but failed to work out a compromise. An elaborate round of negotiations throughout much of the rest of the year resulted in a near meeting at Montmartre, outside Paris: the two principals were in adjoining spaces while their emissaries worked out a compromise, but their efforts came to nothing because Thomas demanded that Henry exchange the kiss of peace with him, as a guarantee of his sincerity, and Henry refused to give it. He alleged that his only reason was that he had once sworn never to exchange the kiss with Thomas and he would not break an oath. He offered to have his eldest son kiss Thomas instead, but Thomas found this insufficient. Predictably, an attempt in early 1170 to arrange another conference failed yet again.

Finally, however, a second meeting actually came off. On July 22, 1170, in a meadow near Fréteval, the king and the archbishop faced each other. By this time, Thomas was more alarmed that his exile was harming the interests of the church of Canterbury than he had ever been. In the spring of that year, Henry had decided to crown his eldest son, also named Henry (afterward known as "the Young King"), during his own lifetime. The kings of France had been using this practice for nearly two centuries as a method of ensuring an undisputed succession to the throne. It had occasionally been used by Anglo-Saxon kings of England but had never become a regular part of English practice and had not been used in England since long before the Norman Conquest. Henry may have decided to adopt the practice largely in order to put pressure on Thomas, for one of the prerogatives of the archbishops of Canterbury had long been to crown the kings of England, yet Henry had the act performed by Roger of Pont l'Evêque archbishop of York, assisted by perhaps as many as 10 of Henry's supporters among the bishops of England and Normandy, including Gilbert Foliot of London and Joscelin of Salisbury.

To see York exercise a right that properly belonged to Canterbury must have alarmed Thomas greatly. Perhaps for this reason, he was much less confrontational at Fréteval than he had been in previous negotiations. Henry, too, may have felt that the time had finally come for all this exhausting drama to come to an end. The two men met, alone, for most of the day, which led, later on, to a good deal of dispute as to exactly what they had agreed upon. Nonetheless, they came to an apparent resolution: Henry would allow Thomas to return to Canterbury. The king would rectify the matter of the Young King's coronation, probably by allowing Thomas to re-crown young Henry and to punish the bishops who had participated in the first ceremony. The king restored both the archbishop and his servants, including Herbert of Bosham and John of Salisbury, to his peace, though without the kiss of peace; and Thomas blessed the king, though he refused to issue immediate pardons to those who had supported the king throughout the quarrel. It is noteworthy that few of the underlying causes of the quarrel were addressed. The Constitutions of Clarendon were apparently not even mentioned.

Henry II and His Sons

Henry and Eleanor had four sons who survived at least into young adulthood. The eldest was also named Henry; by 1170 he was probably 16 and was married to Margaret, daughter of King Louis VII of France. As chancellor, Thomas had gone on a famous embassy to the court of the king of France to arrange this marriage. The "Young King," whose coronation in 1170 played a role in motivating the attempt to end the controversy between Henry II and Thomas and whose unsympathetic treatment of Thomas in the month after his return to Canterbury is described in several sources, led a revolt against his father in 1173 and 1174. He died in 1183, before his father, and never became king in his own right. The other three boys were too young in the 1160s to play any role in the famous controversy. As they grew up, however, how their father was going to divide his domains among his sons became one of the major causes of conflict in the reign. As events played out, two of Henry's sons succeeded in turn to an undivided inheritance. When Henry II died in 1189, he was succeeded by his second son, Richard I, famous as Richard the Lionhearted. When Richard died in 1199, he was succeeded by the youngest of the brothers, John, the king who granted Magna Carta in 1215. The fourth brother, Geoffrey, third in order of birth, had been married to the heiress of the county of Brittany, but he died in 1186. His only son, Arthur, did try to raise a claim to the succession in 1199, only to be captured by his uncle John in 1204, after which he disappeared; he was probably murdered.

Thomas then returned to Sens to wind up his affairs there and rejoined the king in September. Relations were decidedly cool: indeed, when the two attended Mass, Henry ensured that he would not have to exchange a kiss with Thomas by arranging to have the mass for the dead celebrated instead of the usual service. The two met on and off throughout much of the fall, quarreling and making up. Eventually, it was agreed that Thomas should return to England and his see in November. Henry gave Thomas a letter of safe conduct and letters addressed to his son the new king and the king's men at Canterbury ordering them to allow the archbishop back into the country, his see, and his possessions. He may have intended to accompany Thomas back across the Channel and attend his reinstallation. If he had, things might have turned out very differently, but Henry fell ill—or feigned illness—and Thomas traveled without a royal escort. Allegedly, on parting from Henry he predicted that the two would not meet again in this life.

BECKET'S RETURN TO ENGLAND

Thomas arrived at the English port of Sandwich on the first of December and proceeded from there to Canterbury the next day. He was, so his biographers report, greeted by huge, cheering throngs all along his route and in the city itself. It is clear, however, that not everyone was happy to see him return. Most conspicuously, the men to whom Henry had entrusted the archbishop's estates were not pleased at the prospect of losing these lucrative properties.

Once he arrived at Canterbury, Thomas took up residence in the archbishop's palace and recommenced his archiepiscopal duties while he attempted to recover the properties of his see from their intruded occupants. After about a week at Canterbury, he began traveling, showing himself throughout his diocese, visiting London, and attempting to secure an audience with the Young King, who was at Winchester. Instead, however, emissaries from the young Henry ordered him back to Canterbury and told him to stay there. He was back in his cathedral by December 20.

Unfortunately, even before he left France Thomas had decided that he needed to take action against the most prominent of the bishops who had supported Henry against him during the preceding six years. He had long had in his possession a letter from Pope Alexander authorizing him to excommunicate his opponents when and if he thought he needed to do so, reinforced by a second letter from Alexander that he received in November, and the king had agreed that he could punish his opponents among the bishops. Therefore, before he even embarked for England, Thomas excommunicated the three bishops who had most conspicuously opposed him: Roger of Pont l'Evêque of York, Gilbert Foliot of London, and Jocelin de Bohun of Salisbury. He thereby precipitated the events that led to his death.

The three bishops were understandably upset when they heard the news of their excommunication—Thomas's messenger delivered it at great personal danger—and they immediately appealed to the pope and hastily set off

for France, where they found the king in Normandy just before Christmas. When Henry heard the news, he delegated several of the senior members of his entourage to go to Canterbury and deal with the archbishop, perhaps by arresting him. Unfortunately, at some point, perhaps on Christmas Day itself, while he was in a rage, he also uttered the fateful words that led to Thomas's death. They are variously reported, but he exclaimed something like, "Will no one rid me of this meddlesome priest?" Or maybe he said "turbulent"—or even "lowborn." Whatever exactly he said, four knights of his household decided to take him at his word and rode off to rid him of the archbishop.

THE MURDER OF BECKET

The four knights made remarkable speed, leaving the king on December 26 and arriving in England on the 28th, several days before the official delegation. They were William de Tracy, Reginald FitzUrse, Hugh de Morville, and Richard le Bret (or Brito). All were of middling status and middling wealth in the aristocracy. Le Bret was somewhat less important than the others, but all had places at the royal court and all but Le Bret had apparently been Thomas's vassals when he was chancellor. They may all have had connections with King Stephen, the previous king, whose reign Henry II regarded as illegitimate; if they did, that may have made them even more eager than the average courtier to prove themselves loyal to Henry. It may have been the reason why they responded with alacrity to whatever demand they perceived the king to have thrown at his entourage. What demand did they think the king had given? From their reported actions when they arrived at Canterbury and confronted the archbishop, it would seem that the knights themselves were not entirely sure what they were going to do with or to him. Force him to resign? Kidnap him and deliver him to the king? Kill him? The last is what ultimately happened, but it is quite possible that it was done on the spur of the moment rather than as a premeditated act.

   Once they had landed in England, the four repaired to Saltwood Castle, one of the archbishop's estates, which had been in the hands of the de Broc brothers since Henry confiscated them. The de Brocs had been among Thomas's local enemies almost from the moment that he was appointed archbishop. They were the logical persons to whom the knights would turn for shelter and support. They provided the knights with a sizable military force, perhaps two dozen men, when they set out for Canterbury on December 29. Having arrived at Canterbury about 3:00 p.m., which, only eight days after the winter solstice, was the late afternoon, this hostile force first tried to recruit townsmen to their active support. When this failed, they ordered the townsfolk to stay in their houses and out of the way and surrounded the cathedral precincts to prevent anyone from coming to Thomas's aid.

   Accounts of what happened next differ somewhat. None of the knights left an account of his side of the story, at least not one that has survived the ages. On the archbishop's side, five eyewitnesses to at least part of the drama—John of Salisbury and William FitzStephen, two of Thomas's clerks; Benedict of

Peterborough and William of Canterbury, both visiting monks; and Edward Grim, a visiting cleric—left narratives of what happened. Many of Thomas's companions had not yet, of course, arrived back in Canterbury by December 29. Grim was present by happenstance: he had been priest of Saltwood but had been expelled shortly after the de Brocs took control of the castle, perhaps in 1164, and was in Canterbury to pursue his claim to be restored to that church. Of the five, it was probably only Grim who was present throughout the confrontation. All the others vanished at some point in fear of their lives: John of Salisbury, for example, saw the beginning of the final confrontation but then hid behind an altar. Grim, moreover, was badly wounded attempting to defend Thomas, which undoubtedly interfered with his understanding of the last moments of the attack. For all the witnesses, moreover, the noise, the confusion, the deepening darkness, and their own fear must have made it difficult to know exactly what was going on.

The knights' first interview with the archbishop was peaceful in the sense that they divested themselves of their arms before coming into his chamber, where Thomas was consulting with his close confidants and some of the monks of the abbey. The meeting rapidly degenerated into a shouting match, however, and the two sides separated, the knights withdrawing to arm themselves. When they attempted to return, they found that the monks' servants had managed to bar the doors, so they had to break in through a disused door in the archbishop's palace and make their way toward the church itself. By this time it was probably about four o'clock, rapidly darkening, and the archbishop—in his full vestments and with his cross carried before him—was heading for the church, where the monks were celebrating Vespers. Both the monks and Thomas's staff tried to persuade him that, in the circumstances, he could either forgo the ceremony or order the doors to the church locked. Thomas, however, insisted that God's church could not be barred to the faithful and, therefore, the doors could not be locked.

What Was Thomas Wearing When He Died?

When he died, Thomas was wearing what seems to a modern person like a remarkable amount of clothing. It was, after all, wintertime in a period when heat was provided only by fires, and a huge church like Canterbury cathedral must have been frigid. Here, drawn mostly from the account given by a contemporary biographer named Guernes of Pont-Sainte-Maxence, is Frank Barlow's list of what he had on: "Next to his skin was his long hair shirt, the unusual breeches hidden by white underpants. . . . Thomas had put this garment on shortly after he was ordained priest and retained it all his life. On top of this . . . came . . . a linen shirt followed by a cowl. . . . [A]bove it came two ample but short soft pelisses, both of lambskins. Finally, he wore the supposed habit of a canon regular: another

pelisse of lambskins, a fine white surplice or tunic . . . and, to cover it all, a black mantle without a fringe, lined with white lambskins, and with a black tassel for fastening it up." He also wore a cap on his head, which one of the murderers knocked off early in the final confrontation, and "heavy shoes." Several of these layers of garments took on great significance as the body was prepared for burial.

The discovery that Thomas was wearing a hair shirt did much to persuade the monks of the cathedral—many of whom had, until then, regarded him as an exceptionally interfering intruder—that he was a holy man after all, as did the linen shirt and cowl, which were taken to be monastic garb. Before burial, the outer layers of clothing were removed, and Thomas was dressed instead in garments he had long had set aside for this purpose, again a remarkable number of layers: "the alb in which he had been consecrated priest, a simple superhumeral or amice, a stole and maniple and, on his head, the chrismal cloth from his baptism and a mitre. Finally, . . . his archiepiscopal vestments, his tunic, dalmatic, cha-suble and pallium with its pins."

Thomas and the knights confronted one another in a small vestibule leading into the church itself. First the knights tried to arrest the archbishop and laid hands upon him. Reginald FitzUrse may have tried to hoist him onto the back of William de Tracy. If so, Thomas broke away, and it seems to be at this point that one of the knights struck the first blow. At approximately the same moment, Thomas seems to have resigned himself to his fate, for the accounts say that he knelt and prayed, putting up no further resistance. Edward Grim tried to protect him—the only person to do so—but the first blow, struck by either FitzUrse or de Tracy, cut through the arm he had thrust forward to protect the archbishop and partially severed the crown of Thomas's head. The second blow drove Thomas to the floor. The third, from Richard Le Bret, was so forceful that it not only completed the severing of Thomas's crown but broke off the tip of the sword, which was later retrieved by the monks and eventually displayed in a shrine of its own at the site of the murder. By this time Thomas must have been dead, but a hanger-on of the knights, a disgraced cleric named Hugh of Horsea, with his sword pushed some of the archbishop's brains out of his skull and smeared them on the floor.

The knights left the church, stopping on the way to loot the archbishop's palace of all the documents they could find, which they turned over to the king, and of valuables later estimated to be worth two thousand marks, a huge sum in that day, which they kept for themselves. Then they retired to Saltwood. Later they holed up in a royal castle in northern England, Knaresborough, of which Hugh de Morville was custodian, where they remained for about a year. Various stories are told about what eventually happened

to them. If they thought that their actions would bring them advancement at the court of Henry II, they must soon have recognized how grave a miscalculation that was. The horror and sacrilege of the crime were too great. Indeed, it seems that the knights themselves were soon overcome with guilt. The few contemporary sources that discuss their fate concur that they had penances imposed on them by the pope that required them to go on pilgrimage to Jerusalem and that all of them died there within a few years of the murder and were buried there. Some modern scholars have suggested that, instead, they lived on and eventually worked their ways back into the king's good graces and resumed their estates and their lives as minor barons. The most recent investigation, however, concludes that the contemporary version is correct: all four made significant donations to religious institutions beginning almost immediately after the murder; the estates of all four passed to female relatives or cousins, excluding their direct male heirs, in such a way as to suggest that the king had confiscated them and retained part for himself; and it is likely that they were, indeed, all buried in Jerusalem. The de Broc brothers, however, apparently suffered no serious consequences for their support of the murderers.

THE AFTERMATH OF BECKET'S MURDER

In the cathedral, the frightened monks, clerics, servants, and other bystanders—there probably were townspeople who had come into the church to attend the evening service—gradually crept out of their hiding places and regarded the spectacle of an archbishop dead on the floor. His body was placed on a bier, which was deposited before the high altar of the cathedral. A few dipped handkerchiefs into the blood on the floor, and some attempt was made to gather up the blood and brains as relics. The next day the body was hastily buried in the crypt of the cathedral when Robert de Broc returned with armed men and threatened to carry off the body and dump it in a drain unless it was buried in an obscure place.

It is likely that, in the first few days after the murder, the monks and Thomas's staff were so dazed and so fearful of what might still happen that they did not immediately contemplate airing a grievance about what had happened or promoting the idea that Thomas was a martyr. Nonetheless, as rumors of what had happened spread within and then beyond Canterbury, stories began to accumulate that he was performing miracles. Soon pilgrims were attempting to visit the site. As the site of an act of violence, the church was regarded as polluted and in need of reconsecration. It was not even reopened to the public until Easter 1171, and it was not reconsecrated until the feast of Saint Thomas the Apostle on December 21, which was Thomas of Canterbury's birthday. For a while the de Brocs did their best to deter pilgrims, but on Pentecost 1171, their own brother, William, was cured at Thomas's tomb, after which they ceased to oppose the development of the cult.

Murdered Politicians as Popular Saints

It was quite common in the high Middle Ages for prominent persons to be regarded as saints after they died, at least by the populace if not by the institutional church, especially if they had died by violence in the course of political quarrels. King Olaf II of Norway became Saint Olaf after his death in battle in 1030. Charles "the Good" count of Flanders was treated as a saint by the people of Flanders after he was murdered in the church of Bruges in 1127. In England, the remains of Simon de Montfort, the great opponent of King Henry III, were buried inconspicuously, allegedly under a tree, after his death at the battle of Evesham in 1265, probably to prevent a cult from developing around it. Nonetheless, people made pilgrimages to the site in the abbey of Evesham where parts of his body had briefly been buried and collections were made of the stories of miracles performed there. There were pilgrimages to the tombs both of King Edward II, murdered after his abdication in 1327, and of his great opponent, Thomas of Lancaster, who was killed at Edward's order in 1322; King Richard II at the end of the fourteenth century made an effort to secure the formal recognition of Edward II's sanctity. King Henry VI, who was murdered in 1471 and who had lived a notably religious life, was acclaimed a saint: his canonization was pursued by King Henry VII. These are only some of the most prominent examples. Public reaction to the death of Princess Diana in 1997 might be cited as a modern parallel.

News of Thomas's death spread very rapidly. Henry learned of it three days after it happened. The news reached the pope early in 1171, and he was soon bombarded by emissaries and letters from Thomas's supporters demanding action and from Henry and his supporters asking that nothing be done in haste. The question to which everyone wanted an answer—and to which we still today would like an answer—is, did the murderers act on an instruction from Henry? Henry adamantly insisted that the four knights acted entirely on their own and that he was devastated by Thomas's death. He certainly seemed to demonstrate genuine grief at the loss of a man who had, after all, once been his best friend. It does, however, have to be recognized that, on December 25, 1170, it may have seemed to the king that there was no way out of the quarrel so long as he and Thomas were both alive. Indeed, some historians of the affair have suggested that, by December 29, Thomas had come to the same conclusion and that, in effect, he voluntarily sacrificed himself in the interest of peace.

March 25 was the traditional date on which the pope anathematized enemies of the church. By promising that Henry would submit himself entirely to the pope's judgment, Henry's envoys managed to ensure that, on March 25, 1171, only those directly involved in the murder and those who had helped

them were condemned. Henry's person and his Continental lands, but not England, were put under interdict, but the king was not excommunicated. Henry spent much of 1171 and early 1172 in Ireland, attempting to conquer it, ironically on the basis of a papal bull from 1155 authorizing him to do so. In the meantime, his representatives negotiated quite a lenient settlement with the pope. In the same period, Thomas's excommunications and suspensions from office of the three bishops were gradually lifted and they were restored to control of their sees. In the spring of 1172, Henry met with papal legates in France, and on Sunday, May 21, at Avranches in Normandy, he was reconciled with the church after he publicly admitted responsibility for Thomas's death, took an oath that he had not intended the murder, and agreed to terms, of which two were most important. First, he would permit free appeals to the pope in ecclesiastical matters, though he could require that the appellant provide security that he was seeking nothing harmful to the king or the kingdom. Second, more vaguely, he would not require the church to observe any bad customs that had been introduced in his time. He also promised to restore all of Canterbury's possessions, to receive all his recent opponents back into his peace, to maintain two hundred knights in defense of the kingdom of Jerusalem, and to go on crusade himself by the following summer.

It is notable that, while Henry did surrender what he had claimed in the eighth clause of the Constitutions of Clarendon, and appeals flowed from England to the pope for nearly four centuries, until they were outlawed in 1533, his broader promise about customs pertaining to the church at least theoretically did not require him to abandon any of the other claims he had made in the Constitutions of Clarendon because he alleged that all of those were the customs of his grandfather's day, not his own. It is possible that at a council held at Caen at the end of May he did release the bishops of England from the promise they had made back in 1164 to observe the customs listed in the Constitutions. However, he also sent a letter to various dignitaries in England announcing the settlement at Avranches in which he "reckoned" that the customs he had been forced to renounce were "few or none." It is also notable that Henry changed little about his treatment of major offices in the church. In attempting to secure support for his rebellion against his father in 1173 and 1174, the Young King quoted the writ in which his father had ordered the clergy of Winchester to hold a free election to fill the vacant bishopric: he nonetheless ordered that they "elect no one but my clerk, Richard of Ilchester," who did indeed become bishop. The monarch of England's control over choice of the bishops of the church in England, and later of the Church of England, was not seriously affected by the settlement of the "Becket Controversy."

HENRY'S PENANCE AND PUNISHMENTS

Henry visited Thomas's tomb in the crypt of Canterbury cathedral in July 1174 and, once again, confessed to inadvertently causing his death. He underwent public penance that included flagellation and a full day and night of

fasting, as well as making lavish presents to the church. Then, in 1176, in a further series of definitions of the rights of the king and the church that were arrived at by the king in discussion with a papal legate, Henry conceded the following: First, he would not keep churches vacant for more than a year except for great necessity, another concession that made little difference as it was the king who determined when there was necessity to keep a church vacant for more than a year. Second, he would allow the church to discipline members of the clergy when they committed crimes. There was a significant exception: clergy accused of forest offenses were to be treated like anyone else. Nonetheless, Henry's concession on the matter of criminous clergy created a special privilege for clerics, known as "benefit of clergy," which survived until the early nineteenth century. For a few decades, indeed, it looked as though the whole church might adopt the principle that members of the clergy who were accused of crimes could be tried and punished only in church courts, not by lay courts, but that did not turn out to be the case.

The Later History of Benefit of Clergy

As benefit of clergy functioned at first, if a man (the privilege did not apply to the only women who could be considered clergy—that is, nuns) who was brought into court on criminal charges claimed to be a cleric, the authorities would send a message to the bishop of his diocese, asking if his claim was true. If the bishop recognized the accused as a cleric, he would be turned over to the bishop for trial and, if convicted, punishment. The punishment would include defrocking, so that for any second offense the accused could be treated as a layman. This procedure proved cumbersome, however, and relatively soon a quicker method of deciding whether someone was a cleric was devised: namely, asking the accused to read. This worked because in the Middle Ages almost the only persons who could read (especially in Latin) were members of the clergy. One verse of the Bible, the beginning of Psalm 51 ("Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions"), was chosen so often that it became known as the "neck verse" because if an accused man read it successfully—including, presumably, one who memorized it beforehand rather than actually being able to read—he saved his neck. Moreover, it became the habit of the courts to release anyone who successfully read what was put before him, rather than actually shipping the alleged cleric off to a bishop for trial. Benefit of clergy therefore functioned as a first offender's privilege: it could be claimed only once, and, at least from the sixteenth century on, anyone who successfully claimed it was branded on the thumb so that he could not claim it a second time. Letting first offenders off with a warning made quite a lot of sense in a period when the

punishment for all but the most minor offenses was execution and the confiscation of all property.

Basing the determination of clerical status on a man's ability to read had complicated implications as more and more people became literate in later centuries. To cope with the ramifications of this, the most serious crimes were eventually excluded by statute from the privilege, first treason and later murder, rape, arson, witchcraft, and so on. There was, in effect, a tripartite division of crimes: non-clergiable felonies (those for which one could not claim clergy) were the most serious; in the middle were clergiable felonies, and the least serious infractions were mere misdemeanors. By a statute in 1547, the privilege was extended to illiterate members of the House of Lords. In 1575, a statute provided that the benefit should be pled after conviction rather than at the start of the trial and that the convict could be imprisoned for a year even if he successfully pled clergy. A statute of 1624 extended the privilege to women, and a statute of 1706 abolished the reading test, which made the privilege available to everyone, literate or not. In 1770, John Adams, counsel for the defendants in the Boston Massacre case, pled the clergy of the two soldiers who were convicted, thereby saving them from execution. By then, however, changes in the criminal law had made the privilege obsolescent. Benefit of clergy was one of the first medieval oddities to go when modernization of the Common Law began: a statute of 1827 abolished it, six and a half centuries after Henry II first granted it.

All in all, therefore, and with the exception of appeals to the pope and benefit of clergy, the years of conflict between Henry II and Thomas of Canterbury made very little difference to church-state relations in England. The monarchs of England retained and, indeed, retain to this day, at least on paper, a great deal of control over the church. Throughout the rest of the Middle Ages and for centuries beyond, great churchmen were figures of importance in secular government as well as in the church itself, and appointing them gave the monarchs the control they needed over their servants as well as a great source of patronage with which to assuage the cravings of the great families of England for wealth and power.

THOMAS'S LEGACY

In so far as Thomas left a great legacy, it was as a saint rather than as a politician. By the time that Henry performed his penance at Thomas's tomb, Thomas had officially been recognized martyr for the faith. After some investigation of claims that Thomas was performing miracles, Pope Alexander III

formally canonized him on February 21, 1173, less than 26 months after his death, a remarkably short interval for a canonization. The veneration of the new martyr spread with notable rapidity around Europe. No earlier medieval saint's cult spread anything like as fast, and only Saint Francis of Assisi compares among later saints. Thomas's cult remained a major one for centuries, celebrated in architecture, art, music, the liturgy, and plays. In Scotland, the abbey of Arbroath, founded by King William the Lion in 1175, was dedicated to Thomas. The spread of veneration for him on the Continent was undoubtedly helped by the marriages of three of Henry II's daughters to rulers of foreign lands: Joan married first in Sicily and then in southern France, Matilda in Germany, and Eleanor in Spain. Thus, possibly the earliest known representation in art of Saint Thomas of Canterbury is a mosaic in the church of Monreale in Sicily, which may have been done as early as sometime between 1174 and 1182, probably after Joan of England's marriage to William of Sicily in 1177. By about 1190, a stained-glass window in Sens cathedral depicted scenes from Thomas's life; from about 1206 comes a window in Chartres cathedral, to which John of Salisbury, as bishop of Chartres between 1176 and his death in 1180, had given two vials of Saint Thomas's blood. Relics of Saint Thomas were distributed very widely, and, for most of the thirteenth century, the great French center of enamelware at Limoges turned out small chests, most of them intended as reliquaries, depicting the scene of the murder, often accompanied by the scene of the saint's burial. More of these chests survive of Thomas than of any other saint. From Scandinavia to Iceland to Spain to Rome to the Holy Land, churches and chapels were dedicated to Saint Thomas.

At least 184 sermons on him survive from between the 1170s and about 1400; the preachers whose nationalities are known were English, French, Italian, Portuguese, German, Austrian, and Polish. Thomas became the patron saint of the London Company of Brewers and the Venetian wine coopers. By the early sixteenth century, if not earlier, the tale of Saint Thomas was the subject of popular plays: a pageant was performed annually at Canterbury from 1504 until the suppression of Thomas's cult and revived under Queen Mary; in 1519 Becket's life was the subject of a pageant in the London midsummer show. These are only a few of the examples of the ways in which Saint Thomas of Canterbury became one of the most famous saints in all of Europe.

CANTERBURY CATHEDRAL AND SAINT THOMAS'S SHRINE

The great center of the cult of Saint Thomas was, of course, Canterbury itself. Chaucer's pilgrims in the *Canterbury Tales* were off to see "the holy blissful martyr." Indeed, Canterbury became certainly the most popular pilgrimage site in England and perhaps the fourth most popular site for all Europeans, after Jerusalem, Rome, and Saint James of Compostella. As was usual with a canonization, the monks of Canterbury Cathedral were ordered

to translate—that is, move—the new saint's body to a place of honor in the church. Unfortunately, there was a major fire in the cathedral on September 5, 1174. While it did not damage either the site of the murder or the tomb of the saint, which was then in the crypt, rebuilding took so long that the formal translation of Saint Thomas's remains to the elegant shrine in the Trinity Chapel behind the main altar of the cathedral—where they would stay for more than three centuries—did not take place until 1220, the fiftieth anniversary of his martyrdom. The ceremony was conducted, of course, by the archbishop of Canterbury of the day, Stephen Langton, and attended by King Henry III. That shrine was magnificent. Its most notable feature was a great ruby, known as the Régale of France, which King Louis VII had presented to the cathedral on a visit on 1179, allegedly to pray for the welfare of his son and heir. There was also a shrine enclosing the sword point that had broken off in the course of the attack on the archbishop, and visitors to the cathedral were also shown a separate relic alleged to be the piece of the saint's skull that was struck off in his murder. Trinity Chapel was adorned with a magnificent series of stained-glass windows depicting the miracles the saint had performed.

The Shrine of Saint Thomas

No particularly good depictions of the shrine survive, but from the extant evidence John Butler has derived this description of the monument: "The shrine . . . was raised up on steps and fronted by an altar and consisted of three parts: a stone plinth with an open arcaded base, the richly gilded and decorated wooden casket in which the feretrum [reliquary] containing the relics of the saint was laid, and a painted wooden canopy, suspended from the roof by a series of pulleys that enabled it to be raised or lowered to reveal or cover the casket itself. The casket was covered in gold plate and decorated with fine golden trellis-work. Affixed to the gold plate were innumerable jewels, pearls, sapphires, diamonds, rubies and emeralds, together with rings and cameos of sculptured agates, cornelians and onyx stones. Also attached to the casket was the great Régale of France." Writing of his visit to the cathedral in about 1512, the great humanist Desiderius Erasmus said of the shrine that "every part glistened, shone, and sparkled with rare and very large jewels, some of them larger than a goose's egg."

*   The Trinity Chapel is raised above the level of the main body of the cathedral by flanking flights of steps. "After making their way [up one of these flights of stairs] from the site of the martyrdom and the crypt, many of [the pilgrims] crawling on their hands and knees and prostrating themselves before the shrine, the climactic moment came for the canopy*

to be raised on its pulleys and the glistening casket revealed." According to Erasmus's narrative, "silver bells tinkled and one of the officers of the priory came forward with a white wand, touching the many jewels with it, indicating their quality and value, and naming their donors. After prayers and intercessions had been offered and gifts surrendered, the canopy descended and the pilgrims withdrew . . . down the opposite flight of steps from that by which they had ascended."

It was apparently not possible for anyone actually to see the portions of the saint's body that were enclosed in the feretrum. Most of the relics of Saint Thomas that were separately housed at Canterbury and elsewhere were either cloth soaked in the blood he shed when he was murdered or items he had used, or at least touched, while alive. Archbishop Langton, however, was reported to have retained some small bones when Thomas's body was laid in the feretrum in 1220 so that they could be distributed elsewhere, and the part of Thomas's skull that was struck off at the time of his murder was kept in a separate shrine. By the sixteenth century, the monks were apparently claiming that this was the whole of the saint's skull: Erasmus described this item as the "perforated skull of the martyr . . . covered in silver, but the forehead is left bare for people to kiss." Other contemporary descriptions agree. As Butler says, "With the removal [in 1538] of Becket's bones from the shrine, skull and all, the abuse became openly known."

SAINT THOMAS AND THE REFORMATION

And so things remained until 1538. By then, the king of England was Henry VIII, and he was engaged in separating the Church of England from the Roman Catholic Church. Both to Henry and to his opponents, Saint Thomas was the preeminent symbol of denial of the new regime. The powerful influence of this martyr had to be destroyed if Henry was to succeed. In September 1538, the Royal Commissioners for the Destruction of Shrines, having already dealt with many prominent saints, came to Canterbury to deal with Saint Thomas. Henry VIII's chief henchman, Thomas Cromwell, was an active participant in what followed, and the king himself was close by. The shrine was dismantled, its jewels and precious metals were seized for the king and transported to the Tower of London, and the saint's body was removed from the reliquary at the center of the shrine. What became of it? By October 1538, the story was beginning to spread on the Continent that the body had been burned in Cromwell's presence and the ashes had been scattered to the winds, dumped in the River Stour, or even shot out of a cannon at Cromwell's order, depending on who was telling the story. Whether some version of this tale is true or, if not, what happened to Thomas's mortal remains provides a minor but interesting mystery to this day.

What Happened to Thomas's Bones?

In a thorough and well-argued, but ultimately inconclusive, book, The Quest for Becket's Bones: The Mystery of the Relics of St. Thomas Becket of Canterbury *(1995), John Butler explores the evidence for and against the story that the saint's bones were burned in 1538 and considers the many hypotheses as to what may have happened to them if, in fact, they were not burned. Butler sums up many of questions about possible resting places thus:*

> *Whose remains rest in the two unmarked graves in the north aisle of the eastern crypt [of the cathedral]? Who, if anyone, lies beneath the irregular and unidentified ledger slab near the altar of St. Mary Magdalene in the north transept of the crypt—a slab that is embossed with the cross of Canterbury and is almost identical to the one covering the tomb of Archbishop Stephen Langton . . . ? Does the disturbed pavement immediately to the south of this slab, in the Chapel of St. Nicholas, conceal a grave, and if so, whose? Why is the lamp that burns above the altar of St. Mary Magdalene red, the colour of a martyr? Is there a grave behind the altar of Our Lady in the Undercroft, and if so, whose? And is there a parish church somewhere in east Kent that, as one popular legend has it, unknowingly harbours the bones of the saint . . . ? Of all the many speculations, none has aroused greater interest . . . [than] that which sprang dramatically to life on 23 January 1888, when workmen excavating part of the crypt of the Cathedral uncovered a hitherto unknown collection of bones.*

> *Ultimately, however, Butler concludes that those bones cannot be Becket's, though they may, nonetheless, have something to do with what happened to his body. He leaves it up to the reader to decide among five possible solutions to the mystery.*

Shortly after the destruction of the shrine and the disposal, one way or another, of the saint's body, on November 16, 1538, the king issued a proclamation declaring that, because "Thomas Becket, sometime archbishop of Canterbury, stubbornly [opposed] the wholesome laws established against the enormities of the clergy by the king's highness' most noble progenitor, King Henry the second," and because "his canonization was made only by the bishop of Rome because he [Thomas] had been a champion to maintain his [the pope's] usurped authority and a bearer of the iniquity of the clergy," the king now "has thought it expedient to declare . . . that . . . there appears nothing in his life and exterior conversation whereby he should be called a saint,

but rather esteemed to be a rebel and traitor to his prince." Therefore, the king ordered that "from henceforth the said Thomas Becket shall not be esteemed, named, reputed, nor called a saint . . . and that his images and pictures through the whole realm shall be put down and avoided out of all churches, chapels, and other places and that . . . the days used to be festival in his name shall not be observed, nor the service . . . and prayers in his name read, but razed and put out of all the books." In many surviving manuscripts, images that once depicted the life, death, and miracles of Saint Thomas of Canterbury have been cut out, scraped off, or otherwise mutilated, and many of the reliquaries and other precious objects that had commemorated Thomas must have been destroyed. The archbishop of Canterbury removed the image of Saint Thomas from his seal, as in 1539 did the city of London along with the motto on the seal, which had read, "Thomas, do not cease to protect me, who gave you birth."

In England for centuries Thomas remained a pro-Catholic, anti-Protestant symbol and a symbol of church claims for what supporters defined as independence of lay control and opponents defined as ecclesiastical supremacy over lay government. When, between 1553 and 1558, Queen Mary I tried to restore Catholicism in England, attacks on newly installed images of Saint Thomas of Canterbury were one way of expressing opposition to the queen's policy, for example. In the seventeenth century, some English Catholics sported medallions with Thomas of Canterbury on one side and Thomas More on the other—two men named Thomas who opposed kings named Henry in support of the Catholic Church and were executed at the king's command, a parallelism that had been noted in print in several sixteenth-century English works of history. Almost without fail, Catholic historians of the Middle Ages and biographers of Thomas of Canterbury and Henry II supported Thomas's cause; Protestants supported Henry. Only in the twentieth century did the ideal of the dispassionate historian begin to prevail, leading scholars to attempt to evaluate the ins and outs of Thomas's story with as little polemical input as possible.

BECKET IN THE MODERN AGE

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the story of Thomas Becket attracted the notice of quite a few playwrights, no doubt because of the inherently dramatic quality of the subject. In 1840 George Darley published *Thomas À Becket: A Dramatic Chronicle in Five Acts*. In 1863, an American, Alexander Hamilton (not, needless to say, the founding father), published *Thomas A'Becket: A Tragedy, in Five Acts*. Much better known than either of these is the play *Becket,* which the poet laureate of Great Britain, Alfred Lord Tennyson, finished in 1879, but did not publish until 1884. First produced by Sir Henry Irving in 1891, it became the most successful of Tennyson's plays. Shakespearean in form and, no doubt, in aspiration, in five acts and a mixture of iambic pentameter and prose, with a number of songs, longer than the uncut *Hamlet,* it covers the period from just before Becket's appointment

as archbishop to his death. A fairly even-handed exposition of the matters at issue between Henry and Becket and the events that ensued is muddled up (as in the plays of Darley and Hamilton) with a subplot about Henry's famous mistress Rosamund Clifford, whom Becket protects against the jealousy of Eleanor of Aquitaine. Becket is aware of the possibility of martyrdom from the very beginning of his archiepiscopate. The four knights stomp through the whole of the story, rather than appearing only at its end, especially FitzUrse, portrayed as Eleanor's loyal agent. It is Eleanor's taunting that drives Henry to his infamous outburst, here rendered, "Will no man free me from this pestilent priest?" Rosamund actually witnesses the murder and is left alone with Becket's body at the end of the play. This play was made into a silent film in 1923. (There had been an earlier silent short, also called *Becket,* in 1910.)

In 1935, the poet Thomas Stearns Eliot published the play *Murder in the Cathedral,* which concentrates on the last month of Thomas's life and whose central theme concerns the temptations of martyrdom. Henry does not even appear in the play: the main characters are the archbishop; a chorus of women of Canterbury, who are full of foreboding and want nothing more than to be left in peace, even if they are less than fully happy; three priests, who are much more welcoming to the archbishop on his return than is the chorus; and four men who are "tempters" in the first act and the murderers in the second. As literature, *Murder in the Cathedral* is undoubtedly the best of the modern works on Becket. It remains a standard of performance and criticism. It was made into a movie in 1952. Eliot's play also forms the basis of the libretto of the opera *Assassinio nella cattedrale* by the Italian composer Ildebrando Pizzetti, which was first performed at La Scala in Milan in 1958.

In 1959, the French playwright Jean Anouilh published *Becket ou l'honneur de Dieu* ("Becket or the Honor of God"), which was translated into English simply as *Becket* and produced on Broadway in 1960. It was made into a movie starring Richard Burton as Becket and Peter O'Toole as Henry in 1964. This play attempts to depict the whole course of the relationship between Thomas and Henry, from their days as the best of friends to the aftermath of the murder; as the subtitle of the French original suggests, the main theme is Becket's choice between serving the honor of the king and the honor of God. The play tells the story in gripping fashion, but two significant elements of the plot are factual errors: Anouilh's Becket is of Saxon rather than Norman origin, and he shares a mistress with the king, while not even his enemies challenged the chastity of the historical Becket.

Two more recent plays have received less attention. The English playwright Christopher Fry wrote *Curtmantle* for the Royal Shakespeare Company, though the first performance, in 1961, was in the Netherlands and in Dutch. "Curtmantle" ("short cloak") was a nickname for Henry II, and the play is actually about the Henry's life "from 'the proud years when all events were Henry' to the King's final, ignominious defeat at the hands of his own sons and the son of his old enemy. Louis VII of France," as the playwright told *Time* magazine in a March 1961 interview. "[H]is character covers a vast field

of human nature," says Fry in his foreword to the play. "It is difficult to think of any facet of man which at some time he didn't demonstrate, except chastity and sloth." Becket figures as a central character in the first and second of the three acts. He dies offstage at the end of the second act: what is actually portrayed, unusually, is Henry's appalled reaction, first to the news that the four knights have set off and then to the news that his attempt to recall them in time has been unsuccessful. The third act begins with Henry's penance. The treatment of the controversy between the two men is quite even-handed: summing it up, Becket is made to say, "There is a true and living/Dialectic between the Church and the state/Which has to be argued for ever in good part. / It can't be broken off or turned/Into a clear issue to be lost or won."

Most recently, Paul Corcoran wrote *Four Knights in Knaresborough* (1999) about the year during which Thomas's murderers holed up in that Yorkshire castle. The author describes the play as a comedy about "the worst career move in history," as he makes Hugh de Morville call it, and the *Daily Telegraph* reviewer opined that the play is "full of nervous laughter, sudden violence and expletive-laden dialogue that is often outrageously funny," but it is a dark comedy at best. The first scene of the play is the murder of the archbishop: Becket is present, of course, but speaks not a word. In the second scene, the knights turn to the audience and try to explain why they did what they did: Morville sums up, "An extraordinary man had to die—because he opposed the work of a great one!" The rest of the play—entirely invented, because, as Corcoran says in his brief preface, "[f]ortunately nothing is known about the year the killers spent in Knaresborough"—visits the knights on four nights during that year, as they quarrel, make up, worry, and muse about what they did. It emerges that possibly the murder was not provoked by Henry at all but was a plot that Reginald FitzUrse concocted to avoid having to repay a great deal of money that he owed Becket and that the archbishop would have been able to collect if he had been reconciled to the king. By the time this possibility emerges in the last scene, the other knights are so demoralized that they barely blink.

Thomas has also appeared in a good deal of literature aimed at the more popular market. Two novels have Thomas as their central character: Shelley Mydans's *Thomas* (1965) and Margaret Butler's *The Lion of Christ* (1977), whose British title is *This Turbulent Priest*. The archbishop is also a character in novels about Henry II and the Plantagenet family, such as Jean Plaidy's *The Plantagenet Prelude* (1980) and *Time and Chance* (2002), the middle volume of Sharon Kay Penman's "Plantagenet Trilogy," which follows the life of Henry II from start to finish. Ken Follett's *Pillars of the Earth* (1989) includes the scene of the murder. And in 2004 a television documentary considered the question of "Who Killed Thomas Becket?"

In some quarters, Thomas still stands forth as a champion of the separation of church and state. Thus, for example, the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty describes itself on its website as "a Washington, D.C.-based public interest law firm protecting the free expression of all religious traditions. We are nonprofit, nonpartisan, and interfaith."

CONCLUSIONS

If a tragedy is a conflict in which both sides are right, then the conflict between Archbishop Thomas and King Henry was undoubtedly a tragedy, for each side could make a good case, based on both history and policy, for its interpretation of the proper relationship between church and state. The tragedy, however, mutates into melodrama when we consider the behavior of the two protagonists, as there can be little doubt that both men behaved very badly and thereby made the conflict much worse than it need have been. It is almost impossible to attempt to evaluate Thomas of Canterbury without citing the definition by Saint Augustine that it is the cause, not the suffering, that makes the martyr. Undoubtedly, Thomas suffered. But whether his cause was his own advancement, the liberty of the church, clerical tyranny over lay society, or something else is in the eye of the beholder. Whether the methods he used to fight for his cause were appropriate or inflammatory is also an irresolvable dispute. The one thing on which scholars largely agree, now that some of the sectarian fires that overheated previous generations' discussions have died down, is that the "Becket Controversy" made relatively little difference to the evolution of church-state relations. Nonetheless, the most famous of all murders of a bishop in his cathedral is an unforgettable story that became and remains a subject of endless fascination.

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Eighteenth-century engraving of Robert the Bruce, king of the Scots from 1306 to 1329 (*left*). (Library of Congress) Portrait of Sir William Wallace, painted about 1870, Scottish (*right*). (Smith Art Gallery and Museum, Stirling, Scotland/The Bridgeman Art Library)

Robert the Bruce (1274–1329) and William Wallace (ca. 1272–1305)

Alexander L. Kaufman

INTRODUCTION

Robert the Bruce and William Wallace are two symbols of Scottish nationalism and independence. As near contemporaries, both men fought in a series of battles in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries against an oppressive, some even would argue tyrannical, English government. While Robert the Bruce (King Robert I of Scots 1306–29) is today often overshadowed by the heroic outlaw figure of William Wallace, the Scottish king's history remains central to Scotland's aim for a nation separate from England. The Bruce's history is also grounded on a far more level field of facts than Wallace's own record. What we know of Wallace is based on a degree of historical truth but mingled with legend, folkloric accounts, works of fiction and historical literature, and rumor. Perhaps this is why Wallace is such a more fascinating figure to modern audiences: the truth, many times, is not nearly as interesting as the story told in a big-budget Hollywood action film (1995's *Braveheart*). Yet each of these two icons has been celebrated in chronicle accounts, quasi-historical verse narratives, songs, poetry, historical novels, film, and other cultural artifacts.

HISTORICAL FACT: ROBERT THE BRUCE

Robert the Bruce was born on July 11, 1274, most likely at Turnberry Castle in Ayrshire, Scotland. His father was Robert de Brus (d. 1304), sixth Lord of Annandale. His mother was Marjorie countess of Carrick. The Bruce's lineage was aristocratic nobility of Scotland's highest order. His mother had been married first to Adam of Kilconquhar; he died on crusade in 1271 in Acre while accompanying the future King Edward I of England (1239–1307, r. 1272–1307). She met Robert de Brus, an erstwhile comrade of her late husband, and the two were married around 1272.

Robert the Bruce became earl of Carrick after his mother's death in 1292 and made a claim to the Scottish throne though his mother's side, but it was rejected and the crown given to John de Baliol (ca. 1249–1314), who was, though his mother's side, the great-great-great-grandson of King David I (1085–1153). Baliol's service to the English king created much discord among the Scottish nobility, however. In 1295–96 the Scottish lords staged a coup and initiated an alliance with France and its king, Philippe IV. On July 10, 1296, Baliol abdicated the Scottish throne. The Scottish wars did not please Edward I, yet it appears as if the Bruce and his father were at first loyal to their English monarch.

This fealty to Edward I changed, and suddenly. Edward had invaded Scotland and turned it into an occupied country garrisoned by English troops—essentially an English colony—and the Bruce decided to fight this English aggression. William Wallace's insurrection began in May 1297, and for the next several years the Bruce participated in the rebellion. In 1298, the Bruce

burned down the castle of Ayr so that the English would not seize it as a base for military operations. By 1298, the Bruce was made a guardian of Scotland, a post that he gave up in 1300. John Comyn of Badenoch was also made a guardian; he and the Bruce had a tumultuous rivalry. By 1302, the Bruce's stance toward the English softened, and he was once again loyal to Edward I. At times, under the command of Edward, he hunted the Scottish rebels William Wallace and Simon Fraser.

In 1304, the Bruce made a secret agreement with Bishop William Lamberton of Saint Andrews to help one another in times of peril and to show no loyalty to Edward I. Stirling Castle surrendered to Edward and his army on July 20, 1304, and the Scottish lords, including the Bruce, were obliged to make their peace with the English king. Soon thereafter, however, the Bruce began a serious campaign to gain the throne of Scotland. On February 10, 1306, the Bruce and many of his allies met John Comyn, his main rival, in the Franciscan church in Dumfries in southern Scotland. A fight broke out, and in the end Comyn and his uncle were dead. Word was sent to England that the Bruce would soon become the next Scottish king, and he was crowned on March 25, 1306, at Scone. Celebrations were short-lived. Edward regarded the Bruce's coronation as treachery; he again invaded Scotland, and the Bruce was defeated on June 19, 1306, at Methven, after which he, with a small band of followers, became a fugitive. The Bruce's second wife and queen, Elizabeth, his daughter Marjorie, his sisters Christina and Mary, and Isabella MacDuff countess of Buchan were eventually captured by the English and sent into harsh imprisonment, which included Mary and Isabella being hung in a cage on the walls of Roxburgh and Berwick castles respectively for about four years, while the Bruce's brother Niall (or Nigel) was executed.

Nevertheless, the Bruce's popularity among his people only grew. Moreover, his guerrilla army began to defeat the English. The battle of Loudoun Hill around May 10, 1307, was a small but significant Scottish victory. The greatest boon to the Bruce's increasing military success against the English before the battle of Bannockburn was certainly the death of Edward I on July 7, 1307. Still, the Bruce had to deal with internal divisiveness, as a number of mostly northern Scots were aligned against him. The Bruce's first parliament was held at Saint Andrews in March 1309. French envoys were sent, and their king, Philippe IV, recognized Robert the Bruce as King of Scots. Over the next few years, the Bruce's forces consolidated their power and regained strongholds that had been captured and manned by English garrisons, except for Stirling Castle.

The event that has forever marked Robert the Bruce's life is his army's victory against the English under King Edward II at the battle of Bannockburn, the main action of which occurred on Monday, June 24, 1314, the Feast of Saint John the Baptist. The Scottish army had between 8,000 and 9,000 men, while the English force numbered some 16,000. The Scots fought mainly on foot in *schiltrons* (closely knit formations, armed primarily with long pikes, that could operate both defensively and offensively)—"They had axes at their

sides and lances in their hands. They advanced like a thick-set hedge and such a phalanx could not easily be broken," as one contemporary English chronicler described the Scots. The English lines were broken, and they suffered heavy casualties. Edward II escaped to Dunbar and then took a ship to England. The victory did not gain for Scotland English recognition of its independence; however, it did establish the Bruce as the rightful (and popular) king of Scotland. For the English, the loss at Bannockburn was "a stain on their character, a defeat they took very much to heart."[1]

Robert the Bruce decided next to turn his attention to Ireland. His sole surviving brother, Edward, was declared to be the High King of Ireland in May 1315. In January 1317, the Bruce took a large force to the island and proceeded, with his brother, south to Dublin. Their aim was to rid Ireland of the English; in doing so, the Scots would of course take their place. But poor weather and widespread disease forced the Scots to retreat. The Bruce's brother remained in Ireland until his death on October 14, 1318, near Dundalk.

King Edward II of England was deposed in 1327. His successor, Edward III (1312–1377), was only a teenager, and so in the early years of his rule his mother, Queen Isabella, and her lover, Roger Mortimer, ran the government. The young king was almost captured in battle against the Scots, near Stanhope Park in 1327. As a result, the Treaty of Edinburgh-Northampton was drafted on March 17, 1328, and ratified by the English parliament at Northampton on May 4. Scotland was now recognized by England as a free and independent realm with its own monarch.

On June 7, 1329, at his home in Cardross, near Dumbarton, King Robert the Bruce died. He had been ill for a number of years, and it would seem the primary cause of his death was leprosy. Modern-day physicians who have examined casts of his skull support this conclusion. Because the Bruce had never taken part in a Crusade as he had wished, after embalming, his heart was removed and placed in a silver casket; thus Sir James Douglas carried it to fight against the Moors in Granada. Meanwhile the Bruce was buried in Dunfermline Abbey. After Douglas died in battle at Tebas de Ardales on March 25, 1330, the casket containing the Bruce's heart was found next to Douglas's body; Sir William Keith of Galston and Sir Symon Locard returned both Douglas and the casket to Scotland, where the heart was buried at Melrose Abbey.[2]

HISTORICAL FACT: WILLIAM WALLACE

The origins of the Scottish outlaw are almost completely shrouded in myth and uncertainty. We do not know the exact year of his birth. Indeed, for several centuries, it was believed that he was a descendant of a Ricardus Wallensis ("Richard Wallace" [i.e., "Welshman"]) who traveled to Scotland sometime in the mid-twelfth century. Richard's great-grandson, Malcolm, has been identified as William Wallace's father; this was first described by the poet Blind Hary. However, a recent discovery has called Wallace's genealogy into question:

"In 1297, after the battle of Stirling Bridge, the victorious Wallace and his wounded dying colleague, Andrew Murray, sent a letter to the mayor and communes of the German towns of Lübeck and Hamburg," and the inscription on the seal of the letter states "[Wilelm]vs Filius Alani Walais"; in other words, "William, son of Alan Wallace."[3] This discovery "demolishes the names given by literary sources for William's father; he was, we can be sure, Alan Wallace."[4]

Much of what we know of Wallace's early years is from Blind Hary's book *Wallace*. Hary describes Wallace as being 18 years old when he killed the son of Selby, who was the English constable of Dundee, and this event took place in either 1291 or 1292.[5] What information we have on Wallace that is grounded in historical evidence and not based on Hary's literary work all points to the year 1297 as a true starting point for his career. In May of that year, Wallace killed William Heselrig, who was the English sheriff of Lanark. Hary describes this murder as retaliation for the sheriff's having murdered Wallace's love, Marion Braidfute. Further exploits and successful raids on English garrisons boosted Wallace's fame, and he soon gained the support of a large section of the Scottish populace.

In early August 1297, Wallace laid siege to Dundee; the English responded by sending a considerable army northward from Berwick. The battle of Stirling Bridge was fought on September 11, 1297. The English were led by John de Warenne earl of Surrey, and the Scots were commanded by Wallace and Andrew Murray. The Scots fighters were almost all footmen, while the English and Welsh had archers and horsemen. The English were outmaneuvered, and dissension grew in their ranks. Hugh Cressingham, the arrogant treasurer of Scotland under Edward I, took an active role in commanding the English troops but did so unconvincingly; at one point he refused reinforcements. The English were forced to cross the narrow bridge, and the Scots attacked from the high ground. The bridge was so narrow that the English could neither retreat from it nor have reinforcements brought in to aid the soldiers. All told, the English defeat was sizable: "A hundred knights and many infantry, perhaps as many as five thousand, died, either killed or drowned."[6] Warenne survived, but Cressingham was killed by a spear. The Scotsmen then "flayed his obese body. Strips of skin were sent throughout Scotland to proclaim the victory at Stirling. Other strips were used to make saddle girths. Tradition tells us that Wallace himself had a belt made for his sword from what was left of Cressingham's skin."[7]

Soon after the battle, Wallace had a series of successes: Dundee Castle surrendered, and Berwick and Edinburgh were taken. Under Wallace's influence, William Lamberton was elected as the bishop of Saint Andrews on November 3, 1297. Wallace and his forces were by then in English territory, and there are widespread accounts of Scottish brutality inflicted on the English population, both soldiers and civilians alike. Bad weather ended this invasion, and Wallace returned to Scotland to await the inevitable English counteroffensive. At some point between his return in November 1297 and the upcoming campaign in 1298, Wallace was knighted and was named "guardian" of Scotland.

On Tuesday, July 22, 1298 (the feast day of Saint Mary Magdalene), the battle of Falkirk took place. Wallace's forces were outnumbered, and the English army had a large number of heavily armored artillery men and cavalry. Even though the Scottish *schiltrons* were successful against the English cavalry, a large portion of the Scots army fled (out of either fear or treachery). In the end, the Scottish losses were sizable. Wallace escaped and fled to France by November 1299, having relinquished his title of guardian of Scotland. While in France, Wallace managed to befriend King Philippe IV (after an initially hostile reception), and the French king seems to have facilitated Wallace's participation in a mission to Rome.

It is unclear when exactly Wallace returned to Scotland. In March 1304, he was officially outlawed by the parliament at Saint Andrews; however, there were reports that he was in Scotland as early as 1303. On August 3, 1305, servants of Sir John Menteith of Ruskie, the Scottish keeper of Dumbarton Castle, captured Wallace in or near Glasgow. Wallace was taken to Dumbarton Castle and subsequently handed over to the English knight John de Segrave. On August 22, Wallace was brought to London in a procession that caused much excitement in the city. The following day, in Westminster Hall, he was tried for treason (a charge he denied) and was summarily and publicly executed at Smithfield by hanging, drawing (disembowelment), and quartering. Sir John de Segrave, who had brought Wallace to London, personally distributed the outlaw's severed limbs to the towns of Newcastle, Berwick, Stirling, and Perth.

ROBERT THE BRUCE AND WILLIAM WALLACE IN THE CHRONICLE OF PETER OF LANGTOFT

Peter Langtoft was an Augustinian canon of Bridlington and wrote in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. His French verse chronicle spans the years from Brutus, the Trojan-descended founder of Britain, to 1307 and is written in three parts. Antonia Gransden has commented how Langtoft's chronicle belongs to the "romance" tradition of historical writing, for he "wrote in chivalric terms and in places vividly reflects the courtly cult of King Arthur," and that he "ascribes chivalric virtues to King Edward [I]."[8] Indeed, like many historical writers of the Middle Ages, Langtoft relied on his own personal observations as well as hearsay and rumor for his sources of information. His attitude toward the Scots is not at all flattering, and he is downright nasty in some of his remarks. Gransden believes that Langtoft wrote "for recitation, to amuse men and stir their bellicosity against the Scots."[9] Langtoft's representations of William Wallace and Robert the Bruce are decidedly negative. Regarding Wallace, Langtoft views him as nothing but an outlaw who lives in the forest and robs:

Our subject compels us to return to the history,
To treating with the Scots for peace without molestation,

> To William Wallace who lives in the forest.
> At Dunfermline, after the holy festival
> Of Christmas, through friends he has made request to the king,
> That he may submit to his honest peace,
> Without surrendering into his hands body or head;
> But that the king grant him, of his gift, not a loan,
> An honorable allowance of woods and cattle,
> And by his writing the seizure and investment
> For him and for his heirs in purchased land.
> The king, angered at this demand, breaks into a rage,
> Commends him to the devil, and all that grows on him,
> Promises three hundred marks to the man who makes him headless.
> Wallace makes ready to seek concealment by flight
> Into moors and mountains, he lives by robbery.[10]

Langtoft's chronicle (like the slightly later one of Walter of Guisborough) contains a gruesome description of Wallace's execution and death. For Langtoft, it seems as if Wallace's death is wholly justified and reasonable; after all, in Langtoft's words, he was "the master of thieves":

> In the first place to the gallows he was drawn for treasons,
> Hanged for robberies and slaughters;
> And because he had annihilated by burnings,
> Towns and churches and monasteries,
> He is taken down from the gallows, his belly opened,
> His heart and his bowels burnt to cinders,
> And his head cut off for such treasons as follow:
> Because he had by his assumptions of authority
> Maintained the war, given protections,
> Seized into his subjection the lordship
> Of another's kingdom by his usurpations.
> His body was cut into four parts;
> Each one hangs by itself, in memory of his name,
> In place of his banner these are his gonfanons . . .
> By the death of Wallace may one bear in mind
> What reward belongs to traitor and to thief,
> And what divers wages to divers trespasses.[11]

The English chronicler Matthew of Paris, in his *Flores Historiarum* in the early fourteenth century, describes an equally brutal death:

> He was hung in a noose, and afterwards let down half-living; next
> his genitals were cut off and his bowels torn out and burned in a fire;
> then and not till then his head was cut off and his trunk cut into four
> pieces.[12]

For these medieval English chroniclers, the death of this icon was one to be remembered in the most specific of ways. Future generations who would have read these chronicles would remember the ill deeds of Wallace and his men, and these readers would also recall the grisly end of the outlaw. Public executions in the Middle Ages sought to deter more violent crimes; likewise, the recording of these spectacles of death in historical literature served to warn others of the dangers associated with traitorous acts. R. James Goldstein has commented that Langtoft insists that "the execution reminds us that the authority Wallace dared to transgress against was not King Robert I or the Scottish baronial class he represented, but the sovereign of England, Ireland, and Wales."[13] However, one could also read the description of Wallace's death (and similar descriptions of others executed in similar ways in the Middle Ages) as a memorial to the dead. While Langtoft and Matthew of Paris did not seek to make a martyr out of Wallace, one can not help but feel sorry for the outlaw, especially after one reads how he was tortured and yet did not cry out for leniency or mercy.

Robert the Bruce is also derided in Langtoft's chronicle. The Scottish king's sanity is called into question, and Langtoft pointedly calls him insane:

> King Robin has drunk of the drink of dan* Warin,   *dan:* sir (*cf. Spanish* Don)
> Who lost cities and towns by the shield,
> Afterwards in the forest, mad and naked,
> He fed with the cattle on the raw grass.[14]

The Bruce is here compared to the outlaw of the Welsh Marches, Fouke fitz Waryn (ca. 1167–ca. 1258). That the English chronicler compares the Bruce to this outlaw figure is rather intriguing, for there is no record that the Bruce tried to emulate Fouke's outlaw tactics that he used against King John (1167–1216). Nevertheless, Langtoft's association of the two underscores that chronicler's animosity toward the Bruce and solidifies the Bruce's reputation among the medieval English as that of an enemy of the state.

ROBERT THE BRUCE AND WILLIAM WALLACE IN POLITICAL SONGS OF THE MIDDLE AGES

The Scottish wars and their iconographic heroes were the focus of several popular political songs in England. The majority of these verses were, like Langtoft's chronicle, highly critical of the Scots, especially William Wallace. The Latin "Song of the Scottish Wars" survives in several medieval manuscripts, although the earliest would seem to have been composed in 1298, soon after the battle of Falkirk.[15] Throughout this poem, there is a strong anti-Scottish sentiment; the anonymous poet seems to delight in the murder of the Scots and sees them as base animals:

> The kilted people, numerous and savage, who are accustomed to detract
> from the Englishmen, fell at Dunbar, and now stink like a dog; thus do

fools, who are tormented by vain glory.—Vain glory made the deceitful people deny the true lord of Scotland. . . . William Wallace is the leader of these savages; the rejoicings of fools breed increase to griefs.—To increase the wickedness which they had hitherto perpetrated, these wicked men deliver Alnwick to the flames; they run about on every side like madmen.[16]

Not all English political poems, though, celebrate the death of Scots. "The Battle of Bannockburn" was written soon after the battle; in Latin, it describes the defeat of the English and the death of the earl of Gloucester. The mood in the poem is somber, and the writer "laments the humiliation to which his country had been reduced" and also suggests that the defeat was caused by pride, evil counsels, and traitorous acts on the battlefield.[17] Robert the Bruce is not directly named in the poem, and this omission is purposeful and significant. The anonymous poet certainly did not wish to ascribe the reason for the Scottish victory on the Bruce's superior army on that given day; to do so would have almost been treasonous and heretical. Those English who were killed "deserved to suffer judgment of decapitation, since voluntarily they have betrayed such a soldiery."[18]

JOHN BARBOUR'S *BRUCE*

John Barbour's date of birth is uncertain, but it is believed to be around 1325; he died on March 13, 1395. He was a member of the clergy in Scotland and became archdeacon of Aberdeen, presumably in 1355, and served as an auditor as well. His poem, which comprises some 14,000 lines in the language of Early Scots, was composed sometime between 1375 and 1377, a period in which the poet was "only in his diocese and not called thence on the king's business."[19] The poem survives in two manuscripts: Cambridge, Saint John's College Library, MS G.23, which dates to 1487, and Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, Advocates MS 19.2.2., which dates to 1489. Barbour was connected to the Scottish royalty; he first served Robert II when he ascended to the throne on March 26, 1371.[20] His demanding position at Aberdeen allowed Barbour to come into close contact with many of the royal family, yet it is difficult to determine if he had patrons for his poetry.[21]

Barbour's poem focuses on the Bruce's life from 1286 to 1322; it does not include any details on the life and times of William Wallace. The genre is a mixture of chivalric romance and verse chronicle. The battle of Bannockburn is the highlight of the poem. Here, the violence of the day is described in rich detail, and the English defeat becomes one of the poem's central moments. Barbour's words on the concept of freedom are poignant, romantic, idyllic, and influential. Scottish patriotism is stressed throughout the work, and the Bruce, being its symbol, shines. The complicated (some might argue duplicitous) nature of the Bruce's figure is represented by the compelling, bold, courteous, and chivalric hero. While there are a number of historical inaccuracies,

the poet's "themes of freedom and leadership are effectively stated and illustrated, effectively enough for the epic nature of his subject to be felt."[22]

BLIND HARY'S *WALLACE*

The single greatest source for the life and times of William Wallace is Blind Hary's (or Hary the Minstrel's) long poem *Wallace*. The poem comprises 8,877 lines and is written in decasyllabic couplets.[23] Editors have organized the poem into 12 books. Matthew McDiarmid dates the poem, which is written in Middle Scots, to 1476–78.[24] The poem survives in a single manuscript that also contains a version of Barbour's *Bruce*: Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, Advocates MS 19.2.2. The *Wallace* section of the manuscript dates to 1488. John Major was the first to claim that Hary was blind from birth (see the next section), yet McDiarmid has determined that Hary lost his eyesight after he had finished writing *Wallace*.[25] Hary's realistic descriptions of warfare led McDiarmid to suggest that the poet perhaps had his own experiences at war in France.[26] The poet was born around 1440 at Linlithgow to a "locally respected family variously named Hary or Henry," and his education in that neighborhood or at Dundee allowed him to learn Latin, French, and Middle English.[27] He died sometime between 1492 and 1495.[28]

Almost certainly, Hary composed *Wallace* between 1476 and 1478, and his motivation for doing so was multifaceted: "the literary one of surpassing Barbour's achievement, a patriotic enthusiasm for Scottish prowess in the endless war with England, a similarly inspired dislike of the English connection then being cultivated by his king, and a wish to please his influential friends."[29] Hary certainly threw all of his literary and historical knowledge into the poem, as it is a work that cannot be pigeonholed into a single genre. Walter Scheps has called *Wallace* a combination of "epic, romance, and *débat*,"[30] while Goldstein adds "chronicle, saint's life, and complaint."[31] McDiarmid, likewise, presents a dizzying array of sources that Hary used for his poem: vernacular, Latin, and French histories; the chronicles of Barbour, Wyntoun, Bower, and Froissart; didactic and philosophical works, such as Boethius's *The Consolation of Philosophy*; *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville*; saints' legends; astrological treatises; the major and minor poems of Chaucer, including *Troilus and Criseyde* and the *Canterbury Tales*; the romances of Charlemagne, King Arthur, and Alexander the Great; and possibly John Lydgate's *Troy Book*.[32]

Hary's *Wallace* is a celebration of the Scottish hero and a vilification of the English people and especially their government. Hary's description of the outlaw is a wonderful blend of fantasy and realism: "Ix quartaris large he was in lenth indeid" (that is to say, he was "nine quarters"—a fraction under seven feet—tall).[33] Wallace is also described as large and muscular, careful in his speech, and having scars all over his body. "Off Ryches he kepyt no propyr thing, / Gaiff as he won, lik Alexander the king" ("Of wealth he kept none for himself, but gave away that which he won, like King Alexander").[34]

The activities in which Wallace takes part in the poem showcase not only Hary's indebtedness to other literary genres and works, but also, and indeed more so, the poet's innate literary ability to craft a vivid and exciting narrative. Wallace's life as an outlaw and his adventures throughout Scotland, England, and France read just like an action film. Yet Hary was also deliberate in his description of Wallace as a thoughtful and religious man: "A psalter buk Wallace had on him euir, / Fra his childeid fra it wald nocht deseuir" ("A psalter Wallace had on him always, and from his childhood he would not part with it").[35]

Hary's description of Wallace's execution is a politicized event; for Hary, Wallace becomes a martyr for the Scottish cause and he does not delve into the details of his death. While the poem is certainly about Wallace, it is also about Scotland. As Richard Moll has argued, Hary's *Wallace* "demonstrates that a unified Scotland, bound by common descent and political ideals, is necessary to protect the realm from the aggressions of the 'auld enemy,' [i.e., England] both in Wallace's day and in the late fifteenth century."[36]

WILLIAM WALLACE IN JOHN MAJOR'S *HISTORIA MAJORIS BRITANNIAE*

The medieval British chronicle tradition remains a corpus of writing that, as a whole, presents readers with a decidedly subjective point of view of medieval history and culture. John Major's *Historia Majoris Britanniae* (*History of Greater Britain,* although one could also translate the title as *Major's History of Britain*) was written toward the tail end of the fifteenth century and published in 1521, most likely in Paris.[37] Major (whose name is sometimes spelled "Maior" or "Mair") lived from 1467 to 1550; he was a logician, a biblical commentator, and a theologian.

In the preface to his English translation of Major's Latin chronicle, Archibald Constable states that he would like to "say something about the singular fairness, the anxious impartiality, of Major's judgment of the English nation, the cordiality of his appreciation of English customs."[38] Summarizing Major's contribution as a humanist writer, Constable remarks that the chronicler "showed the insight of a philosophic statesman," which makes him "unique among Scottish writers."[39] But as with most medieval historiographers, Major was not subtle when it came to identifying those whom he disliked. The English printer, translator, and editor William Caxton (ca. 1422–1491) was perhaps Major's most notable target, for the Scottish chronicler, in Constable's words, "heartily abhorred" the notable editor and translator for his inability to foster a sense of "national amity" in his *Chronicles of England* (published at Westminster in 1480 and 1482).[40] Major, it can be said, sought to unify the English and Scottish people under their shared sense of religion and humanity. However, this unification of peoples meant that certain histories needed some degree of reinterpretation and refashioning, and Major set to work.

First, Major describes how "the Scots chose for their king a certain William Wallace, up to this point a man with nothing illustrious in his origin."[41] True to his training as a humanist, Major decidedly revises Caxton's original text and rebukes Caxton, not so much for his unfavorable portrait of the Scottish outlaw as for his inability to craft a true and objective version. For Major, Caxton's narrative contains a "mass of incoherencies" and "silly fabrications."[42] Major then proceeds to "place the history of the Scots in its true light."[43] Major's version of Wallace's birth, breeding, and valor is somewhat awe-inspiring. It is full of vivid details of Wallace's upbringing, his physical and social characteristics, his martial abilities, and how he was "hailed as regent by most of the Scots, with the universal acclamation of the common people."[44] At one point, Major compares Wallace's ability to draw up an army and lead it successfully on the field of battle to some the heroes of classical antiquity: "Hannibal, Ulysses, and Telamonian Ajax."[45] In another work of Major's, his *In Quartum Sententiarum*, the chronicler compares Achilles's penchant for eating the muscles from oxen and not fowl with Wallace's similar dietary predilections.[46] And while Major concurs that Robert the Bruce flourished at a later date, nonetheless he argues that Wallace "had no other instructions in warfare than experience and his own genius."[47] Major does not dwell upon the various English atrocities that were carried out during Wallace's tenure as rebel leader. Instead of underscoring the hatred that so many Scots felt toward Edward I (as well as toward many of the Scottish nobility who surrendered to Edward, such as John de Baliol), Major dispenses with this overheated political rhetoric and chooses instead to elevate Wallace to mythical status. The English are not represented as bloodthirsty animals; instead, they are weak, clueless, and confused, unable to match Wallace's abilities: "[T]wo or even three Englishmen were scare able to make stand against him,—such was his bodily strength, such also the quickness of his understanding, and his indomitable courage."[48]

Major does indeed humanize Wallace, and he also makes him into more of a character out of literature. Perhaps he was influenced by Blind Hary's narrative, for Major is the first to mention the supposed author of the Middle Scots poem. Near the end of Major's own history of Wallace, he describes how, "in the time of [his] childhood," the blind author "fabricated a whole book about William Wallace. . . . I however can give but a partial credence to such writings as these."[49] While Hary the Minstrel's long verse narrative does include a sizable number of literary embellishments (moments of fantasy, comedic interplay, elements of romance), his overall portrait of Wallace as a fierce leader who commands respect is very similar to Major's outline of the hero.

WILLIAM WALLACE AND ROBERT THE BRUCE IN ROMANTIC LITERATURE

The Romantic movement of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries saw a reaction against the formal rules and the predominance of reason that marked

the Neoclassical period. Some of the characteristics that we most often as-sociate with romanticism are a love of nature, an intense interest in the past (particularly things medieval), individualism, a sense of primitivism, and mys-ticism. The figure of William Wallace was one in which several romantic writ-ers took a keen interest. After all, in the person of Wallace we see an individual spirit from the Middle Ages who, as a fighter for the nationalist cause of Scotland, was still very much alive in writers' imagination. The wild, untamed nature of Wallace, and that of Scotland itself, were directly and indirectly cel-ebrated by a host of romantic writers.

William Wordsworth (1770–1850) is one of the best-known romantic poets. Along with Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772–1834), he published *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798, thus ushering in the Romantic Age. Wordsworth's autobio-graphical poem *The Prelude* is one of the poet's great works. Written in blank verse, it is deeply philosophical and just as sophisticated as John Milton's epic *Paradise Lost*. In book I, Wordsworth recalls William Wallace's exploits and speaks of them in the context of the revolutionary ideals of romanticism:

> How Wallace fought for Scotland; left the name
> Of Wallace to be found, like a wild flower,
> All over his dear Country; left the deeds
> Of Wallace, like a family of Ghosts
> To people the steep rocks and river banks,
> Her natural sanctuaries, with a local soul
> Of independence and stern liberty.[50]

The Wordsworths visited the various Scottish locales where Wallace and his men fought and hid. The turbulent life and times of Wallace, it seemed, had some impact upon Wordsworth; his sister Dorothy mentions how in 1803 they visited two caves reputed to have been hideouts of Wallace's.[51]

Robert Burns (1759–1796) is perhaps the only Scottish figure who could (in his day or today) eclipse either Wallace or Bruce. Burns's poem *Scots wha hae,* which is also known as *March to Bannockburn* (1793–94), is set to the melody of the old Scottish song "Hey, Tuttie Tatti." As William Everett com-ments, the song was "quite probably heard at the Bannockburn victory which Burns's words celebrate. Scottish archers took the tune to France, and it was played when Joan of Arc entered Orleans. The song exemplifies Scottishness on both levels discussed above: the independent Scotland of the Middle Ages, immortalized in a distant time, and the romanticization of the Jacobite ideol-ogy, recreated in nostalgic and benign terms."[52] As one can see from Burns's poem, which is printed below, the author places the reader squarely in the nationalistic past. However, the poem also addresses the future of Scotland and proposes that the heroes of the past (Bruce and Wallace) should serve as symbols of yet-unattained political and social freedom. As Everett observes, Burns's use of the future-tense "shall" signals a look into the future in which there exists the liberation of the sons of Scotland.[53] Burns's poem was one

that could be sung to a specific tune; however, it works perfectly fine on its own literary and linguistic merits as it captures the author's own Scottish pronunciation.

> Scots, wha hae wi' Wallace bled,
> Scots, wham Bruce has aften led,
> Welcome to your gory bed,
> Or to Victorie!
> Now's the day, and now's the hour;
> See the front o' battle lour;
> See approach proud Edward's power—
> Chains and Slaverie!
> Wha will be a traitor knave?
> Wha can fill a coward's grave?
> Wha sae base as be a Slave?
> Let him turn and flee!
> Wha, for Scotland's King and Law,
> Freedom's sword will strongly draw,
> Free-man stand, or Free-man fa',
> Let him on wi' me!
> By Oppression's woes and pains!
> By your Sons in servile chains!
> We will drain our dearest veins,
> But they shall be free!
> Lay the proud Usurpers low!
> Tyrants fall in every foe!
> Liberty's in every blow!—
> Let us Do or Die![54]

One of Scotland's most prolific writers was Sir William Scott (1771–1832), and he is primarily known for his lengthy historical novels that depict a highly romanticized notion of Scottish history, its people, and its geography. *Waverley* (1814), *Rob Roy* (1817), and *Ivanhoe* (1819) are in many ways the novels of Scott that best represent his romanticized notions of the Scottish and English past. Like a number of writers in the romantic period, Scott was very familiar with medieval literature and history. He was acquainted with a number of important medieval manuscripts (for instance, the Auchinleck Manuscript, which contains many well-known and significant medieval romances) and with the scholars who edited these texts (such as Joseph Ritson, George Ellis, and Henry Weber).[55] According to Jerome Mitchell, Barbour's *Bruce* was one of the texts that Scott knew quite well and cited often in his own works; indeed, it is referred to in two of Scott's letters: one to George Ellis in 1805 and another to Jacob Grimm in 1814, and in the latter Scott is critical of John Pinkerton's 1790 edition.[56] As John Sutherland notes, Scott was wholly consumed with his homeland, particularly during the first two

decades of the nineteenth century when he was writing the poems *The Vision of Don Roderick* (1811) and *Rokeby* (1813), for Scott was "wild about Scottish gallantry at this period. Even his new terrier (who sat on his lap while he wrote *The Vision*) was called 'Wallace.'"[57] While Scott's 1814 novel *Waverley* is set during the 1745 Jacobite Rising, the novel really addresses the unstable national and social relationship between England and Scotland. One of the characters of *Waverley*, the Baron of Bardwardine, is "the perfect example of a sympathetic portrayal of a sentimental Scottish Jacobite who reluctantly, but perhaps with relief, accepts the Hanoverian reality of Great Britain."[58] In a nuanced reading of the Baron's middle name, which is Comyne, Julian Meldon D'Arcy points out the dubious nature of this name, for it is associated with duplicitous figures in Scottish history, such as Sir John Comyn (Robert the Bruce's rival) and the earls of Menteith (originally from the Comyn family), one of whom was the elder brother of the "false Menteith" who betrayed William Wallace to Edward I in 1304.[59]

Scott's *The Lord of the Isles* (1815) is a poem in six cantos whose narrative and characters are right out of medieval romance. In fact, the primary source for the poem is Barbour's *Bruce*. In Scott's romantic verse, the character of Edith is set to marry Ronald, Lord of the Isles, at Artonish Castle, but she is unsure of his love. Three strangers sail to the castle: the brothers Robert and Edward Bruce as well as their sister, Isabel. A fight ensues, for God is on the side of King Edward I of England. The bride meanwhile disappears, and we learn that the groom has feelings for Isabel. Ronald and Robert venture to Skye, rescue a young, mute, male page (who really is Edith in disguise), and are rejoined by Robert's brother Edward. Robert discusses Ronald's feelings with his sister, and she agrees to consider his hand if he ends his relationship with Edith. Isabel, meanwhile, realizes that the young mute is really Edith in disguise. However, Edith is captured by Clifford, an English leader. She refuses to reveal her identity to her captors and is to be executed, whereupon Bruce and his army rescue her and defeat the enemy. The final canto describes the battle of Bannockburn, wherein Edith (who is still disguised as the mute male page) commands the Scottish onlookers to join in the fight. The bystanders are convinced that, since a mute has spoken, a miracle has occurred. They join in the fight, the English are defeated, Ronald and Edith marry, and Isabel (in an unusual twist) takes her holy vows so as to enter into a convent. Appended to the poem are a substantial number of Scott's own textual and historical notes, the majority of which are drawn from Pinkerton's three-volume edition (1790) of Barbour's *Bruce*. Jerome Mitchell states that the poem "owes a lot to medieval literature, not only to Barbour's *Bruce* for its historical content but to Chaucer and medieval romance for other content, general atmosphere, and matters of style and structure."[60]

Scott's own *History of Scotland* (1830) is a curious mixture of history, myth, and legend. In this work, as in his novels, there exists, as Murray G. H. Pittock has observed, a "strange dual loyalty" to "Scotland's past and Britain's present (Bruce and Wallace on the one hand, England and Empire on the

other)."[61] Scott's historical prose writings are highly descriptive and detailed, and he seems to have prided himself on the sheer amount of specific, factual information that he included in his histories. In the preface to his *History of Scotland*, Scott writes:

> Our limits oblige us to treat this interesting subject more concisely than we could wish; and we are of course under the necessity of rejecting many details which engage the attention and fascinate the imagination. We will endeavour, notwithstanding, to leave nothing untold which may be necessary to trace a clear idea of the general course of events.[62]

In his descriptions of Wallace, the Bruce, Edward I, and the Scottish wars, Scott displays an even temper, one that the humanist John Major would have admired. The divisiveness of the early medieval historians is wholly absent; rather, Scott attempts to highlight the positive qualities of the principal figures:

> Edward, on his return from the Low Countries, found himself at the head of a gallant muster of all the English chivalry, forming by far the most superb army that had ever entered Scotland. Wallace acted with great sagacity, and, according to a plan which often before and after proved successful in Scottish warfare, laid waste the intermediate country between Stirling and the frontiers, and withdrew towards the centre of the kingdom to receive the English attack, when their army should be exhausted by privation.
>   Edward pressed on with characteristic hardihood and resolution. Tower and town fell before him: but his advance was not without such inconvenience and danger as a less determined monarch would have esteemed a good apology for retreat.[63]

Scott does not divulge the gory details of Wallace's death, but he does conclude with some moving words on the place of the Scottish outlaw in the country's history:

> Thus died this courageous patriot, leaving a remembrance which will be immortal in the hearts of his countrymen. This steady champion of independence having been removed, and a bloody example held out to all who should venture to tread in his footsteps, Edward proceeded to form a species of constitution for the country, which, at the cost of so much labor, policy, and bloodshed, he had at length, as he conceived, united for ever with the English crown.[64]

This populist reading of historical events was almost certainly written for the general reading public. Scott himself was a rather self-assured individual and, like Mark Twain, a great spokesman for his literary output. He was also

rather honest about the limitations of his *History of Scotland*: "I have not the least doubt that I will make a popular book, for I trust it will be both interesting and useful; but I never intended to engage in any proper historical labor, for which I have neither time, talent, nor inclination."[65] Scott also saw the importance of his history books for adolescent readers, and so a series called *Tales of a Grandfather* was soon created that would make Scott's historical novels more appropriate for a younger reading audience. As the editor of *Tales of a Grandfather: Being the History of Scotland* (1831), Edwin Ginn states that the "present work has been slightly abridged by the omission of detailed descriptions of some of the more barbarous cruelties of those times and other important matter."[66] What Scott does add to his children's book to make it livelier than his adult version is a heavy dose of dialogue, which, at times, reads right out of a modern comic book or an action movie:

> "Go back to Warenne," said Wallace, "and tell him we value not the pardon of the King Of England. We are not here for the purpose of treating of peace, but for abiding battle, and of restoring freedom to our country. Let the English come on;—we defy them to their very beards!"[67]

Schoolchildren who read this account of Wallace and Scott's later chapter on Robert the Bruce would have been impressed (and understandably so) by the exploits and characters of both figures. Scott's narrative of the Bruce's (possibly legendary) encounter with a spider became a central moment in the hero's biographical narrative. The story is as follows: In 1306 the Bruce was a discouraged fugitive, apparently unable to gain the throne. He happened to observe a spider that was trying to attach its web to a beam; after several attempts, the spider succeeded.[68] This determination on the spider's part encouraged Bruce to try harder for the throne and for the freedom of his country. The moralizing and didactic nature of this episode must have been prime fodder for schoolteachers and children alike.

The early nineteenth century also saw a handful of literary reinterpretations of the Wallace figure and legend. In 1802, John Finlay's *Wallace; or the Vale of Ellerslie* was first published in Glasgow, and the text went through three revised and expanded editions; in 1809, Margaret Holford published *Wallace, or the Battle of Falkirk*; in 1810, Jane Porter's commercially successful romance novel *The Scottish Chiefs* appeared;[69] and, in 1813, R. P. Gillies had his *Wallace; a fragment* published.[70]

In 1819, the literary journal *Blackwood's* announced a contest for the best work in verse or prose on William Wallace. The top three submissions came from Felicia Hemans (who won first prize and £25), James Hogg, and Joanna Baillie. As Nancy Moore Goslee has noted, these three poems, and the aim of the competition, "show how subtle and complex such reinterpretations" of a pan-British narrative of a heroic nature can be, and that in these three poems "the medieval struggle for Scottish independence against England comes to stand for the modern struggle for British liberty against Napoleonic tyranny,"

and in a post-Waterloo environment they can also represent a struggle for "individual civil liberties."[71]

Wallace and Bruce continued to be the focus of other forms of art, both high and popular. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the icons became the centerpieces of musical compositions, paintings, and films.

WILLIAM WALLACE AND ROBERT THE BRUCE AS SCOTTISH POLITICAL SYMBOLS

Both William Wallace and Robert the Bruce have had a long-standing role in the formation of Scottish political organizations and of the dissemination of their ideologies. Some cultural critics and political scientists have viewed this appropriation of their native Scottish men as a prime example of political propaganda. While the images and historical narratives of the two were obviously exploited for political gains, the vast majority of Scots (and especially the politicians) during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries sought to cool the heated political rhetoric that had existed for centuries between England and its northern neighbor.

Between 1852 and 1856, the National Association for the Vindication of Scottish Rights (NAVSR), which was formed by two brothers, James and John Grant, "used their literary skills to produce a myriad of pamphlets, petitions and newspaper contributions to make their case that Scotland's right as a nation, not a region of Britain, should be recognized in complete equality with England in matters of taxation, expenditure and parliamentary time."[72] As Graeme Morton has observed, the NAVSR focused on the Union of 1707, when Scottish rights were established as being equal with English rights; now, the political party spoke of the union of British and English heroes as a link between England and Scotland: "We glory in the triumph of a Marlborough, a Nelson and a Wellington, but might we not look with pride to the achievements of a Wallace and a Bruce?"[73]

Formed in 1886, the Scottish Home Rule Association (SHRA) was active in the distribution of its literature much like the NAVSR, and it members were very much Unionists who now "argued for federalism" through the Liberal Party.[74] In the wake of deep involvement in Ireland's cause for home rule, in 1896 the publication *Scottish Highlander* printed an article in which the SHRA's Theodore Napier used Wallace and the Bruce to refocus and energize the organization's members:

> [Scottish people nowadays] are more interested in a football or golf match than in the political welfare and freedom of their country. Was it for this our great hero-patriot Wallace struggled for so long and lost his life? Was it not for the object of delivering Scotland from English aggression and predominance? Do we not hail Bruce as the successful champion of our independence from English thralldom? And yet we have

basely surrendered our political freedom to England. For a country that does not govern itself cannot be regarded as free.[75]

Throughout the rest of 1896, various publications such as the *Scottish Highlander* and the *Montrose Review* carried inspirational poetry that celebrated Wallace and the Bruce as patriotic Scots. It was also in this year that the SHRA marked the anniversary of Bannockburn and the Bruce's victory with a seven-verse poem that was read on the battlefield at Bannockburn. In a keen political move, the poem celebrates both Wallace's victory and the Bruce's victory in 1314, even though Wallace was executed in 1305. As Morton has commented, this poem and its performance marked "the now orthodox view that it was Bruce who avenged the death of Wallace, and completed his work."[76]

The Scottish National Party (SNP) was formed in 1934. In an inflammatory nationalistic speech in 1943, the party's leader, Professor Douglas Young, invoked Wallace to object to the conscription of Scotsmen into the British army:

> Wallace was against union with England, not merely because England was a feudal state (that is, a state run by the police and the bureaucracy in the interests of the landlords and the financiers), but because the English are a different nation. Wallace suffered martyrdom, in the most bestial way which the King of England could contrive, because he refused to stop doing the job that the Scots had committed to him, namely, to defend the freedom of the Scots nation in arms. . . .
>
> Wallace died for Scottish nationhood, the greatest tribute and honour he could pay. The degenerate posterity of 1707 abandoned the cause of Scotland, Wallace's cause, for a share of the proceeds of London's overseas financial exploitation. . . .
>
> William Wallace would never have believed that a day could come when Scotsmen would be hauled off like sheep to defend far-flung tracts of the London profiteer's empire, while the defense of the Scottish homeland was committed to the polyglot and heterogeneous influx of Poles, Czechs, Anglo-Saxons, Negroes and other species. Incidentally, conscription furth of Scotland is unconstitutional under the Scots-English Treaty of 1707, which instituted a lamentable affair called Great Britain.[77]

Following World War II, however, neither Wallace nor the Bruce was frequently referenced by Scottish politicians, and not until Mel Gibson's film *Braveheart* were these icons again seen as symbols of Scottish political power.

WILLIAM WALLACE AND ROBERT THE BRUCE IN CLASSICAL MUSIC

As we have seen in Burns's poem, Wallace and the Bruce were often the inspiration behind literary works that contained an element of song. Indeed, in the

early twentieth century, two composers were themselves so much influenced by the pair that they created extended pieces of music that focused on the individuals' character.

William Wallace (1860–1940) hailed from Greenock, Scotland, and, after qualifying as an ophthalmic surgeon, turned to music and studied at the Royal Academy of Music in London. The year 1905 marked the 600th anniversary of the death of William Wallace, and his musical namesake seized upon the opportunity to create an orchestral work that combined elements from the classical tradition—Wallace the composer was influenced by Richard Wagner and Franz Liszt—as well as Scottish folk songs. The work that Wallace created was titled *Sir William Wallace: Scottish Hero, freedom-fighter; beheaded and dismembered by the English (Symphonic Poem No. 5)*. Its premiere was September 19, 1905, at a Queen's Hall Promenade Concert under the direction of Sir Henry Wood.[78] The music is forceful at times, because it is in many ways a celebration of the outlaw hero's power, might, and courage. The main theme of the work is derived from "Scots wha hae" in which it fully emerges "in a blaze of glory."[79] As Everett notes, the celebration at the end of Wallace's symphonic poem does not address his namesake's torture and execution, but instead the close of the piece is a celebration of "Britishness in the spirit of Burns and Scott and does not dwell on the Scottish-English conflict which resulted in Wallace's execution."[80] In 1996, the well-respected classical label Hyperion released on CD two newly recorded performances of works by Wallace, one of which, *William Wallace: Symphonic Poems,* performed by the Glasgow BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra conducted by Martyn Brabbins, contains the piece *Sir William Wallace*.[81]

Frederick James Simpson (1856–?) was a contemporary of the composer William Wallace. He was brought up in Portobello, Scotland, and educated at Edinburgh Academy and later in England, Switzerland, and Germany. After Simpson returned from Germany, he entered the National Training School, which later became the Royal College of Music.[82] Simpson's symphony *Robert the Bruce* was performed but apparently never published. It received its premiere at the Crystal Palace Concerts on November 2, 1889, and it too included the tune of "Scots wha hae" as its principal musical theme.[83] Simpson's works that were published, such as *Coronach from the Lady of the Lake* (1891) and *Old English Songs Arranged for Three Voices* (1894), also show his interest in medieval culture.

WILLIAM WALLACE AND ROBERT THE BRUCE IN ART

The various paintings that depict William Wallace and Robert the Bruce are in many ways the most iconographic references that we have. One of the oldest and most significant surviving portraits of Wallace is a pencil sketch by David Steuart Erskine, the eleventh earl of Buchan (1742–1829). It is supposedly based on a medieval original, and Wallace "takes the form of a bearded

warrior with a dragon on top of his helmet."[84] The piece is housed in the Scottish National Portrait Gallery in Edinburgh.

The scene in Sir William Allan's *Heroism and Humanity: An Incident in the Life of Robert the Bruce* (1840; Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum, Glasgow) depicts the king with his right hand raised to heaven in denunciation of those who have abandoned a woman who has just given birth. The topic is apparently based not on any historical moment but on an incident in Scott's *Tales of a Grandfather: Being the History of Scotland*. According to Scott, while the Bruce was in Ireland on campaign, he was forced to retreat; however, he discovered that a laundress who was with his force had just given birth, and so instead of leaving her behind and at the mercy of the English army, the Bruce rallied his troops to fight. John Morrison comments that this work displays the Bruce as the "embodiment of nobility and, as the title indicates, humanity. It was these qualities, Allan suggests, that motivated the heroes of the Wars of Independence and allowed Scotland to emerge unconquered to take an honourable place alongside England, rather than subject to it."[85] Phillip's *Bruce About to Receive the Sacrament on the Morning Previous to the Battle of Bannockburn* (1843; The Mechanics' Institute, Brechin, Angus, Scotland) stresses the Bruce's "saintly character," and the presentation aligns him within the British heroic tradition rather than a "singularly Scottish one."[86] In the twentieth century, Stewart Carmichael (1867–1950) captured the mystical elements of the Bruce. His 1943 oil *Robert the Bruce Receiving the Wallace Sword from the Sprit of Scotland* (sold at Christie's, London, November 25, 2004, to the Stirling Smith Art Gallery and Museum, Stirling, Scotland) depicts the king kneeling and receiving the sword from a "Lady of the Lake"-type figure.

ROBERT THE BRUCE AND WILLIAM WALLACE
IN THE NOVELS OF NIGEL TRANTER

Nigel Tranter (1909–2000) was an author of a variety of types of written work, from histories, to children's works, to historical fiction, to Westerns. He was born in Glasgow, and a number of his best-known books focus on Scotland—its land, people, and architecture.

In 1969, Tranter published the first of three books that would become *The Bruce Trilogy*. *Robert the Bruce: The Steps to the Empty Throne* was soon followed in 1970 by *Robert the Bruce: The Path of the Hero King*. The third and final installment, *Robert the Bruce: The Price of the King's Peace*, was published in 1971. All three books sold extremely well, but the reviews were mixed. Robert the Bruce was and remains a national hero in Scotland. Tranter, as he did with a number of his protagonists, wrote the Bruce and "all his heroes largely out of his own experience, posing the question, 'What would *I* have done?'"[87] As a work of historical fiction, *The Bruce Trilogy* largely succeeds in its presentation of the Bruce as a complex figure.

Tranter went on to write about the exploits of William Wallace. In *The Wallace,* published in 1975, he was able to give a larger stage to a figure who was given a limited role in *The Bruce Trilogy*. Tranter believed that Wallace was a greater hero than the Bruce, for while the latter fought for "a throne, Wallace fought for a nobler cause, for liberty and the idea of nationhood."[88] Wallace's capture, his procession to and through London, and his torture and eventual death are, in the hands of Tranter, moments of real tension, despair, and pathos.

MEL GIBSON'S *BRAVEHEART* (1995)

No recent cultural artifact has had a greater influence upon the public's perception of both William Wallace and Robert the Bruce than Mel Gibson's 1995 film *Braveheart*, scripted by Randall Wallace. The film was nominated for 10 Academy Awards and won 5 of them. John Toll won the Oscar for Best Cinematography, Gibson won Best Director, and the film took home Best Picture. While the film could not really be considered a blockbuster (it earned around $75.5 million at the box office in the United States and $133.4 million internationally), it seems to be in constant rotation on cable channels in the United States.[89] And even though its running time of 177 minutes may be a tad too long for those audiences whose ability to remain focused and attentive is lacking or limited, Gibson's film has enough action, romance, gore, and shouting to capture viewers' attention.

Even today, it is not hard to see why the film was so popular among critics as well as audiences. First and foremost, we have Gibson as Wallace himself. As a leading Hollywood star for the better part of the 1990s, Gibson was and remains firmly entrenched within Western popular culture (though in recent years he has become more notorious for his behavior and disparaging comments about homosexuals, women, African Americans, and Jews). Early in his career, he had starred in a handful of critically well-received films, such as *Gallipoli* (1981) and *The Year of Living Dangerously* (1982). The *Mad Max* and the *Lethal Weapon* films, however, propelled him into the spotlight as a box-office draw and a leading man who equaled in many ways Harrison Ford's popularity of the 1980s and 1990s. *Braveheart* was the film that gave Gibson both critical and commercial success. And because *Braveheart* is so firmly ingrained within our popular culture, it is difficult for many to see Gibson as anything other than the fighter/lover that he created in his character of William Wallace.

Like Blind Hary's *Wallace,* Gibson's *Braveheart* is an interesting mixture of fantasy, history, folklore, legend, romance, and artistic bravado, though much of the history in the film is seriously flawed.[90] Moreover, as a film, Gibson tried to do far too much with the life and times of Wallace, even with the film's almost three-hour running time.

The film begins with an interesting back story of the murder of Wallace's father and brother at the hands of the English. As a result, young William is

sent to live with his learned uncle. Some 20 years later, Wallace returns to his native village; he is now fluent in a handful of foreign languages (which comes in handy when trying to court his childhood crush), and he knows of the arts of war and government (which comes in handy when he decides to fight the English and join forces with Robert the Bruce). The turning point in the film occurs early. Wallace's love Murron (played by Catherine McCormack) is publicly executed for her assault on one of the king's soldiers who attempted to rape her. It seems that there was a conscious effort by the filmmakers not to name her "Marion," as Hary does in his poem; after all, Robin Hood's love interest is Maid Marion/Marian, and confusion might have set in. Wallace revenges this act by killing the English garrison commander who had executed Murron, and thus begins a series of well-orchestrated battles both large and small.

The clean-shaven, blue-eyed Wallace of Gibson's film is a stark visual contrast to his enemies and even his supporters, and the outlaw's exterior is almost certainly one of the many ahistorical elements of the film. Wallace's fellow Scottish nationals are almost all bearded, and the Irish force presents a rugged appearance. Gibson's exterior, including his two-toned painted face at the battle of Stirling Bridge, allows his face to stand out as the hero of the narrative's. In contrast, of course, is Edward I, "Longshanks," as portrayed in menacing style by Patrick McGoohan, who is complete with fierce eyes, severe countenance, and an almost pathological personality.

Gibson's choice to portray the blood and nastiness of warfare in a number of the battles but to eschew the gore of Wallace's execution was an interesting move. The scene had been filmed in graphic detail, but test audience reaction was negative. Thus, in the final version for cinema release, while we do see Wallace on the rack and witness one of the torturers wield the hook that will disembowel the hero, the camera focuses on faces: those of Wallace, the crowd (which at first delights in the torture), Wallace's cloaked supporters in the square, the executioner, a gravely ill Longshanks, and the loves of the hero: Princess Isabelle (played by Sophie Marceau) and the ghost/hallucination of Murron. Gibson's Wallace shows no weakness whatsoever in the film; even in death, he is strong and heroic. The death of Wallace in Gibson's film is in many ways Christ-like. Indeed, many of the shots and framings that the filmmaker used in the execution scenes were again used in the torture and crucifixion scenes in his later movie *The Passion of the Christ* (2004). The possible conflation of these two filmic interpretations of historical figures is inherently problematic.

The story of Robert the Bruce in *Braveheart* is pushed to the backburner (behind Wallace's military exploits and the two romantic subplots), even though this is a film that is ostensibly about Scotland's freedom from English governance and oppression. The Bruce is played by Scotland's own Angus MacFadyen. The voiceover that begins the film is the voice of the Bruce; however, the audience does not yet know this. In this narration, the character of Robert the Bruce addresses the issues of historical truth, though not

convincingly: "Historians of England will say I am a liar. History is writ-
ten by those who have hanged heroes." Some, like Władysław Witalisz, have
interpreted this voiceover as a means for filmmakers, much like medieval
historical writers, to give themselves open license to interpret and represent
history as they see fit: "From the beginning of the film, when the narrator as-
sumes his critical stance toward written history," the audience participates in
or listens to "an official, private story. The character of the hero is thus made
more real and tangible, unlike the hypostatized figures of epic and heroic
discourse."[91] Perhaps the character of Robert the Bruce can be interpreted
by audiences as more "realistic" than Wallace; however, we are still working
within the medium of film, in which representation and interpretation are
highly subjective.

That Gibson's film begins with Robert the Bruce's narration and ends with
his first charge at the battle of Bannockburn is a fine example of film unity and
cohesion. In the final scene, the Bruce is shown caressing Wallace's love token,
which he has hidden inside his armor. This is the same embroidered kerchief
that Murron gave to Wallace and which he let fall the instant the axe came
down on his neck. Apparently, the Wallace's supporters were able to smuggle
it out. It is a rather odd moment, and it is one of many ahistorical details that
appear to be added for the sake of sentimentality, romance, and nostalgia. The
final scene of the film is, in many ways, an open door for a possible sequel.
After all, the real success story of Scottish independence is not Wallace's but
rather that of Robert the Bruce. The Bruce's story, apparently, does not present
the fodder for an appealing Hollywood story: he was not as much an underdog
as Wallace was, his historical personage is at times duplicitous and sinister, and
there are far too many concrete details of his life (as opposed to Wallace's life
and times, which is itself based mainly on legend and historical literature).

Upon the film's release, it was met with cheers and jeers from a variety of
political and social movements that saw something uplifting or offensive in
the film and its characters. Michael Sharp has noted that the Scottish National
Party (SNP) seized upon the emotional and rational argument for Scottish in-
dependence but that in the United States the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against
Defamation (GLAAD) staged numerous protests in which the organization
objected to the depiction of Edward II, which was seen as homophobic.[92]
Sharp argues, indeed convincingly so, that Gibson plays Wallace and the Scots
as natural in their sexuality, while the English are a collection of closeted gays,
rapists, men who are keen on incest, and misogynists. According to Sharp, the
film uses women "to mark Wallace as fair, honest, and enlightened, and to
mark the English as abusive and duplicitous."[93] The union of Wallace and Isa-
belle in the film is one that suggests how Scotland may indeed persevere and
overcome England. In a remarkable turn, Isabelle informs Longshanks on his
deathbed that the child whom she is carrying is perhaps Wallace's, since ap-
parently the prince could not impregnate her. Thus, Wallace and the Scots can
beat England externally on the field of battle and also biologically through an
apparently half-Scottish illegitimate heir to the throne of England.[94]

In the end, *Braveheart* is one more repository of semi- and non-historical evidence for the lives of William Wallace and Robert the Bruce. The outlawed Wallace and his guerrilla army are portrayed is such a favorable light that audience members often delight in the savagery on the field of battle that is inflicted upon the English. The iconic image of Gibson's two-toned face, sword in hand, may in fact become the dominant image that comes to be associated with the Scottish outlaw. Gibson's film did indeed bring the figure back into the public consciousness. Just as there are few who wish to read the adventures of Robin Hood in Middle English, there are perhaps fewer still who wish (or can) read Wallace's acts and deeds in Middle Scots. In many respects, the dissemination of the narratives of the two Scottish national heroes in *Braveheart* has made the icons more accessible and available to a far wider audience than any previous medium was able to do. Part of the popularity of the icons today (and especially Wallace) can be attributed to the power of film and its ability to connect with a global audience.

THE BRUCE (1996)

The year after the release of *Braveheart* appeared a rather different sort of film, *The Bruce,* that was based on the story of Robert the Bruce. This full-length feature film was produced by Cromwell Productions, an independent filmmaking company known primarily for documentary videos on historical topics, and released on VHS. *The Bruce* was made on a shoestring budget of approximately $500,000 (*Braveheart*'s was approximately $53 million), partially raised by guaranteeing small investors from the general public parts as extras in the battle scenes. The film was directed by Bob Carruthers and David McWhinnie and featured Sandy Welch, a minor Scottish actor (mainly on TV), as Robert the Bruce. Oliver Reed as Bishop "Wisharton"[95] and Brian Blessed as a booming King Edward I added some name recognition to the cast. Despite the best intentions, *The Bruce* cannot be judged a success. The script is often melodramatic; the acting is generally poor, as are the sound quality, continuity, and other production values; the battle scenes are not as impressive as the filmmakers claimed; and unnecessary liberties are taken with historical facts and events. Nevertheless, *The Bruce* remains interesting as a cheap, almost homemade foil to the expensive, Hollywood *Braveheart*.

GRAVE DIGGER AND THE ICONS

In the years following Gibson's film, other forms of media have revisited the Scottish icons but have done so mainly through the lens of *Braveheart*. Rather than start anew, filmmakers, television writers and producers, and musicians have gone to *Braveheart* for inspiration on the Scottish outlaw. One of the more interesting products of this reductive method of creativity, in which the

source for Wallace and the Bruce is not the primary documents but rather a filmic representation that is itself far removed from pure history (and is in many cases ahistorical), is the concept album *Tunes of War* (1996) from the German heavy-metal band Grave Digger. The album is a retelling of the Scottish fight for independence and the early history of Scotland. With song titles such as "Scotland United," "The Bruce," and "Cry for Freedom (James VI)," it is obvious that the band has put its ideology squarely behind Scotland's right.

The music on this album, as on most of Grave Digger's efforts, is characterized by intense guitar riffs and rapid drumming interspersed with introspective, dramatic, and cathartic moments. A synthesized bagpipe sound even makes an appearance. The heavy-handedness of the material is, perhaps, understandable; after all, this is heavy metal and not chamber music. What is interesting, though, is that this is a German band and not a Scottish one. Much like King Arthur and even Robin Hood, the Scottish icons have become a global phenomenon.

BRAVEHEART AND THE AMERICAN SOUTH

After the release of *Braveheart*, the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), a nonprofit organization based in Montgomery, Alabama, that tracks hate groups in the United States and prosecutes them, identified the film as being extremely popular among certain white supremacist groups and neo-Confederates. One such fan of the film is Louis Beam, a former Ku Klux Klan leader from Texas.[96] Beam predicted that the film "may well become a movement piece de resistance for Christian Patriots."[97] Euan Hague has noted that right-wing organizations in the southern United States have also attempted to link Gibson's Wallace with the founder of the Klan: "In 1996, Clyde Wilson, a director of the right wing secessionist neo-Confederate organization the League of the South, told delegates at his political movement's annual conference to 'Imagine the film of our *Braveheart*: The Life of General Nathan Bedford Forrest.'"[98] In an analysis of neo-Confederate behavior and attitudes in the South, the SPLC identifies certain Celtic traits that many white supremacists and neo-Confederates would like to appropriate. They see Gibson's film as a perfect source:

Popular films like *Braveheart* have been interpreted by neo-Confederates as mirror images of their own struggles and proponents of the Celtic South thesis simplistically conflate Confederate with Celtic. Within this interpretation, Celtic culture is assumed to be genetic and evidence of supposedly Celtic behavior (fighting, drinking, emotional reactions, clannishness, disdain for authority, etc.) is taken as proof of Celtic ancestry. In turn, Celtic ancestry legitimates these supposedly Celtic behaviors, practices that are typically understood to be unchanged since the Bronze

Age. This Celtic culture and ethnicity is understood by neo-Confederates to be under attack from a mainstream U.S. policy that favors non-white ethnicities over others. Proponents maintain that malevolent actors are deliberately committing "cultural genocide" against the "Anglo-Celtic" white southern population. Invoking the language of multiculturalism and self-determination, neo-Confederates demand the right to pursue and preserve their own culture in their own communities. When coupled with neo-Confederate beliefs about the ideal unit of self-governance, the result is an intellectualized argument for racially homogeneous and ethnically segregated self-sufficient communities.

One of the most troubling aspects of neo-Confederacy is how proponents understand the relationship between culture and ethnicity. What is lauded in the "Anglo-Celtic" population (e.g. violent masculinity) is derided in other ethnic groups, particularly those of African descent. Neo-Confederacy proposes the antiquated position that cultures do not change over time. The behaviors of "Celtic" peoples in the seventeenth and eighteenth century British Isles are understood to have been transmitted intact to the southern states of the U.S.A.[99]

Colin McArthur is quick to remind us that not all of those living within the southern United States share this hatred and that reports such as the one above "have a tendency to over-dramatize the American appropriation of *Braveheart* by concentrating on its being embraced by the most extreme of the Southern groups. . . . What tends to be elided is the diversity of the 'real' South."[100] However, Mark Potok, director of the SPLC, states that the Klan is not the only hate group in the United States that has used the film for nefarious means. Militia groups have also grown attached to the film: "That film is on the shelf of every white supremacist in America. . . . The Christian Identity and Klan groups have always believed the Celts are the most racially pure, but the neo-Nazis, by definition not Christian, really got into Scotland after *Braveheart*. Now it's often a focal point for discussions."[101]

THE NATIONAL WALLACE MONUMENT

In 1859, a competition was held in Scotland for architects to submit plans for the creation of a national monument that sought to honor and commemorate the battle of Stirling Bridge. John Thomas Rochead (1814–1878) was chosen winner among 76 entrants, and the monument was completed in 1869 at a cost of £18,000 on the Abbey Craig near Stirling.[102] The monument is 220 feet tall and made of sandstone, and from the top of the observation area one can view the field of Stirling where Edward I's forces were said to have organized. James Coleman has argued that, from the inception of the monument, the site has become a place where Wallace's role in Scottish nationalism has been misinterpreted. Coleman argues that we should "shrug

off this post-*Braveheart* image of William Wallace and its associations with modern Scottish nationalism" and reexamine the monument in light of its original political context in the nineteenth century, where it marked "the patriot-hero's achievement of independence for Scotland and to commemorate what he had done for the Union and the Empire."[103] Coleman's point is duly taken; however, the popularity and staying power of Gibson's film makes the scholar's argument (though valid) less likely to be actualized.

In 1996, Tom Church, a stonemason, sculpted a 13-foot, 12-ton statue of Wallace that was directly based on Gibson's character, and this was placed in the monument's parking lot at the foot of Abbey Craig. Most visitors, critics, and Scots apparently disliked the piece. On the figure's shield is the word "Braveheart," and his mouth is open as if shouting a battle cry, in a way that definitely recalls Gibson's Wallace. Andrew Ross has alluded to the commercialization of the monument in recent years, noting that the "Disney touch is evident in an audiovisual 'talking head' display that dramatizes dialogues between Wallace and his antagonists."[104] The National Monument also has a "Legends Coffee House/Gift Shop," where one can relax, have a cappuccino, and take in the view of the (now cleaned-up) battlefield. The creation of this eatery forced the removal of Church's statue in 2008; it went back to the artist's residence after he put it up for auction and received no bids.[105]

CONSUMING THE ICONS

In the very strange collision of postmodernism, iconography, fetishism, and our consumer culture, one can now ingest a little bit of both Wallace and the Bruce—well, in theory at least. The robust nature of these two icons has even made its way into the beverage industry. The Bridge of Allan Brewery, Ltd., in Scotland brews a year-round Scottish ale simply called "William Wallace." Other beers in the company's line include more (of course!) Scottish ales: "Bannockburn," "Stirling Brig 1297," and "Sheriffmuir" (named after the battle in the Jacobite Rising of 1715). These can be purchased at the gift shop at the National Monument. Maclay Inns, Ltd., in Alloa, Scotland, brews an India pale ale (IPA) simply called "Wallace"; that this is an IPA, an ale that was originally brewed in England for export to the British in India during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, is interesting when one considers the history of English "colonialism" in Scotland. The Three Floyds Brewery in Munster, Indiana, has a decidedly strong reputation among lovers of quality beer. Their award-winning "Robert the Bruce Scottish Ale" is a mahogany-colored, malty ale with hints of chocolate and caramel; it is also available in a very limited barrel-aged version that has a significantly higher alcohol content by volume. The illustration of the Bruce on the label is less stern and warlike than the Wallace-themed images on other bottles and is more comical: bearded, in armor and with a crown on his head, sporting a big and somewhat mischievous grin, the Bruce is raising his foaming tankard in one hand while

holding a small hatchet in the other. Duncans, an erstwhile chocolate company in Scotland (now owned by an English firm and relocated to the north of England), once made a chocolate bar in honor of Wallace: "Independence."[106] Of course we will never know what the Bruce and Wallace would have thought of all of this; indeed, neither one had access to chocolate in their lifetimes. Many replica versions of Wallace's *Braveheart* sword are available for purchase; had *Braveheart* not received an "R" rating, perhaps the movie would have spawned a line of toys.

CONCLUSION

The Scottish chronicler Andrew of Wyntoun, an Augustinian canon of Saint Serfs Inch on an island in Loch Leven, wrote around 1420 of Wallace in such a manner that is still very much the image of the outlaw today:

> In all Ingland þare wes nocht þan
> As William Wallace a lelare man.
> That he did agane þe nation,
> Thai maid him prouocation;
> Na to þaim oblist neuer wes he
> Off faith, fallowschip, na lawte;
> For in his tyme, as I herd say,
> That fals and fekill þai were of fay.[107]

> [In all England there was not then a more loyal man than William Wallace. That which he did against the nation [i.e., England], they gave him provocation; not to them did he ever make a pledge of faith, fellowship, nor loyalty; for in his time, as I heard say, that they were false and fickle of their faithfulness.]

Both Robert the Bruce and William Wallace continue to inspire, and both icons it seems are forever embedded in the conscious (or unconscious) mind of those who strive for an independent voice. Whether that voice is for Scottish independence or for the re-secession of the Southern states from the United States of America, it does not matter. Popular culture has been rather kind to Wallace and, considering the Bruce's many shortcomings, he too has benefitted from a rather rosy reappraisal in popular fiction and film. In the United States in particular, whose citizens almost unanimously prefer the underdog, both men, but especially the outlaw Wallace, still resonate with readers and viewers. Like Robin Hood, each generation has a slightly different Wallace and the Bruce. It will be interesting to see whether Gibson's film will be the final popular statement on both icons or whether other filmmakers and writers will craft new versions of these icons that will inspire future generations.

NOTES

1. David Cornell, *Bannockburn: The Triumph of Robert the Bruce* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009), 253.

2. G.W.S. Barrow, *Robert Bruce and the Community of the Realm of Scotland* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1988), 323–24. The heart was discovered in 1920, but the site of its reburial was not marked. In 1996, a casket containing a human heart was unearthed during construction work at the abbey. It was reburied in Melrose Abbey in 1998.

3. Andrew Fisher, *William Wallace* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2007), 14.

4. A.A.M. Duncan, "William, Son of Alan Wallace: The Documents," in *The Wallace Book,* ed. Edward J. Cowan (Edinburgh: John Donald, 2007), 42–63 at 50.

5. *Hary's Wallace (Vita Nobilissimi Defensoris Scotie Wilelmi Wallace Militis),* ed. Matthew P. McDiarmid, 2 vols., Scottish Text Society, Fourth Series, 4, 5 (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1968–69), 1:1–16.

6. Fisher, *Wallace*, 106.

7. Ibid.

8. Antonia Gransden, *Historical Writing in England I: c. 550 to c. 1307* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974; repr. London: Routledge, 1996), 480.

9. Ibid.

10. *The Chronicle of Peter Langtoft,* ed. and trans. Thomas Wright, 2 vols., Rolls Series 47 (London: Longmans, 1866–68), 2:253.

11. Ibid., 2: 263, 265. A "gonfanon" was a small flag that was attached to the steel head of a knight's lance.

12. Translation quoted in D. J. Gray, *William Wallace: The King's Enemy* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1991), 152.

13. R. James Goldstein, *The Matter of Scotland: Historical Narrative in Medieval Scotland* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993), 270.

14. *Chronicle of Peter Langtoft*, ed. Wright, 2: 373.

15. *The Political Songs of England, from the Reign of John to that of Edward II,* ed. and trans. Thomas Wright, Camden Society, OS 6 (London: J. B. Nichols and Son, 1839), 159–79.

16. Ibid., 166–67, 173.

17. Ibid., 261; the text of the poem is on 262–67.

18. Ibid., 265.

19. *Barbour's Bruce: A Fredome is a Noble Thing!* ed. Matthew P. McDiarmid and James A. C. Stevenson, 3 vols., The Scottish Text Society, 4th Series, 12, 13, 15 (Edinburgh: Blackwood, Pillans, and Wilson, 1980–85), 1:3.

20. Ibid., 1:7.

21. Ibid., 1:9–10.

22. Ibid., 1:50.

23. Walter Scheps, introd. and trans., "From the Acts and Deeds of William Wallace," in *Medieval Outlaws: Twelve Tales in Modern English Translation, Revised and Expanded Edition,* ed. Thomas H. Ohlgren (West Lafayette, IN: Parlor Press, 2005), 420–69 at 423.

24. McDiarmid, *Hary's Wallace,* 1: xvi.

25. Ibid., 1: xxiv–xxxviii.

26. Ibid., 1: xxxviii–xlvi.

27.   Ibid., 1: lviii.

28.   Ibid., 1: xxxiii.

29.   Ibid., 1: lix.

30.   Walter Scheps, "The Literary Nature of Blind Harry's *Wallace*" (PhD diss., University of Oregon, 1966), 135.

31.   Goldstein, *Matter,* 250.

32.   McDiarmid, *Hary's Wallace,* 1: xxxvii–xxxviii.

33.   Ibid., 2: 38, line 1225. Hary's measurement is reckoned as nine-quarters of the Scots ell of 37 inches.

34.   Ibid., 2: 39, lines 1241–42.

35.   Ibid., 2: 120, lines 1393–94.

36.   Richard J. Moll, "'Off quhat nacion art thow?' National Identity in Blind Hary's *Wallace,*" in *History, Literature, and Music in Scotland, 700–1560*, ed. R. Andrew McDonald (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 120–43 at 138.

37.   John Major, *Historia Majoris Britanniae* (Paris: Josse Badius, 1521).

38.   John Major, *A History of Greater Britain as well England as Scotland*, trans. and ed. Archibald Constable, Publications of the Scottish History Society 10 (Edinburgh: University Press, 1892), xxi.

39.   Ibid., xxii.

40.   Ibid., xxiv.

41.   Ibid., 193.

42.   Ibid., 194.

43.   Ibid.

44.   Ibid., 196.

45.   Ibid.

46.   Ibid., 195 n. 1.

47.   Ibid., 195.

48.   Ibid., 196.

49.   Ibid., 205.

50.   William Wordsworth, *The Prelude: The Four Texts (1798, 1799, 1805, 1850)*, ed. Jonathan Wordsworth (London: Penguin Books, 1995), 49, lines 214–20.

51.   Dorothy Wordsworth, *Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth*, ed. E. de Selincourt. 2 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1952), 1: 228.

52.   William A. Everett, "National Themes in Scottish Art Music, ca. 1880–1990," *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music* 30, no. 2 (1999): 151–71 at 159. See also Anne Dhu Shapiro, "Sounds of Scotland," *American Music* 8, no. 1 (1990): 71–83.

53.   Carol McGuirk, "Jacobite History to National Song: Robert Burns and Carolina Oliphant (Baroness Nairne)," *The Eighteenth Century* 47, no. 2/3 (2006): 253–87 at 261.

54.   Robert Burns, *The Poems and Songs of Robert Burns* (London: J. M. Dent), 457–58.

55.   Jerome Mitchell, *Scott, Chaucer, and Medieval Romance: A Study in Sir Walter Scott's Indebtedness to the Literature of the Middle Ages* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1987), 1–10.

56.   Ibid., 14.

57.   John Sutherland, *The Life of Walter Scott: A Critical Biography* (London: Blackwell, 1997), 159.

58. Julian Meldon D'Arcy, *Subversive Scott: The Waverley Novels and Scottish Nationalism* (Reykjavík: University of Iceland Press, 2005), 66.

59. Ibid., 67.

60. Mitchell, *Scott, Chaucer, and Medieval Romance*, 79.

61. Murray G. H. Pittock, *The Invention of Scotland: The Stuart Myth and the Scottish Identity* (London: Routledge, 1991), 54.

62. Walter Scott, *The History of Scotland*, 2 vols. (London: Longman, 1830), 1:1.

63. Ibid., 1:74.

64. Ibid., 1:80.

65. John Constable, *John Constable's Correspondence*, ed. Ronald Brymer Beckett, 6 vols. (London: H. M. Stationary Office, 1962–68), 3:93.

66. Walter Scott, *Tales of a Grandfather: Being the History of Scotland*, ed. Edwin Ginn (Boston: Ginn, 1981), iii.

67. Ibid., 66.

68. Versions differ as to the location of the episode, either within a house or in a cave on Rathlin Island off the northeastern coast of Ireland.

69. The numerous editions of Porter's novel were hugely successful in both Britain and the United States, and it remains readily available in the secondhand market, in a print-on-demand version, and as a free e-book.

70. Ibid., 41–42.

71. Nancy Moore Goslee, "Contesting Liberty: The Figure of William Wallace in Poems by Hemans, Hogg, and Baillie," *Keats-Shelley Journal* 50 (2001): 35–63 at 36.

72. Graeme Morton, *William Wallace: Man and Myth* (Stroud, Gloucestershire: Sutton, 2001), 114.

73. Ibid., 114–15.

74. Ibid., 117–18.

75. Ibid., 119–20.

76. Ibid., 121.

77. Douglas Young, *William Wallace and This War (Speech at the Elderslie Commemoration, 1943)* (Glasgow: Royal Exchange Press, 1943).

78. Everett, "National Themes in Scottish Art Music," 163.

79. Ibid.

80. Ibid.

81. William Wallace, *William Wallace: Symphonic Poems*, conducted by Martyn Brabbins, CD, Hyperion Records, CDA 66848, 1995.

82. Kenny M. Sheppard, "Selected Choral Works of Learmont Drysdale, Scotland's Forgotten Composer" (PhD diss., Texas Tech University, 1987), 25.

83. Everett, "National Themes in Scottish Art Music," 163.

84. Elspeth King, "The Material Culture of William Wallace," in *The Wallace Book*, ed. Cowan, 117–35 at 126.

85. John Morrison, *Painting the Nation: Identity and Nationalism in Scottish Painting, 1800–1920* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003), 120–21.

86. Ibid., 121–22.

87. Ray Bradfield, *Nigel Tranter: Scotland's Storyteller* (Edinburgh: B&W Publishing, 1999), 222.

88. Ibid., 225.

89. The Numbers: Box Office Data, Movie Starts, Idle Speculation, "Braveheart," http://www.the-numbers.com/movies/1995/0BRVH.php.

90. Gibson has admitted that the film is heavily fictitious, noting that changes were made for dramatic purposes. For example, in truth King Edward II did not marry Princess Isabella (born ca. 1295) until 1308, soon after her first-ever arrival in England; Wallace died in 1305 and Edward I died in 1307; the future Edward III was not born until 1312. In truth Wallace was not a commoner; in Wallace's time blue body paint had not been used in battle by Scottish/Celtic warriors for roughly eight centuries, standardized patterns of tartan had not been invented yet, and English soldiers had no set uniform. In the film, no bridge plays a part in the battle of Stirling Bridge. In truth Robert the Bruce was not present at the battle of Falkirk, on the English side (as in the film) or otherwise. Wallace was actually captured near Glasgow, not at Edinburgh Castle.

91. Władysław Witalisz, "Blind Hary's *The Wallace* and Mel Gibson's *Braveheart*: What Do Medieval Romance and Hollywood Film Have in Common?" in *Medievalisms: The Poetics of Literary Re-Reading*, ed. Liliana Sikorska with Joanna Maciulewicz (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2008), 221–29 at 226.

92. Michael D. Sharp, "Remaking Medieval Heroism: Nationalism and Sexuality in *Braveheart*," *Florilegium* 15 (1998): 251–66.

93. Ibid., 263.

94. The film's proposition that Edward II was homosexual is not new; nonetheless, it is historically spurious, and it is a narrative thread that is linked not to Scottish historians but to English ones. For an examination of Edward II's sexuality, see John Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 298–302; Pierre Chaplais argues against the claim of homosexuality in his study *Piers Gaveston: Edward II's Adoptive Brother* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 109.

95. Presumably a combination of the historical William Lamberton bishop of Saint Andrews and Robert Wishart bishop of Glasgow—both of whom were, in varying degrees, supporters of William Wallace and Robert the Bruce—with, perhaps, a trace of William Wishart, elected bishop of Glasgow but translated to Saint Andrews before his consecration. Lamberton and Wishart presided at the coronation of King Robert in 1306. Neither bishop was present at the battle of Bannockburn nor did either belong to a military religious order (perhaps the legendary Scottish combined Order of Saint John and the Temple?), as portrayed in the film.

96. The Southern Poverty Law Center, "The Clan Overseas: They're not just in the U.S. Anymore," *Intelligence Report* no. 89 (1998); available online at http://www.splcenter.org/get-informed/intelligence-report/browse-all-issues/1998/winter/the-klan-overseas. The SPLC has termed Beam "[a]n iconic figure of the radical right."

97. Kirsty Scott, "The Fatal Attraction," *The Herald,* August 6, 1997, 12.

98. Euan Hague, "Representations of Race and Romance: The Portrayal of People of Scottish Descent in North America by British Newspapers, 1997–1999," *Scottish Affairs* 57 (2006): 39–69 at 53.

99. Euan Hague, "Essay: The Neo-Confederate Movement," The Southern Poverty Law Center, http://www.splcenter.org/get-informed/intelligence-files/ideology/neo-confederate/the-neo-confederate-movement.

100. Colin McArthur, *Brigadoon, Braveheart and the Scots: Distortions of Scotland in Hollywood Cinema* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2003), 201.

101. Gerard Seenan, "Klansmen Take Their Lead from Scots," *The Guardian (London)*, January 30, 1999, 12.

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Equestrian statue of Charlemagne (ca. 742–814), bronze, French. (Louvre, Paris, France/Giraudon/The Bridgeman Art Library)

Charlemagne (ca. 742–814)

Dominique T. Hoche

INTRODUCTION

Charlemagne is one of those icons of the Middle Ages whose name is familiar to many people, some of whom might be able to estimate roughly when he lived, but the majority know no more than that. The connection between the name of Charlemagne and the term "Carolingian" is not immediately or automatically obvious, much less to imagine that the man is considered to be the "Father of Europe" and is responsible for a renaissance that extinguished the so-called Dark Ages and brought about a revival of art, religion, culture, and economic standards. But he is very important to know about—in fact, if one were going to know of one man between the fall of the Roman Empire and the rise of the Middle Ages, that man should, perhaps, be Charlemagne.

OVERVIEW

Charlemagne's name comes from the Latin *Carolus Magnus,* meaning "Charles the Great." He was the king of the Franks from 768 and emperor of the Romans from 800 until he died in 814. The reason he is called "the Great" is because of what he did to the map of Europe, both in terms of land and in terms of culture. He expanded the small Frankish kingdom into an area larger than France is now, incorporating parts of northern Spain and Italy, western Germany, and a great amount of central Europe. Adding Italy to his lands earned him the gratitude of the pope, who crowned him "Imperator Augustus" on December 25, 800.

He didn't start out that great, though. He was the eldest son of King Pepin the Short and Bertrada of Laon, and his parents were not technically married until after he was born—as a way of making sure Bertrada produced a son, otherwise, why get married? She did produce more children after the wedding—including Charles's brother Carloman, with whom he never got along. After their father's death in 768, following tradition and law, the kingdom of the Franks was divided between the brothers. They soon began to squabble, but Carloman died in 771 before the two could resort to warring. Charlemagne continued in his father's footsteps, protecting the papacy, and settling power struggles in both Italy and Spain. One of his incursions into Spain has become very famous—as his army retreated from his attempts to offer military aid in Barcelona, he was attacked by the Basques at the battle of Roncesvalles in 778—and the battle was memorialized in fiction as the *Song of Roland*. Charlemagne's commitment to Christianity encouraged him to campaign against the Saxons in the northeast, and after a long series of wars he subdued them, converted them, and added them to his realm.

His empire united most of Western Europe for the first time since the Roman Empire, and today he is considered the founding father of both French and German monarchies. He is also the "Father of Europe" because his actions spurred the creation of a common European identity.

DATE AND PLACE OF BIRTH

Charlemagne's life—or much of what is known of it—comes from his biographer, Einhard, who wrote a *Vita Caroli Magni*, the *Life of Charlemagne*. It is commonly believed that Charlemagne was born in 742, but there are some problems with that date—first of all, it's an estimate to begin with, based on his age given at death, rather than evidence from primary sources. Critics consider another date to be possible: April 2, 747, but the second of April of that year was Easter, and the birth of a prince on Easter would have provoked a lot of discussion, yet there are no comments on such an auspicious birth in the chronicles and annals of the year 747. That date, then, might simply be some fiction written by a pious devotee of Charlemagne to honor the emperor.

Other scholars suggest that his birth was one year later, in 748, but at present it is impossible to be certain of the true date of the birth of Charlemagne. Our best guesses are April 1, 747, after April 15, 747, or April 1, 748. We do know he was born in Herstal (the town where his father was born), which is near Liège in Belgium today. When he was about seven, he was sent to live at his father's villa in Jupille, which has caused Jupille to be listed as a possible birthplace in many history books.

Charlemagne was named after his grandfather, Charles Martel, and the birth name of Charles comes from the Germanic word *karlaz* or "free man" and from which we get the German *Kerl,* "man" or "guy," and the English word "churl." His name is first seen in its Latin form as Carolus or Karolus. One sign of how much of an effect Charlemagne had on Europe is how his name has become the very word for "king" in many European languages: Bulgarian: крал, Serbian: краљ, Croatian: *kralj,* Russian: король, Polish: *król,* Czech: *král,* Lithuanian: *karalius,* Latvian: *karalis,* Hungarian: *király,* Turkish: *kral,* Slovak: *král.*

NATIVE LANGUAGE

What was Charlemagne's native language? Most people might answer French, but in the area in which he was born they did not then speak French, as we know it. Scholars believe it was a form of a German idiom, but which one? Some argue it was a Germanic dialect of the Ripuarian Franks, and others say he did not speak Old Frankish at all. Linguists have reconstructed old Frankish today by loanwords in Old French, and from its descendent, Old Low Franconian, a tongue which is the ancestor of the Dutch language and the modern dialects heard in the German area of North Rhineland; these dialects were named Ripuarian by modern linguists. Old Frankish, though, is a mystery today because all we have left of it are phrases and words in the law codes of the main Frankish tribes (the Salian and Ripuarian Franks), which are written in Latin but sprinkled with Germanic phrases. The Franconian language was a form of Lower German, but in some areas it was being replaced with a form of Old High German.

Sound confusing? The problem is that Charlemagne was born in an area of great linguistic diversity. If we went to Liège around the year 750, we would hear Old East Low Franconian in the city, north and northwest; Old Ripuarian Franconian to the east and in Aachen; and Gallo-Romance (the ancestor of the Walloon dialect of Old French) in the south and southwest. The one confirmation that he might have spoken a German dialect comes from the fact that he gave his children Old High German names.

What else did he speak? We have evidence that he spoke Latin fluently and understood Greek—Einhard, his biographer, writes, "Grecam vero melius intellegere quam pronuntiare poterat," or "He understood Greek better than he could pronounce it" (26). It is also possible that he spoke Arabic, for in the fifteenth-century Irish work the *Gabhaltais Shearluis Mhoir* or *Conquests of Charlemagne* from the Book of Lismore, it states, "When Agiolandus heard the Saracen language from Charlemagne he marveled at it greatly. For when Charlemagne was a youth he had been among the Paynims in the city which is called Toletum (Toledo) and he had learnt the language of the Saracens in that city" (Hyde 35).

APPEARANCE

We do not have an exact description of Charlemagne from his lifetime, but we do have one from his biographer Einhard, who wrote in 826:

> His body was large and strong. He was tall, but not unduly so, since his height was seven times the length of his own foot. The top of his head was round, his eyes were large and lively, his nose was a little larger than average, he had fine white hair and a cheerful and attractive face. So, standing or sitting his presence was greatly increased in authority and dignity. His neck seemed short and thick and his stomach seemed to project, but the symmetry of the other parts hid these flaws. His pace was firm and the whole bearing of his body powerful. Indeed his voice was clear but given his size, not as strong as might have been expected. His health was good until four years before he died, when he suffered from constant fevers. Towards the end he would limp on one foot. Even then he trusted his own judgment more than the advice of his doctors, whom he almost hated, since they urged him to stop eating roast meat, which he liked, and to start eating boiled meats. (34)

Einhard's description matches the images we have of him on the coins of the time as well as the eight-inch (20.3 cm) bronze statue prized by the Louvre Museum in Paris. Charlemagne's tomb was opened in 1861 by scientists who reconstructed his skeleton and measured it, finding that it was 74.9 inches (190 cm), and a modern study based on the dimensions of his tibia suggest

that his height was 72.44 inches (1.84 m). Since the average male was 66.54 inches (1.69 m), he was probably one of the tallest men of his day.

Charlemagne was supposedly stately, with fair hair and a thick neck. The contemporary paintings and sculpture of the man, however, show an ideal vision of him. The Roman tradition of realistic portraits was out of favor at the time, and so pictures of rulers were made with the view of showing them as perfect beings, which more often made them all look alike. Pictures of Charlemagne the Emperor and God's representative on Earth resemble images of an ideal ruler and often look similar to icons of Christ as Ruler. Even his hair is portrayed incorrectly—Einhard describes Charlemagne as "canitie pulchra" ("with beautiful white hair"), suggesting that the man went prematurely gray, but portraits of him render his hair as blond or yellow.

Einhard describes Charlemagne's clothes to show how the emperor was an unassuming man—he wore the traditional costume of the Frankish people:

> He used to wear his national, that is, Frankish, costume; close to his body he put on a linen shirt and linen underwear, then a tunic fringed with silk and stockings, then he wrapped his thighs and his feet with stockings, and covered his shoulders and chest in winter with a jacket made of otter-skin or ermine and a blue cloak, and he was always armed with his sword, which had a gold or silver hilt and belt. Sometimes he used a jeweled sword, but only at great feast days or when he received foreign ambassadors. He spurned foreign clothes, even the most beautiful, and never wore them except at Rome, when, asked once by Pope Hadrian and then by his successor Leo, he wore a long tunic and a chlamys and put on shoes made in the Roman way. On feast days he would process wearing a robe woven of gold and jeweled leggings and fastened his cloak with a golden brooch, and wore a crown of gold adorned with jewels. But on other days his costume was little different from that of the common people. (35)

Judging from Einhard's reports of his being moderate in food and drink, especially drink, as he hated to see anyone drunk, Charlemagne was comfortable with being seen as—and it seems odd to use this word—*ordinary*.

MARRIAGES

Charlemagne had four wives and six concubines, and the result was 20 children. One might think that he would have had heirs galore, but he ended up with only four legitimate grandsons—the children of his fourth (third legitimate) son, Louis. Bernard of Italy, the only son of Charlemagne's third (second legitimate) son, Pippin of Italy, was born illegitimate but was included in the line of inheritance. The reasons for this slim inheritance situation are

very complex and interesting, but first let us take a look at the list of Charlemagne's wives and children:

1. **Himiltrude** was the woman with whom he had his first official relationship. Some scholars call the relationship a legal marriage, but most believe it was concubinage because Charlemagne was able to easily put Himiltrude aside when he had to officially marry Desiderata. Himiltrude had two children by him:
   a. **Amaudru**, a daughter
   b. **Pippin the Hunchback** (ca. 769–811)
2. **Desiderata,** daughter of Desiderius king of the Lombards; they married in 770, but the marriage was quickly annulled in 771.
3. **Hildegard** (757 or 758–783) was Charlemagne's second official wife. They married in 771, and she died in 783. By her, he had nine children:
   a. **Charles the Younger** (ca. 772–December 4, 811), duke of Maine, and crowned king of the Franks on December 25, 800
   b. **Adalhaid** (774), who was born while her parents were on campaign in Italy. She was sent back to Francia, but the infant died before reaching Lyons.
   c. **Rotrude (or Hruodrud)** (775–June 6, 810)
   d. **Carloman,** renamed Pippin (or Pepin) (April 777–July 8, 810), king of Italy
   e. **Louis** (778–June 20, 840), twin of Lothair, king of Aquitaine from 781, crowned Holy Roman Emperor in 813, senior Emperor from 814
   f. **Lothair** (778–February 6, 779/780), twin of Louis, died in infancy
   g. **Bertha** (779–826)
   h. **Gisela** (781–808)
   i. **Hildegarde** (782–783)
4. **Fastrada** was Charlemagne's third wife. They married in 784, and she died in 794. By her he had two children:
   a. **Theodrada** (b. 784), abbess of Argenteuil
   b. **Hiltrude** (b. 787)
5. **Luitgard** was his fourth wife. They married in 794, but she died childless.

CONCUBINES AND ILLEGITIMATE CHILDREN

Charlemagne also had several known concubines, who bore him many illegitimate children. The list of these individuals is as follows:

1. **Gersuinda,** his first known concubine. By her he had:
   a. **Adaltrude** (b. 774)

2. **Madelgard**, his second known concubine. By her he had:
   a. **Ruodhaid** (775–810), abbess of Faremoutiers
3. **Amaltrud** of Vienne, his third known concubine. By her he had:
   a. **Alpaida** (b. 794)
4. **Regina**, his fourth known concubine. By her he had:
   a. **Drogo** (801–855), bishop of Metz from 823 and abbot of Luxeuil Abbey
   b. **Hugh** (802–844), arch-chancellor of the empire
5. **Ethelind**, his fifth known concubine. By her he had:
   a. **Richbod** (805–844), abbot of Saint-Riquier
   b. **Theodoric** (b. 807)

CHARLEMAGNE AND HIS CHILDREN

Taking advantage of the first lengthy peacetime in his rule (780–82), Charlemagne began to appoint his young sons to positions of authority, following the traditions of French kings and mayors of the past. The eldest, Charles, he kept at his own court to learn from his tutors and officials. The two younger sons he had crowned kings by Pope Hadrian in 781, and they were sent away from home to "rule" their subkingdoms.

The elder of these two, Carloman, became king of Italy in a ceremony in which he was renamed Pippin (or Pepin) and took the Iron Crown of Lombardy that his father had first worn in 774. The younger of the two, Louis, became king of Aquitaine. Charlemagne ordered Pippin and Louis to be raised in the customs of their kingdoms, and he gave their regents some control of their subkingdoms, but real power was always in his hands, though he intended his sons to inherit their realms some day. Until that day, it was their job to maintain their father's high profile, and by giving the boys their lands when they were young, Charlemagne hoped to insure the future divisions of his realm against infighting. He made sure, though, that his sons were educated by Alcuin of York at the palace school in Aachen, and as soon as they were old enough he took them on campaigns; by the time they were in their teens they were expected to lead their own troops in battle.

Charlemagne did not tolerate insubordination in his sons: in 792, he banished his eldest son, Pippin the Hunchback, to the monastery of Prüm because the young man had joined a rebellion against him. The rebellion was easily predicted because even though Pippin was considered illegitimate, he was still the emperor's firstborn, and the insult to him of renaming the young Carloman "Pippin" was not easy to bear—it was as if Charlemagne had erased Pippin the Hunchback's very existence. Banishing him to a monastery was the final step to making the young man disappear.

Charles the Younger focused on the Bretons, who shared a border with the Franks and who rose up against him and his father on at least two occasions before they were easily defeated. He was also sent against the Saxons on

multiple occasions. In 805 and 806, he was sent into the Böhmerwald, which today is modern Bohemia, to deal with the Slavs living there (today's Czechs). He subjected them to Frankish authority and devastated the valley of the Elbe, forcing a tribute on them. He took his responsibilities seriously, rising to his duty as a king, and was noted to have been very careful to watch for corruption among his people.

Pippin fought the Slavs to his north, but had to hold the Avar and Beneventan borders—making him uniquely poised to fight the Byzantine Empire when conflict arose after Charlemagne's imperial coronation. Pippin's personality was that of a natural-born warrior, so much that his teacher Alcuin nicknamed him "Julius."

Finally, young Louis was in charge of the Spanish March and also went to southern Italy to fight the duke of Benevento. At age 19, he took Barcelona in a great siege in the year 797. Despite his military skill, he was considered to be the scholar of the family and so devout that he would later be nicknamed Louis "the Pious." He was Alcuin's favorite, but the teacher noted that the boy "never showed his white teeth in a smile."

Among the sisters, Rotruda, Bertrada, and Gisla, life was very different. It was culturally expected that as soon as they reached puberty they were to be married off, but Charlemagne decided to keep all his daughters single and at home. Einhard writes that it was because "he could not live without them," but scholars speculate that he did not let them get married because the resulting heirs would make inheritance much more complicated.

Rotruda was at one time betrothed to the Byzantine Emperor, and Bertrada was supposedly going to marry Offa king of Mercia, but no actual alliances ever came about. Instead, the princesses stayed at court, were educated under Alcuin, and were spoiled rotten with the all the luxury and pampering that the court could offer. They were chaperoned—but not closely enough. Rotruda had an affair with Rorgon count of Maine and had a son, Louis. Bertrada, the prettiest and liveliest of the sisters, had a passionate and long-lived affair with Angilbert, one of Charlemagne's closest friends—who was also 30 years her senior! He was an early version of a Renaissance man—a brilliant soldier, scholar, poet, statesman, courtier, and diplomat and ultimately a lay abbot of the monastery of Saint-Riquier. He must have been an amazing man, beloved of Alcuin and the court, and was noted for his zest for living—a fact that must have attracted the princess, for she bore him two sons. One of their sons was named Nithard, who was a loyal servant to the Carolingians (the descendants of Charles Martel) and who became one of the greatest of the early Frankish historians.

Charlemagne tolerated his daughters' relationships, even rewarding their common-law spouses, and adored the illegitimate grandchildren they produced for him. He refused to believe stories of any sort of scandalous behavior from his daughters—scholars believe that Charlemagne knew perfectly well what his girls were doing, but he accepted it as the result of his not letting them marry sacramentally. While Charlemagne lived, the tug-of-war between Christian morals and the libertarian Frankish court life was easily managed because of

the balance between earthiness and piety that came from the emperor himself. Indeed, his daughters' bastards had many playmates because of the emperor's own many concubines. After Charlemagne's death, however, the surviving daughters were banished from the court by their brother, the pious Louis, to take up residence in the convents they had been bequeathed by their father.

One of the court poets described the emperor's homecoming with his sons falling over themselves to help him undress and carry his gloves and sword, while his daughters fawned over their father with gifts of flowers and ripe fruit. Charlemagne loved to be surrounded by people at all times and so he had very little want of intimacy. All the stories we have about him tell of a king who was rarely without the company of his family or his scholars, or enjoying the camaraderie of his fellow warriors on campaign or while hunting. Charlemagne loved swimming, and that was one of the reasons why he chose Aachen as his favorite residence—he loved the warm springs and often invited his children, friends, courtiers, and evidently even the royal guards to join him in the water.

Charlemagne's daily routine, when he was at home or at one of his residences, began at dawn when he woke and went to matins. When he returned, he began the business of the day—he was a complete workaholic and kept his scribes, advisors, and messengers busy with a constant flow of letters, legal judgments and instructions, or receiving petitioners. At noon he heard Mass, followed by the main meal of the day, and even during his meal he liked to be read to, hearing morally improving books like Augustine's *City of God*. He enjoyed his food and drink, refusing to fast (it was reported that he thought fasting, like the church's prescriptions regarding sex, did not apply to kings), but he was not excessive. The royal family dined alone, surrounded by well-born retainers, while the rest of the court watched them eat; only when Charlemagne rose from the meal was the rest of the court allowed to dine. Einhard portrays Charlemagne as a man who disliked ceremony, but the records show that the emperor did have small ceremonies in his life that meant very much to him.

EARLY LIFE

As mentioned, Charlemagne was the son of Pepin the Short (714–768) and his wife Bertrada of Laon (720–783), daughter of Caribert of Laon and Bertrada of Cologne. Records name a brother, Carloman, a sister, Gisela, and a short-lived child named Pippin as his younger siblings. One late medieval text suggests that a shadowy Redburga, wife of King Egbert of Wessex, might have been Charlemagne's sister, sister-in-law, or niece, and the legendary material makes him Roland's maternal uncle through a Lady Bertha. Einhard refuses to speculate on the early life of Charlemagne:

It would be folly, I think, to write a word concerning Charlemagne's birth and infancy, or even his boyhood, for nothing has ever been written on

the subject, and there is no one alive now who can give information on it. Accordingly, I determined to pass that by as unknown, and to proceed at once to treat of his character, his deeds, and such other facts of his life as are worth telling and setting forth, and shall first give an account of his deeds at home and abroad, then of his character and pursuits, and lastly of his administration and death, omitting nothing worth knowing or necessary to know. (21)

We do know that Charlemagne was born out of wedlock, also as mentioned. Pepin declined to marry Bertrada until Charlemagne was a few years old, not on account of loose morals, but because of the need to provide the kingdom a healthy heir at a time when the death rate from infantile diseases and childhood mortality was very high. A king often had a harem of mistresses and would choose which one of them to marry based on her proven ability to bear healthy children, especially sons. Pepin the Short chose well. Bertrada must have been a tall and large woman, because Charlemagne had a commanding stature, suggesting that in terms of his size and looks he took after his mother.

Pepin's father was Charles Martel (ca. 688–741), for whom the Carolingian dynasty is named, a bastard son of Austrasia's mayor of the palace. The mayor of the palace usurped power from the king; the Merovingian-dynasty monarchs, who had ruled since 476, were by this time rulers in name only. Martel was an aggressive man who from a disadvantaged start, by sheer force of personality and military genius, established his authority over his father's heirs (his legitimately born brothers) and put his own Merovingian puppet-king on the throne. When Martel died he divided his empire between his elder sons Pepin and Carloman and their half-brother, Grifio; almost immediately Pepin and Carloman attacked, captured, and locked Grifio away, and Grifio's mother was sent off to a nunnery.

Pepin and Carloman then moved to take over the Frankish empire, dragging their own puppet-king named Childeric III and putting him on the throne so their actions would look legitimate. Pepin and Carloman began to have tensions in their partnership, and soon Carloman was "encouraged" to become a monk with the promise that his son, Drogo, would be Pepin's heir. Because Pepin was unmarried and had no legitimate heirs, it seemed like a good idea, and Carloman soon joined the Benedictines. Within months, however, Pepin showed his hand. He married his concubine Bertrada, legitimized his son, Charles, and began consolidating his power. He had to fight his half-brother Grifio when the man escaped from prison, but fortunately for Pepin, Grifio was killed in battle in 753. Drogo was quickly put under lock and key, and the now unnecessary puppet-king Childeric could return to the monastery from whence he came. Pepin did some fancy negotiating with Pope Zacharias (who knew a powerful ally when he saw one), who in turn authorized Boniface to crown Pepin and his two sons Charles and Carloman in 751 at the tender ages of nine and three, respectively.

The boys were not sent away to school but educated under their father's eyes. In order to found a new dynasty, Pepin knew that he had to make sure that his heirs would follow his thinking and beliefs, that they were protected from being kidnapped and murdered, and that they were taught that any influence other than their father's was the sin of rebellion. Thus they were educated in the art of war along with the sons of Pepin's most trusted followers—as soon as they were able to walk and speak, they began learning how to ride a horse, and their boyhood games were modeled on the military arts. At age six, military training began in earnest and all luxuries ceased. They were taken on campaign and subjected to the hardships of camp life, such as long marches in foul weather; simple, cold meals; sleeping in the open around a campfire; and commands enforced with the flat of a sword.

An education like this did not leave much time for book learning, and even though Charlemagne supposedly knew how to read, he is noted for having great respect for men who knew how to write, as he did not know how. The Frankish warrior caste generally regarded literary pleasures and interests as beneath them, but the brothers were still well educated for their time. In later years, Charlemagne oversaw educational reform for the clergy, rationalization of the law codes, and the growth of written communication and administration to keep his empire together. He had a sharp grasp of theology, and he could dispute with church leaders. So somehow Pepin managed to create a balance in his sons' education between ruling at swordpoint and ruling through effective legal and social administration.

On Pepin's death, Charlemagne, then 23 years old, took the outer parts of the kingdom, bordering on the sea—namely Neustria, western Aquitaine, and the northern parts of Austrasia—while Carloman, 18, retained the inner parts: southern Austrasia, Septimania, eastern Aquitaine, Burgundy, Provence, and Swabia, the lands bordering on Italy. Carloman had a solid block of land made of the central and eastern parts of Francia, and Charlemagne's land was in a semicircle around it from the Pyrenees to the Elbe, but blocked from direct contact with Rome.

JOINT RULE

The first event of the brothers' reign was the uprising of the Aquitainians and Gascons, in 769, in the territory split between the two kings. Charlemagne met Carloman at Vienne to plan for the battle, but they quarreled and Carloman refused to participate and returned to Burgundy. Charlemagne turned his anger on the rebellion and led an army to Bordeaux, where he set up a camp at Fronsac. Duke Chunoald II was forced to flee to the court of Duke Lupus II of Gascony, but Lupus, fearing Charlemagne, turned Chunoald II over in exchange for peace, and Aquitaine was considered to be finally subdued by the Franks.

The brothers maintained lukewarm relations with the assistance of their mother, Bertrada, and the new pope, Stephen III. Carloman's actions soon

revealed his scheming to gain political advantage over his brother—even though he was the younger brother, he considered himself Pepin's real heir because he had been legitimate since birth. Charlemagne struck back, signing a treaty in 770 with Duke Tassilo III of Bavaria. He set aside his wife/concubine Himiltrude (who had provided him with a son, Pepin the Hunchback; since the supposedly handsome boy sadly had a deformity, it explains why Charlemagne was in no hurry to marry the boy's mother) and married a Lombard princess (commonly known today as Desiderata, though we do not know her real name), the daughter of King Desiderius.

Charlemagne's aim was to create allies with whom he would surround his brother. Though Pope Stephen III first opposed the marriage with the Lombard princess, he would soon have little to fear from a Frankish-Lombard alliance. Charlemagne had cleverly made an alliance with Bavaria and Lombardy that ringed Carloman's territory—land-wise, Charlemagne now held his brother in a vise. King Desiderius took the opportunity to threaten Carloman if the young king tried to break up the alliance, and Carloman, of course, was incensed and decided to bring his forces into Italy to "influence" the pope. The pope was clear—Carloman was not welcome in Rome while Desiderius was well received. That summer and autumn, the two brothers watched each other carefully. It seemed only a matter of time before a fraternal war would break out. The nobles in Francia carefully settled into their positions, awaiting the worst. Then, on December 4, 771, Carloman suddenly died, at the age of 20. With that event, Charles was free to become Charles the Great.

CONQUEST OF LOMBARDY

Upon his brother's death, Charlemagne repudiated Desiderata (she had produced no children anyway) and sent her back to her father's court—there was no more need for a Lombard alliance, and so there was no more need for a Lombard princess. He quickly remarried to a 13-year-old Swabian named Hildegard; his marriage to her secured the eastern region and strengthened his position. This sort of ruthlessness became Charlemagne's trademark response in times of danger for his lands—that and his determination, a cold rationalization of events and actions, and tireless focus on administration. It was now his time to secure his power and his own dynasty, and that is exactly what he focused on for the next 10 years.

Einhard, his biographer, knew Charlemagne only in the later part of his life, but it seems that his later character shows the reasons for his earlier successes:

> Charlemagne was by far the most able and noble-spirited of all those who ruled over the nations in this time. He never withdrew from an enterprise that he had once begun and was determined to see through to the end, simply because of the labor involved; and danger never deterred

him. Having learnt to endure and suffer each particular ineluctable cir-
cumstance, whatever its nature might be, he was never prepared to yield
to adversity; and in times of prosperity he was never to be swayed by the
false blandishments of fortune. (63–64)

Einhard, in sum, attributes Charlemagne's success to his indomitable strength
of will.

Carloman had left two sons, and by law they should have inherited their fa-
ther's lands, but their mother, Queen Gerberga, did not wait to find out what
Charlemagne's intentions were—she fled to Lombardy and put them under
the protection of Desiderius to save their lives. Meanwhile, Charlemagne
began to bargain with Carloman's supporters: some readily transferred their
allegiance, some had to be bribed, and some had to be made kin, thus his mar-
riage to Hildegard.

His next problem would be what to do with the Lombards and to settle
his affairs with the papacy—but first he had to deal with the Saxon problem.
Francia's ancient enemy, the Saxons, held the lands along his northern bor-
der, and there was little to no negotiating with them—they were steadfastly
pagan, they were constantly looking for better farmlands than the cold north-
ern mountains, and they had little respect for negotiation or paying tribute.
The moment the Saxons knew Carloman died and there was a potential for
weakness, they attacked. In 772, Charlemagne hit back by attacking the reli-
gious icon of the Irminsul (a vast, ancient tree trunk erected in the open air as
a pillar: it was a shrine, believed to be one of the pillars of the heavens) and
destroying it. In one strike, he wanted to prove that his military might was
superior, and that his Frankish God was also superior.

Now he could focus on ending the three-way conflict in Italy between the
papacy, Lombardy, and Francia. Pope Stephen died and Pope Hadrian I suc-
ceeded him in 772, and Hadrian was made of sterner stuff than Stephen. He
demanded the return of certain cities in Lombardy that Desiderius currently
controlled; Desiderius denied the pope's charges and instead took over more
papal cities and began heading toward Rome. Charlemagne crossed the Alps,
and over the winter of 773 he laid siege to Pavia, the Lombard capital—and
it was not until the spring of 774 that the city fell and Desiderius was exiled
to a monastery. While he was waiting for Pavia to succumb, Charlemagne
visited the pope and received a warm welcome, as the king not only was a
firm supporter of the papacy but also was about to remove one of the en-
emies of the pope himself. Hadrian granted him the title of "patrician," and
Charlemagne confirmed and expanded his father's grants of land, adding to
the list Tuscany, Emilia, Venice, and Corsica. When Pavia fell, Charlemagne
took for himself the Iron Crown of Lombardy (so named because a supposed
nail from the True Cross was worked into the golden circlet), making him
not only king of the Franks but also king of the Lombards—and so in less
than two years his reputation showed he was a hugely successful and new
kind of king.

Charlemagne's relationship with Pope Hadrian I was a warm and respectful one, but it is clear from the chroniclers that a lot of it was window dressing. The king was a dutiful son to his holy father, but beyond that he was going to set his own agenda. Hadrian tried to manipulate Charlemagne into more military work, but Charlemagne refused, saying he had to return to his fight with the Saxons. The balance of spiritual and temporal power was a tricky thing, and the pope realized too late that he had exchanged one kind of master (the Lombards) for another (the Franks). Hadrian protested, and he was perfectly within his rights as he had been given the authority by the papacy to dictate, in the name of God, what kings and emperors should or should not do. Charlemagne operated under the idea of divine sanction, in that as a king he and his heirs were allowed to rule, under God, all the affairs of their subjects, both clergy and laymen. Hadrian had to give way as the king left to go north, and Charlemagne won this round—but it was a contest that would be fought between rulers and popes for centuries.

THE ORIGIN OF THE *SONG OF ROLAND*

The king's worst defeat came next—the massacre of his rear guard at Roncevalles—which ironically became the basis of later legends that sang of Charlemagne and Roland as the most heroic Christian knights since King Arthur.

In 777, Saracen envoys came to Charlemagne to beg him to help their masters, who had been cornered in the Iberian Peninsula by the Emir of Cordoba, Abd ar-Rahman I, and they offered their homage in exchange for military support. Charlemagne saw it as a chance to take advantage of Islamic turmoil and extend his kingdom, and possibly Christendom itself. He must have also seen the Saxons as being conquered (and they were, temporarily), so he agreed and set off for Spain. Putting together an army of Neustrians, Austrasians, Lombards, and Burgundians, Charlemagne went over the Pyrenees in 778 and defeated the already weakened Basque city of Pamplona before going on to Zaragoza. The Basques, who had already had their fill of Muslim invaders, did not appreciate being used as target practice by the Franks, and they plotted revenge.

When he got to Zaragoza, Charlemagne was told that his Muslim allies had broken away from each other. Sulaiman had been assassinated, and the caliph's huge forces were marching straight for Charlemagne's army, sweeping the rebels away with every step. The king was a great warrior, but he was also no fool—he beat a retreat.

It was while he was making his way through the pass of Roncesvalles that the Basques attacked, separating his rear guard and baggage train. They massacred the rear guard, including one of the king's relatives and friends—a man named Hruodland, known today as Roland, the ruler of the Breton March. Whether Roland was actually a relative, an illegitimate son, or merely a friend of Charlemagne is unknown, but the Frankish bards seemed to believe the

story would be better if he were a relative. They also made the battle not against the Christian Basques but against the Saracens in order to turn Roland into a Christian martyr, and they painted the king as a glorious King Arthur–like character, with the legendary sword Joyeuse in hand and surrounded by elite (possibly cavalry) bodyguards.

The battle was disastrous for Charlemagne, but only in the short term, as the defeat did not undermine his position in Francia as a great warlord. It also helped that he and his military barons were immediately involved in a new war with the Saxons, and the border remained stable because the Moorish caliphs were too busy killing each other to think about trying to cross into Frankish lands.

THE DIFFICULT 780s

The decade of the 780s was full of upheavals and personal grief for Charlemagne. When he visited Rome in 781 he had Pope Hadrian crown his sons, Carloman (renamed Pippin) and Louis, in order to give his empire harmony and continuity. He also agreed to betroth Rotrudra, his daughter, to the Byzantine Emperor, Constantine VI. Both of these moves ended up encouraging rebellion instead of peace and promoting fear instead of security. Hildegard, the wife Charlemagne seemed to genuinely feel affection for, died in 783, and the king's mother followed in the same year not long after his wife. His trusted chamberlain, Adalgisile, and his constable, Geilo, died in battle in 782. His rebound marriage to Fastrada was unpopular with his court, and internal battles among his supporters were constant in the years that followed. Charlemagne, however, rose above all these trials, and, if anything, they encouraged more and higher ambitions in the man.

At the end of the decade, the king had to settle rebellions in southern Italy and Bavaria, although in Bavaria he never did so successfully. In 787 the Lombard duchy of Benevento covered most of southern Italy, and although it technically belonged to Charlemagne from his defeat of Desiderius, it was far enough away that the duchy operated as an independent state. Duke Arechis, who was a good politician and maintained friendly relations with the Byzantine emperors, ruled it. Arechis might have remained relatively inconspicuous to Charlemagne, but one winter, instead of going home, Charlemagne happened to stay in Rome, making it easy for the king to focus on Arechis's lack of follow-through with his promises of fealty. The duke made his submissions, but as soon as the king of the Franks was safely on the other side of the Alps, promptly broke all his vows and ignored the pope's territorial claims. Arechis's son, Grimoald III, followed his father's political maneuvering, successfully fending off the armies of Charlemagne or his sons many times in future years. Charlemagne, however, never returned to Benevento, and Grimoald never was forced to surrender to Frankish rule.

In 788, Charlemagne was compelled to turn his attention to Bavaria, a dukedom that he, and his father and grandfather before him, claimed to be vassal territory. Its duke, Tassilo III, disagreed, believing his little country was independent—and because Bavaria (like Benevento in Italy) was seen as too far away from Charlemagne's rule for the king to bother with it, Tassilo felt very secure. Tassilo tried to make Charlemagne happy by sending military detachments for the king's armies, but on the other hand Tassilo rarely showed up to attend the Frankish gathering in order to vow fealty publicly. The pope warned Tassilo that he was flirting with disaster, and when Charlemagne decided he needed to control the Danube valley against the Saxons, Avars, and Slavs, Tassilo's behavior became an issue.

From the chronicles it is quite clear that Tassilo offered no threats or provocations, but the king had had enough of the so-called independence and put his fist around the dukedom. He ordered Tassilo to appear and immediately restate the vow the duke had made to the king; the duke was understandably reluctant to put his person at risk, and the war was on. Charlemagne sent three armies against Bavaria: one with the king in person, one with a force of Saxons and East Franks, and another under the leadership of his son, the young Pippin, king of Italy.

Tassilo wisely did not resist, and he yielded up the dukedom without a fight. Although it must have frustrated Charlemagne because it appears he wished to somehow do away with the duke and change the way the region was ruled, Charlemagne was merciful and did not punish Tassilo. Months later, however, Tassilo came under charges of rebellion, and he and his family were removed: either forced to take monastic vows or exiled. Bavaria was divided into Frankish counties, and the dukedom became another part of the Frankish empire.

THE SAXON WARS

From 772 to 785, Charlemagne would start each spring by heading to the north to fight with the Saxons, then he would move south to fight other battles. He would win some battles, baptize the people, demand tribute, and take hostages, but as soon as the winter came and the king went home, the Saxons would renege on their agreement, attack, and regain what they had lost. Basically, thousands of men and women accepted the Christian faith, but as soon as the conflict was over they would abandon the newly built churches and monasteries.

The Germanic Saxons were divided into four subgroups in four regions: Westphalia was the nearest kingdom to Austrasia, Eastphalia was the farthest away, and in between these two kingdoms was Engria. To the north of the Saxon kingdoms, at the base of the Jutland peninsula, was the kingdom of Nordalbingia.

It was in his first campaign in 773 that Charlemagne forced the Engrians to cut down the Irminsul pillar near Paderborn. In 775 he returned to

Westphalia and conquered the Saxon fort of Sigiburg, then marched to Engria. He defeated the Saxons again in Engria and then in Eastphalia, where the Saxon leader Hessi converted to Christianity. Charlemagne returned through Westphalia, leaving permanent troops at what had been the Saxon bastions of Sigiburg and Eresburg. All of Saxony except for the northern kingdom of Nordalbingia was under his control, but Saxon resistance had just begun.

Following yet another campaign in Italy the next year, Charlemagne returned to Saxony in 776 because a rebellion had destroyed the fortress and troops at Eresburg. The Saxons were once again defeated, but Widukind, their chief and most charismatic leader, managed to escape to Denmark. Preparing for another round of fighting, Charlemagne built a new bastion at Karlstadt.

The king called together his dukes at Paderborn in 777 to integrate Saxony fully into the Frankish kingdom, but it was more of a political statement than a mark of how well the Saxons had been incorporated into the growing Frankish Christian empire. The Saxons agreed to Charlemagne's terms, were baptized and feasted, but the moment the king left they went back to their pagan ways and customs, ignoring all of the king's laws and treaties.

Thus Charlemagne had to return and return each summer. For two years only there was peace: in the summer of 779 he again invaded Saxony and yet again conquered Eastphalia, Engria, and Westphalia, dividing the land into missionary districts and assisting personally in several mass baptisms. He then returned to Italy in the fall and, for the first time, there was no immediate Saxon revolt. To encourage this submission, Charlemagne ordered the death penalty for all Saxons who refused to be baptized, who failed to follow Christian festivals, and who cremated their dead. Saxony was peaceful from 780 to 782.

Thinking he had finally subdued the Saxons, Charlemagne returned to Saxony in the summer of 782 and set up a code of law and appointed judges and counts, both of Saxon and Frankish ancestry: good idea, but bad laws. The laws were uncompromising about religion, and while the Saxons may have become theologically Christian, they were still socially and philosophically followers of Germanic polytheism.

This renewed the old conflict: in the autumn of 782 Widukind returned and led a revolt that included several assaults on the church, as the Saxon chiefs would not be torn from their independence, and neither bribery nor conversion worked. In response, Charlemagne (allegedly) ordered the beheading of 4,500 Saxons at Verden in Lower Saxony who had been caught practicing their native paganism after conversion to Christianity. (The chroniclers follow the 4,500 figure, but modern scholars estimate it could not have been more than a thousand men killed.) It was known as the Massacre of Verden ("Verdener Blutgericht"), and it caused three years of bloodthirsty warfare, from 783 to 785, during which the kingdom of the Frisians were also finally subdued and a large part of their fleet burned. Charlemagne had his army rampage through the Saxon lands, killing, burning, and tearing down pagan shrines—creating total devastation. It was

only when, in the autumn of 785, Charlemagne managed to appeal to the Saxon leader Widukind—and Widukind agreed to accept baptism—that the fighting eased for seven years.

In 792, the Westphalians again rose against their conqueror, and the Eastphalians and Nordalbingians joined them in 793, but the rebellion did not have enough support from the tired masses of Saxons and was put down by 794. It was the turn of the Engrians to rebel in 796, but the quick military presence of Charlemagne, Christian Saxons, and Slavs crushed them. The last rebellion of the independent Saxons rose in 804, more than 30 years after Charlemagne's first campaign against them: it was the Nordalbingians, who quickly found themselves effectively disempowered from rebellion because the Saxons around them refused support. According to Einhard:

> The war that had lasted so many years was at length ended by their acceding to the terms offered by the King; which were renunciation of their national religious customs and the worship of devils, acceptance of the sacraments of the Christian faith and religion, and union with the Franks to form one people. (24)

After the conquest of Nordalbingia, the Franks were discovered by the peoples of Scandinavia as the pagan Danes, "a race almost unknown to his ancestors, but destined to be only too well known to his sons," as historian Charles Oman described them, began to move outward in expansion (367). While they lived on the Jutland peninsula, they had no doubt heard many stories from Widukind (his wife was Danish) and his allies—the Franks were dangerous, unrelenting, and difficult to defeat, and their Christian religion was spreading like wildfire.

In 808, the king of the Danes, Godfred, built the vast *Danevirke* across the isthmus of Schleswig. The *Danevirke* was at its beginning a 19-mile-long earth and stone rampart that protected Danish land and gave Godfred the opportunity to harass Frisia and Flanders with pirate raids. An excellent commander, he invaded Frisia and joked of visiting Aachen in order to upset Charlemagne, but he was murdered before he could do any more conquering (either by a Frankish assassin or by one of his own men). Godfred was succeeded by his nephew Hemming, who knew better than to go up against the Frankish king and agreed to the Treaty of Heiligen with Charlemagne in late 811.

The Saxons were never met with the generosity in victory that Charlemagne had shown in Italy and Bavaria. He treated their areas as conquered lands, and ones that had cost the Franks a lot of lives and blood, and there was always a chance one of the regional warlords could up and start yet another rebellion. The time and tide had turned, however, as the Saxons began to look to their coasts instead of looking landward for enemies: in the early years of the ninth century the Viking raids were beginning.

THE CONSOLIDATION OF THE EMPIRE

The conquest of Italy brought Charlemagne into renewed contact with the Saracens, who, at the time, controlled the Mediterranean. Pippin, his son, spent years fighting with the Saracens in Italy. To keep the area under control, Charlemagne conquered Corsica and Sardinia in the 790s and the Balearic Islands, which were often attacked by Saracen pirates, in 799. The counts of Genoa and Tuscany, with their large fleets of fighting warships, kept the Saracens at bay until the end of Charlemagne's reign.

Charlemagne's reach extended even to places that would have been considered alien worlds, even for the well-traveled king: he had diplomatic contact with the caliphal court in Baghdad. In 797, the caliph of Baghdad, Harun al-Rashid, presented Charlemagne with an Asian elephant named Abul-Abbas and gave him the additional gift of a clock. The decadence and violence seen in the Christian capitals would have been a sharp contrast to the splendor and sophistication of the Muslim court.

Charlemagne's younger son Louis was in charge of the Spanish border, and in Hispania the struggle against the Moors continued without end. In 785, Louis's men captured Gerona and extended Frankish control into the Catalan littoral for the duration of Charlemagne's reign—much longer, actually, as it remained Frankish until the Treaty of Corbeil in 1258. The Muslim chiefs in the northeast of Hispania were constantly fighting against Córdoban authority, and they often turned to the Franks for help, allowing the Frankish border to slowly extend until 795, when Gerona, Cardona, Ausona, and Urgel were joined into the new Spanish March, contained within the old duchy of Septimania.

Louis had as much difficulty with the Moors as his brother Pepin did with the Saracens in Italy. Barcelona fell to the Franks in 797 when Zeid, its governor, who had rebelled against Córdoba and failed, handed it to the Franks out of spite. The greatest city of the region did not stay in Frankish hands for long—the Umayyad authority recaptured Barcelona in 799—but Louis marched the entire army of his kingdom over the Pyrenees and besieged the city for two years, wintering there from 800 to 801, until it capitulated. Seizing the victory, the Franks continued to press the emir, taking Tarragona in 809 and Tortosa in 811, a conquest that brought them to the mouth of the Ebro and allowed them to raid Valencia, prompting (the now exhausted) Emir al-Hakam I to recognize their conquests in 812.

THE AVAR AND SLAV CAMPAIGNS

When Charlemagne incorporated much of Central Europe, he brought the Frankish state face to face with the Avars and Slavs in the southeast. In 788, a new enemy arrived on Frankish lands: the Avars. They were a pagan Asian

horde who had settled in what is today Hungary (Einhard calls them Huns), before invading Friuli and then Bavaria. Charlemagne was highly preoccupied until 790 with other political conquests, but in that year he decided he finally had the time to march down the Danube into Avar territory and ravage it all the way to the river Raab. As a second strike, Charlemagne called up a Lombard army under Pippin to march into the Drava valley and ravage Pannonia. Their forked campaign would have continued if the Saxons had not revolted again in 792, breaking seven years of peace and forcing Charlemagne to focus on the Slavs and the Saxons for the next two years.

Pippin and Duke Eric of Friuli, however, continued to attack the Avars' strongholds. The great Ring of the Avars, their capital fortress (so named because the fort was built in 10 rings of earthworks), was taken twice, and the booty was sent to Charlemagne at his capital, Aachen, and redistributed to all his followers and even to foreign rulers, including King Offa of Mercia. The Avar leaders soon learned that fighting Charlemagne or his sons was a losing battle: they traveled to Aachen personally to offer themselves to Charlemagne as vassals and Christians. Charlemagne accepted, and he sent one native chief (baptized Abraham) back to Avaria with the ancient title of *khagan.* Abraham kept his people in line, but not for long: in 800 the Bulgarians under Khan Krum swept the Avar state away, and a hundred years later the Magyars arrived on the Pannonian plain and began a new threat to Charlemagne's descendants.

To consolidate his empire further, in 789 Charlemagne marched an Austrasian-Saxon army across the Elbe into Abrodite or Slav territory. The pagan Slavs immediately submitted under their leader Witzin, and Charlemagne then accepted the surrender of the Witzes under their leader Dragovit. He did demand many hostages from Dragovit and the permission to send missionaries into the pagan region; once his aims were met, his army marched to the Baltic Sea before turning around and returning to the Frankish heartland with much treasure and no harassment.

The Slavs wisely became loyal allies, even helping Charlemagne fight the Saxons. In 795 the Abrodites and Witzes rose in arms with the French king against the Saxons. Witzin died in battle, and Charlemagne avenged him by attacking the Eastphalians on the Elbe. Thrasuco, Witzin's successor, led his men to conquest over the Nordalbingians and handed their leaders over to Charlemagne. The Abrodites remained loyal until Charlemagne's death and even fought later against the Danes. Charlemagne wanted to bring in the Slavic peoples to the west of the Avar khaganate: the Carantanians and Carniolans. Although these people were overcome by the Lombards and Bavarians and made Frankish tributaries, they were never fully incorporated into the Frankish state.

The most southeasterly Frankish neighbors were Croats, who settled into two duchies: the Pannonian Croatia Duchy and the Littoral Croatian Duchy. While fighting the Avars, the Franks had called for their support, and the Pannonian Croatian duke Vojnomir aided Charlemagne. In turn, Charlemagne

offered protection to the Croatians of northern Dalmatia, Slavonia, and Pannonia, but not to the Littoral duchy.

This duchy was soon an item on Charlemagne's list of projected conquests. Eric of Friuli, a Frankish commander, wanted to extend his dominion in Charlemagne's name by conquering the Littoral Croatian Duchy, ruled by Duke Višeslav, one of the first known Croatian dukes. Sadly for the Frankish king, the effort failed. In the battle of Trsat, Eric's forces fled their positions and were totally defeated by Višeslav's army. Eric himself was among the dead, and his defeat was a great setback for the Frankish empire.

EMPEROR CHARLEMAGNE

Despite Charlemagne's protests, it was hardly surprising that Charles king of the Franks was to become Charles emperor of the West. Even uncrowned as emperor, he would still have been known as the greatest of the Carolingian kings, who believed himself to be a divine weapon used to bring order and Christianity to the West. History and the pope had other plans for him, including the protection of the Byzantine Empire from the spread of Islam and paganism and from the Iconoclastic Controversy.

The Controversy was a fight that reflected two sides of a very serious and divisive issue in Christianity. On one side, many devout Christians had a deep emotional attachment to their icons of the saints, Virgin Mary, and bible stories, and monasteries worked hard at preserving ancient artifacts, bones, and personal items of the saints that would attract pilgrims (and their money). Other Christians, however, felt that these icons distracted from the true faith and were too gaudy and showy for a truly ascetic view of Christianity.

On one side, then, were Christians who felt (along with Muslims and Jews) that it was blasphemous to represent the divine in art and who followed the Law of Moses to not make or worship "graven images" because it led to idolatry. On the other side, there were those who felt that the images helped pagan believers convert, and ordinary Christians keep focus, because the visuals directed the thoughts and prayers to heaven. Christianity was a religion that asked its followers to take many doctrines on faith alone, and the images helped followers see that which was invisible and mysterious as concrete and believable.

The Iconoclastic Controversy began during the reign of the Byzantine emperor Leo III (d. 741) when a series (726–29) of edicts was issued against images; in most churches they were removed and destroyed, and the frescoes were whitewashed over. Almost immediately there was a backlash, with riots and revolts that were settled with violence. The Roman popes consistently supported the image-worshippers; not only did they refuse to obey the imperial edicts, but they declared any iconoclast to be a heretic.

Charlemagne and the Frankish clergy regarded image-worshipping as idolatrous and superstitious, as set forth in four tracts composed in 789–91

and issued in his name. Nevertheless, despite such opposition, in 800 Charlemagne allowed himself to be crowned as emperor at Rome by Pope Leo III (elected 795; not to be confused with the earlier Byzantine emperor of the same name and number).

In April 799, Pope Leo III had been attacked by assailants who tried to put out his eyes and tear out his tongue, thus disqualifying him from the papal office. It is not certain what his crime was: some say he was guilty of fornication and perjury, others of the time pointed out that he was simply not the son of one of the city's elite families, and that was crime enough. Leo escaped and fled to Charlemagne at Paderborn, asking him to intervene in Rome and restore him. Charlemagne, advised by Alcuin of York that the church was in a deep crisis, agreed to travel to Rome, doing so in November 800 and holding a council on December 1. On December 23, Leo swore an oath of innocence, and Charlemagne took the pope's side, although it seems he did so mostly in the interest of political stability, not necessarily because he believed the pope was innocent. It seems clear that negotiations had taken place between king and pope at Paderborn, and historians have speculated for centuries on just what might have been reached, as there is no record of their discussions.

On Christmas Day of the year 800, Charlemagne attended the nativity Mass in Saint Peter's Basilica, where he prostrated himself for prayers. When he rose, the pope stepped forward and crowned him as emperor (*Imperator Romanorum,* or "Emperor of the Romans"), and the crowd acclaimed him and knelt along with the pope to pay him homage.

The earliest surviving evidence of what contemporaries thought of that event comes to us from 803. The scribe of the Lorsch Annals set down the basic facts: that the pope was transferring the office of emperor from Constantinople to Charlemagne and thus returning it to Rome. This suggests that the event was well planned out and agreed on by Charlemagne and Pope Leo III at Paderborn, but Einhard argues that Charlemagne was ignorant of the pope's intent and did not want any such coronation:

> At first he disliked this so much that he said that he would not have entered the church that day, even though it was a great feast day, if he had known in advance of the pope's plan. But he bore the animosity that the assumption of this title caused with great patience. (38)

Is it possible that Charlemagne was indeed aware of the planned coronation? The huge, jeweled crown that was waiting for him on the altar must have been quite obvious. Einhard may have wanted to give his hero a sense of Christian humility and modesty and to show that it was not personal ambition, but a desire to give stability to Western Christendom, that led Charlemagne to this crown.

In his official charters, Charlemagne preferred to be called "Karolus serenissimus Augustus a Deo coronatus magnus pacificus imperator Romanum

gubernans imperium" ("Charles, most serene Augustus crowned by God, the great, peaceful emperor ruling the Roman Empire") instead of the more direct "Imperator Romanorum" ("Emperor of the Romans"), but the latter title became the norm.

Roger Collins suggests that any chance that "the motivation behind the acceptance of the imperial title was a romantic and antiquarian interest in reviving the Roman Empire is highly unlikely." Neither the Franks nor the Church of Rome would have wanted the Roman Empire to be revived, because they viewed it with distrust—it was old, decadent, and pagan. Pepin II, father of Charles Martel and great-grandfather of Charlemagne, described the old Roman Empire as something the Franks took pride in overthrowing, having "fought against and thrown from their shoulders the heavy yoke of the Romans [and] from the knowledge gained in baptism, clothed in gold and precious stones the bodies of the holy martyrs whom the Romans had killed by fire, by the sword and by wild animals" (Collins 151).

Charlemagne's assumption of the imperial title was not usurpation in the eyes of the Franks or Italians, who found it to be completely to their benefit. The risk of Charlemagne being overcome by his new power and making drastic changes was not considered a potential problem—the new emperor had never behaved this way and had always included the needs and protection of the Frankish peoples as his priority in his administration. In Byzantium, however, it was protested by Empress Irene and her successor Nicephorus I, but neither of them had any great effect in having their protests heard.

The title of emperor stayed in Charlemagne's family for years, but it caused his descendants to fight over who had the supremacy in the Frankish state. The papacy continued to reserve the right to bestow the honor of emperor on whomever the pope wished, and so when the family of Charlemagne no longer had a worthy heir to offer for the throne, the pope was happy to crown whichever Italian warlord was agreeable and could protect him from his local enemies. In 962, however, the title passed out of French and Italian control to the person of Otto the Great—bringing the title into Germany for almost a thousand years, helping it become the Holy Roman Empire.

DEATH

In 806, Charlemagne made plans for the traditional division of the empire on his death: Charles the Younger was to be given Austrasia and Neustria, Saxony, Burgundy, and Thuringia; Pippin got Italy, Bavaria, and Swabia; Louis got Aquitaine, the Spanish March, and Provence. There was no mention of the imperial title for any of the sons, which suggests that Charlemagne may have regarded the title at the time as an honorary personal award that his sons could not inherit.

The inheritance division was never to be tested. Pippin died in 810 and Charles died in 811. The emperor then reconsidered the situation, and in 813

he crowned King Louis "the Pious" of Aquitaine, his only surviving legitimate son, as co-emperor and co-king of the Franks—an action that suggests he changed his mind and now regarded the imperial title as a hereditary title and not a singular gift of the papacy. The only part of the empire that Louis did not receive was Italy, which Charlemagne specifically gave to Pippin's illegitimate son Bernard.

The emperor spent the autumn hunting in the lands around the royal residence at Aachen, returning to the palace on the first of November. In mid-January, however, the great king fell ill with a fever and the symptoms of pleurisy, as his lungs were inflamed. Depressed, according to witnesses, because even at the age of 72 most of his life plans had not been achieved, he had decided to fast, abstaining from food but taking in a little liquid as was his custom to rid himself of fevers. This time, however, he became bedridden on the twenty-first of January and, as Einhard tells it:

> He died January twenty-eighth, the seventh day from the time that he took to his bed, at nine o'clock in the morning, after partaking of the Holy Communion, in the seventy-second year of his age and the forty-seventh of his reign. (39)

He was buried the same day, in Aachen Cathedral, although such a hurried burial would seem unnecessary given the cold weather and the nature of his illness. Einhard explains that there was uncertainty as to what to do with the body, as Charlemagne himself had not made plans for a tomb or a burial site, but his people agreed that the best place for his tomb would be in the cathedral he had loved so much. His inscription supposedly read as follows:

> Under this tomb lies the body of Charles, the Great and Orthodox Emperor, who gloriously increased the kingdom of the Franks and reigned with great success for forty-seven years. He died in his seventies in the year of our Lord 814, in the seventh indiction, on the twenty-eighth day of January. (40)

One of the first post-death tales, narrated by Otho of Lomello, Count of the Palace at Aachen in the time of Otto III, claimed that around the year 1000 he and Emperor Otto had discovered and opened Charlemagne's tomb. The emperor had been buried upright, seated upon a throne and wearing a crown and holding a scepter, his flesh almost entirely natural and undecomposed. In 1165, Frederick I reopened the tomb and placed the emperor in a sarcophagus beneath the floor of the cathedral. Not to be outdone, in 1215 Frederick II re-interred Charlemagne in a casket made of gold and silver.

Charlemagne's death was more than just another king's death. It led to grief being expressed in almost every corner of the empire, some people mourning because they feared what might happen next, and others mourning out of love. It affected most those of the literary and intellectual clique who had

surrounded and been protected by him at Aachen. An anonymous monk of the monastery of Bobbio lamented:

> From the rising of the sun to the shores of the sea where it sets all hearts are full of sorrow. Alas! The Franks, the Romans and all the Christian peoples weep, bowed in sorrows. . . . The kingdom of the Franks has suffered many disasters but never has it suffered such great grief as in the moment when the awe-inspiring and eloquent Charlemagne was laid to rest at Aachen. O Christ, welcome the pious Charlemagne into your blessed home among the apostles. (Becher 135)

Louis succeeded Charlemagne as intended, but his empire lasted only another generation. The division of the lands made according to law and custom between Louis's own sons after their father's death laid the foundation for the modern states of Germany and France.

CHARLEMAGNE'S LEGACY

Charlemagne is remembered for being an empire-builder, but he is also remembered for his many reforms of the monetary system, the government, the military, the church, and Frankish culture. His reforms became what today is called the "Carolingian Renaissance."

While there was no chance of the survival of the empire as it was when Charlemagne died—there was no constitution to hold it together, and the tensions within the Carolingian descendants were too great, plus in the outlying areas of the kingdom the tribal loyalties were too strong—what did remain was a common memory of a time when there was a united Western Christendom that had a common goal of expanding culture, education, quality of life, and Christian religious values.

Economic and Monetary Reforms

The peace with Byzantium in the 750s ended Byzantine rule in northern Italy, but it created a financial problem: a shortage of gold. The Franks were forced to give up Venice and Sicily, and that meant the loss of trade routes to Africa and the East. When Charlemagne came to power, he followed his father's reforms, but extended them further in 792 to 794 by ending the monetary system based on the gold *sou* and replacing it with a system based on silver, which was in much more plentiful supply in Frankish lands.

This standardization unified, harmonized, and simplified the hundreds of tribal currencies that had been in place for centuries and began new opportunities for trade and commerce. The new currency was called the *livre carolingienne* (from the Latin *libra,* the modern pound), and based upon a

pound of silver. This pound, which was a unit of both money and weight, was worth 20 *sous*—from the Latin *solidus* (which was primarily weight used for accounting and trade and never actually minted) or 240 *deniers* (from the Latin *denarius,* equal to the modern penny). During this period, the *livre* and the *sou* were counting units; only the silver *denier* was a coin of the realm.

Charlemagne instituted principles for administrative structure in several documents; the most significant in terms of the economic control of his kingdom was the *Capitulare de villis* of 802. It lists a series of very specific rules about how the king's estates must be run, and it gives us a wealth of detail about the day-to-day expectations of how his subordinates must meet the king's needs. It has rules about the estate's agricultural, craft, financial, and industrial workings, and how each of these must be run in order to meet the needs of the royal household and the palace.

In addition to this macro-oriented reform of the economy, Charlemagne also initiated a number of microeconomic reforms, such as direct control of prices and levies on certain goods and commodities. He prohibited the lending of money for interest, and then strengthened the laws regarding lending in 814 when he made the *Capitulary for the Jews,* a complete banning of the Jewish practice of money-lending.

Much of the European continent took up Charlemagne's system, because it was not his problem alone that gold was no longer heading north. In England, the Anglo-Saxon King Offa of Mercia voluntarily adopted the standard. After Charlemagne's death, the quality of the silver used for coins began to decrease, forcing those in Europe until about the year 1100 to use the more purely minted English coin.

Laws

One cannot have an empire without a common law, the essential ingredient that binds people together and gives society its structure. The *Lex Romana,* for example, allowed Roman citizens the confidence in knowing that they were protected by the same laws and had the same rights wherever they lived in the Roman Empire. Charlemagne's view of law was not that it should be uniform in his empire: that would have been too difficult, considering the differences of language, territory, and custom. He did insist on a uniform Christianity, however, and he based his legal decisions on the church's canon laws first, and then regional law next. To clarify: Charlemagne believed in law and justice, and he made sure the laws of all the areas of his empire were collected and written down. He also documented and circulated the laws of the church. But in terms of individual areas' laws concerning such things as inheritance, trials and punishments, and age of majority for marriage, he allowed the rule of tribal leaders and local law.

Military

One of the myths surrounding Charlemagne's legacy is the idea that he was able to dominate Europe by his cavalry's use of the stirrup, supposedly introduced by Charles Martel in the 730s. The stirrup, however, was not introduced until the late eighth century and was not widely adopted until the twelfth century, and so it could not have been used as a part of a "shock cavalry charge" with the lances held locked in position and the knights locked on the horse as well by means of stirrups. Charlemagne's military success instead can be attributed to clever use of the siege technologies of the time and to brilliant logistics—he fought very few battles directly in the field, as most of his warfare was based on attacking the enemy's forts and laying siege—and so even if he had the skill of a "shock cavalry" among his knights, he would not have had to use the technique enough for it to become famous.

Church Reforms

Charlemagne may have had problems with his dukes, counts, officials, and other political subordinates, but he was very secure in his relationship with the representatives of the church. Because he saw himself as a partner in a divine mission, the church gave him bishops, abbots, monks, and priests to do the work of conversion wherever Charlemagne conquered—but they also were educated men who acted as his trusted secretaries, intellectual support, and administrators.

Many of these men were wealthy in their own right, and one way that Charlemagne showed his favor was to give grants of ecclesiastical titles and land. The men who swore allegiance to the emperor were given certain immunities and were able to receive tithes from the subjects who lived on their lands. Charlemagne, in turn, had a high level of expectations for his ecclesiastical subjects. When he became king, he discovered that the clergy had taken advantage of their privileged position in society and, instead of evangelizing, had sat back and simply enjoyed their security. Most of the clergy were woefully undereducated, and the result was that preaching was substandard: inadequate in both quality and quantity. If he wanted to create a peaceful Christian society, then he had a long way to go—a realization that he would have as much of a problem with creating a standardized spiritual community where dogmas were understood and obeyed as with creating a Christian empire among the borderlands of Frankish territory.

Charlemagne set out his program for church reform in 789 in the *Admonitio Generalis*. In it, he standardized not only the secular life within the church—law courts, building upkeep, the church calendar, and tithing—but also spiritual matters such as how to teach the mystery of the Trinity. He believed (he had a superstitious side) that there was one right way of saying

Mass, one right way of chanting the psalms, and one perfect and faultless text of scripture, and straying from these forms would displease God (and hence would be unlucky). He asked the pope in 790, for example, for an authorized sacramental liturgy, which he then had copied and sent all over his kingdom with the express intent that it would be the one right text that every clergyman would use. He did the same with the Bible in order to get things perfect and thus not tempt the Almighty into displeasure.

His reforms had to be restated, and pushed, over and over again despite the fact that the clergy were supposedly submitting to the papal rule. Almost every year Charlemagne had orders sent out, even up to his death, and in the letters exchanged between the emperor and Alcuin it seems that Charlemagne was going to be frustrated in his life's goal to create an orderly and universally obeyed realm of church law.

Educational Reforms

The term "Carolingian Renaissance" is most closely connected to the flowering of education, scholarship, literature, art, and architecture that the king enthusiastically encouraged. He had always enjoyed a passion for scholarship and learning, mastering languages (he spoke Latin fluently and mastered diplomatic Greek, and evidence suggests he spoke more than a little Arabic). In the 780s Charlemagne began to make his court a center of religious scholarship, controlling, in effect, the intellectual grounding of his empire, and thus boxing in what people might believe or think.

He sent away to monasteries for manuscripts that might be useful and had many copied and sent on to other schools or centers of learning throughout his empire—attempting to create a standard of education among present and future generations of clerics. They were sent holy scripture, commentaries, patristic works, and as much of the Roman and Greek classical authors as were available at the time. He did increase the libraries of monastic schools and scriptoria (centers for book-copying) in his empire: most of the surviving works that we have today of classical Latin were copied and preserved by Carolingian scholars, and the earliest manuscripts available for many ancient texts are Carolingian. If a text managed to survive to the Carolingian age, chances are that it survives today, thanks to Charlemagne.

Charlemagne brought Frankish culture into contact with the culture and learning of other countries (such as the Visigoths in Spain, the Anglo-Saxons in England, and the caliphal court in Baghdad) due to his vast conquests. In his court, he surrounded himself with men of learning from all over his empire: Alcuin, an Anglo-Saxon from York; Theodulf, a Visigoth from Septimania; the historian Paul the Deacon, a Lombard; Peter, later the bishop of Pisa, and Paulinus of Aquileia, both Italians; and Angilbert, Angilram, Einhard, and Waldo of Reichenau, all Franks. This is only a partial list of his legion of scholars.

This blend, however, promoted the liberal arts at the court, and Charlemagne ordered that his children and grandchildren be well educated in this mix. Even he continued to study. At a time when most warlords were basically illiterate, Charlemagne learned Latin grammar from Paul the Deacon; rhetoric, logic, and astronomy from Alcuin; and arithmetic from Einhard. The king's great failure in scholarship, as Einhard confesses, was his seeming inability to learn how to write. Part of the problem was that Charlemagne attempted to learn only in his later years—practicing the formation of letters (in his bed during his free time) on books and wax tablets that he hid under his pillow—and it calls into question his ability to read. Einhard is notoriously silent about that skill, and no contemporary source supports the idea that Charlemagne could read.

Nevertheless, Charlemagne's success as warrior and administrator can be traced to his admiration for learning. One of the reforms named after him, however, was due not to an intellectual advance, but, ironically, an advance in handwriting. Because all manuscripts had to be hand-copied, the handwriting a monk or scribe was taught to use was very important in terms of being easy to read. The Merovingian handwriting was very difficult to follow, as single letters could be written with different shapes—a "c" could easily be mistaken for an "e," for example—and the Insular Script was beautiful but the ligatures and abbreviations also made copying difficult and slow.

The new minuscule, called Carolingian or Caroline, was developed first in Aachen and later from the influential scriptorium at Tours, where Alcuin retired as an abbot. It combined the Roman half uncial script (and its cursive version) with features from the Insular Scripts that were being used in Irish and English monasteries. Its strength was in its uniformity—rounded shapes, clearly distinguishable letters, clear capital letters, and spaces between words—all norms that we take for granted today.

LATER LEGENDS

The legends around Charlemagne began even before the emperor was dead. Even though the Royal Frankish Annals offer readers the detailed facts of year-by-year events, he was too much a larger-than-life figure for speculation and fiction not to arise.

Einhard joined Charlemagne's court in the 790s and served his son Louis the Pious at both Aachen and the king's estates at Selingenstadt. Einhard had been a pupil of Alcuin of York and was most likely the youngest of the circle of international scholars that the king had collected for his court (see section on Charlemagne's educational reforms). What makes his biography of Charlemagne so interesting is that we are reading the account of an insider to the court and to the royal family, and the evidence in court letters of how others held Einhard in high esteem gives the biography a status that others do not hold. A later biography—the anonymous *Visio Karoli Magni,* written around

865 as a visionary, cautionary tale of Charlemagne meeting with a prophetic specter in a dream—uses facts taken from Einhard and the author's own observations on the decline of the emperor's family after the tumult of the civil war in 840.

The emperor still found his way into epic tales. He was considered one of the Nine Worthies, one of the three model knights of Christendom in that body, and so it seems fitting that one of the great topics of medieval narrative, known as the *Matter of France* or the Charlemagne Cycle, focuses on the deeds of Charlemagne. In it he is called "The Emperor with the Flowing Beard," a title seen in the *Song of Roland,* and Roland and the paladins are made equal to the knights of the Round Table in King Arthur's court. Charlemagne was honored by Dante, who placed the emperor's spirit in the Heaven of Mars, among the other "warriors of the faith."

In 1165 Charlemagne was canonized by Antipope Paschal III to gain the favor of Frederick Barbarossa. The sainthood was never recognized by the church, of course, and all of Paschal's ordinances were annulled at the Third Lateran Council in 1179. Charlemagne was later beatified by Pope Benedict XIV (r. 1740–58); he is venerated on January 28.

CHARLEMAGNE'S ENDURING INFLUENCE

The emperor is credited with being one of the reasons behind the East-West Schism in the Christian church, although he may not have done it intentionally. The disagreement has to do with a very important statement in the Nicene Creed, called the *filioque*. The Visigoths believed the Holy Spirit came from God the Father *and Son* (the Son part is the *Filioque*), and the Franks inherited that tradition. Charlemagne, upon the advice of his religious advisors, thus challenged the Council of Constantinople's proclamation of 381 that the Holy Spirit proceeded from the Father alone.

Pope Leo III rejected Charlemagne's challenge and stubbornly had the Nicene Creed carved into the doors of Old Saint Peter's Basilica without the offending phrase, as if that would make the king's challenge less weighty. The Franks, of course, ignored such a gesture, and their insistence on the *filioque* led to years of poor relations with Rome. The Roman Church was later persuaded by Charlemagne's argument and adopted the phrase in its version of the Creed. This, in turn, contributed to the dispute between Rome and Constantinople.

In honor of Charlemagne, the city of Aachen has, since 1949, awarded an international prize (called the *Karlspreis der Stadt Aachen*) annually to "personages of merit who have promoted the idea of western unity by their political, economic and literary endeavours." Winners include Count Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi, the founder of the pan-European movement; Alcide De Gasperi, a founding father of the European Union; and the British prime minister Winston Churchill.

The most valuable and lasting aspect of Charlemagne's life that we have inherited is the idea of "Europe" as a core concept of geography, history, art, science, politics, and religion. As Derek Wilson puts it:

> Over and over again, throughout all the centuries that followed—during which warrior barons and the leaders of nation-states who succeeded them fought to extend or defend their boundaries—bards, kings, political theorists and artists appealed to Charlemagne to justify their actions and support their ideas. A luxuriant myth grew out of the seed of ninth-century reality, putting out new shoots in every generation. Thousands of stories were added to the Charlemagne corpus. He became for different ages a saint, a crusader, the model of chivalry, a cultural icon, a champion of civilization, an exemplar for absolutist monarchs but also an advocate of democracy, a focus of national pride but also the supreme internationalist. Charlemagne—man, monarch, and myth—cannot be disentangled from the story of Europe. (3–4)

I wrote at the beginning of this chapter that Charlemagne is one of those icons whose name is better known than his accomplishments. Yet his accomplishments are in evidence all around us, because what Charlemagne stood for was essential to the development of our Western civilization. When we think of Western art, politics, culture, economics, and most importantly the Christian faith, we should think of Charlemagne.

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APPENDIX: THE CAROLINGIAN DYNASTY

Pippinids

Pippin (or Pepin) the Elder (ca. 580–640)
Grimoald (616–656)
Childebert the Adopted (d. 662)

Arnulfings

Arnulf of Metz (582–640)
Chlodulf of Metz (d. 696 or 697)
Ansegisel (ca. 602–before 679)
Pepin II "the Middle" (ca. 635–714)
Grimoald II (d. 714)
Drogo of Champagne (670–708)
Theudoald (d. 714)

Carolingians

Charles Martel (686–741)
Carloman (d. 754)
Pepin the Short (714–768)
Carloman I (751–771)
Charlemagne (ca. 742–814)
Louis the Pious (778–840)

Carolingians after the Treaty of Verdun (843)

Lothair I, Holy Roman Emperor (795–855) (Middle Francia)
Charles the Bald (823–877) (Western Francia)
Louis the German (804–876) (Eastern Francia)

Portrait of Geoffrey Chaucer, from the poem *Regiment of Princes* by Thomas Hoccleve, fifteenth century. (British Library/Stockphoto-Pro)

Geoffrey Chaucer (ca. 1340–1400)

Louise M. Bishop

INTRODUCTION

The major Hollywood movie *A Knight's Tale* (2001, written and directed by Brian Helgeland) follows the adventures of William Turner (played by Heath Ledger), a common page to a recently deceased noble. The peasant Turner, disguised in his late master's armor, seeks the rewards of knighthood, despite the supposed dangers of his impersonation. In addition to Ledger and his motley crew who quest for tournament prizes, the film features a thin, sprightly, bigheaded (in more ways than one) Geoffrey Chaucer (played by Paul Bettany). Chaucer introduces himself with "Geoffrey Chaucer's the name, writing's the game." He's a down-and-out writer, addicted to gambling and stuck making his living as a scribe. Poetry plays second fiddle to his other interests like wenches and gambling (he suffers from a modern-flavored addiction, without benefit of a 12-step program), but he nevertheless expects his fame to have preceded him. Having lost his clothes in a card game, and standing naked before Turner, Chaucer attempts to jog Turner's memory: "You've probably read my book?" (Beat) "Book of the Duchess?" Turner just looks on, puzzled. The poet's wit glistens only in comparison to the film's generally insipid dialogue as Chaucer, like Turner, pulls a number of fast ones in his attempts to score with damsels as well as dice.

A Knight's Tale is a pretty uninspired movie, but at least it doesn't try to be more than it is: an entertaining teen flick. It reveals a popular culture that has lost touch with its medieval past as well as the figure of Geoffrey Chaucer, except in the most bowdlerized of forms. The film's opening tournament shows its grandstands rocking to Queen's "We Will Rock You"; the film's villain, Count Adhemar of Anjou (played by Rufus Sewell), loses a polite challenge once Turner and company dance enthusiastically, if not brilliantly, to David Bowie's "The Golden Years." It's clear that Helgeland can't trust an audience to find humor in an *authentic* representation of the Middle Ages.

But what Helgeland's movie reveals is that, in the midst of perhaps the most high-stakes commercial enterprise in the United States—filmmaking—even an audience of teenagers intrigued by things labeled "medieval" will recognize Geoffrey Chaucer as an icon of the Middle Ages. Indeed, a YouTube search for "Chaucer" returns hundreds of hits, primarily videos of high school class projects. There are live-action re-creations, energetic cartoons, and Lego-based narratives. Even the video game *World of Warcraft* has been used to bring a version of Geoffrey Chaucer to the home computer screen. Some of these amateur productions take authenticity more seriously than does *A Knight's Tale,* with occasionally accurate Middle English renditions of one or another of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. As for choice of tale, a tally of a sampling of these videos shows that "The Pardoner's Tale," with its challenging combination of moral lesson and scurrilous character, wins the popularity contest, hands down.

Evidently Americans aged 15 to 24 have enough familiarity with Geoffrey Chaucer for Hollywood's money machine, which squarely targets this

demographic, to front a major production that features the poet prominently, if not at the film's center. But what about the real Geoffrey Chaucer and his legacy? What has made him available, some six centuries after his death, as an icon viable for commercial use? Is there more to Chaucer than a simple sound bite or a moniker that says "medieval"? Where does his iconic status come from, and how has it changed? What has kept Geoffrey Chaucer alive?

The following essay will treat Chaucer's biography, the creation of his iconic status, and the ways his icon has inhabited English literary culture for more than six hundred years. Here you will find some reasons for his durability, continued importance in literary circles, and commercial viability. We will see why Chaucer endures.

BIOGRAPHY

Birth and Early Life

As with many medieval persons of common stock, the day and even the year of Chaucer's birth are unknown. He is thought to have been born in London sometime around 1340, and we do know he died in 1400. The year of his death is a matter of public record because, by the time of his death, Chaucer had spent most of his adult life in the orbit of the royal family and its prestigious courts. He wasn't necessarily destined to end up at court, but his family was wealthy and well enough placed, both geographically and socioeconomically, to give him a good start. His father, Thomas Chaucer, was a prosperous wine merchant. London was then a burgeoning commercial hub—arguably the most active in Europe—and its power was great enough to necessitate royalty's accession to the city's wishes: London's mayor rivaled the king in political and economic sway.

Among the ironically lucky events early in Chaucer's lifetime was his father's decision, in 1347, to relocate his family, including the young Geoffrey, outside of the city. Their move fortuitously took them out of London, and harm's way, just before the Black Death—bubonic plague—struck. Contemporary chronicles and modern research put the plague's devastating death toll between one-third and one-half of Britain's population. As for London itself, a 2005 article in the journal *Human Biology* puts the population of London at 100,000 before the first wave of plague (1348–51)and 50,000 after the plague (*Human Biology* 77.3 (2005) 291–303). Although calculations vary, it is clear from many remnants of fourteenth-century material culture, such as manuscript illuminations, tombs, and currently excavated burial grounds, that the plague wreaked havoc on London. But the city's importance as commercial center for Britain and Europe remained, and after the plague the Chaucer family returned to the metropolis to augment their fortunes and play a role in local politics.

Chaucer the Page

Family connections got teenaged Geoffrey preferred to court as page, the first step for a royal servant being educated in the ways of aristocratic life. Chaucer first entered court service during the reign of King Edward III (1312–1377, r. 1327–77), but did not serve immediately at any of that king's domiciles. Instead, Geoffrey was "preferred" to the court of the second of Edward's five sons, Lionel (1338–1368). Chaucer took part in the consolidation of the prince's court with that of his wife, the princess Elizabeth. As Chaucer became more accomplished in the courtly arts, he moved among princely venues, including the magnificent courts of the third of Edward's sons, John of Gaunt (1340–1399), a powerful noble and father to the usurping king Henry IV (1366–1413, reigned 1399–1413). This Henry is the one who attained the throne of England, as William Shakespeare's (1564–1616) second tetrology of history plays dramatizes, after forcing the abdication of Richard II (1367–1399) at the end of the fourteenth century, a year before Chaucer's death. In the course of his work life, Chaucer served, and was recognized with substantial rewards from, all three of these kings: the aged Edward, the young Richard, and the usurping Henry.

Diplomat and Soldier

It did not take long for young Geoffrey to move up in responsibilities at Prince Lionel's court. From page he became yeoman; from yeoman, esquire and that rank's foreign service in international diplomacy. The traveling he did in his diplomatic role—he visited Italy, Spain, and France—immersed him in late medieval urbanity. The poetic sophistication upon which Chaucer's iconic status rests derives in no small part from these travels as a young man on royal business. In his youth he saw the French city of Reims, near which he was captured and ransomed after four months of imprisonment. Such ransoming was a common practice among noble courts in the fourteenth century and, because their captors hoped to attain considerable sums in ransom, prisoners were well treated and not abused. Besides Reims and Paris, the increasingly urbane Geoffrey saw the major Italian cities of Genoa and Florence during the 1360s and traveled to Pavia and Milan in the 1370s. These cities exposed Chaucer to the rich international commerce and diplomacy, not to mention the aesthetic pleasures, the burgeoning Renaissance fostered there.

Poet

Chaucer's success as diplomat paralleled his growth as poet. Influenced by the writings of Dante (1265–1321), Petrarch (1304–1374), and Boccaccio (1313–1375), whose works he could acquire as manuscripts through his travels,

Chaucer also found inspiration in the French poets Guillaume de Machaut (ca. 1300–1377) and Eustache Deschamps (1346–1406), the latter of whom wrote to Chaucer letters that survive to this day. Following the styles of these accomplished men of letters, Chaucer wrote ballads attuned to the devices and conventions of courtly love and short poems touched with courtly pretensions, from love-longing to knightly endeavors. His greatest innovation, while prompted in part by his French and Italian literary influences, made him different from them: he wrote in his native, vernacular English.

Chaucer's choice to write in English parallels Dante's decision to write his major work, *The Divine Comedy,* not in Latin, despite its subject matter, but in his vernacular Tuscan Italian, the reasons for which he presents in his Latin work, *De vulgari eloquentia* ("On the eloquence of the vernacular"). Still, Chaucer's choice of English over French went against tradition in England at that time. The business of England had been conducted in French since the Norman conquest of 1066; although "Saxon" survived, it was not the status language of commerce, the royal court, or even law. But Chaucer was no apologist for Saxon, either. He did not take up models available to him outside the court. English verse had relied on alliteration, rather than end-rhyme, for its meter and rhythm in the Anglo-Saxon period (fifth century–eleventh century), but Chaucer's poetry, from his earlier works to his last, *The Canterbury Tales,* use end-rhyme and the syllabic count that governs poetry composed in the Romance languages. Why did Chaucer write in English? Perhaps he was moved by Dante's arguments in *De vulgari eloquentia*; perhaps, court creature and diplomatic voyager that he was, he wanted to explore national identity produced through language. The reasons for his choice are both obscure and manifold, but the choice of English marks Chaucer's iconic status. The creation and continuity of Chaucer's iconic presence in later centuries depends, as did his initial choice of English, on intersections among monarchic power, national identity, aesthetic judgment, and the pleasures of English poetry.

The sweet courtly poems Chaucer composed—in English, of course—during his residency in the courts of Prince Lionel and John of Gaunt were practice runs for his longer dream visions. The dream-vision form was popularized by French poets, but its roots run deep in classical and biblical culture. Chaucer modeled his dream visions on those of his favorite French writer, Guillaume de Machaut, the previous generation's most courtly exemplar and a favorite of Anglo-Norman nobility. Chaucer's dream-vision poems situate him in the literary mainstream of his courtly circles. Most critics agree that Chaucer's first dream-vision poem—the one that Paul Bettany's Chaucer in *A Knight's Tale* erroneously thinks William Turner will recognize—is *The Book of the Duchess*. Most consider the poem a commission from John of Gaunt to honor his late wife Blanche. Blanche had died in 1369, but Chaucer composed the poem, it is argued, for a later ceremony on the anniversary of her death.

William Turner's ignorance of *The Book of the Duchess* in *A Knight's Tale* may match the present audience's: there are no YouTube *Book of the Duchess* videos. Chaucer's current fame rests on his *Canterbury Tales*: 24 tales stitched

together with a "frame narrative" of a pilgrimage and a tale-telling contest, the unfinished last of his poetic works in a career that spanned three decades. But Chaucer's signature poetic traits, the ones current fans recognize in *The Canterbury Tales,* also appear in his earliest work. One feature of his early poetry well-attested in his later work is a spark of what moderns would call "realism" as well as an understanding of human psychology. In *The Book of the Duchess,* the grieving Man in Black is brought around to a confession of what his fulsome praise seemed to deny, that his love is dead; his admission brings a kind of relief. There's an insistent dog leading the dreamer around, and even his nightclothes—actually, his lack thereof—are described in the poem. Although allegory was a preeminent mode in the literature Chaucer read, his own work plays with the tension between the real and the allegorical, making his poetry continually enigmatic but eminently re-readable. In addition, Chaucer's early poetry features one of his literature's most recognized traits: a kind of ironic distance, caught in a web of emotion, yet knowing and self-aware. Even in the midst of the conventions of love's tribulations or Fortune's turning wheel, the narrator in Chaucer's poetry seems to have a tongue poised firmly within his cheek. This attitude on the part of a narrator marks all of Chaucer's poetry; it's the attitude for which today, from college classrooms to YouTube, Chaucer is justly celebrated. Not everyone reads such ironic distance the same way. This quality of Chaucer's poetry—and maybe its positive critical reception by twentieth-century critics in particular—prompted critic Camille Paglia to denounce Chaucer's chumminess of the "wink, wink, nudge, nudge" sort: she detests Chaucer's enjoyment of the "in joke." But there is no end of enjoyment to be taken in analyzing the connection between self and words parallel to the vagaries of court life that Chaucer's poetry places in imaginative landscapes poised between fantasy and dreadful reality. The pleasures of such a stance involve readers today and may have been even more attractive to those embroiled daily in the tumultuous years, the 1370s, of one old king's late reign and his grandson successor's early years.

Service under King Richard II

Edward III had groomed his eldest son, Edward the Black Prince (1330–1376) to succeed him, but the prince predeceased his father following a long illness. Upon Edward III's death in 1377, the Black Prince's son Richard, at the tender age of 10, assumed the throne. Due to his youth it was suggested that Richard be ruled by a regency made up of his uncles, but fear of their power—especially that of the exceedingly wealthy and powerful John of Gaunt (Chaucer's patron since Prince Lionel's death in 1368)—was substantial enough to produce a unique configuration of councils, rather than uncles, exercising consultancy. But the uncles—John of Gaunt, Edmund of York (1341–1402), and Thomas of Woodstock (1355–1397)—still exerted the kind of influence that comes with wealth and position.

Chaucer initially served his new king through these avuncular branches of the powerful Plantagenet family. In 1378 he participated in diplomatic efforts to broker a marriage between England's royal interests and the despotic Visconti family in Milan: the goal was to engage a Visconti daughter, Catarina, to the newly crowned young Richard. It's hard to know how surprised Chaucer might have been when, in 1379, Richard II was affianced to Anne of Bohemia, daughter of the Holy Roman Emperor. A choice marriage, but not one with which Chaucer had been involved: we can only guess at his reaction to the engagement. He was, however, undoubtedly present at Richard and Anne's marriage ceremonies in 1382.

Until his participation in marriage negotiations for the young king— Chaucer had accompanied an embassy to Paris in 1377 to explore marital options there as well as in Italy—his travels had been curtailed since 1374, when he was named controller of the "wool custom" and the "petty custom," posts he held for some 12 years. While Chaucer kept books, per se, for both posts, he was not the actual collector of funds. Rather, he was the crown's agent, assuring reliability, accuracy, and the king's interests. Both customs positions required moral probity as well as commercial cognizance, and Chaucer's designation for the posts demonstrates his utter immersion in the mercantile, political, and international issues of his day. Whether his new duties resulted from the king's—or the king's uncles'—desires to reward prior service or were a way to keep him in town, Chaucer's day job resulted in continued connection to royal administration as courtly and commercial patrons gained their footing in a burgeoning economy. These commercial vagaries as crucible of character capture the poet's attention, adding to his inspired explorations of the real in the allegorical and the allegorical in the real.

The Aldgate Years

To satisfy the needs of his new position as customs officer, Chaucer leased a dwelling above one of London's city gates, called in its time Aldgate (now a London Tube stop). This situation, along with the access his administrative post necessitated, afforded Chaucer a front-row seat for the last events of Edward III's reign and the earliest ones of Richard II's, letting him follow the political machinations that accompanied this troubled succession of a preteen king.

Two more dream vision poems date from these years: *The House of Fame* and *The Parliament of Fowls*. The first allows us another glimpse of Chaucer's constructed persona accosted by an eagle that grips him with its talons and flies away, only to engage the narrator in conversation about poetic fame. The bird-motif continues in the second dream vision, which, mimicking Chaucer's diplomatic efforts, treats marriage and the making of a good union. Perhaps predictably, considering the failure of Chaucer's marriage negotiations with the Visconti, the union of the male eagle and female tercelet, the poem's ostensible goal, is deferred at the tercelet's insistence. Chaucer's marriage-themed dream

vision, peopled with creatures, counterpoises the seemingly forced marriages in the final acts of Shakespeare's comedies like *Measure for Measure*. Instead, the *Parliament of Fowls* puts off what had seemed the perfect pairing and ends inconclusively. Undoubtedly a finished work, the *Parliament* anticipates the unfinished nature of some of Chaucer's later work, specifically the *Legend of Good Women* and *The Canterbury Tales*. In those instances Chaucer has left his audience with enduring mysteries, and speculation continues about his motives for writing what he did, how he did. Such inconclusiveness has added to his iconic status, just as indecision has assured Hamlet's fame.

But the Aldgate years also saw the beginning of the poem on which Chaucer thought his legacy would rest. *Troilus and Criseyde* is a long epic poem retelling Boccaccio's *Il Filostrato,* which is itself a treatment of the further adventures of the Trojan War as amplified by late classical and medieval poets' many additional stories. Again we meet Chaucer's created persona, a narrator both inquisitive yet bumbling, much like the narrator of the dream visions but wrapped into a narrative at once historical (the Trojan War), courtly (love achieved and frustrated anchors the plot), and philosophical. Many critics suggest that Chaucer had other reasons for injecting a philosophical strain into *Troilus and Criseyde*. One of his shorter poems suggests that Chaucer was at the time translating the late classical *Consolation of Philosophy,* a bellwether Late Latin text (ca. 521) that was adopted by Christianity for its messages about fortune's seductive blandishments and free will's Christian centrality. A good deal of the *Consolation*'s power derives from its dramatic situation. Its eponymous narrator sits in prison, undeservedly condemned to capital punishment. His capacious vision attempts to answer why bad things happen to good people. Chaucer's translation hasn't earned high marks on its own, but some think he translated the text as part of a drive to educate the young king Richard. Although Chaucer's Boethius translation may not sing, his *Troilus and Criseyde* is a compelling masterpiece written in the stateliest English. Its accomplishments include Chaucer's invention of a rhymed, metered poetic form, the diction of which is at once both English and classical. Chaucer had no English-language models for what he did with *Troilus and Criseyde*. But the poem reveals poetic achievement beyond vernacular linguistic invention. Chaucer imbues the poem with equal measures of insouciance—the narrator retains his admiration for Criseyde almost despite himself—and the gravitas of martial realities. *Troilus and Criseyde* is a poem even undergraduates can't stop reading. Its enigmatic ending—Troilus, betrayed by Criseyde and now perched in the spherical heavens, looks down at the piddling earth and laughs—continues to provoke readers and evoke commentary.

The Rising of 1381

In typical Chaucerian fashion, however—meaning that neither motives nor outcome is unambiguous—Chaucer's Aldgate years are known for a staggering event that makes virtually no appearance in his poetry. In June 1381 an

enormous confederacy—variously called "rebels," "lollards," and "peasants"—surrounded the metropolitan city of London to press their claims against royal taxes and decrees that were the result of the Black Death. The taxation the rebels resisted included a poll tax of three pence per head—"poll"—payable to the royal coffers. The decrees, called the Statutes of Laborers, had frozen wages in favor of the nobility, to the detriment of landless peasants selling their ability to work in a market straitened by the enormous manpower losses of the plague.

For one warm summer week, London (pop. 50,000) was besieged by a rebel tumult: 10,000 people surrounded the city and milled about below the gate in which Chaucer lived. The rebels meant business: they executed the archbishop of Canterbury and burned the Savoy palace of Chaucer's patron John of Gaunt. The shockwave of the Rising or, as it was called prior to 1968, the Peasants' Revolt, reverberated in contemporary chronicles, which, to please royal masters, took pains to paint the rebels as dastardly and the nobles as wise. As it happened, the 14-year-old king Richard II rode out to meet the rebel leaders in Smithfield, outside Aldgate, and gave assurances, soon to be rescinded, of meeting the leaders' demands. Once the crowds dispersed, the remaining rebel leaders were taken and executed, and a terrifying week in London's history moved into legend. But, remarkably to modern ears accustomed to the concept of "newsworthy," these events did not move into Chaucer's poetry, with the sole exception of a glance at the perhaps legendary rebel leader Jack Straw, whose raucous voice is named and parodied in "The Nun's Priest's Tale," one of the *Canterbury Tales*. If we see Chaucer as primarily caring for his legacy as a poet, guided by Petrarch, Dante, Machaut, and Deschamps, and understanding literature as different from "the news," then we might appreciate the subtlety he brings to his opinions, couched in his signature ironic distance. Our age of surveillance might suggest that Chaucer avoided "the news" because to engage with headlines posed a danger. But Chaucer's poetic choices were, first and foremost, *poetic* ones, designed to engage his audience on every level, not just the most sensational.

None of this detracts from the simmering politics that animated Chaucer's courts and inhabited London's streets. There were those who attributed to the Rising's rebel leadership an affiliation with a contemporary religious reform movement whose adherents were maligned by the obscure term "Lollard." These social critics followed the reformist Oxford theologian John Wyclif (ca. 1325–1384), a prolific scourge of church leadership, especially the papacy, who voiced his disappointment at what he considered the Christian church's failure to adhere solely to biblical traditions. Wyclif was no wild-eyed reformer: rather, during the heyday of his campaign in the 1370s he earned the protection of none other than John of Gaunt, Richard II's uncle and, we should remember, an important patron of Chaucer's. Gaunt's role in Wyclif's career resulted from the main political rationale of Wyclif's reforms: to limit the role of clergy and church administration in the secular courts' affairs. Canterbury Cathedral's martyr Thomas Becket (ca. 1118–1170) had met his end defending the church's prerogatives against those of the English king

Henry II (r. 1154–1189); the popular pilgrimage to Canterbury that frames Chaucer's *Tales* commemorated this check on royal power (see the chapter on Thomas Becket). Wyclif, two centuries later, concentrated not on the Christian church's triumphs but on its abuses. He targeted not only the papacy but the monasteries, the former looking rather bad in light of multiple popes, the latter evidently rich in land and other wealth that rivaled princely holdings. Although the rebels likely were supporters of Wyclif and familiar with his calls to reform, they burned the London palace of Wyclif's protector Gaunt, probably because Gaunt's wealth made him a target analogous to the rich monastic foundations Wyclif denounced. Gaunt himself was not harmed, but the rebels beheaded the politically powerful and perhaps rivalrous archbishop of Canterbury: the besieged nobles, cravenly but accurately, figured that the archbishop would serve to sate the rebels' demand for a sacrificial victim. Although Gaunt lost his palace, he kept his head, and he remained one of the most powerful nobles in England—a fact not lost on his son Henry who, less than 20 years later, ascended the throne as Henry IV after forcing Richard II to abdicate.

Chaucer and Lollardy

Just as Chaucer's attitudes to court intrigue seem to be—and not to be—written into his poetry, so his relationship to Lollardy's theology and ideology has inspired enormous debate. In *The Canterbury Tales,* the pilgrimage's Host, Harry Bailey, explicitly labels the Parson a Lollard. Critics have traced a fair amount of Lollard attitude in the sermon delivered by the Parson in his tale. But the Parson is no supporter of royal prerogative. The pilgrims in *The Canterbury Tales* travel to the tomb of Thomas Becket, defender of the Christian church's prerogatives against royal administration. A pilgrimage to Canterbury thus memorializes the only check available on runaway kingly power and seems to support the Christian church. Yet the pilgrims with whom the narrator (Chaucer) travels, like the secular Lawyer and the religious Prioress, exemplify paradox and, frequently, irreverence, especially when the narrator lauds their character. We can ask, "Who exactly are the targets of Chaucer's satire?" but then we have to question whether the label of *satire* fits at all. The Parson has the last word of *The Canterbury Tales*: is that also Chaucer's last word, or does the unfinished nature of the *Tales* suggest otherwise? One of Chaucer's patrons was John of Gaunt, both supporter of Wyclif and victim of the Rising's fury. Like the ambivalences surrounding the Rising as far as leadership and rationale go, and the ironic distance Chaucer builds into his poetry, Chaucer's nearly total neglect in his poetry of both the Rising and Lollardy—at least, in an overt fashion—reflects the perspicacity, position, and subtlety with which he, perhaps characterologically, endowed his work. The depth of daily life tinged with ideological controversy and the apparently dangerous nature of what may appear to a modern audience as

theological niceties may go a long way to explain Chaucer's decision to create and recreate a bumbling and obtuse caricature of himself as narrator for his dream visions, his epic poem *Troilus and Criseyde*, and his last great work, the *Canterbury Tales*. How interesting, in light of Chaucer's iconic status, is the fact that we identify ironic distance as the signature trait not only of Chaucer but of an English literary mentality.

Chaucer in Kent

Like his father's moving his family out of London just before the Black Plague hit, Chaucer's decision to leave his positions with the wool and petty customs, as well as his rooms above Aldgate, was fortunately timed. Richard II's powerful uncles asserted their power over him between 1386 and 1387, citing Richard's tendency to pick bad favorites and his inability to heed good counsel. They had parliamentary help securing their sway over the king just before Richard achieved his majority at age 21. To hamper the king's power, they dismissed his favorites from office, even executing a number of them. Perhaps through reading Chaucer's translation of *The Consolation of Philosophy,* Richard had learned patience—but not a rejection of the blandishments of worldly power. Richard waited 10 years before taking his revenge and regaining his royal clout. Part of his patient plan included Chaucer. In 1389, Richard II appointed Chaucer clerk of the king's works, a post he held for three years. Whether Chaucer left that post because of Richard's dissatisfaction or because of his own worries about Richard's increasingly autocratic behavior (Richard had a famous row with the City of London in 1392) isn't easy to discern. But leave it he did. After his stint as clerk of the works, Chaucer moved to Kent, most likely to Greenwich, seemingly out of kingly purview and in retirement, although he retained old and obtained new sinecures at the hands of both John of Gaunt and King Richard. These gifts and annuities, monetary and sustaining (one was a yearly tun, or large cask, of wine), seem to have been bestowed to reward Chaucer for his good labors. They also demonstrate that Chaucer remained in the good graces of seemingly rival parties.

Greenwich proved fertile for Chaucer's imagination: it was here that Chaucer composed the poetry that for the twenty-first century, from YouTube to Canterbury animatronics (see "Chaucer and the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries," below), replays his fame. Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* are the poetry on which his modern iconic status rests. Yet *The Canterbury Tales,* like Chaucer's other poetry, remain distant in action and import from the intrigue and revenge that closed the reign of Richard II. Between 1397 and 1399 Richard took his revenge on those who, in 1387, had hampered his power. He swept in to clean house, even imprisoning one of the uncles, Thomas duke of Gloucester, who died in captivity: his death can be laid at Richard's doorstep. When Richard's cousin Henry, son of John of Gaunt, challenged the noble who had imprisoned Gloucester and under whose "protection" Gloucester

had been murdered—likely at Richard's behest—the king banished cousin Henry. It seemed a prudent decision: banishment falls short of murder—killing John of Gaunt's son would exact a price—and truncates a potential problem's power. In this case, the banished cousin is the Henry who, at his father Gaunt's death and Richard's seizure of Gaunt's fortune, returned to England despite his sentence of banishment (suddenly made permanent, rather than for a term of years, as Richard had originally decided), to rally disaffected nobles to his side in a bid to claim his father's wealth.

Some historians lament Richard's turn to autocracy—his choice to change a temporary sentence to a permanent one, solely on his say-so—and cite it as reason for his downfall; others note Gaunt's son Henry's only partially concealed aim for the throne. Richard's abilities as monarch were debated in contemporary chronicles; the historians that Shakespeare read used Henry-friendly chronicles for their prose histories, and their opinions shape the playwright's history plays. While these chronicles lament Richard's increasing autocratic behavior and his reliance on poor counselors, Terry Jones of Monty Python fame has come to Richard's defense, citing the powerful Henrician propaganda machine working overtime after the fact to paint Richard's foibles and Henry's nobility. According to Jones, today's historians fall prey to Henry's effective propaganda and continue to portray Richard undeservedly in a negative light. In any case, Richard's fall from power was a cataclysmic event in aristocratic circles that dated their chronicles according to the year of a king's reign.

During these controversies in the 1390s, Chaucer lived in Greenwich, remote from these tribulations as the different factions of Edward III's progeny wrestled for power. But events like Gloucester's arrest and death, the passing of John of Gaunt, and his son's attempt to reclaim his inheritance swirled ever closer and with increasing political challenge as the decade wore on.

Return to London

Chaucer moved back to London in 1398 and formulated a long-term lease the following year for a residence within the precincts of Westminster Abbey. Terry Jones, Alan Fletcher, Robert Yeager, Juliette Dor, and Terry Dolan make much of this move to the abbey in their book *Who Murdered Chaucer?* (2004). They detect in this relocation Chaucer's anxieties about the machinations of the resurgent Lancasters and Henry's henchmen. Chaucer had been identified with Richard II, and the new Lancastrian monarch demanded fealty to Henry's dynastic cause, despite the ambiguous grounds—other than force—he used for taking the crown. Chaucer's move to London and then to church precincts at the height of these troubles indicates his desire for sanctuary in light of his former faithful service to Richard. As it happened, after Chaucer's death in 1400, Richard II continued to plague Henry IV. Richard's death was announced in 1400, but the ex-king's "unquiet body,"

as the Chaucerian scholar Paul Strohm calls it, served as a rallying point for anti-Henry, anti-Lancastrian forces. Only when Henry IV's son Henry V (1386–1422, r. 1413–22) ascended the throne and, in the first year of his reign, ostentatiously put Richard's body into a magnificent newly built tomb did rumors of Richard's continuing existence evaporate.

CHAUCER AND LANCASTRIAN AND YORKIST PROPAGANDA

This story of Richard's unquiet body indicates the difficulties the new Lancastrian dynasty had solidifying its position. Interestingly enough, the new court pressed into service Chaucer's legacy following the poet's death (possibly murder). The Lancasters needed strategies to legitimate their rule. Perhaps Chaucer's prior royal connections made him the right choice for the Lancastrian court's desire for connection with its predecessor; perhaps personalizing an English poetic sensibility in terms of progeny—"Father Chaucer"—could by analogy solidify the progeny of Lancastrian succession; perhaps the first two scions of the usurping Lancastrian line, Henry IV and Henry V, presciently figured that national poetic identity could soothe rebellious spirits or combat them with an ideological effectiveness newly suitable for written vernacular English's growing promulgation. Fifteenth-century followers of Chaucer, Lancastrian apologists to the core, proclaimed Chaucer's preeminence as England's poet. It is not at all surprising that the poets who took up Chaucer's mantle were Lancastrian supporters, allied to a political power structure, albeit an embattled one.

Thomas Hoccleve

The first of these Chaucerian disciples, Thomas Hoccleve (1368–1426), who was personally acquainted with Chaucer, began to frame the elder poet's work, if not with tropes of overt English nationalism, then with covert national sentiment woven in his praise of Chaucer's English writing. He calls Chaucer "England's treasure and riches," but more importantly he deems Chaucer his poetic father. He chose the metaphor of poetic paternity for his relationship to Chaucer's work because paternity and legitimacy shaped every aspect of Lancastrian rule and propaganda. Chaucer's Englishness, forged in linguistic, geographical, and genealogical terms, remains to this day the foundation of his iconic status.

Chaucer may have considered *Troilus and Criseyde* his poetic genius's greatest accomplishment, yet even the manuscript record—copies of Chaucer's works that predate the emergence of the printing press in the late fifteenth century—provide some 80 copies of *Canterbury Tales* but only some 20 of *Troilus and Criseyde*, whole or part. In the Ellesmere manuscript, the most deluxe of fifteenth-century manuscripts of *The Canterbury Tales,* we

find a portrait of Chaucer affixed in the margin of the tale the pilgrim Chaucer tells—the prose *Tale of Melibee.* Although we know that the portrait was produced after Chaucer's death, it does include seemingly identifying features— forked beard, slight pudginess, hooded eyes. These same features also appear in another manuscript portrait of Chaucer from the early fifteenth century. London, British Library, Harley MS 4866, folio 88, includes an image of Chaucer very much like the Ellesmere's—some have argued for tracing and copying work between the two manuscripts. But the Harley manuscript's text is not by Chaucer: it is Thomas Hoccleve's *Regiment of Princes,* wherein Hoccleve notes Chaucer's paternity of Hoccleve's poetic vocation. The torso portrait points at lines about this "fresh likeness," calling it a copy of Chaucer's image in Hoccleve's mind. It is reproduced on the page, the lines aver, as a way for readers to find Chaucer in their own "thoughts and mind." These two images in two fifteenth-century manuscripts, one of Chaucer's work and one of the work of one of his fans, are our initial literal "icons" of Chaucer. Surprisingly, his portraiture remained remarkably consistent through the centuries in beard, eyes, and size—until we come to *A Knight's Tale,* with its rangy blond Chaucer. Hoccleve's own desire for preferment may have added to his adoration of Chaucer, whose courtly successes far outweighed Hoccleve's own. But, more importantly, we detect a will to make Chaucer into England's poetic icon within scant years of his death.

John Lydgate

Another of Chaucer's Lancastrian promoters, John Lydgate (ca. 1370–ca. 1451), provides no portrait, but his paeans to Chaucer as "flower of English poetry" sound much like Hoccleve's and reverberate throughout Lydgate's voluminous corpus. Lydgate was a monk, but one who was supported by, and given to pleasing, noble patrons. Unstinting in his praise of Chaucer, he accords him the title "master" and reckons as immeasurable his debt to Chaucer as England's poet. He considers Chaucer "peerless," lauding his ability to made rude English beautiful: this judgment continued to be expressed throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Lydgate was a friend to Chaucer's son Thomas (ca. 1367–1434), and the monk's poetic ambitions perhaps got a boost from Thomas's court and political connections: Thomas Chaucer served as chief butler of England and also Speaker of the House. Geoffrey Chaucer, like William Turner, could never claim nobility, but his son Thomas certainly rose up the food chain. Nor did the Chaucer family's ascent stop there: Thomas's daughter Alice (1404–1475) married William de la Pole, first duke of Suffolk.

Here, then, are the beginnings of Chaucer's iconic status. Hoccleve and Lydgate recognize him for his stately poetry as well as his political connections— connections upon which Lydgate, for one, traded. Their invocation of their poetic father and master demonstrates the almost instant nature of Chaucer's celebrity and the inextricable intertwining of his poetry with politics. Chaucer

as icon served a legitimating purpose for a power structure newly cognizant of English literature's nation-building potential—the poet's inscrutability and irony notwithstanding.

Lydgate and Hoccleve's praise of their master-father Chaucer and their shared English identity boosted Lancastrian egos and intertwined politics and poetry. But conflict and threat to Lancastrian hegemony followed the death of Henry V. Chaucer was used as icon not only by Lancastrian sympathizers but by the opposing Yorkist side in the bloody Wars of the Roses, England's internecine conflict between the supporters of Lancastrian claims to the throne and those who supported the claims of the duke of York, one of John of Gaunt's rival brothers, whose progeny contested the legitimacy of the original Lancastrian Henry. The divided loyalties that followed for aristocratic families well intermarried between Yorks and Lancasters, whose political alliances shifted with time and advantage, are not limited to polite arm-twisting. It has been estimated that, by the end of the fifteenth century, half of England's male nobility had succumbed to battle, duel, or judicial execution. The end of the Wars of the Roses also saw the end of Chaucer's literal progeny. Great-granddaughter Alice's son John de la Pole, second duke of Suffolk (1442–1492) married the sister of Richard III (1452–1485, r. 1483–85), making Alice's son brother-in-law to the eventual king. But John had been earlier affianced, as a child, to Margaret Beaufort (1443–1509). That arrangement was annulled in 1453, but Margaret went on to marry Edmund Tudor and gave birth, after Edmund's death (ending a very brief marriage), to Henry Tudor, eventually King Henry VII (1457–1509, r. 1485–1509), scion of the regnant Tudors following Richard III's defeat at the battle of Bosworth field. Ironically, John de la Pole, Chaucer's great-great-grandson, had been named heir to the ill-fated Richard III. Neither Richard III nor John de la Pole ended up having children; Chaucer's bloodline ran out at the same time that the new Tudor dynasty, with Henry VII as its progenitor, was minted. Richard III, like his distant relative Richard II, has been the subject of revisionist history to rehabilitate his reputation and kingly success (see the chapter on Richard III). But, in light of the vagaries of royal power-grabs epitomized by the Wars of the Roses and Chaucer's iconic role in these conflicts, Sir John Harington's epigraph seems as apt today as it was when printed in 1615:

Treason never prospers: what's the reason?
If treason prosper, none dare call it treason.

CHAUCER AND TUDOR PROPAGANDA

Of course, in order to call something patriotic or someone a traitor, the past must be made to fit, and its characters—its icons—pressed into service. The reputation of Geoffrey Chaucer as master English writer who brought rhetorical

eloquence to the English language (this is the opinion of George Ashby, ca. 1470) prevailed through the tumult of the fifteenth century and trumped any Yorkist stain sullying his literal progeny's reputation. At the demise of Richard III, Henry VII and the Tudor propaganda machine he invented took hold of Chaucer's English-identified legacy. Not only had Chaucer's iconic reputation survived, but the Tudor monarchy, much in need of good press, took advantage of a new method to promulgate Tudor Chaucer's icon in Britain. The printing press made its debut at the same time that Henry VII, first Tudor king and initial Tudor apologist, defeated Richard III at Bosworth. This coincidence augmented the royal treatment Chaucer's icon received as England's national poet. The press's arrival happily coincided with, and abetted, the spectacular growth of royal administration: courts had grown since the royal functionary Thomas Hoccleve invoked Chaucer's fatherhood of English poetry. Thus the politics and iconic status of Chaucer were shaped to coincide with newly active imperial attitudes and the grandiose visions of the English Tudor monarchy, culminating in the grand success of Elizabeth I (1533–1603, r. 1558–1603).

CHAUCER'S WORKS IN PRINT

The first of Chaucer's works to be printed appeared from the press of England's first printer, William Caxton, who published *The Canterbury Tales* circa 1478. It was, according to some bibliographers, the first book that Caxton printed in England after his return from Bruges in 1476. He reprinted *The Canterbury Tales* in 1483 and also printed, at about the same time, Chaucer's translation of Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy* (1478), *Troilus and Criseyde*, and Chaucer's dream vision *House of Fame* (both 1483). Caxton's successor, Wynken de Worde, a younger man whom Caxton brought to England from Bruges to help him with his press, also printed the *Tales,* as did, it seems, rival printer Richard Pynson. De Worde's 1517 edition, "newly corrected," became the property of Pynson, who after de Worde's death virtually simultaneously (circa 1526) printed the *Tales, House of Fame*, and *Troilus and Criseyde*. The printer John Rastell published the *Tales* simultaneously with Pynson. Is this evidence of a Chaucer industry? Maybe. Rastell had gotten caught up through marriage (he was married to Sir Thomas More's sister) and public prominence in debates about the "Great Matter" of King Henry VIII (1491–1547, r. 1509–47). From Henry's first attempts (1525) to divorce Catherine of Aragon, his wife of 16 years, claiming that the marriage was incestuous (she was his brother Henry's widow), to Henry's final severance of church ties to Rome (1533), a public and private debate raged, the victims of which were not only Catherine and her daughter Mary, declared illegitimate once Henry married Anne Boleyn, mother of Elizabeth I, but also Sir Thomas More, who, like Becket before him, was martyred on the altar of church prerogative. Perhaps Rastell, concerned with the chill his association with More might bring,

thought Chaucer's work and status as national icon could salvage his reputation. But in the greater scheme of things, these editions of Chaucer were a drop in the bucket. Early English printers published many, many titles (de Worde's output is estimated at 400 titles in 800 editions), and the best seller to roll off the presses, in de Worde's case, wasn't Chaucer but a Latin grammar. Still, the rapidity and consistency with which these printers produced early editions of his poetry testify to Chaucer's continuing iconic status.

Pynson's edition of *The Canterbury Tales* provides a nice example of Chaucer as icon for sixteenth-century readers. Woodcut illustrations grace the title pages for various *Tales*—his pilgrims have also become icons—and his "proheme," instructing a reader how to understand and appreciate Chaucer, touts the felicity of *The Canterbury Tales*:

> Great thanks, laud, and honor ought to be given unto the clerk, poets, and historiographers that have written many noble books of wisdom of the lives, passions, and miracles of holy saints and histories of noble and famous acts and faits [deeds] and of the chronicles since the beginning of the creation of the world unto this present time by which we are daily informed and have knowledge of many things of whom we should not have known if that had not left to us their monuments written. Among whom and in especial tofore [before] all other[s] we ought to give a singular laud unto the noble and great philosopher Geffrey Chaucer, the which for his ornate writing in our tongue may well have the name of a laureate poet, for tofore that he by his labor embellished, ornated and made fair our English in this realm was had rude speech and incongruous as yet it appeareth by old books, which at this day ought not to have place nor be compared among, nor to his beauteous volumes and ornate writings, of whom he made diverse books and treatises of many a noble history, as well in meter as in rhyme and prose. And them so craftily made that he comprehended his matters in short, quick, and high sentences, eschewing prolixity, casting away the chaff of superfluity, and showing the picked grain of sentence uttered by crafty and sugared eloquence. Of whom among all other of his books I purpose to imprint by the grace of Jesus the book of the tales of Canterbury in which I find many a noble history of every state and degree.

Chaucer's identity with the English language and England, with poetry, with nobility, with philosophy, as well as with the "old," uses the frame that fifteenth-century poets and their noble patrons had already provided for Father Chaucer. But perhaps the most noteworthy feature, in this cascade of clauses, is Chaucer's reputation for "eschewing prolixity" and "eschewing the chaff of superfluity." These factors remain the centerpiece of English's best prose style. The value of direct and unaffected prose continues to ring in the modern political sphere's reliance on simplicity—to a fault, perhaps.

Notice that it is not Chaucer's ambiguous persona that Pynson lauds: an appreciation for indeterminacy is a trademark of twentieth-century literary studies.

Following the resolution of the Great Matter, the 1530s mark Chaucer's remarkable entry, in a manner of speaking, into the coffee-table book market of the Tudor court. Beginning with William Thynne's edition in 1532, printers produced large and expensive black-letter folio editions of Chaucer's complete works. The handsome and heavy volumes, with illustrations, leather binding, high-quality paper, and voluminous dedications, put together in one book all of Chaucer's works. Chaucer would have been pleased that a movement begun a bit earlier in Italy to preserve the corpus of famous poets like Dante, whose civic and national identity provided a model, had spread west and caught the English poet in its fashionable hold.

Like Chaucer's earlier proponents and printers, folio producer William Thynne (d. 1546), the first in a series of Renaissance collectors and publishers presenting a Chaucerian oeuvre, had royal connections. He was educated at Oxford and attained a prominent position, clerk of the kitchen, in Henry VIII's court. In his Chaucer folio's dedication to Henry VIII, Thynne frames his activities on Chaucer's behalf with the same kind of nationalistic fervor as did Pynson. But his identification of King Henry's brilliance as poet and historian allies antique Chaucer with Tudor royalty. Again publishers deploy Chaucer's fatherhood of English poetry to recertify English nationalism. The point isn't Chaucer's political leanings; rather, the import is Chaucer's embodiment of a burgeoning national consciousness that needs its king to be lettered as much as it needs its venerable poet's Englishness. The folio editions begin their sequential march through the sixteenth century at the same time that Henry, successful in his break with Rome, begins to tangle with challenges from Martin Luther and a diverse Protestant critique, as well as his own problems concerning progeny, legitimacy, inheritance, the crown, and authority. One could suggest that Chaucer's iconic status as England's poet is pressed into the service of Henry's severely challenged court, the survival of which depends on ever more authoritarian methods of retaining control over recalcitrant subjects.

The question of authority, for better or worse, and even to this day, is wrapped up with the presence—or absence—of authors and authenticity. Chaucer's iconic status served to expand his authority. The strength of Thynne's attributions allowed his canon of Chaucer's works to be reproduced in every Chaucer edition for two centuries. But modern scholarship contests some of Thynne's attribution to Chaucer of a number of the folio's poems. On the face of it, a larger canon—a weightier canon—suggests a more prolific poet. Moreover, the idea of collecting an author's works in one large volume imitates the burgeoning idea of "bigger is better" in the first flush of colonial expansionism. Thus Thynne's folio edition includes a number of poems not previously printed under Chaucer's name to augment Chaucer's status, while his gravitational pull as national poet drew recognizably antique texts into

his orbit. Piling works on Chaucer's shoulders augmented his reputation, honored his unique status, and affirmed his iconic position.

Thynne's successors reprinted his edition during the short reign of Edward VI (1537–1553, r. 1547–53), Henry's sickly youngest child. Once on the throne, Edward's youth made him an easy mark for the more rabid Protestant counselors kept under wraps during Henry's reign. At Edward's precipitous death, his Catholic sister Mary (1516–1558, r. 1553–58), Henry VIII's eldest daughter, assumed the throne, despite some last-minute efforts to name the Protestant Lady Jane Gray (1536–1554), great-great-niece of Henry VIII, as queen. Queen Mary's successor after her short reign was Henry's second child, Elizabeth I, daughter of Anne Boleyn, who eventually proved an extraordinarily adroit and gifted leader. In the reigns of all three of Henry VIII's Tudor progeny, folio editions of Chaucer's works were printed and reprinted. Chaucer continued to be lauded as England's primordial poet. Ironically, however, because of language shifts in the sixteenth century, Chaucer's poetry, though lionized, had become difficult to read. Moreover, the appearance of the poetry itself became iconic: while for "modern" texts the book trade began to use roman typefaces, Chaucer was kept in recognizably antique black letter.

More than Chaucer's words added to his iconic reputation. In the heat of Queen Mary's Catholic resurgence, Nicholas Brigham erected a canopied tomb for Chaucer's remains. The tomb, founded in 1556, became the cornerstone of Westminster Abbey's eventual "Poet's Corner." This tomb both represents, and solidifies, quite literally, Chaucer's iconic status. The tomb includes a portrait much like that found in the Hoccleve manuscript—could it have been copied?—and verses pertaining to Chaucer's origination of English poetry. Its position in London's parliamentary abbey and its laureation of Chaucer as England's poet parallels the religious iconography affixed in Catholic times to saints and prelates: could it have been an answer to resurgent Catholicism? The similarity of the likeness the tomb displays to those of the Hoccleve and Ellesmere manuscripts demonstrates the durability of Chaucer's iconic image begun with those fifteenth-century manuscript portraits. By the late sixteenth century, portraits of Chaucer were hanging in noble houses, and this practice continued well into the late seventeenth century. Chaucer's aspirations to noble status find their reward in these iconographic renderings, his image occupying both secular and sacred spaces, the cultural weight of which was changing in response to modernity's ascendancy.

Chaucer's next editor, John Stow (ca. 1525–1605), produced not only a fat folio Chaucer edition (1561, over 600 pages) but also a series of history books compiled from his extensive personal collection and exhaustive labors in private archives. Finding unused archives and reestablishing them for antiquarian research were new pastimes for writers and publishers engaged in the process of modernization, which also meant putting the past in its place. After his Chaucer edition, Stow published a *Summarie of Englyshe Chronicles* (1565, over 1200 pages), *Chronicles from Brute to unto the present year* (1560; later *Annales,* 1592, over 1300 pages), and a comprehensive and best-selling *Survey*

of London (1598, about 500 pages) that continued to be printed, used, and revised by others into the eighteenth century. In its attachment to English history and archival research, Stow's work exemplifies antiquarian re-creation of "Englishness," verifying its pedigree in a remote, classical (not medieval) past identified with Troy and, later, Rome, while simultaneously creating its English moment as "new." One anonymous 1518 history, printed by Richard Pynson, Caxton's rival and early printer of Chaucer, locates England's ancient history in relation not only to Greece and Rome, but also to Israel: "Brute came after the making of the world into the land of Albion in the time that Eli the priest of the law was in the land of Israel. New Troy (that is now called London) was founded by the making of Brute after the making of the world. Rome was founded by Remus and Romulus. Jesus Christ was conceived by the holy ghost in the maid Mary on a Friday." Chaucer is thus one point on an iconic scale begun with the ancient Brutus. But Chaucer's icon, identified specifically with English's original poetic language, shimmers with "Englishness." Chaucer is, for Edmund Spenser (1552–1599), "the well of English undefil'd."

Unlike their successors intent on defining modernity and cordoning off the past, people in the "Middle Ages" (a term introduced in 1616) did not see themselves as between eras, bounded on either side by the classical era and the Renaissance. Rather, their self-image was one of continuity with a Trojan and Roman past (even Charlemagne, crowned Holy Roman Emperor in 800, wore a toga to the ceremony) and of membership in a universal Christian church. The social, political, and economic changes for which we use the term "Renaissance" reflect the term's coinage in the mid-sixteenth century by the Italian artist George Vasari (1511–1574) to break with an ostensibly stultifying past. "Classic," which entered the English language in the seventeenth century, in its original use meant only "best"; its application to Greece and Rome, and to literature, became exclusive only in the eighteenth century. The popular vigor of the term "Renaissance" rises in the nineteenth century, spurred by the work of German historian Jacob Burckhardt (1818–1897) and responding to the pressure of modernity—in science, art, medicine, technology, and Western expansion—to reassert divisions between eras and deny other than quaint antiquarian interest in a medieval past. Like the term "Enlightenment," "Renaissance" paints its own era positively and its medieval antecedent negatively. The use of words like "Renaissance" and "classics" *creates* that break between epochs because it serves the "new" era's need to make itself distinct. Such a need was not a feature of medieval thought: instead, an era's diminution in light of a Golden Past, and a recognition that there was "nothing new under the sun," epitomizes what we would call medieval ideology. For Karl Marx, modernity's rage for the new supports a capital economy. Asserting modernity's superiority over the past assures capitalism's success.

Nevertheless, individuals like Stow and his work in literature (Chaucer), history (annals), and geography (London) enabled adoration of the ancient and remote in England's language and politics. Those who identified, gathered, and then made available antiquarian researches on English history produced

editions of Chaucer's works that were keen to solidify an economically, politically, and literarily apt identity for the English nation. The same antiquarianism and obsessive scholarship characterize the next edition of Chaucer's works, produced at the end of the sixteenth century during the reign of Elizabeth I. The folio Thomas Speght published in 1598 and amplified in 1602 ratifies Chaucer's iconic status in a fashion especially sympathetic to modern tastes: Speght provides a biography for Chaucer with the help of antiquarian records and manuscript documents, since personal knowledge like Hoccleve's was no longer available.

Biography did not have the cultural weight in the medieval era that it began to have in the Renaissance. Medieval manuscript books frequently list no authors' names, let alone any information about them. Much that we know about named authors comes from research into legal documents rather than by consulting autobiographies, which essentially did not exist as a specific genre until later. Chaucer's first readers who encountered his name and work in Hoccleve or even Stow expressed no need for biographical information about the poet, perhaps because it was assumed they already knew him: at least, that's how Chaucer's contemporary Hoccleve expresses it. The original assumption of personal knowledge isn't so far-fetched: considering the limited literate audience and scarce production of manuscripts, an early fifteenth-century lay reader would likely move in court circles.

To identify text with biography in post-medieval books shapes the taste of a readership newly broadened by the printing press. Modern readers take for granted the way a life informs a work, and vice versa. In the opening years of the seventeenth century, the expectations of authorship changed, and the habits of print that include biography certify firmer identity between an individual's creative work and life story. Perhaps Chaucer's biography was thought to make up for his poor readability. Through the seventeenth century, the disused rules of the English language that governed pronunciation of Chaucer's over 200-year-old verse continued to fade from collective memory. Thus, while the volumes gather hundreds of pages of English poetry, they were little read. Chaucer's iconic status rested on affirmation of his ancient English character and reputation rather than on appreciation of his verse.

THE RIVAL POPULARITIES OF CHAUCER AND GOWER

But, even granting a dearth of real readers, Chaucer was not universally admired in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. His *Canterbury Tales* became, for some, a signal of moral degradation. From the middle of the sixteenth century and to its end, Chaucer's rival for affection and adulation as England's premiere national poet was his contemporary John Gower (ca. 1330–1408). The historical Chaucer and Gower knew each other in their lifetimes; they refer to each other in their poetry. Both Chaucer and Gower were printed by Caxton: Gower's long English poem, *Confessio*

amantis, appeared in 1483, the same year Caxton printed Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* and *Troilus and Criseyde*. Thomas Berthelet, the self-proclaimed King's Printer, brought out the *Confessio* in 1532, the same year that Thynne brought out his works of Chaucer—printed by Berthelet. The *Confessio* was reprinted, perhaps by other hands, in 1554, as Thynne's Chaucer edition was reprinted two more times before Stow's version appeared in 1561. The editions of Gower's *Confessio* do not have the weight of contemporary Chaucer folios: with about 190 leaves, or about 400 pages, they do not have the heft of Chaucer's well over 500 pages. But despite a reduced number of editions and copies, and despite the fifteenth century's identification of Chaucer as England's literary icon, sixteenth-century Gower gave sixteenth-century Chaucer a run for his money. Gower's tomb, in London's Southwark Cathedral, predates Chaucer's in Westminster, but Southwark was smaller than Westminster and was identified with the monastic Augustinians rather than having the political foundation Westminster enjoyed: Southwark earned its designation as cathedral in 1905. Gower had a hand in his tomb's design, although its modern version is in large part a reconstruction. Perhaps Gower's interest in a permanent chantry for his remains says more about his self-opinion and attempts to foster his reputation than it does about his piety. But it is for his piety, especially as foil to Chaucer, that Gower was known in the sixteenth century.

In the complicated religious politics of the successive reigns of Henry VIII's three children, Gower possessed the epithet "moral Gower." The phrase was used not only to tout his work but to distinguish it from Chaucer's. In an era riven by sectarian politics and religious foment, reformist mentalities preferred "moral Gower" to his opposing number's racy *Canterbury Tales*. Truth be told, a fair number of *The Canterbury Tales* are naughty: "The Miller's Tale" is the best-told dirty joke in the English language. YouTube versions of it run a close second to "Pardoner's Tale" videos. As for the sixteenth century, some writers use the phrase "Canterbury Tale" as a code for scurrility. One dramatist, Robert Greene (1558–1592), actually constructs a prose dream vision in which Chaucer and Gower visit him as he struggles with his legacy and the immoral books he has produced. The dream's Chaucer supports Green's less-than-pious collection of stories as an excellent legacy, but "moral Gower" lectures Green on the error of his ways (with not a joke in sight). Through the intercession of a biblical *deus ex machina,* King Solomon advises Greene that wisdom and theology should be his only study. Greene credits Gower with showing him the way to repent of his works and immoral behavior, and, when the vision ends, Greene promises to leave all thoughts of love, instead devoting himself to produce fruit of better labors.

Besides moral Gower in Greene's book, other sixteenth- and seventeenth-century references to Chaucer and Gower show that Greene's opinion had traction. For instance, Sir Philip Sydney's *Apologie for Poetry* notes Chaucer's "great wants." But in the number of sixteenth-century editions published, Chaucer outshone Gower brightly. Gower's work saw printing only once in

the sixteenth century, in 1554, in contrast to the many printings of Chaucer's works. No seventeenth-century Gower edition exists. Indeed, Gower's work wasn't republished until the nineteenth century. Perhaps fame needs a racy edge to reach the height of iconic status. Chaucer's work, though little read, inhabited sixteenth-century literary history and nationalist narratives and found printers for editions in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries.

The world of narrative literature itself changed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and not just because of the availability of books. Perhaps it was Roger Ascham, Queen Elizabeth I's tutor, who praised Chaucer as the English Homer to keep alive Chaucer's reputation as excellent versifier and epic poet. The attribution seems somewhat forced in light of the difficulty readers had with Chaucer's Middle English, pronounced and poetically scanned differently from modern English. Perhaps this difficulty prompted Sir Philip Sydney in his classic *Apologie for Poetry* (1581) to forgive Chaucer his "great wants," his deficiencies, because he had in the main "beautified our mother tongue."

CHAUCER AND THE ENLIGHTENMENT

By the eighteenth century, the winds of taste blew away the ostensible messes Chaucer (and Shakespeare) had made of English literature in order to install a new English classicism. As already noted, "classicism" as both concept and word took off in the eighteenth century. Enlightenment poets concentrated on reviving not English classics but Greek and Latin classics translated into English. Chaucer's legacy eventually fell into the hands of Alexander Pope and other poets of England's Enlightenment era. These Augustan poets professed disdain for the quaint relics of the past. They nevertheless paid obeisance to Chaucer's Ghost, as one work (1672) termed it. But that reverence did not include new editions, only reprints of his work. Speght's edition was reprinted in 1672, and no new Chaucer edition appeared, nor were old ones reprinted again, before two decades of the eighteenth century had already passed. The seventeenth century transformed Chaucer from an important and original antique voice whose poetry was little read, and even then with difficulty, to a quaint curiosity unenlightened and unadmired but for his (accidental) Englishness. In his *God's Plenty* (1700), John Dryden labels Chaucer "a rough diamond" who "mingles trivial things with those of greater moment." The icon kept standing almost as a curiosity.

Still, Pope admired Chaucer's storytelling ability despite the contemporary taste for Latin- and Greek-sounding poetry. Perhaps it was Pope's Catholicism that allowed him to admire Chaucer's works. The historical Chaucer was, of course, Catholic insofar as any fourteenth-century Christian was "catholic." Perhaps Chaucer's sixteenth-century Protestant editors had amplified the non-Chaucerian works in their editions in order to remove the poet's Catholic taint. Certainly their addition of anti-Catholic polemics under Chaucer's

name was meant to recoup Chaucer as an English Protestant *avant la lettre*. But despite the need to recreate Chaucer as English Protestant, and also to situate him in the thick of English literary history, not very many readers were doing more than handling Chaucer's texts in old editions. While Chaucer continued to be referred to as the "father of English poetry," as he had been for quite some time, his works themselves had little purchase on the reading classes of eighteenth-century England. Schooling may have been slightly more available in the eighteenth century, but higher education concentrated on the Greek and Roman classics and left English literature out in the cold. And, beside the near unreadability of Chaucer's texts, self-professed English writers like Daniel Defoe thought Chaucer's lewdness explained the justifiable burial of his works.

Support for Chaucer's poetry and iconic status in spite of his supposed scurrility and difficult language found one interested party at the beginning of the eighteenth century, and a new edition of Chaucer's works finally caught up with this new appreciation. Unlike Speght, who merely included a glossary of "hard words explained," John Urry in his 1721 edition modernized Chaucer's language and made his verse widely readable. At least now Chaucer's metrics had been codified and the pronunciation of his verse was better understood. Not that Urry neglects a glossary, a feature included in all Chaucer editions to this day. Urry's readable Chaucer still retains the poet's original flavor and touts his paternity of English letters. The edition's biography calls Chaucer "a great scholar, a pleasant wit, a candid critic, a sociable companion, a steadfast friend, a grave philosopher, a temperate economist [!] and a pious Christian." A witty economist Chaucer given to friendship and conviviality reflects the values of eighteenth-century society: protean Chaucer, retaining his iconic status, acquires an eighteenth-century impress that makes him simultaneously venerably revered and contemporarily recognizable. The impulse, if not the exact fashion, of modernization persists in YouTube productions of Chaucer.

Even when his poetry was little read, Chaucer's iconic status is verified by the fact that admirers and detractors alike had to reckon with his reputation as Father of English Poetry. Even those who lament his lack of decorum—a signal eighteenth-century literary value—still recognized his poetic virtuosity or, as one critic labeled it (Joseph Warton, 1782), "a mine of gold." Surely eighteenth-century England's ambivalent attitude toward its poetic icon comes from efforts of poets like Pope not only to find their poetic voices in classical antecedents but to denigrate as "barbarous" the inescapable Middle English in which Chaucer wrote. But the attraction of Chaucer's "barbarous" voice and his identity with England's Celtic and Saxon past gained a foothold in the mid-eighteenth century. A Gothic impulse, still familiar today in the television horror series *Tales from the Crypt* (1989–96) gave new inspiration to English novels like Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*. An antiquarian interest in and general revival of Scots bards and Welsh poets, even in patent forgeries like the Ossian poems, makes Chaucer look downright modern even as

burgeoning Romantic attitudes began to celebrate the awesome and antique as essential and authentic.

CHAUCER IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

William Godwin (1756–1836), father of *Frankenstein*'s author, Mary Shelley, reflected this new adoration of the Gothic allied with Romantic heroism in his biography of Chaucer (1803). Moving his reader's imagination further back in time, past the already remote sixteenth century, Godwin pointed to the "times of Chaucer" as more obviously and unquestionably barbaric than the times of that other English barbarian, Shakespeare. Chaucer, unlike Shakespeare, had the "single mind" to effect a restoration of poetry and the Muses to England's rocky shore by "fix[ing] and naturalis[ing] the genuine art of poetry in our island." Chaucer thus became the uniquely rugged and effective individual, the man of genius every Romantic heart claimed for its own. In the hands of William Blake, in his engraving of the *Canterbury Tales* pilgrims, Chaucer becomes the "great poetical observer of men," as well as master, father, and superior. Chaucer caught the sacred inspiration, according to Shelley. Adoration of Chaucer's realism, aided and abetted by widely readable editions of his work, made him into a figure of his time who was ironically not only capable of transcending it but friendly to his readers in the bargain. What better definition of iconic status?

Mass production in the nineteenth century enabled an enormous monumentalizing of Chaucer's iconic status. His cause was taken up by the Arts and Crafts movement and William Morris, whose Kelmscott Press produced an illustrated *Canterbury Tales* of enormous popularity. The signal temperament of English nostalgia can be summed up in the phrase "Merrie Olde England," and Chaucer was made to stand at the head of this nostalgic attitude's parade. Not unlike the Romantic gestures that certified Chaucer's individual genius in the early part of the nineteenth century, the mid-nineteenth century identified him with the beginnings of English literary enterprise in relation to moral truth. John Ruskin, prolific Victorian critic, teacher, and moralizer, considered Chaucer for the English the equal of Virgil for the Latins, teaching the purest theology. This feat could be accomplished, of course, only by leaving *The Canterbury Tales* out of the curriculum. Be that as it may, Chaucer's iconic identity with the English mind was a mainstay of nineteenth-century appreciations of the poet. Other assessments followed the changing currents of nineteenth-century literary aspirations, such that the literary aesthetics of Chaucer's poetry began to take primary position.

The nineteenth century saw another change in its intellectual landscape that affected the way Chaucer was read and understood. Nineteenth-century philology and linguistics made the recognition and description of a language's predictable changes in sound a scientific enterprise. Moreover, manuscript studies in the later nineteenth and early twentieth century professionalized

the reading of Chaucer's poetry and led to a disconnect between those who read Chaucer for pleasure and those who studied his poetry in the academy. The Modern Language Association fought for the reading of the "modern languages," such as English and French, alongside classical Greek and Latin, which were the stuff of a college education (in 1900 only 10 percent of the American population pursued a high school education, let alone attended college). Although a nostalgia for "Merrie Olde England" kept a mostly modernized form of Chaucer in the public eye, including in children's books, in the first part of the twentieth century the professionalization of literary criticism began to take hold.

CHAUCER AND THE TWENTIETH AND TWENTY-FIRST CENTURIES

Some twentieth-century poets found themselves in Chaucer. Yeats praised Chaucer for his masculinity and vitality. Others praised his refinement; still others, his earthy physicality. His cheerfulness did not match modernism's seriousness, but among Chaucer's best twentieth-century readers was Virginia Woolf. She tangled with an iconic Chaucer in her *Common Reader*, and she discerns Chaucer's interest in nature (like a Romantic poet) coupled with a keen, realistic eye (like a modern novelist) that helps readers "make out a meaning for ourselves." This liberal tendency, coupled with an admiration for realism, brought Chaucer's iconic status into the twentieth century, where, through the wonders of cinema and YouTube, he has persisted in the modern imagination. Even as the Academy claims expertise in Chaucer's language and tends to denigrate popular culture's regard for the poet, a healthy cadre of lay readers continue to enjoy Chaucer's poetry.

Perhaps not all contemporary medieval-themed enterprises that employ the icon of Geoffrey Chaucer cave as blatantly to modernization as *A Knight's Tale,* but many do. A very funny Chaucer comes to life in the visitor attraction "The Canterbury Tales: Medieval Misadventures," just minutes from Canterbury Cathedral in historic Kent (see www.canterburytales.org.uk/home.htm). In the attraction, life-sized figures move à la Disney to enact five of the *Tales,* not surprisingly the five most frequently anthologized: "The Knight's Tale," "The Miller's Tale," "The Wife of Bath's Tale," "The Nun's Priest's Tale," and "The Pardoner's Tale." A sound system carries the walk-through narrative and a mostly Modern English reading of selected passages from the *Tales*. Multilingual audio guides can be had for a price. Still, like all things coded "medieval," the animatronics remain in semi-darkness, a subtle coding of the earlier "Dark Ages." Although it's a stretch to find anything remotely sublime about the poetic icon in the tourist attraction, "The Canterbury Tales" re-certifies for twenty-first-century tourists not Chaucer's attachment to the cathedral but the creative engine of his imagination tangling the medieval literal—the pilgrimage and its trudging steps—with the medieval virtual— tale-telling and an infinite variety of stories. Chaucer's identity as both poet

and pilgrim, his seemingly bumbling narrator persona, and his constant attempts to blur the line between reality and fiction serve as continuous features of an iconic Chaucer.

YouTube Chaucer videos are amateurish and short. On the other hand, British novelist and screenwriter Jonathan Myerson has written and directed a very slick three-part version of *The Canterbury Tales* (1998 and 2000) that employs Claymation and other techniques of animation. Joining twentieth-century professionalism with good old-fashioned business sense, Myerson consulted academic Chaucerians for details of his production while also signing up the BBC and HBO as distributors. Several teams of animators, using visually different styles, produced 10 tales in nine episodes (The tales of the Miller and the Reeve are combined). Myerson's series also includes the frame story of the pilgrimage to Canterbury and a set of links between the tales, and his Chaucer looks as an iconic Chaucer should: hooded eyes, pointed beard, slight paunch. Even Alexander Pope would recognize him. Just like the portraits in the Hoccleve manuscript and everywhere else, though produced with the wonders of animated plasticene, the forked beard, slight pot belly, and hooded eyes are paired with a gentle demeanor that strongly contrasts with the wild and wooly Miller. Myerson originally provided two soundtracks for his videos: one in Middle English, the other modernized. In this, Myerson harks back to a sensibility born in the eighteenth century that, through modernization, encouraged the reading of the *Tales*, instead of antiquarian or purely iconic admiration.

A network television phenomenon that has kept iconic Chaucer in the public eye is a live-action series made for the BBC of six updated *Canterbury Tales* (2003). Sally Wainwright adapted "The Wife of Bath's Tale" and set it on and behind the stage of a soap opera; Peter Bowker's "The Miller's Tale" updates the funniest narrative in English with a pub, karaoke night, and false promises of fame; "The Knight's Tale," adapted by Tony Marchant, begins with jail and two prisoners falling in love with their teacher; Avie Luthra's "The Sea Captain's [Shipman's] Tale" concerns a love triangle in an Asian community in Gravesend, Kent, outside London and on the Thames; Rochester, east of Gravesend, is the setting for the three drunken rioters of "The Pardoner's Tale," adapted by Tony Grounds; and Olivia Hetreed sets her adaptation of "The Man of Law's Tale" in Chatham, just down the road from Gravesend, with an amnesiac yet pious Nigerian filling in for the Christian Constance.

The problem with adaptations like this high-budget BBC effort is the relentless normalizing of Chaucer's social world, not to mention his language. The commercial structures of London, Gravesend, Rochester, and Chatham may arguably have their roots in the late Middle Ages, but the triumph of commercialism that controls the modern imagination could not have been envisioned in Chaucer's time. In addition, regularization and familiarization rob *The Canterbury Tales* of their alterity and shortchange the audience of an opportunity to grapple with that alterity. Of course, such adaptations of

Chaucer fit the long history of his iconic status: reshaped, refolded to fit alternately others' Protestant and Catholic, national and provincial, sublime and scurrilous agendas. Can we ever define a "real" Geoffrey Chaucer?

CONCLUSIONS

What is the future of Geoffrey Chaucer? Although in the United States the College Board no longer requires students to recognize Chaucer's poetry, the number of *Canterbury Tales* projects on YouTube indicates that Chaucer remains protean, funny, rhymed, and mischievously attractive for the twenty-first century. It's easy to consider Chaucer's icon as eternal, having lasted for six hundred years through adaptation, manipulation, and commercial viability. Chaucer became very quickly a totem for Englishness, at once linguistic, national, and personal. His poetry's ambiguities in voice, character, plot, and interpretation make his work stand the test of time. But Chaucer's iconic status is not all about Chaucer, nor is it under Chaucer's control. We see in our icons what we project onto them, even as the icons themselves must have a protean nature to survive that amount of projection. The past speaks to us through these icons, and we can get over our obsession with one kind of authenticity if we can accept an icon's fame as dynamic, rather than static. Moreover, in Chaucer's case (and maybe that of other poets too, but not other Fathers of English Poetry, for only one exists), the continuity of his iconic status is assured by the pleasing proliferation of YouTube Chaucers. Icons are more than images, and the ease with which Chaucer has entered the Internet age (how many YouTube William Wordsworths are there?) bodes well for his continued iconic presence as England's medieval poet *par excellence*.

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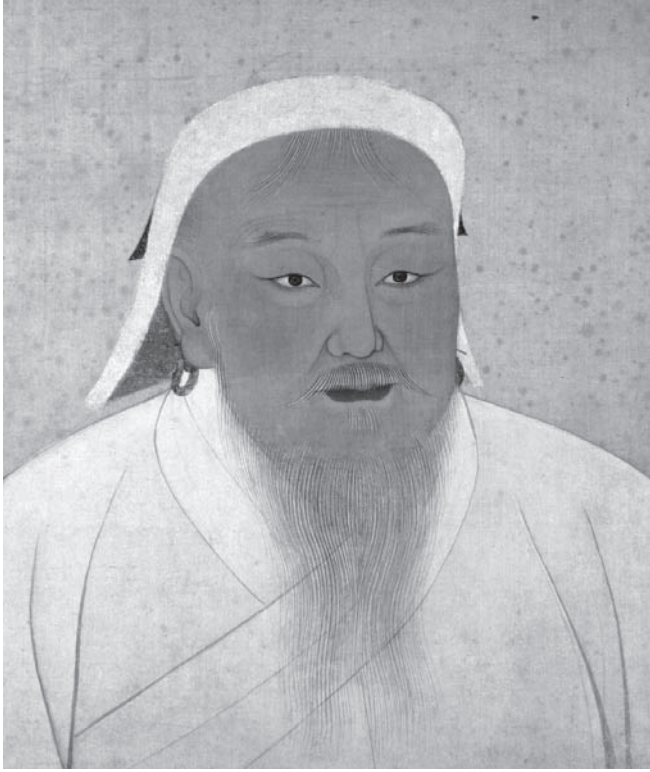
Portrait of Chinggis Khan (ink and watercolor on silk), date unknown, Chinese. (National Palace Museum, Taipei, Taiwan/The Bridgeman Art Library)

Chinggis Khan (ca. 1167–1227)

George Lane

Chinggis Khan, conqueror of the world, loomed large in the nightmares of medieval Europeans, and his image haunts the conscience if not nightmares of European and American leaders today as they instigate the return of Mongol troops to the ruins of Baghdad in what some see as a rerun of history. The man who became the myth lives on through a legacy that is very much alive and thriving today in many different guises and a multitude of conceptions throughout the lands where he and his immediate descendants first established their writ. DNA analysis suggests that the man is literally responsible for as much as 1 percent of the male population of the planet and his legacy is peopling rather than de-peopling the world, the association that has so often been coupled with Eurasia's greatest hero, Chinggis Khan.

Freed from the shackles of Soviet political correctness, Russia's easterly neighbors have reinstated their most famous ruler to the heroic and sometimes even divine status of which he is more deserving than either the dismissive or the demonic status he "enjoyed" under Soviet patronage. The demonic Genghis Khan and his "Storm from the East" found himself seated alongside Hitler and Stalin as visitations from hell in the European pantheon of evil. Therefore when the newly liberated former communist states adopted Chinggis Khan as a role model and national hero and, in the case of Mongolia, as very much the national hero and the embodiment of the state, it shocked much of the world. However, this shock was not universal, and what was also surprising was the number of countries that shared, if not the hero worshipping of the Great Khan, certainly a deep respect and admiration for the Mongolian conqueror. China had adopted the Mongol emperors as their own, Turkey had always viewed the horsemen from the East with approval, Iran certainly recognized that the Mongol century represented a golden age in literature and the arts, and Central Asia was in the process of raising Timür Khan onto a pedestal while recognizing their own hero's debt to the Mongol conqueror.

Realizing that some kind of reassessment of history was urgently needed, scholars were quick to dust off the many long-neglected tomes and examine again the many florid words and illustrated manuscripts in a rich array of tongues and from a exotic collection of courts, composed by eyewitnesses and participants in the history of that time. What began as a revisionist trickle has since the year 2000 become an increasingly excited torrent, and today the study of Chinggis Khan and the Mongol Empire is a particularly exciting field of history in which to be involved.

Temüjin (the future Chinggis Khan) was born into the Turco-Mongol world of nomadic pastoralists who inhabited the vast steppes of Eurasia. Much of his early life is obscure and clouded in both mystery and myth. This includes the date of his birth, for which at least three dates are widely cited. The year 1155 is cited by Rashīd al-Dīn (d. 1318), the historian and grand wazir (the equivalent of prime minister) at the court of the Persian Mongols; 1162 by the *Yuan shi*, a history of the Mongol Yüan dynasty of China compiled and edited by Ming scholars (1368–1644); and 1167 by various traditions citing direct and indirect evidence. While May 3, 1162, remains his official date of birth in

the Mongolian Republic and 1162 is accepted in China and Russia, it is the last date, 1167, that most Western historians consider most likely and that most logically ties in with later recorded events in the Conqueror's life.[1] However, de Rachewiltz, in his definitive edition of the anonymous *Secret History of the Mongols*, has backed 1162 as the year of Chinggis Khan's birth, and it is very probable that he will be granted the last word. What all the histories agree is that the infant was born in Del'iun-bolduk on the Onon River, and many embellish this fact with the tradition that tight in his tiny hand he was clutching a clot of blood as big as a knucklebone.[2] Temüjin was related to the Tayichi'ut, a forest tribe of hunters and fishers, through his father and was related to the Mongol Onggirat tribe on his mother's side.

The Tatars were the dominant Turco-Mongol tribe at that time and enjoyed the support of the powerful, sedentary Chin dynasty (1115–1234) of the Jurchens from the settled north of China. A symbiotic relationship existed between the steppe and the sown (that is, nomads and agriculturists), and though this association is often portrayed as marked by animosity and incompatibility, the bonds uniting the two were strong and deep. By tradition, the Chins would ally themselves with one of the nomadic steppe tribes to encourage rivalry and thereby increase their own security. Tatars were one of a number of nomadic Turco-Mongolian tribes, but it was their name that became a generic term for all the Turco-Mongol tribes in Europe, possibly because of its resemblance to the Latin *Tartar* meaning "hell," and by implication people who emanated from hell. Because it was also a generic term for the Mongol tribes in western Asia, the explanation for this widespread adoption of the generic term could simply be that the Tatars were early the most successful, well known, and powerful of the nomadic steppe tribes. However, the identification of the Mongols with the mythical Gog and Magog was common throughout the Islamo-Christian world. At that time, these foul monsters were commonly believed to have been imprisoned by Alexander the Great beyond "Alexander's Gate" (the Derband pass, Daghestan, Russia). According to the Book of Revelations, they would be unleashed upon Jerusalem and the world before the Final Judgment, thus the apocalyptic stories circulating about the Mongols seemed to be confirming the veracity of this prophecy.

The main literary sources for Chinggis Khan's early life are the anonymous *Secret History of the Mongols* and Rashīd al-Dīn's *Compendium of Chronicles*[3] (*Jāmiᶜ al-Tavārīkh*). The former is the only literary text written in Mongolian about the Mongol Empire. It presented historians with some unique problems when it was first discovered. Because Mongolian was not a written language before the rise of Chinggis Khan, the original *History* had been written down in an adaptation of the Uyghur script; however, the surviving texts are all copies of painstaking transcriptions into Chinese characters, divorced from their Chinese meaning, that were phonetically equivalent to spoken Mongolian. It was written in the Year of the Rat, which would correspond to either 1228, the year after Chinggis Khan's death, or 1240, the year before the death of Ögödei, Chinggis's son and successor. In fact, it seems likely that the original

text might have been completed during Ögödei's enthronement and certain abridgments and additional material concerning Ögödei's reign added later, in which case both dates could be correct. In fact it is now believed that substantial editorial adjustments and additions were made during Ögödei's reign. The author or compilers of this unique work remain unknown, and the history's English translator, Arthur Waley, dismissed it as fiction and fable. However, the *Secret History* has formed the framework of most accounts of Chinggis Khan's early life, providing the essential chronology and background, and much of what the history relates can be corroborated in a general sense from other primary sources.

Corroboration and a test of the *Secret History*'s reliability can be gained from a work compiled some 80 or so years later. Rashīd al-Dīn's *Compendium of Histories* used various Chinese sources for its extensive portrayal of early Mongol and Turkish history. These early Oriental chronicles are no longer extant, and almost the only known description of their content and the sole source providing access to their knowledge is from Grand Wazir Rashīd al-Dīn's laboriously recorded chronicles. Rashīd al-Dīn, who was among many things a serious historian, had unparalleled access to Mongol and Chinese sources, many of which were forbidden to non-Mongols, through his friendship with the Mongol administrator, entrepreneur, cultural broker, and diplomat Bolad Aqa.[4] In particular, Rashīd al-Dīn was able to utilize the *Altan Debter*, an official Mongol history with a strictly restricted circulation, which independently corroborated much of the background and substance of the stories reported in the *Secret History*. Rashīd al-Dīn was commissioned to write his *Compendium of Histories*, the *Jāmiʿ al-Tavārīkh*, by Sultan Ghazan Khan, the first Mongol ruler of Iran to convert to Islam. Ghazan had a deep interest in history and recognized that scholars in the Mongol courts had unprecedented access to the representatives of peoples from all over the world.

> In these days when, thank God, all corners of the earth are under [Mongol] control, and philosophers, astronomers, scholars, and historians of all religions and nations . . . are gathered in droves . . . and each and every one of them possesses copies, stories, and beliefs of their own people . . . the opportunity is at hand, [for] the composition of such a [history] the likes of which no king has ever possessed.[5]

Central to Rashīd al-Dīn's history was of course Chinggis Khan, and the grand wazir and his team had unlimited access to all available, extant sources. Due to the wazir's friendship with the Yuan ambassador to the Ilkhanid court, the remarkable Mongol courtier and Renaissance man Bolad Aqa Chīnksānk, he also had access to restricted Mongol documents normally for the eyes of the Mongol nobility only.

Much speculation has been offered regarding the authorship of the *Secret History*, but all that appears certain is that it was written from within the Mongol court and while avoiding too exaggerated panegyrics, its author is

sympathetic to the image of Temüjin succeeding despite the opposition and treachery of the other khans. Chinggis Khan's considerable political skills are downplayed while the inevitability of his rise and the defeat of those who sought to oppose him through intrigue and perfidy are stressed. Speculation has even extended to the history having been written by a woman, evidenced apparently by inclusion of such anecdotes as Temüjin's fear of dogs and his childhood murder of his half-brother. The history contains a wealth of detail concerning the minutiae of Mongol camp life, detail that puts to rest the traditional theory that the Mongols had no interest or aptitude for administration and bureaucracy.

EARLY LIFE

Temüjin's early life was punctuated by four defining incidents: the murder of his father and the family's subsequent fall into near destitution; his murder of Bekhter, his half-brother; his kidnapping by the Tayichi'ut; and the abduction of his bride, Börte Füjin.

Though not born into the nobility, Temüjin's early circumstances were respectable, and his father, Yesügei, the son of Bartan-Baghatur, is generally recognized as a minor chieftain though not as a khan. His grandfather, Qabul Khan, was recognized as a *khagan,* or chieftain, by the Chins. Qabul Khan was a grandson of Qaidu Khan, who is credited with being the first leader to attempt to unify the Mongol tribes.

Temüjin's mother, Hö'elun, was from the Olkhunut forest tribe; she had been abducted by Yesügei and his brothers from her newlywed husband of the Merkit tribe as she and her husband were traveling back to the Merkit camp. Yesügei then made Hö'elun his chief wife, who would bear his heirs. Though abduction was a common and traditional form of marriage, the custom continued to cause resentment and anger, and it was a common cause of hostility and intertribal warfare.

Temüjin's mother, Hö'elun, bore Yesügei Bahadur[6] three more sons, Khasar, Khajiun, and Temüge, and lastly one daughter, Temulin, born when her oldest was nine. There were also two other brothers, Bekhter and Belgutei, from a second wife. The family had their base by the River Onon, where the children learned riding and archery from an early age. During these years Temüjin formed a close friendship with Jamuka, a son from a neighboring family, with whom he formed a blood-brothership (*anda*) by exchanging knucklebones and arrows. The relationship between *andas* was often considered stronger than that between blood brothers and could not be lightly set aside. It was also during this time that Temüjin's father arranged his nine-year-old son's marriage to Börte Füjin, a daughter of Dei-sechen, from the Boskur tribe, a subgroup of a leading Mongol tribe, the Onggirad. Upon departing from the bride's father's camp, leaving his son with his new in-laws, Yesügei Bahadur passed by a group of Tatars who had struck camp to eat. He availed himself

of the ancient nomadic custom of hospitality and was invited to share their meal. However, the Tatars recognized him as an enemy who had previously robbed them—"Yesügei the Kiyan has come"[7]—and so poisoned his food. He died upon reaching home and entrusted the loyal Mönglik with ensuring his eldest son's safe return.

After his father's murder, Temüjin's family fortunes declined abruptly, and as eldest son, on whom the responsibility of breadwinner fell, Temüjin was summoned home to provide for his family. His mother famously

> hoisted her skirts up . . . running upstream on the banks of the Onon, gathering wild pear, fruits of the region, nourishing the bellies and throats of her children . . . digging up roots to nourish her children, she fed them with onions, fed them with garlic, saw how the sons of her belly could flourish. . . . Thus on a diet of seeds they were nourished.[8]

This was a harsh and bitterly learned lesson that left a profound impression on his character. The family's predicament worsened when their relatives decided that continued loyalty to a departed leader was strategically prejudicial, politically inopportune, and economically detrimental. Dismissing the nine-year-old Temüjin as too young to lead the clan, Yesügei Bahadur's Tayichi'ut followers, his *nökhöd,* deserted the camp, declaring, "The deep water has dried up; the shining stone is worn away. It is over."[9]

It was not only the *nökhöd,* whose expectations of plunder and martial adventure had now been dashed, who deserted Yesügei's stricken family, but also less explicably the family's close relatives. According to steppe tradition, a widow should be taken in marriage and given protection by the youngest brother, in this case, Da'aritai-otchigin. Hö'elun declined, asserting her wish to raise her family alone. However, as Rashīd al-Dīn records that in fact the bereaved family did receive considerable support from family members including Yesügei's elder brother, Kuchar, this might well be the *Secret History* overdramatizing Temüjin's plight to portray the mounting adversities from which the future world conqueror was so determinedly and remarkably able to extricate himself. What is clear is that times became considerably harder for Hö'elun and her young family, and such filial occupations as horse-rustling became necessities rather than pastimes.

The murder, when he was 13 or 14, of his half-brother, Bekhter, is perhaps the most controversial of the four defining incidents from Temüjin's early life. It is an incident that figures prominently in the *Secret History* but appears to have been ignored in the *Altan Debter,* an official history. Ostensibly the reason behind the murder was the theft of a fish and a lark from Temüjin and his brother, Jochi-Kasar, by the two half-brothers, Bekhter and Belgutei, which highlighted a certain rivalry simmering between the two branches of the family. The official history, the *Altan Debter,* avoids reference to the incident, which undoubtedly besmirches the reputation of Chinggis Khan, whereas the *Secret History* does not hide Hö'elun's grief, shock, and anger at her sons, whom she brands murderers and destroyers.

In response to Bekhter's theft of a fish, an incident that followed accusations of the half-brothers' failure to share their hunting spoils (the division of spoils being a practice sanctified by Mongol custom and tradition), Temüjin and Kasar confronted the older brother, who, apparently accepting his fate, asked only that his younger brother, Belgutei, be spared. Bekhter was dispatched with horn-tipped arrows, and Belgutei was spared to eventually find honor and recognition serving his brother's murderer. Chinggis Khan was later to speak of both brothers, "It is to Belgutei's strength and Kasar's prowess as an archer that I owe the conquest of the World Empire."[10]

It seems likely that more was at stake than ownership of a fish to have caused this fratricide. The age of the half-brothers is not explicitly stated in the sources, and there is evidence suggesting that Bekhter might have been older than Temüjin, in which case he could have been perceived as a threat to Temüjin's leadership of the family. Had Temüjin been the oldest of the boys, such breaches of tradition as the theft and refusal to share hunting spoils could not have occurred, because his status could not have been questioned. Belgutei is reported by Rashīd al-Dīn to have voted in the election of Möngke Qa'an in 1251 before dying in 1255 at the age of 110. While assuming the figure of 110 to be exaggerated but indicative of unusual longevity, it could be that even the younger of the half-brothers was older than Temüjin. However, as the first son of the first wife, Temüjin would have regarded Bekhter's behavior as an infringement upon his privileges, almost as insurrection, and would have felt full justification in meting out appropriate punishment. Bekhter's apparent lack of resistance and his brother's failure to seek revenge suggests that they also understood Temüjin's response.

In the *Secret History*, Temüjin's kidnapping and imprisonment by the Tayichi'ut follow immediately after the account of the murder, though no suggestion is made that the two events were linked other than portraying Temüjin's treatment as that befitting a common criminal. Whether his capture was retribution for the killing or because Tarkutai-Kiriltuk, a leading noble of the Tayichi'ut, considered him a potential rival, or both, is never clarified, and Rashīd al-Dīn suggests that throughout his youth Temüjin suffered continually at the hands of not only relatives from the Tayichi'ut but also rivals from the Merkits, the Tatars, and other tribes. Such tribulations were hardly uncommon for the young Turco-Mongols, and kidnappings for ransom, for servants, or even for forced fighters were not uncommon, as the many examples mentioned in the *Secret History* testify.

The *Secret History* recounts how Temüjin cleverly planned and calmly executed his escape. He chose to flee on the night of a feast, when he knew his guards would be distracted. Still wearing the wooden *cangue* his captors had put him in (a sort of collar immobilizing the head and both arms), he plunged into a river. By using the *cangue* as a flotation device, he was able to lie on the bed of the river and keep his head above water. In this manner he bided his time. He was discovered by Sorqan-shira, of the small Suldus tribe, who rather than betraying him assisted the fugitive in his escape. Sorqan-shira, like others who were to follow him, said of Temüjin, "There is a fire in his eyes

and a light in his face."[11] Rejecting the advice of his savior to head straight for his family's camp, Temüjin sought out the camp of Sorqan himself, where he knew Sorqan's children were sympathetic toward him. While the *Secret History* might well have embellished this anecdote somewhat, the essential elements of Temüjin's character remain evident. The careful planning, the self-control, the understanding of people, the awareness of his powers over others and young people in particular, the lack of impulsiveness—these were all qualities that he was to develop over the next decades. The lessons he learned from this encounter with the Tayichi'ut were never to be forgotten.

The fourth defining incident in Temüjin's early life resulted in a gradual turn in his fortunes and the beginning of his rise to unifier of the Turco-Mongol tribes. This incident was the kidnapping of his bride, Börte Füjin, by the Merkits, and the repercussions were to echo far into the future political history of the Mongol Empire.

Not long after his escape from the Tayichi'ut and having reached the age of 15, the Mongol age of majority, Temüjin returned to reclaim his bride Börte Füjin from her father, Dei-sechen. He also sought to consolidate himself as head of his small tribe and gather supporters and outside protection that he might never again to fall victim to the dictates and bullying of neighboring tribes. To this end, he summoned his friend and fellow horse-rustler, Bo'orchu; collected his brothers, Kasar with his bow and Belgutei with his axe; packed his wife's wedding gift, a sable cloak, as a very persuasive and valuable offering; and set off in search of a powerful protector.

Parallels between Temüjin and the leader he chose as his protector are possible. Toghrul, the leader of the powerful Keraits, had been abducted by the Merkits when he was a boy and, for a while, forced into hard labor. Later, at 13, he and his mother were carried off by the Tatars, and the young Toghrul was made to tend their camels. After the death of his father, the young Toghrul also murdered his brother and as a result became head of his family. This role was short-lived: as a consequence of the murder of his brother, his uncle forced him into exile. It was Temüjin's father who assisted the exiled Toghrul, the two becoming *anda,* and together they attacked Toghrul's uncle, the *gur-khan* (leader of the tribe). Thus Toghrul became the powerful leader of the Kerait, with the title of ong-khan or wang-khan, and at the time when Temüjin made his appearance to remind the Kerait ruler of his debt to Yesügei Bahadur, Toghrul's authority had spread from the River Onon over the Mongol homelands to the lands of the Chin emperor, to whom he paid tribute and from whom he received recognition in return.

When Toghrul accepted the sable cloak and with it Temüjin, as an adopted son, he gained a much-needed ally against the intrigues of his own family and in return bestowed some much-needed status and security on Temüjin. In recognition of this new status, Temüjin was presented with a "son" as a personal servant. This was Jelme, the future Mongol divisional commander. The value and advantages of this new alliance were to be made clear within a very short time.

The details of the abduction of Börte Füjin by the Merkit differ in the *Secret History* and in Rashīd al-Dīn's *Altan Debter*–based account. Both agree, however, that a force of Merkits attacked Temüjin's camp and seized Börte Füjin and also Belgutei's mother while the men and Hö'elun with her daughter Temulun on her lap escaped. Both accounts also agree that Temüjin sought immediate assistance from his adopted father, Toghrul, who was only too pleased to wreak revenge on his enemies of old, the Merkits. The Merkits were in fact exacting revenge themselves for the original abduction of Hö'elun from them by Temüjin's father, Yesügei.

The discrepancy in the accounts surrounding this episode is not difficult to explain. Temüjin's first son, Jochi, was born approximately nine months after Börte Füjin's abduction, and the uncertainty of his paternity reverberated down through his line, sons who became rulers of the Golden Horde, the *ulus* (the lands and people designated to be under a Mongol prince's command) that held sway over Russia, Eastern Europe, and the Pontic (Qipchaq) steppes. Women abducted from other tribes were awarded to members of the capturing tribe as a matter of course. Belgutei's mother was filled with shame after her release, not so much because she had been given to a Merkit as a wife but because the Merkit to whom she had been given was a mere commoner, while her sons were khans. Rashīd al-Dīn's account has Börte Füjin treated with the greatest respect by her abductors due to her pregnancy and claims that the Merkits happily turned her over to their sworn enemy the Kerait leader, Toghrul. Toghrul refused to take her as a wife because he considered her his daughter-in-law, returning her to Temüjin. This account is obviously contrived and implausible and served the political aim of avoiding embarrassing a neighboring Mongol dynasty and tarnishing the name of Börte Khātūn (Lady). Rashīd al-Dīn adds that Toghrul sought to "preserve her from the gaze of strangers and non-intimates,"[12] an obvious inaccuracy because the Keraits were not Muslim and would never have entertained such sentiments, unlike Rashīd al-Dīn himself and others in the Muslim Mongol court where he served.

Though not explicit, the *Secret History,* written for insiders who would have been well acquainted with the facts of this incident, does not weave any falsehoods around the events, while at the same time it romanticizes the eventual reunion of Temüjin and his "beloved" Börte Füjin, a depiction worthy of Hollywood.

> Then Lady Borte, who was fleeing for her life, heard Temüjin's voice and recognized it. She leaped from the still moving cart and came running to him. . . . By the light of the moon he saw her, and, as he jumped from his horse, he took her in his arms.[13]

Such romantic love and moonlight tenderness sits strangely with the fact that Temüjin had abandoned his beloved apparently without a second thought when the Merkits launched their attack. However, this might be explained by

the fact that whereas Temüjin and the other men in the party and possibly even Hö'elun, who was also there, would have faced almost certain death had they been captured, young women were too valuable a commodity to wantonly dispose of, and though paternity of any children could be important, women were considered transferable among men in Mongol society. This attitude is clearly evident in the inheritance laws that stipulate that the wives and concubines of deceased Mongols were inherited by their nearest relatives, with sons inheriting their father's wives. Temüjin would therefore have realized that it was imperative that he escape rather than confront a stronger enemy and that he would later be in a position to impose his revenge and reclaim his bride.

Temüjin called on his adopted father, Toghrul, his *anda,* Jamuka, his brothers Kasar and Belgutei, his boon-companion (*nökor*), Bo'orchu, and his servant and *nökor*, Jelme, to assist him in rescuing his bride and his stepmother from the Merkits. Toghrul had not forgotten his pledge:

> Didn't I tell you last time that you could depend on me? Your father and I were sworn brothers, and when you brought me the sable jacket you asked me to be a father to you. . . .
>
> In return for this sable I shall trample the Merkit;
> Lady Börte shall be saved.
> In return for this sable I shall trample the Merkit;
> Lady Börte shall be rescued.[14]

The victory was total. However, having retrieved his bride and scattered his enemies, Temüjin called a halt to the assault and though he took some youngsters as slaves and women as concubines, he spared many of the Merkit men. In future encounters also this was often the case, and the defeated enemy were usually encouraged to join the growing Mongol forces and become incorporated into Chinggis's army, a welcome option for most, as it offered the likely prospect of plentiful booty and future reward. Temüjin had begun his rise to power.

THE RISE TO POWER

Temüjin's rise to supreme leader was neither smooth nor in any way assured. The break with his boyhood *anda,* Jamuka, is often cited as the event that signified the real start of his pursuit of power. Jamuka was also singularly ambitious, and the two would have scented in each other a dangerous rival. This rivalry split them as it would also split the Mongol tribes, and as this rivalry intensified both knew that there could be only one ultimate winner and that the price of losing would be dire.

Eighteen months after their successful campaign against the Merkits, the two *andas* broke camp and went their separate ways. Jamuka, as the legitimate ruler of the Jadarat tribe, could expect support from the more conservative and

traditionalist Mongol elements, who upheld the solidarity of the nobility and the constitution of the tribe. Temüjin, whose noble lineage had been effectively severed by the defection of his own tribe following his father's death, relied on personal loyalty and on those who would question the traditional tribal hierarchy or who sought refuge from the claims and strictures of clan and bondage. The night that Temüjin swept away from the *andas*' shared camp, he was followed by a defecting detachment of Jamuka's men. Temüjin's reputation as a just and generous master who inspired and rewarded loyalty was growing. Those who joined his ranks came as individuals or in small groups, often defying their leaders who generally remained supportive of Jamuka. Among those groups who rallied to Temüjin's banner were ancestral subject tribes, *ötögus bo'ol*, such as the Jalair, the Soldu, and the Baya'ut. Individual serfs, *ötögu bo'ol*, were also welcomed, with the result that representatives from all the tribes and from every level of tribal society could be found within Temüjin's following.

With a growing power base of loyal followers and even talk of a heavenly mandate, Temüjin could now realistically aspire to leadership of the steppe tribes. He was proclaimed khan[15] by his supporters in 1185, even though many of them outranked him in the tribal hierarchy.

> We will make you khan,
> And when you are khan
> We shall gallop after all your enemies,
> Bring you girls and women of good complexion,
> Bring palace-tents and foreign girls with cheeks
> Like silk, bring geldings at the trot,
> And give them to you.[16]

Whereas Toghrul, the ong-khan of the Keraits, offered his congratulations to the new khan, Jamuka was determined to thwart his former *anda*'s ambitions, and using the pretext of revenge for an executed horse-thief, he rode at the head of 30,000 men from 14 tribes against his one-time brother. Temüjin was defeated and fled to the higher reaches of the Onon River. Behind him he abandoned some of his men to Jamuka's mercy—but Jamuka showed none. The unfortunates were boiled alive in 70 vats,[17] and their two leaders were decapitated, their heads later used as tail-adornment on Jamuka's horse. This action would seal Jamuka's eventual fate.

Before he could regroup and counterattack, however, Temüjin was summoned to the aid of his patron, the Kerait ong-khan. Temüjin's defeat at the hands of Jamuka had repercussions throughout the Turco-Mongol tribes, one of which was the toppling from power of Toghrul, and Temüjin's once-powerful patron was forced into exile under the protection of the Kara-Khitai.

In fact mystery surrounds this whole period in the sources, and a certain amount of conjecture is necessary to ascertain the events clearly. In his authoritative biography, Paul Ratchnevsky surmises that Temüjin was

held, possibly as a captive, at the Chin court following his defeat by Ja-
muka. Toghrul had ruled with the acquiescence of the Altan Khan ("Golden
Khan"), as the nomads called the Chin emperor, and he would not have
welcomed the Chinese ruler's downfall. When the Tatars, the Chins' acting
police force during this obscure decade between 1186 and 1196, fell foul of
the Altan Khan, Temüjin was on hand to offer his services and at the same
time take some revenge for his father's murder. Whether Toghrul took part
in the battle against the Tatars is disputed in the sources, but as a result of
the victory Temüjin was awarded a title by the Chin emperor, and Toghrul,
now an old man, had his title wang-khan confirmed and his leadership of the
Keraits restored. By 1197 Temüjin and the wang-khan[18] were therefore both
restored to positions of prestige and power.

The Temüjin was content at this time to serve as the wang-khan's protégé, and
their alliance brought success to both the Mongols and the Keraits. Jamuka
continued to inspire envy and hatred against Temüjin's growing prestige, and
discontented Merkits, Naimans, Tayichi'uts, Unggirats, and remnants of the
Tatars allied against him. The climax to this steppe war pitting Temüjin and
Toghrul against an alliance loosely gathered under Jamuka, who had been
hastily elected *gurkhan* (khan of all the tribes) in 1201, was reached in 1201–2
in the foothills of the eastern Khinghan mountains. Temüjin secured a victory
over the confederation and followed it up by forcing a confrontation the fol-
lowing year near the Khalkha River with his old, hated enemy. This bloody
battle resulted in the massacre and near extermination of the Tatars, final
revenge for the murder of Temüjin's father, Yesügei.

EARLY ANECDOTES

These decisive battles of 1201–2 have furnished historians with some endur-
ing stories about Chinggis Khan the man, which—whether they be truth or
fabrication—certainly reflect aspects of his character that history has shown
to be accurate.

The *Secret History* records the surrender of some Shirkutu tribal leaders.
On their way to surrender, they had captured their overlord, Tarqutai of the
Tayichi'ut, but before reaching Temüjin's camp they had decided to release
their former lord. They admitted this when they arrived, and Temüjin re-
sponded thus:

> If you had laid hands on your own Khan, Tarqutai, I would have ex-
> ecuted you and all your brethren. No man should lay hands on his right-
> ful lord. But you did not forsake him and your hearts were sound.[19]

In another incident, Temüjin was interrogating some prisoners after the bat-
tle when he demanded to know the identity of the soldier who had shot and

killed his "yellow war-horse with the white mouth." A certain Jirqo'adai (Tödöge) stepped forward and admitted his guilt. Temüjin responded as follows:

> When a foe is faced with his enemies, with those he has killed, he usu-ally keeps his mouth shut, too frightened to speak out. Not this man. Faced with his enemies, with those he has killed, he does not deny it, but admits it openly. That is the kind of man I want on my side. His name is Jirqo'adai, but because he shot my yellow war-horse with the white mouth in the neck, he shall hence forth be known as Jebe, which means "arrowhead." He shall be my arrow.[20]

Jebe was to become one of Chinggis Khan's four great generals (*noyens*)—one of his "Four Hounds"—and he would achieve great renown.[21]

Before launching his terminal attack on the Tatars, Temüjin announced a break with steppe tradition and a defining battle tactic.

> If we triumph, we should not stop for booty, but press home our advan-tage. Once victory is secure, the booty will be ours anyway, won't it? Then we can divide it amongst ourselves. If we are forced to retreat, let us regroup in the original spot where we began our attack. Anyone who does not come back will be executed.[22]

By ordering his troops to ignore the plunder and continue the battle, Te-müjin was breaking with an ancient nomadic custom that saw the aim of warfare solely as the acquisition of booty and that gave the chiefs the sole right for the dispersal of these spoils. Temüjin knew that unquestioning disci-pline was essential if victory was to be achieved over a superior enemy, and he knew also that such a decree would be a trial of strength between him and his tribal leaders. In accordance with these orders, after the battle he dispatched Jebe and Qubilai to confiscate the booty acquired by three "princes" who had disregarded his orders. Though these three were later to defect, Temüjin's resounding victory had proved his point and reinforced his reputation as a strong, disciplined, and just ruler who valued such traits in others, especially courage and honesty, be they friend or foe.

THE FINAL FALL AND ITS AFTERMATH

Temüjin had won a decisive victory over the confederation that Jamuka had collected against him, but he had failed to defeat Jamuka. In 1202, the Tatars had been practically exterminated, but resentment against Temüjin was still widespread amongst the old steppe order, and many of the tribal princes, jeal-ous of their independence and suspicious of this warrior's growing might, were open to suggestions of resistance. The whispers became a call to arms when the growing ill will between Wang-Khan Toghrul and his "son" became formal.

Temüjin's proposal that one of Toghrul's daughters be given to his eldest son, Jochi, in marriage and that one of his daughters be given to Toghrul's grandson, Nilka-Senggum's son, Tusaqa, had been rejected out of hand by Nilka-Senggum. Senggum in his arrogance had declared, "We shall not give Cha'ur-beki [his younger sister] to you," a refusal that greatly displeased Temüjin. Jamuka capitalized on this ill feeling and immediately began intriguing against his former *anda*.

Informed of a planned ambush by Toghrul and Jamuka, Temüjin was able to escape, but his forces suffered serious losses, only 4,600 men surviving with him. Ögötei, his second son, was badly injured. It is thought that the only reason Jamuka did not press the hunt for Temüjin afterward was that Jamuka considered his adversary a spent force and no longer any kind of threat to his own ambitions. In the year 1203, on the shores of Lake Baljuna, Temüjin began to regroup his forces and once again call on his allies for their support. Those who remained with him at Lake Baljuna were accorded the highest honors in the years to come.

Meanwhile, the Keraits had grown in power, but, now under the leadership of Senggum rather than the ailing wang-khan, signs of fragmentation had appeared, and many of their allies once again turned to the exiled Temüjin. The epic battle (1203) that eventually ensued lasted three days, but the Keraits, who had been taken unaware, were soundly defeated. Toghrul fled, but he was quickly captured and executed before his "son" could intervene. Senggum also escaped and fled, but he too was eventually killed. Anxious to avoid a repeat of the Tatar solution, Temüjin ordered that the defeated Kerait commanders not be punished but rather be offered the opportunity to pledge their allegiance and join the Mongol "nation." He made a point of commending the bravery of the Keraits' commander-in-chief. To further cement his absorption of the Keraits, he married off their leading princesses. Two of these princesses—Sorkaktani, the wang-khan's youngest daughter, and his granddaughter, Dokuz Khatun, both Nestorian Christians like many of the Keraits—were given to Temüjin's youngest son, Tolui, as wives and were to play a prominent political role in later events. Dokuz Khatun eventually became the principal wife of Hülegü Khan, the first Il-Khan of Persia.[23]

Temüjin now sat on the throne of his one-time protector, the wang-khan, but he still felt insecure knowing that one great tribal grouping, the Naiman, remained beyond his control and were also harboring enemies, including Jamuka. The Naiman dwelt in the regions northwest of the traditional Kerait lands, between the Selenga River and the Altai mountains. If he could defeat the Naiman, his enemies would have nowhere to shelter, and he would be undisputed leader of the unified Turco-Mongol steppe tribes. With so much at stake, Temüjin could not risk failure, and so he devised a careful and militarily prudent plan that would form the basis of his world-conquering army in the decades to come. The army was organized into decimal units of regiments (1000s), squadrons (100s), and troops (10s), with each unit headed by a commander and these units often composed of men from different tribes.

He appointed six commanders-in-chief. His own bodyguard consisted of the sons of the unit commanders as well as the sons of individual soldiers personally known to him. There were 80 night guards and 70 day guards, these facts being detailed in the *Secret History*.[24] On the day of the Feast of the Moon in the Year of the Rat (1204), Temüjin led his troops into battle. To bolster the morale of his own meager forces and intimidate the numerically superior Naiman waiting to greet him, Temüjin employed a strategy that he was to use to great effect in future conflicts. By lighting innumerable campfires, mounting dummies on their spare horses, and trailing branches and bushes from their own mounts, the Mongols were able to create the impression that their numbers were far greater than they actually were.

The Mongols' victory was total, and the Naiman were decimated. Following this victory, all the other tribes that had once had thoughts of independence were quick to pledge their full loyalty to the Mongol khan. Only the Merkits sought to escape, but within the same year they too had been destroyed. When eventually Jamuka, betrayed by his followers, was brought before Temüjin, these same treacherous companions and followers were first executed, reputedly at Jamuka's request, before Jamuka himself was killed. Temüjin considered treachery the gravest of sins and happily granted this wish. Temüjin was now undisputed leader of the united nomadic Turco-Mongol tribes of the Asiatic steppes.

It is from this period that one of the most notorious quotes from Chinggis Khan is recorded. The discussion was on the pleasures of life, and Bo'orchu and his other companions expressed their pleasure in falconry in the spring. But for Chinggis this was nothing compared to the pleasures of conquest.

> Man's greatest good fortune is to pursue and claim victory over his foe, seize all his possessions, abandon his wives lamenting and wailing, ride his geldings, use the bodies of his women as nightshirts and support, casting eyes upon and kissing their rosy breasts and sucking their lips which are as sweet as the berries on their breasts.[25]

During the period of Chinggis Khan's rise to power, China was divided into three separate kingdoms. South of Mongolia was Hsi Hsia, Tangut territory, in what is today the northwest. To the east of Mongolia, the Jurchens ruled northern China. The Jurchens were a semi-nomadic people from Manchuria who defeated the Khitan and the Sung and established their own dynasty, the Chin. They were more powerful than Tangut-dominated Hsi Hsia. The most powerful and sophisticated of the three kingdoms was in the south, often considered the real heartland of China. This kingdom south of the lands of the Chins' was ruled by the Sungs. The Sungs, who traced their heritage back hundreds of years, regarded themselves as a pure Chinese dynasty. The Sung empire was widely believed to be the most powerful and sophisticated in the world.

Traditional accounts of Chinggis's life say that once he had created the Mongol nation, he turned on China, to extend his empire. However, initially

this was not the case, because traditionally the nomadic Mongol horsemen had never shown any real interest in conquest, their periodic raids providing all they needed from the urbanized and settled world. The conquest of China was not contemplated when Chinggis Khan rode forth in 1207. For the great khan and his "nation of archers," China was just a rich quarry to be plundered.

In 1209, Chinggis Khan launched a raid on the Tangut and forced them to retreat into their fortified capital. Chinggis had not come across such defenses before, and he had no immediate answer to this alien tactic of hiding behind fortifications. Although the Tangut king eventually accepted the Mongols' terms, it was an important lesson for the Mongols. The Tangut kingdom recognized Chinggis Khan as its overlord. The Tangut monarch pledged to supply future Mongol military operations with troops, and to cement the allegiance he presented Chinggis Khan with a princess as a new wife.

Chinggis's name first became widely known and feared with his campaign against the Chins in 1211, which catapulted the name of Chinggis Khan, with the associations of fear and rampage, onto the international stage. This campaign started with the time-honored Mongol practice of extorting money and other concessions. However, the Chins felt they had little to fear from these unsophisticated horsemen. They had constructed a series of fortified cities to protect their empire from invasions from the north; they also possessed a large and powerful army. Chinggis scattered units of his force across the northern part of the Chin Empire, systematically laying waste to the land as they rode. They avoided the major fortified cities until they were confronted with a vast Chin force at Huan-erh-tsui. Chinggis decided to attack them. In their first serious engagement with a large foreign army, the Mongol cavalry proved devastating. They completely outmaneuvered the Chins, virtually destroying a force of some 70,000 within a matter of hours. Jochi, Chinggis's eldest son, rode as far as the gates of Chung-tu (modern Peking), but, having no knowledge of siege warfare, he withdrew.

Although the Mongols had gained control of key passes into China and a number of small fortifications, they had no use for these; so, early in 1212, they rode back to Mongolia. They had failed to extort much out of the campaign, and the Chins quickly rebuilt the towns that Mongol invaders had destroyed. Chinggis learned an important lesson: even though they had routed a huge Chin army, they would never extract a submission from the Chin emperor as long as he and his government could retreat into their large, fortified cities.

Chinggis Khan returned to raid the Chins in 1213. By a series of overwhelming victories in the field and a few successes in the capture of fortifications deep within China, Chinggis extended his control as far south as the Great Wall. He also captured or extorted vast amounts of plunder in silks and gold and took hundreds of Chin captives, including engineers and soldiers. In his typically logical and determined fashion, Chinggis and his staff studied the problems of the assault of fortifications. With the help of the captured Chin

engineers, they gradually developed the techniques and built the siege engines that would eventually make them the most successful besiegers in the history of warfare. Many of their captives were found to be willing advisors and recruits. These were Khitans who had been defeated and exiled a hundred years before, and their memories and resentments were still strong, as was their deeply felt animosity toward the Jurchens.

As often happens with newcomers, Chinggis and his generals, assisted by the Khitan specialists, were soon making their own improvements and developing their own techniques. The two Chinese engines that the Mongols adopted, and later modified when they compared them to the siege weapons of the Persians, were the light catapult, which could launch a two-pound missile over 100 yards and required a crew of 40 prisoners to create the tension on its ropes, and a heavier machine, with a crew of 100 that would fire a 25-pound projectile over 150 yards. Although the lighter device was limited in range, it had the advantage that it could be dismantled and carried with the main body of the army. Both of these machines could be used either to launch rocks at walls and gates or to hurl naphtha or burning tar into the enemy's ranks. After his campaign against the Persians, Chinggis adapted the siege machines captured from the Persian army. The Islamic design was adapted to the lighter Chinese models to create something similar to the European catapult or trebuchet, with a range of more than 350 yards. Chinggis's men also adapted the ballista, which looked like a giant crossbow and fired a heavy arrow over the same range as a catapult but with far more accuracy. Ballistas were light enough to be carried onto the battlefield.

But the most important type of weaponry that the Mongols adopted was explosives, a Chinese invention. Explosives were used either in the form of rockets, which were fired en masse into the enemy's ranks, causing little damage but much alarm; or as grenades—clay vessels packed with explosives and hurled either by catapult or by hand. Virtually every new military invention was snatched up and adapted by the Mongols, and with these arms they quickly developed the modern principles of artillery.

A prolonged battering from rocks, burning tar, grenades, and firebombs into the enemy lines would be followed up by an attack from mounted archers. These carefully rehearsed maneuvers depended on great mobility and discipline. Although the bombardment was not nearly as accurate as the mounted archers, it spread fear and confusion among the enemy and made the archers' job easier.

In 1215, Chinggis Khan's army besieged, captured, and sacked Chung-tu, one of the largest cities in Asia. Squadrons of Mongol horsemen rode the streets firing incendiary arrows into the wooden houses, while others put thousands of the civilian population to the sword. There was some method in this madness. Chinggis preferred to secure submission from his neighbors without resort to warfare. His military excess sent a signal to others. Those who surrendered would be spared, but those who resisted would be annihilated. As the Mongol armies massed before a target city, they would invariably

issue an ominous message in warning: "If ye submit not, nor surrender, what know we thereof? The Ancient God, he knoweth."[26] In a letter from Guyuk Khan to Pope Innocent IV, a similar message was relayed: "And if ye do otherwise, what know we? God knoweth."

To the west, where the Uyghurs had pledged their loyalty to the Great Khan, events, political and military, were also unfurling. Küchlüg the Naiman, the last remaining enemy from the days of Temüjin's rise to power, still retained his oppressive grip on power over the Qara Khitai. Küchlüg was a Buddhist neophyte, and he ruled his newly acquired kingdom with a convert's zeal, the Muslim population suffering accordingly. Such was the hatred felt for Küchlüg by his Islamic subjects that the Mongols were viewed as potential liberators and Chinggis Khan as their savior. Their former rulers, the Qara Khitai, whom Küchlüg had brutally ousted, had been popular, and their ethnic ties to the Mongols were duly noted by the Muslims suffering under the cruel oppression of their new ruler, Küchlüg. For Chinggis Khan, Küchlüg, who had gathered to his cause the remnants of the rebel Naimans, represented a potential military threat and also unfinished business.

In the west, the first contact the Mongols had with the Islamic world was ultimately positive and, after the objectives of their advance became clear, one of welcome. This is often forgotten, and the Mongols' subsequent bloody confrontation with the armies and cities of the Khwārazmshāh is often erroneously interpreted as the Mongols' war on Islam.

The Qara Khitai (Black Cathays) were descendants of Khitans, semi-nomadic Turco-Mongols who fled westward in the 1120s after their defeat by the Jurchens from Manchuria. They left some of their people behind, who resentfully served their new masters the Jurchens, while under the leadership of Yelü Dashi (d. 1142), the Khitans were adopted by the Islamic world as their "Great Wall" against the barbarians to the north and east. They established a state in Transoxiana and Turkestan in 1141 after defeating the last Great Saljuq, Sultan Sanjar, at the historic battle of Qatwan.[27] They practiced the religious tolerance endemic to the Eurasian steppe societies, and Christians, Buddhists, Manichaeans, and Muslims all existed harmoniously under their decentralized regime. They were accepted and recognized by their Muslim subjects, but also very significantly by the wider Islamic world, including the caliph in Baghdad. The Muslim sources such as the 'Arundī's *Chahar Maqala* refer to the Qara Khitai in the most respectful and positive terms. Even though they were accepted and became an integral part of the Islamic world, the Qara Khitai never lost their dream of returning to their ancestral lands in northern China, usurped by the hated Jurchens. It was their defeat of the Muslim Saljuqs that gave rise to stories of the Christian king, Prester John, answering the call of the hard-pressed Crusaders in the Holy Lands. During the Chinggisid raids into Chin territory, many Khitans had defected to the Mongol forces, so with the arrival of the Mongols in neighboring Uyghur lands, many Qara Khitai saw a potential ally against the usurper, Küchlüg, rather than an invader. In 1218, Chinggis Khan sent his general Jebe, "the

Arrow," to dispose of the Naiman Küchlüg, a task he completed promptly and with the support of the Qara Khitai people. The rights and freedoms of the Muslims were restored, and the Mongols were welcomed. The incorporation of the lands and people of the Qara Khitai was one of the most significant phases in the development of the Mongol Empire, because it was these people whose influence was to be so crucially important and pervasive in the organization and administration of the growing empire. The Khitans shared common roots, traditions, and culture with the Mongols. However, they had already progressed far from their nomadic beginnings; the Qara Khitai had a fully developed state and the experience of statecraft and administration, and these were things they were now willing to share with their new masters and allies, the Mongols. Just as the top commands and military posts had gone to those who had shared Temüjin's lean times, many of the empire's top administrators emerged from the ranks of the Qara Khitai and the Uyghur.

One reason for the collapse of the Qara Khitai forces other than the widespread dislike of Küchlüg and the popular uprising at the appearance of Jebei Noyan was the weakness of the Qara Khitai army. With the connivance of Küchlüg, Sultan Mohammad, the Khwārazmshāh and vassal of the Qara Khitai, had risen in revolt against the *gurkhan* (the ruler of the Qara Khitai). While the sultan declared Khwārazm, Khorasan, Persia, Ghur (Afghanistan), and Transoxiana independent and under his sovereignty, Küchlüg imprisoned the *gurkhan* and made himself ruler of eastern Turkestan and the remaining lands still under nominal Qara Khitai control. The dispirited army he inherited was no match for the growing Mongol forces who arrived at his borders fresh from their victories in the east.

Chinggis Khan now found himself neighbor to one whom he held in the highest esteem, even awe, and his early communications with the Khwārazmshāh reflect this respect: "I am the sovereign of the Sun-rise, and thou the sovereign of the Sun-set."[28] However, the reality of Sultan Mohammad's kingdom matched neither his own grandiose vision nor the reputation believed by his new neighbor. Chinggis Khan had grave misgivings about assailing such a powerful ruler, yet the Khwārazmshāh was a paper tiger, and once hostilities had begun there was no real opposition to the relentless march of the great khan's armies. The bloated and strife-ridden Khwārazmian Empire crumpled because it had no cohesion and was unable to present a united front to the Mongol assault and also because it was led by a sultan who harbored grave illusions concerning the extent of his true authority and his military prowess. The Khwārazmshāh was a petty tyrant briefly sitting atop an artificially united bandit kingdom, whose delusions of his own grandeur were initially shared by Chinggis Khan.

There was a widespread belief that the caliph had been in secret communication with the Mongol leader and had asked him to attack his rival, though what he offered in return is unknown. This story is alluded to in the histories of Ibn al-Athīr. Though he goes into little detail, Ibn al-Athīr alludes to what was obviously a common belief at the time among the Iranians:

[The Caliph's] role in what the Persians attribute to him was correct, namely that he is the person who roused the Tatars' ambition for the lands of Islam and wrote to them about that. It was a very great disaster in comparison with which every serious sin becomes insignificant.[29]

It was the initial irruption of the Mongols into the Islamic world that sealed their reputation for brutality and barbarism, a reputation that unfortunately has never left them, even though the excesses of those early years were never again repeated. One campaign, in particular, ensured that the Mongols' reputation would be inextricably linked to pathological barbarism and wanton slaughter: the notorious reconnaissance trip around the Caspian Sea undertaken by Noyens (Generals) Jebe and Subodai in the years 1221 to 1224.

NOYENS JEBE AND SUBODAI

Subodai Bahadur (1176–1248) was the son of a blacksmith of the Uriangqadai clan and had joined Temüjin as a youth in 1190. By the age of 25 this large and imposing man had been appointed commander of cavalry. He was so large that the slight Mongol horses sometimes had problems carrying him, and he is recorded as being transported to battle in various forms of carriage. Subodai was utterly loyal to his master, and in mopping up operations before the great *quriltai* (assembly of leaders) of 1206, it was Subodai who pursued and terminally disposed of Kutu and Chila'un, sons of Chinggis's archenemy, the defeated Merkit leader, Tokhto. Such service and loyalty was rewarded. Subodai was made commander of a *tümen* (10,000) in the devastating wars against Hsi Hsia in 1209.

Subodai's most enduring claim to fame arose from his legendary reconnaissance trip around the Caspian Sea with his fellow general, Jebe Noyen. This trip, which ensured the pair's place securely in the annals of military history, commenced when Jebe and Subodai abandoned the search for the dying Khwārazmshāh in western Iran in 1221. On the island of Abaskun in the southeast corner of the Caspian Sea, Mohammad Khwārazmshāh was left to slowly die from his ills. He had brought terrible tragedy to his divided people and the people of western Asia, and he had opened the legendary gates of Īrānzamīn ("the land of Iran": "Greater Iran," referring to those regions subject to Iranian cultural influence) to the mythical hordes of Tūrān ("the land of the Tur": "Central Asia," the homeland of fierce rivals to the Iranians). Chinggis Khan had unleashed his armies to wreak vengeance-fed death and destruction on an unprecedented scale because the Khwārazmshāh had allowed, if not ordered, the unprovoked murder of a trade delegation composed mainly of Muslim merchants. In Bokhara, Chinggis Khan had addressed the assembled citizens to explain his presence: "I am the Punishment of God. If you had not committed great sins, God would not have sent a punishment like me upon you" (Juwaynī 105). If this had been the verdict on the people of

Bokhara, there must have been countless other people in the environs of the Caspian Sea and the Qipchaq Steppes who thought those words should apply equally to them after being visited by the two *noyens* Subodai and Jebe.

Having given up the hunt for the Khwārazmshāh, the two Mongol generals, with their armies, began their devastating journey, and their brief, bloody visits to the surrounding regions enshrine the reputation of the Mongols for barbarity and bloodletting for all time. Though the city of Tabriz managed to bribe the approaching army in time to avert catastrophe, other towns were not so fortunate, and the human wave of destruction engulfed them before they knew what was upon them. The Mongols swept through so quickly that the Georgian army under George IV was able to claim victory from their total defeat: After engaging the Mongol forces of 20,000 men and suffering calamitous defeat, the Caucasians fled in terror back to their capital, Tiflis, to await the inevitable siege. However, that siege never came; the Mongols merely continued on their way northward, the encounter being merely another skirmish for them on their circumnavigation of the Caspian. George IV, seeing the Mongols apparently in retreat, was able to convince himself that his decimated forces had in fact so impressed the invaders that they had fled rather than risk another encounter. There were few who believed his boasts.

The generals continued their unstoppable march north through the rugged Caucasus, cleaving asunder at Derbent the biblical barrier restraining Gog and Magog,[30] and into the open plains beyond encountering and defeating Cuman Turks from the Qipchaq steppe lands and Rus armies from what is today Russia. In the *Chronicle of Novgorod* the impact of their coming in 1224 is poignantly expressed in the few startling words of an observer.

> The same year, for our sins, an unknown tribe came, whom no one exactly knows, who they are, nor whence they came out, nor what their language is, nor of what race they are, nor what their faith is; but they call them Tartars. . . . God alone knows who they are and whence they came out.[31]

Their army was to meet up with the main Mongol armies in Khwarazm and leave it to others to consolidate their gains. In these two short years they had expanded the reach of the great khan's writ as far as the borders of Eastern Europe and the heartlands of the Islamic world. The tales of horror, heroism, cunning, blood and gore, desperation, and bravery that have filled the pages of many chronicles in almost as many languages associated with this epic journey are too numerous to recount here. However, the famous battle of Kalka,[32] fought on the river of the same name in the Crimea in 1223, deserves special mention. It was carried out with great tactical skill and classic Mongol cunning, and it left the alliance between the Qipchaq/Cuman/Polovtsian Turks and the Rus princes shattered and their armies routed. The victory feast was celebrated literally on top of the still-living bodies of the vanquished foes. After the remnants of the defeated Kievan army surrendered to the Mongols,

a heavy wooden platform was placed on top of the bodies of the tightly bound Russian generals. As the joyful Mongol leaders celebrated their hard-won victory, their helpless foes slowly suffocated in a horrible death.

> **The Story of the coming of Jebe and Subeda'i to the province of Iraq and Azerbaijan and Aran and the killing and pillage in this land, and the passing from the road to Darband, Qipchag to Moghulistan.**

When Sultan Jalāl al-Dīn fled from Nishapur and turned his thoughts to for Ghaznin, Jebe and Subeda'i sent a messenger to Chinggis Khan to say, that Sultan Muhammad no no more and his son Jalāl al-Dīn had fled and was coming in that direction. "We are no longer worried about him, and in accordance with your command we will spend a year or two conquering as many lands that lie before us as we can and then we will be able to return via Derband, the Qipchaq Gates to the rendezvous point as commanded in Mongolia, God willing and through Chinggis Khan's fortune. The authority of the Great God and the fortune of Chinggis Khan know that." Thereafter he dispatched envoys for the purpose of taking care of necessary business, and since provinces had still not been secured, no fewer than three or four hundred envoys went. In short, when they began the conquest of Iraq (Persia), they first took Khwar and Simnan. From there they came to the city of Ray, where they killed and plundered. Then they went to Qum, the people of which were all killed and the children of which they took away into captivity. And from there they went to Hamadan. Sayyid Majd al-Dīn Ala' al-dawla surrendered, sending tribute in steeds and garments and accepting to have a *shahna*. When they had heard that there was a large number of soldiers from the sultan's army assembled in Sanjas under the leadership of Beg-Tegin Silahi and Kuch Buqa Khan, they headed for them and "nothinged" (*nīst gardānīdan*) or annihilated them. From there they came to Zanjan, where they massacred many times more than they had done in other regions. They returned to Qazwin where they engaged in a fierce battle with the Qazwinis and took the city by force. The Qazwinis, as was their wont, fought inside the city with knives until nearly fifty thousand men had been killed on both sides. They massacred and plundered throughout the land of Iraq [i.e., Persia].

When winter set in, they engaged in a great battle in the vicinity of Ray. At that time Chinggis Khan was in the Nakhshab and Termez area. That year the cold was extreme. They headed for Azerbaijan, any place they encountered a hindrance [*godāz* 'gorge, ford'], they indulged in killing and looting in the customary manner, everywhere along the way. When they reached Tabriz, the governor, who was Atabeg Ozbeg, son of Jahan Pahlavan, hid himself and sent someone to ask for a truce. He also sent much tribute and many animals. They turned back to spend the winter there under the truce before setting out for Arran on the road to Georgia.

Ten thousand Georgians faced them and engaged them in battle. The Georgians were defeated, and most were killed. Since most of the roads in Georgia were narrow and they foresaw difficulties in the hills, they turned back and headed for Maragheh. When they returned to Tabriz, the governor, Shams al-Dīn Tughra'i, sent out enough tribute to satisfy them, and they passed on. They laid siege to the city of Maragheh, and because at that time the ruler was a woman who ruled from Royin[diz], there was no one in the city who could offer resistance or think up a strategy. They therefore turned their hands to war. The Mongols put the Muslim prisoners out in front to attack the walls, and they killed anyone who turned back. They fought in this fashion for several days. In the end, they seized the city by force and put [both] high and low to death. Anything that could be easily carried they took away, and the rest they burned and smashed. Then they set out for Diyarbakr and Arbela, but when they heard the great fame of Muzaffar al-Dīn Kok-Bori's army, they turned back. Because Jamāl al-Dīn Aybeh, one of the Khwārazmshāh's slaves, had stirred up sedition again with a group of people, killed the *shahna* of Hamadan, seized Ala'al-Dawla for having submitted, and imprisoned him in the castle of Girit, a dependency of Lur, they went again toward Hamadan. Although Jamāl al-Dīn Aybeh came forth to surrender, it did him no good. He and his *nokers* ['vassals, lieutenants'] were martyred and the Mongols laid siege to the city and carried out a general massacre in Rajab 618 [August–September 1221].

After devastating Hamadan, they set out for Nakhichevan, which they captured and [in which] they massacred and looted. In the end Atabeg Khāmūsh surrendered and they gave him a royal seal ["*āl-tamqā*"] and a wooden *pāīza*. From there they went to Arran. First they took Saraw [Sarāb] and massacred and looted and [then] Ardabil in the same way. From there they went to the city of Baylaghan, which they took by storm, killing old and young [alike]. After that, they attacked Ganja, which was the greatest of the cities of Arran. They seized it and destroyed it too. From there they headed for Georgia, where the people had gathered an army and had prepared for battle. While they were facing off against each other, Jebe hid himself with five thousand soldiers in a secret recess, and Subeda'i advanced with the army. At the very beginning of the battle the Mongols retreated with the Georgians in pursuit. Jebe leapt from ambush and caught [the Georgians] in a trap. In an instant thirty thousand Georgians were killed. From there they headed for Derbent and Shirvan. Along the way they took the city of Shemakhī by siege, massacring the people and taking many captives. Since it was impossible to pass through Derbent, they sent a message to the Shirvanshah telling him to send representatives for peace talks. He dispatched ten of his nobles. The Mongols killed one of them and seized the others, saying, "If you show us the way through Derbent, we will spare your lives; otherwise we will kill you too." They guided them out of fear for their lives and [the Mongols] passed through.

When they reached the province of the Alans, there was a multitude of people there, and together with the Qipchaqs they engaged the Mongol army in battle and not one [managed to] escape. Afterwards the Mongols sent a message to the Qipchaqs, saying, "We and you are one tribe and of one sort. The Alans are aliens to us. We have made a pact with you not to harm one another. We will give you whatever gold and vestments you want. Leave them with us." And they dispatched a large quantity of goods.

The Qipchaqs turned back, and the Mongols achieved victory over the Alans, exerting themselves as much as they could in massacring and looting. The Qipchaqs, in hopes of peace, dispersed in safety in their own territory. Suddenly without warning the Mongols attacked them and killed everyone they found, taking double that which they had given [the Qipchaqs] before turning back. Some of the Qipchaqs who remained fled to the lands of the Rus. The Mongols wintered in that area, which was all pasture lands.

From there they went to the city of Sudaq on the coast of the sea that is connected to the Gulf of Constantinople. They took that city, and the people scattered. After that, they resolved to attack the towns of the Rus and the Qipchaqs who had gone there. They [the Rus and Qipchaqs] got ready and assembled a large army, and when the Mongols saw the formidable size they retreated.

The Qipchaqs and Rus thought they were retreating out of fear and pursued them at a distance of twelve-days. Then, without warning, the Mongols turned around and attacked them, and before they could regroup many were killed. They fought for a week, and in the end the Qipchaqs and Rus were routed. The Mongols went in pursuit and destroyed their towns. A great deal of their province was emptied of human beings. From there they traveled until they rejoined Chinggis Khan, who had returned from the province of the Tajiks.[33]

Subodai continued a celebrated military career, and his descendants added to his illustrious legacy. His last campaign was in Hungary, where he decimated the Hungarian troops after luring the already-defeated army into a trap that enabled the Mongol archers to pick off the fleeing enemy one by one. Reports claim that bodies littered the region for a distance of two days' march. By late 1241, Subodai was discussing plans with his generals for the invasion of Austria, Italy, and Germany. It was the death of the Great Khan Ögödei and the subsequent recall of all the leaders of the clans to Qaraqorum that saved Europe from the "Tatar yoke."

Subodai was dead by 1248, but his progeny continued in his military footsteps. His son, Uriyangkhadai, led Mongol armies into the jungles of what is today north Vietnam, while his grandson Bayan earned a reputation of which his grandfather would have been proud. He is credited with finally defeating the Sung armies of southern China in 1276.

A record exists of Chinggis Khan's last years due to his insistence on finding the elixir of life. He had heard tell of a certain holy man from the east who possessed the secret of eternal life, and the great khan duly summoned the great man, Ch'ang Ch'un, a Taoist sage. Ch'ang Ch'un explained that he knew the secret of eternal spiritual life but not of eternal earthly life, and Chinggis eventually became reconciled to that. A disciple of Ch'ang Ch'un recorded a diary of their journey across Asia and Turkestan to meet Chinggis Khan and has left a chronicle of life in those lands recently conquered by the Mongols and accounts of their meetings with the great khan.

Chinggis was determined he would return to Mongolia before meeting his fate, but before his end he wished to take final revenge upon the Tanguts of Hsi Hsia, the first people outside of the steppe that he had conquered 20 years previously. The Tanguts had failed to send him reinforcements to help him with his campaigns in the west, and for this perceived treachery he was determined to exterminate them. It has been said that the Mongols' actions were the first recorded act of deliberate genocide in recorded history; there no longer remains any trace of Tangut history in the region today. Chinggis Khan died in 1227 after a fall from a horse before he was actually able to personally kill the ruler of the Tanguts, though someone else murdered him shortly after. Chinggis Khan's burial site was a closely guarded secret, and it has never been found. Rashīd al-Dīn claims that all those involved in the actual burial were subsequently killed to preserve the secrecy of the site, but this story is not repeated elsewhere.

There may be another explanation for the disappearance of the Tanguts. Many of the peoples of the steppe gladly joined the Mongol army, and just as the various Turco-Mongol tribes were absorbed into the Mongol supra-tribe, so too were these other ethnic groups absorbed into those people who went under the banner of the Mongols.

> Now it has come about that the people of the Khitāī, Jurchen, Nankiyas (S. China), Uyghur, Qipchaq, Turkoman, Qarluq, Qalaj, and all the prisoners and Tajik races that have been brought up among the Mongols, are also called Mongols. All the assemblage takes pride in calling itself Mongol.[34]

CHINGGIS KHAN AND THE YASA

Another institution associated with Chinggis Khan and often erroneously dated to 1206 is the so-called Great Yasa of Chinggis Khan. The common assumption that a new steppe conqueror will "mark the foundation of his polity by the promulgation of laws"[35] has often been applied to Chinggis Khan, and the belief that the Great Yasa is just such an example has been held by many since within a few decades of the great conqueror's death.[36] The term *yasa* is a Mongol word meaning law, order, decree, judgment. As a verb, it implied the

death sentence, as in "some were delivered to the *yasa*" usually meaning that an official execution was carried out. Until Professor David Morgan exploded the myth in 1986, it was the accepted wisdom that Chinggis Khan had laid down a basic legal code called the Great Yasa during the *quriltai* of 1206 and that written copies of his decrees were kept by the Mongol princes in their treasuries for future consultation. The Great Yasa was to be binding throughout the lands where Mongol rule prevailed, though strangely the actual texts of the code were to remain taboo, in the same way as the text of the *Altan Debter* was treated. This restriction on access to the text explains the fact that no copies of the Great Yasa have ever actually been recorded.

The Great Yasa became a body of laws governing the social and legal behavior of the Mongol tribes and the peoples of those lands that came under their control. Initially it was based on Mongol traditions, customary law, and precedent, but it was never rigid. It was always open to very flexible and liberal interpretation and quite able to adapt, adopt, and absorb other legal systems. Speaking of the *yasas,* the Muslim Juwaynī was able to declare, "There are many of these ordinances that are in conformity with the *Shari'at* [i.e., Islamic law]."[37] The Great Yasa must therefore be viewed as an evolving body of customs and decrees that began long before Chinggis Khan's *quriltai* of 1206. His son Chaghatai was known to adhere strictly to the unwritten Mongol customary law, and many of his strictures and rulings would have been incorporated into the evolving body of law. Many of the rulings that appear to be part of this Great Yasa are based on quotations and *biligs* (maxims) of Chinggis Khan that are known to have been recorded. Another source of the laws that made up the Great Yasa is the Tatar Shigi-Qutuqu, Chinggis Khan's adopted brother, who was entrusted with judicial authority during the 1206 *quriltai*. He established the Mongol practice of recording in writing the various decisions he arrived at as head *yarghuchi* (judge). His decisions were recorded in the Uyghur script in a blue book (*kökö debter*) and were considered binding, thus creating an ad hoc body of case histories. However, this in itself did not represent the Great Yasa of Chinggis Khan, and it must be assumed that such a document never existed, even though in the years to come, the existence of just such a document became a widespread belief.

With or without the existence of a written Great Yasa, the Mongols, especially under Chinggis Khan, had a strict set of rules and laws to which they adhered, and their discipline was everywhere remarked on and admired. An intelligence report prepared by Franciscan friars led by Friar John of Plano Carpini, who visited Mongolia in the 1240s, commented as follows.

> Among themselves, however, they are peaceable, fornication and adultery are very rare, and their women excel those of other nations in chastity, except that they often use shameless words when jesting. Theft is unusual among them, and therefore their dwellings and all their property are not put under lock and key. If horses or oxen or other animal stock are found straying, they are either allowed to go free or are led back to

their own masters. . . . Rebellion is rarely raised among them, and it is no wonder if such is their way, for, as I have said above, transgressors are punished without mercy.[38]

Even the Muslim historian Jūzjānī does not hold back:

The Chinggis Khan . . . in [the administration of] justice was such, that, throughout his whole camp, it was impossible for any person to take up a fallen whip from the ground except he were the owner of it; and, throughout his whole army, no one could give indication of [the existence of] lying and theft.[39]

Nor does he refrain from treating Chinggis Khan's son and successor, Ögödei Qa'an, who was generally credited with having shown compassion and great sympathy for his Muslim subjects, with respect and positive treatment.

Religious tolerance became enshrined in the Yasa, though some would say that the Mongols were just playing safe by safeguarding religious leaders of all faiths. Priests and religious institutions were all exempted from taxation. Water was treated with great respect: it was strictly forbidden to wash or urinate in running water, because streams and rivers were considered as living entities. Execution was the reward for spying, treason, desertion, theft, adultery, or persistent bankruptcy in the case of merchants. Execution could take on various horrific forms, and one particularly gruesome example has been recorded by Rashīd al-Dīn: A rash Kurdish warlord had attempted to double-cross Hülegü Khan. He was apprehended and received this fate.

He [Hülegü] ordered that he [Malik Salih] be covered with sheep fat, trussed with felt and rope, and left in the summer sun. After a week, the fat got maggoty, and [the maggots] started devouring the poor man. He died of that torture within a month. He had a three-year-old son who was sent to Mosul, where he was cut in two on the banks of the Tigris and hung as an example on two sides of the city until his remains rotted away to nothing.[40]

Reflecting the Mongols' respect for and superstitious fear of aristocracy, they were fearful of shredding the blood of the highborn upon the earth. They therefore reserved a special form of execution for kings and the particularly mighty: such nobles, in recognition of their status, were wrapped in carpets and kicked to death.

In a grand *quriltai* (assembly) held near the source of the Onon River in the spring of the Year of the Tiger (1206), the assembled leaders, princes, and steppe nobility of the now-united Turco-Mongol tribes awarded Temüjin Khan the title Chinggis Khan, meaning Oceanic or Universal Ruler.[41] Why Chinggis Khan set out on his mission of world conquest can only be surmised, and explanations have been numerous, including those put forward in his

own lifetime. Many of his people and indeed his enemies believe that he had a mandate from God and that he had been divinely inspired and commanded to go forth and spread his word and laws over the whole known world. Such a belief was eventually reflected in the messages demanding submission that his offspring sent to kings, popes, and emperors during the empire's rise to power. Chinggis Khan is famously quoted as haranguing the cowed people of Bokhara from the pulpit of their central mosque that he was a judgment from God.

> O People, know that you have committed great sins, and that the great ones among you have committed these sins. If you ask me what proof I have for these words, I say it is because I am the punishment of God. If you had not committed great sins, God would not have sent a punishment like me upon you.[42]

Most of those who experienced the Mongol onslaught and survived, and certainly those who heard tell of the invasion second- or third-hand were quite willing to believe that Chinggis Khan was indeed the "Punishment of God." His own followers and his family were also quite content for this belief to persist and also later the belief that his mission of conquest was sacred and his and their destiny was at least sanctioned if not written by God.

However, in the period around 1206 when Temüjin was awarded the leadership of the Eurasian steppe tribes and was proclaimed Chinggis Khan, there is no evidence that the would-be world conqueror regarded himself anything other than a very powerful and unstoppable warrior-king. He had fought, connived, plotted, intrigued, and battled his way to the top, and he had rewarded those who had remained loyal to him. But his rise had been difficult and demanding, and he had been given few breaks by smiling fortune. He owed his success to his own cunning, bravery, tenacity, and cold insight into the hearts of his fellow men. He knew that loyalty had usually to be bought and that for loyalty to be held, payments had to be forthcoming. The tribes flocked to his banner because of the promise of reward. His continued aggrandizement was dependent on his ability to replenish those coffers of promised plenty.

THE ARMY

Immediately after the *quriltai* of 1206 the great khan, Chinggis, began to consolidate power and reorganize his army in anticipation of dipping into the rich pickings of the Sung, the power center of China to the south. He continued the process of decimalization, and where possible he broke up tribal structures and rewarded with command postings those who had been loyal to him during the lean years. The breakup of the tribal makeup of his fighting force was to have profound effects on the loyalty, discipline, and effectiveness of his army. The *ordu* (base camp) was a tightly regulated unit, and its

layout and organization were often uniform so that newcomers and visitors would immediately know where to find the armory, the physician's tent, or the chief. The fighting men, who included all males from 14 to 60 years, were organized into standard units: *arbans* (10 men), *jaguns* (100 men), *minghans* (1000 men), and *tümens* (10,000 men) and were overseen by the *tümen* quartermaster, the *jurtchi*. Such an organization meant that no order would ever have to be given to more than 10 men at any one time. Transfer between units was forbidden. Soldiers fought as part of a unit, not as individuals. Individual soldiers, however, were responsible for their equipment, weapons, and up to five mounts. Their families and even their herds would accompany them on foreign expeditions.

Soldiers wore protective silk undershirts, a practice learned from the Chinese. Even if an arrow pierced their mail or leather outer garment, the arrowhead was unlikely to pierce the silk. In this way, though a wound might be opened up in the flesh, the actual metal would be tightly bound in the silk and so would be prevented from causing more extensive harm and would also be easier to withdraw later. The silk undershirt would be worn beneath a tunic of thick leather, lamellar armor-plate, or mail and sometimes a cuirass of leather-covered iron scales. Whether the helmet was leather or metal depended on rank. Contemporary illustrations depict helmets with a central metal spike bending backward, and others ending in a ball with a plume and wide neck-guard shielding the shoulders and the jaws and neck. Shields were leather-covered wicker.

The Mongols were famous for their mastery of firing their arrows in any direction while mounted and galloping at full speed. Strapped to their backs, their quivers contained 60 arrows for use with two composite bows made of bamboo and yak horn. The light cavalry were armed with a small sword and two or three javelins, while the heavy horsemen carried a long lance (four meters) fitted with a hook, a heavy mace or axe, and a scimitar.

On campaign, all fighting men were expected to carry their equipment and provisions as well as their weaponry. A horsehair lasso, a coil of stout rope, an awl, needle and thread, cooking pots, leather water bottles, and a file for sharpening arrows would be among the utilities possibly carried in an inflatable saddlebag fashioned from a cow's stomach. When the horseman was fording a river, this saddlebag, if inflated, could double as a float.

Much is known about the Mongol fighting forces simply because they succeeded in causing such a wide impact, and artists of the pen, the brush, and the song as well as various artisans of all skills, media, and provenance have all vividly recorded in their different ways the details of the Mongol war machine, its composition, organization, and methods.[43]

Two other aspects of the army deserve mention before returning to the account of the Mongols' rise to greatness, because both were crucial to the success that Chinggis Khan achieved after the *quriltai* of 1206. One was the *nerge* (hunt or chase), which was not only a source of entertainment and food but vital in the training of the Mongol fighting force and in the

installation of discipline and coordination into the tribe as a military unit. The other institution was the *yam* and *barid* or "postal" system, the communications network, the efficacy of which ensured the unity and cohesiveness of the empire and its armies.

The *nerge* formed an essential element in Mongol life. Juwaynī (d. 1282) was brought up in the Mongol court and later became governor of Baghdad under the Il-Khan Hülegü, and he must have witnessed, if not taken part in, the *nerge* many times. The *nerge* not only provided sustenance for the tribe, but served as an exercise in military training and discipline that was taken with the utmost seriousness. It was an event that was remarked upon by many, and accounts are many, from the earliest days of the nascent empire until the Golden Age of the Yuan and the Ilkhanate.

[Chinggis Khan] paid great attention to the chase and used to say that the hunting of wild beasts was a proper occupation for the commanders of armies; and that instruction and training therein was incumbent on warriors and men-at-arms, [who should learn] how the huntsmen come up with the quarry, how they hunt it, in what manner they array themselves and after what fashion they surround it according as the party is great or small. For when the Mongols wish to go a-hunting, they first send out scouts to ascertain what kinds of game are available and whether it is scarce or abundant. And when they are not engaged in warfare, they are ever eager for the chase and encourage their armies thus to occupy themselves; not for the sake of the game alone, but also in order that they may become accustomed and inured to hunting and familiarized with the handling of the bow and the endurance of hardships, Whenever the Khan sets out on the great hunt (which takes place at the beginning of the winter season), he issues orders that the troops stationed around his headquarters and in the neighbourhood of the *ordus* shall make preparations for the chase, mounting several men from each company of ten in accordance with instructions and distributing such equipment in the way of arms and other matters as are suitable for the locality where it is desired to hunt. The right wing, left wing and centre of the army are drawn up and entrusted to the great emirs; and they set out together with the Royal Ladies (*khavātīn*) and the concubines, as well as provisions of food and drink. For a month, or two, or three they form a hunting ring and drive the game slowly and gradually before them, taking care lest any escape from the ring. And if, unexpectedly, any game should break through, a minute inquiry is made into the cause and reason, and the commanders of thousands, hundreds and tens are clubbed therefor, and often even put to death. And if (for example) a man does not keep to the line (which they call *nerge*) but takes a step forwards or backwards, severe punishment is dealt out to him and is never remitted. For two or three months, by day and by night, they drive the game in this manner, like a flock of sheep, and dispatch messages to

the Khan to inform him of the condition of the quarry, its scarcity or plenty, whither it has come and from whence it has been started. Finally, when the ring has been contracted to a diameter of two or three parasangs, they bind ropes together and cast felts over them; while the troops come to a halt all around the ring, standing shoulder to shoulder. The ring is now filled with the cries and commotion of every manner of game and the roaring and tumult of every kind of ferocious beast; all thinking that the appointed hour of "And when the wild beasts shall be gathered together" is come; lions becoming familiar with wild asses, hyenas friendly with foxes, wolves intimate with hares. When the ring has been so much contracted that the wild beasts are unable to stir, first the Khan rides in together with some of his retinue; then, after he has wearied of the sport, they dismount upon high ground in the centre of the *nerge* to watch the princes likewise entering the ring, and after them, in due order, the noyans, the commanders and the troops. Several days pass in this manner; then, when nothing is left of the game but a few wounded and emaciated stragglers, old men and greybeards humbly approach the Khan, offer up prayers for his well-being and intercede for the lives of the remaining animals asking that they be suffered to depart to some place nearer to grass and water. Thereupon they collect together all the game that they have bagged; and if the enumeration of every species of animal proves impracticable they count only the beasts of prey and the wild asses.[44]

The *yam*, the successor institution to the *barid*, was in essence a postal system and a means of communication for the reigning and the reigned. Though first mentioned by name during Ögödei Khan's reign, it must be assumed that the *yam* network was developed during Chinggis Khan's rule. In 1234 Ögödei set up a properly organized network that in future years was to so impress visitors and merchants to the Mongol Empire. *Yam* is a Mongol term and the term most commonly employed in the Persian sources of the time, whereas *barīd* is an Arabic term used to describe the horse relay stations of the Abbasids (749–1258) and the later communications network of the Mamluks of Egypt, which in fact was a development of the Mongols' *yam* system. Much of what is known of the functioning of the *yam* is from later sources that detail various reforms of the system and often lambaste the failings of the operation under former rulers. However, praise comes from many sources, including Marco Polo, who claims that distances of between 200 and 250 miles a day could be covered by the great khan's couriers, adding that "these strong, enduring messengers are highly prized men." The *yam* operating in China, where it originated, seems to have been more effectual than the Persian system, but whatever the criticisms of the sources (whose authors so often had their own agendas), this network of fresh horses, couriers, supply houses, and escorts succeeded in establishing a remarkable degree of cohesion and communication over such a vast empire.

The network was run by the army, and therefore it crisscrossed the whole expanse of Mongol-controlled territory, from Eastern Europe to the Sea of Japan. Post-houses were established every three or four *farsangs* (somewhere between 9 and 18 miles) and each *yam* had at least 15 horses in good condition and ready to go or, if Marco Polo is to be believed, between 200 and 400 ready mounts. Rashīd al-Dīn puts the figure at 500 mounts, but it can be assumed that different routes would have different requirements. *Īlchīs* (messengers or representatives) would be authorized to make use of these waiting horses as well as replenish their supplies or seek shelter if their journey was to be continued by another waiting *īlchī*. Though the army was entrusted with operating and replenishing these numerous *yam* stations, it was the local peasantry who supplied the food, fodder, and generous provisions that were made available to the *īlchīs* and others passing through. One of the abuses of the *yam* system that was rectified by later reforms was the frequent use made of these facilities by merchants. Officially only persons on official business and in possession of a tablet of authority, a *paiza,* made of wood, silver, or gold and engraved in the Uyghur script with a tiger or gerfalcon at its head were permitted to make use of the *yam* services. However, the heavy burden the *yam* stations inflicted on the locals suggest that many others benefited from the free horses, food, and provisions on offer. The frequent references in the sources to reforms of the system to curb misuse imply that such exploitation was widespread. Particularly urgent messages or documents could also be sent with runners who would also be on hand at the *yam* stations and at regular short intervals of a *farsang* or less in between. According to Marco Polo, they would wear belts of bells so that the runner at the next village would hear their approach and be able to make preparations to continue the relay. He further claimed that they carried not only urgent messages for the great khan but also fresh fruit. These runners or *paykān* would relay their packages from station to station, village to village, and they could cover between 30 to 40 *parsangs* in 24 hours. As with most figures recorded in medieval sources, numbers differ widely and cannot be relied on for accuracy. However, that the *yam* was a major institution and that it was crucial for the smooth and effective running of the empire cannot be questioned. The fact that someone of the prestige and status of Rashīd al-Dīn, the grand wazir to the Il-Khan of Persia, Ghazan Khan (r. 1295–1304), was put in charge of the *yam*'s operation and reform program speaks of the significance attached to this institution. Rashīd al-Dīn took responsibility for the *yam* stations away from the army and the burden of their financial upkeep from the local people and entrusted each *yam* to a great emir. Generous funds were allotted for maintenance, and strict regulations were laid down detailing exactly who was permitted use of the facilities. Documents requiring stamps and seals were issued to control unauthorized use of the horses, runners, and provisions of the *yam* stations. The *yam* under Ghazan Khan was a far more sophisticated institution than the improvised relay system that Chinggis Khan began adapting to his needs as his steppe empire began to emerge from its pastoralist past. It was certainly

one of the more effective of the Mongols' imperial institutions, and it lived on in the *barīd* of the Egyptian Mamluks, the courier system found in the Delhi Sultanate, and even the *ulak* system of the Ottoman Turks.

CHINGGIS KHAN AND MUSLIMS

Although few now believe that the Mongol armies under Chinggis Khan or his successors had pointedly negative designs on the Muslim world, it is still widely believed that the advent of the Mongols bode ill for people and countries of the Islamic world. This view, however, has very little basis in fact and is increasingly being challenged. One recent biography of the great khan that appeared in 2007 was researched and penned by Michel Biran of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. What is remarkable is that it is published by Oneworld Publications of Oxford in their series of "Makers of the Muslim World."[45] Chinggis Khan and his successors enjoyed positive and fruitful relationships with those Muslims they encountered and with whom they had political, cultural, and mercantile dealings.

There is a story related by the revered South Asian saint Shaykh Nizam al-Dīn Awliya (d. 1325) concerning Chinggis Khan that not only demonstrates the presence of influential Muslims at the heart of the Mongol court early in their campaigns but also the sophisticated and benign attitude of the world conqueror toward mankind. Though not specific, the narrative suggests the date in which the events occurred to be in the second decade of the thirteenth century. A certain Khwajeh 'Alī, the son of Khwajeh Rukn al-Dīn, the venerable Chishti saint, was taken prisoner by the Mongols. It so happened that when Khwajeh 'Alī was brought before Chinggis Khan to explain himself, there was present at the Mongol court one of the disciples of the Chishti Sufi order. Upon seeing a fellow Chishti Sufi, he at once began wondering how best to realize his release.

It has already been remarked on that with the initial encounter with the Islamic world, Jebe Noyen, one of Chinggis's four "Hounds of War," was regarded as a liberator and welcomed by the Uyghur Muslims of the former lands of the Qara Khitai as their deliverer from oppression. When the full force of the Mongol war machine was ranged against the Khwārazmshāh, the foremost representative of the Islamic world, there was a tradition emerging that the figure rallying the hosts of barbarism and ranks of infidels was not Chinggis Khan but in fact was the figure of the Sufi saint Shaykh Maṣlahat Khujandī.[46] Sufi tradition believes that God had sent the Mongols to punish the blasphemous Khwārazmshāh who had defied the caliph and who was an insult to the Islamic world. A fifteenth-century chronicler, Dawlatshāh, records the terror of the Khwārazmshāh who heard voices from the "unseen world" whispering, "Oh infidels, kill the evildoers"[47] and relates that some saw the Prophet Khizr leading the Tatar hosts. Other stories stress the central role of Shaykh Najm al-Dīn Kubrā in guiding and initiating the Mongol devastation

of Khwārazm in fulfilment of God's designs. These stories were restricted to Sufi circles, but their significance lies in their reflection of the widespread ill will felt toward the Khwārazmshāh by the Muslim world and the acceptance of Chinggis Khan as an agent of the Divine.

The Mongols in the role as the Punishment of God was a common image of the time and one found in Armenian, Georgian, and Chinese, as well as Persian and Arabic, sources. The medieval mind saw the world in religious terms, and all events were played out on a spiritual chessboard. Nothing happened by chance, and divine intent could be discerned behind every eventuality. Juwaynī famously remarked after the fall of the Ismā'īlīs at their fortress of Alamut that now God's secret intent had become clear. It has often been assumed that Juwaynī, a troubled devout Sunni Muslim, was trying to assuage his guilt at working for the Mongols by seeing the annihilation of, in his eyes, a blasphemous sect as just retribution by a vengeful God. However, his words toward the end of his history of Chinggis Khan[48] were sentiments doubtless shared by many of his Muslim contemporaries. Not only had this perceived blasphemous scourge, the Ismā'īlīs, been destroyed, but the despised Khwarazmshah had also been removed and Islam had indeed been freed from its Arab homeland and freed upon the world. Juwaynī had traveled extensively, and he would have known the extent of Islam's penetration of China. Islam flourished in China far more vigorously than today. The port cities of Hangzhou, Quanzhou, and Guangzhou were Muslim strongholds, while the province of Yunnan, safeguarding the Mongol state's borders, had a Muslim governor, Sayyid 'Ajall, safely and fully entrenched. The Mongols played host to an international audience, and the stage was centered in Muslim Iran. Juwaynī's words were not hollow prayers for forgiveness but rather the realization that his judgment had been sound and that the Chinggisids represented a Muslim renaissance.

Muslim acceptance of the Mongols coincided with the emergence of the dominance of the Toluids, the Mongol rulers of Iran descended from Chinggis Khan's youngest son, Tolui. However, this acceptance was more to do with an identification with a new elite and a new world order that split not only the Mongol world but the Islamic world as well. It was the Persians and Turks who happily forgot about the injustices of the House of 'Abbas and the oppression of the Arabs and embraced a global vision and an economy and culture that spanned Asia from Kurdistan and Anatolia to Manzi and the three international port cities of Hangzhou, Quanzhou, and Guangzhou. Persian was the language spoken; Islam, Nestorian Christianity, and Buddhism were the religions practiced; and commerce was the cement. In Iran, the respected cleric and historian, Qāḍī Baḍāwī, had written and widely disseminated a "pocket history" that portrayed the Mongols as a legitimate and almost preordained Iranian dynasty. Written originally under Abaqa Khan (1234–1282), the second Mongol ruler of Iran from 1265, his little history found its way into every subsequent important historical bibliography, and the establishment of the Ilkhans so soon after their arrival suggests that the

Iranian delegation that petitioned Mongke Qa'an for a royal prince to rule over their province already envisaged absorbing themselves into the new Toluid empire that was emerging. In this brave new world, membership of the ruling elite was not dictated by ethnicity or religion. The Muslims of Iran and Turkistan were free to practice their religion, but their world was no longer bounded by the constraints of the past, and they were now members of a global community sometimes ruled over by infidels and sometimes ruling over infidels. This was the world that Chinggis Khan had left them, and this is the reason that so many Muslim rulers regarded Chinggis Khan and his successors as just and noble rulers.

NOTES

1. Igor de Rachewiltz, trans. and ann., *The Secret History of the Mongols: A Mongolian Epic Chronicle of the Thirteenth Century*, 2 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 1:320–21.

2. Urgunge Onon, trans., *Chinggis Khan: The Golden History of the Mongols* [i.e., the *Secret History*] (London: The Folio Society, 1993), 9.

3. Rashīd al-Dīn's work is translated and published as Rashiduddin Fazlullah, *Jami'u' t-tawarikh: A Compendium of Chronicles*, trans. and ann. Wheeler M. Thackston, 3 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998–1999; rpt. Ottoman Studies Foundation). Cited hereafter as Rashīd al-Dīn.

4. See Thomas T. Allsen, *Culture and Conquest in Mongol Eurasia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

5. Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jami'u' t-tawarikh,* 6 (text), 8–9.

6. "Bahadur" is a title awarded brave warrior leaders, used by both Rashīd al-Dīn and the *Secret History*. Chinggis Khan alone described his father as "khan."

7. de Rachewiltz, *The Secret History,* 1:16.

8. Onon, *Chinggis Khan,* 14–15.

9. Ibid., 14.

10. From the *Yuan Shi*, cited in Paul Ratchnevsky, *Genghis Khan: His Life and Legacy*, trans. and ed. Thomas Nivison Haining (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 24.

11. Onon, *Chinggis Khan,* 19.

12. Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jami'u' t-tawarikh,* 347.

13. Onon, *Chinggis Khan,* 33.

14. Ibid., 28–29.

15. The *Secret History* inaccurately claims the title "Chinggis Khan" was awarded at this time.

16. Onon, *Chinggis Khan,* 38–39.

17. On this form of execution, see Ratchnevsky, *Genghis Khan,* 46–47.

18. Toghrul was one of several historical persons who were identified as the legendary Prester John, tales of whom entranced Europe, as, indeed, was Chinggis Khan by the European Crusaders of the early thirteenth century.

19. Onon, *Chinggis Khan,* 56.

20. Ibid., 53.

21. Chinggis Khan's four "Hounds of War": Jelme, Kubilai, Jebe, and Subodai.

22. Onon, *Chinggis Khan,* 58.

23. Hülegü Khan, grandson of Chinggis Khan, founded the Il-Khanid dynasty, which ruled Iran from 1256 until 1335.

24. Onon, *Chinggis Khan,* 86–87.

25. Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jami'u' t-tawarikh,* 591; see also Ratchnevsky, *Genghis Khan,* 153.

26. Ata-Malik Juvaini, *Genghis Khan: The History of the World-Conqueror* [i.e., ʿAṭā Malik Juwaynī, *Tārīkh-i Jahān Gushā*], rev. ed., trans. and ed. John Andrew Boyle, introd. David O. Morgan, 2 vols., Manchester Medieval Studies (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), 25–26. Cited hereafter as Juwaynī.

27. Michal Biran, "Like a Mighty Wall: the Armies of the Qara Khitai," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 25 (2001): 44–91.

28. Minhāj Sirāj Jūzjānī, *The Tabakat-i-Nasiri of Minhaj-i-Saraj, Abu-Umar-i-Usman: A general history of the Muhammadan dynasties of Asia, including Hindustan from A. H. 194 (810 A. D.) to A. H. 658 (1260 A. D.), and the irruption of the infidel Mughals into Islam*, trans. Henry G. Raverty, Bibliotheca Indica, vol. 78 (Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1881; rpt. in 2 vols., New Delhi: Oriental Books Reprint Co., 1970), 966. Cited hereafter as Jūzjānī.

29. Ibn al-Athīr, *The Chronicle for the Crusading Period from al-Kāmil fi'l-ta'rīkh. Part 3. The Years 589–629/1193–1231: The Ayyubids after Saladin and the Mongol Menace*, trans. D. S. Richards (Aldershot, Hampshire: Ashgate, 2008), 261.

30. In the Bible, Gog is a hostile power that is ruled by Satan and will manifest itself immediately before the end of the world (Revelation 20). In the biblical passage in Revelation and in other Christian and Jewish apocalyptic literature, Gog is joined by a second hostile force, Magog; but elsewhere (Ezekiel 38; Genesis 10:2) Magog is apparently the place of Gog's origin. See the Encyclopædia Britannica Online, http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/237108/Gog-and-Magog.

31. *Chronicle of Novgorod, 1016–1471*, trans. Robert Mitchell and Nevill Forbes; introd. C. Raymond Beazley; account of the text A. A. Shakhmatov, Camden Society, 3rd Series, vol. 25 (London: Offices of the Society, 1914), 64.

32. David Nicolle and Viacheslav Shpakovsky, *Kalka River 1223: Genghiz Khan's Mongols Invade Russia* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2001).

33. Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jami'u' t-tawarikh,* 531–35.

34. Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jāmi' al-Tavārīkh*, ed. M. Roushān and M. Mūsavī (Tehran, 1994), 78; Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jami'u' t-tawarikh* (trans. Thackston), 44.

35. Patricia Crone, *Slaves on Horses: The Evolution of the Islamic Polity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 20.

36. The debate has raged since Professor David Morgan published his now generally accepted paper on the subject, "The Great Yāsā of Chinggis Khān and Mongol Law in the Ilkhānate," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 49, no. 1 (1986): 163–76.

37. Juwaynī, *Genghis Khan,* 25.

38. "The Tartar Relation," ed. George D. Painter, in *The Vinland Map and the Tartar Relation*, ed. R. A. Skelton, Thomas E. Marston, and George D. Painter, foreword by Alexander O. Vietor (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1965), 96, 98.

39. Jūzjānī, *Tabakat-i-Nasiri*, 1078–79.

40. Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jami'u' t-tawarikh,* 1043, (trans. Thackston) 510–11.

41. Some sources, including the *Secret History*, suggest this title might have been awarded Temüjin by his own tribe at an earlier date and then endorsed in 1206.

42. Juwaynī, *Genghis Khan,* 105.

43. See, for example, Stephen R. Turnbull, *The Mongols*, illus. Angus McBride, Men at Arms Series 105 (Oxford: Osprey, 1980); Stephen R. Turnbull, *Mongol Warrior 1200–1350*, illus. Wayne Reynolds (Oxford: Osprey, 2003); Stephen R. Turnbull, *Genghis Khan and the Mongol Conquests 1190–1400.* (Oxford: Osprey, 2003); Antony Karasulas, *Mounted Archers of the Steppe 600 BC–AD 1300*, illus. Angus McBride (Oxford: Osprey, 2004); Timothy May, *The Mongol Art of War* (Yardley, PA: Westholme, 2007).

44. Juwaynī, *Genghis Khan*, 27–28.

45. Michal Biran, *Chinggis Khan* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2007).

46. Devin DeWeese, "'Stuck in the Throat of Chingīz Khān:' Envisioning the Mongol Conquests in Some Sufi Accounts from the 14th to 17th Centuries," in *History and Historiography of Post-Mongol Central Asia and the Middle East: Studies in Honor of John E. Woods*, ed. Judith Pfeiffer and Sholeh A. Quinn, with Ernest Tucker (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2006), 23–60.

47. *The Tadhkiratu 'Sh-Shuʻará ("Memoirs of the Poets") of Dawlatsháh bin ʻAláʼu 'd-Dawla Bakhtísháh al-Ghází of Samarqand*, ed. Edward G. Browne, Persian Historical Texts Series 1 (London: Luzac & Co., 1901; rpt. on demand Whitefish, Montana: Kessinger, 2010), 134–35.

48. Juwaynī, *Genghis Khan,* 638.

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Painting of Dante Alighieri by Renaissance painter Giotto di Bondone. Dante is considered one of the great Italian poets of the Middle Ages. His work helped form the basis for the modern Italian literary tradition. (Corel)

Dante Alighieri (1265–1321)

Elizabeth K. Haller

INTRODUCTION

Known in Italy as "il Sommo Poeta" ("the Supreme Poet"), Dante Alighieri's relatively short list of works contains some of the most highly influential pieces in the literary canon. Although he is most well-known for his epic poem *The Divine Comedy* (ca. 1308–21), Dante was a political thinker as well as a poet and prose writer. In fact, his influence also stretched beyond literature to language, contributing to the slow demise of Latin as a predominant literary tool. Latin was the prevailing written language of the time; all of the most scholarly individuals used it. Florence-born Dante, however, political free-thinking rebel that he was, chose to write in the language of his forefathers and countrymen: Italian. By doing so, Dante effectively turned Italian into a literary language, thereby securing his designation as "Father of the Italian Language," one of several honorary titles assigned to him.

With its solemn purpose and literary style, *The Divine Comedy* soon established that it was entirely possible for Italian to be used as a literary language. The Italian in which Dante wrote was mostly based on the regional dialect of Tuscany, with some elements of other regional dialects. His aim was to deliberately reach a diverse readership throughout Italy—not just people of scholarship or high status who understood and spoke Latin. By creating an epic poem, both structurally and in its philosophic purpose, he established that the Italian language was more than suitable for the highest form of literary expression.

Publishing works in Italian marked Dante as one of the first (though soon to be followed by other writers such as Chaucer and Boccaccio) to break free from the established standard of writing in Latin (the language of religion, history, and scholarly study as well as of lyric poetry). This break from the norm set a precedent and allowed more literature to be published in other languages for wider audiences—this would ultimately set the stage for higher levels of literacy. However, Dante did not really become widely read (that is, beyond Italy) until the Romantic era (approximately 1820–90), when he was viewed as an "original genius" and placed in stature alongside Shakespeare and Homer—pretty good company. Throughout the nineteenth century, Dante's reputation grew, and by the time of the centenary in 1865 of his birth, he was firmly viewed as one of the greatest literary icons of the Western world.

Now that we have noted the steady increase in Dante's fame, let us examine more closely the man behind the legend. In order to do so, we must go on a fact-finding mission through the works he has left behind. Why? Because Dante included numerous autobiographical references throughout his writings, and he placed himself as the central character taking the epic journey in *The Divine Comedy*. This is where our search begins. References he makes within this epic poem are our only indication of Dante's birth date. The exact year and date of his birth are unknown, but searching through *The Divine Comedy* we find his statement "Halfway through the journey we are living" (*The Inferno*). This is a clue. A foundation of Dante's Florentine culture was

the Bible, and within this text (Ps. 90:10) a full lifespan is described as "three score and ten years," or 70. Therefore, if he is halfway through the journey of life, he must be roughly 35 years old. Because there is indication within the *The Divine Comedy* that the events take place in 1300, that would mean he was born around 1265. Now we have a hint of the year, but what about the date? In the *Paradiso* section of *The Divine Comedy,* he refers to his being born when the sun was in the constellation Gemini, which would place his birth date somewhere between mid-May and mid-June. Not as precise a date of birth as some might like, but it's a start. Why is it necessary for us to search Dante's writing in this manner for factual evidence of his life? By all accounts, Dante did not leave behind any autobiographical data other than references such as these found in his writings, what is made available in public records of the time, and what is recounted in Giovanni Boccaccio's formal life of Dante, *Trattatello in laude di Dante* (*Little Tractate in Praise of Dante*), written at some point after 1348.

It is largely through these public records and Boccaccio's account that we are able to gather information concerning Dante's childhood as well as his literary and political life. We know Dante's mother was Bella degli Abati, who died sometime before his tenth birthday. His father, Alighiero di Bellincione, soon remarried to Lapa di Chiarissimo Cialuffi, with whom he had two children, Dante's half-brother Francesco and half-sister Tana (Gaetana).

EDUCATION

We have no specifics regarding Dante's early childhood education, but given his family's relatively high social standing and religious belief system, it can be presumed that he studied at home or in a Florentine school included as part of a church or monastery. He informs us in his *La Vita Nuova* (*The New Life*) (ca. 1292) that he taught himself how to write verse. He studied poetry at a time when the Sicilian School (*Scuola poetica Siciliana*), a group from Sicily who wrote hundreds of courtly love poems between 1230 and 1266, was becoming well-known. He had an interest in Occitan, a romance language; poetry of the performing troubadours; and the classical Latin poetry of such famous and influential writers as Ovid, Cicero, and most especially Virgil, who would later become a leading figure in Dante's *Divine Comedy*.

Dante's interest in philosophy grew out of his readings, and he eventually dedicated himself to philosophical studies at religious schools, including the school located at the Dominican church in Santa Maria Novella. He also took part either overtly or indirectly in the debates between the two principal religious orders, Franciscan and Dominican, held in Florence. The Franciscans represented the doctrine of the mystics and of Saint Bonaventure, while the Dominicans supported the largely Aristotelian theories of Saint Thomas Aquinas. It was these Aristotelian theories that would most influence Dante.

When he was approximately 18 years old, Dante met contemporary poets and writers Lapo Gianni, Guido Cavalcanti, Brunetto Latini, and Cino da Pistoia. Together, they developed the *Dolce Stil Novo* (Sweet New Style) of writing, exploring themes of love. Brunetto would later receive special mention in *The Divine Comedy,* but it was Guido to whom Dante dedicated *The New Life* and who would later be referred to by Dante as "the first of my friends."

POLITICAL LIFE

Dante was born into a family who claimed allegiance to the Guelphs, one of two opposing factions (the Ghibellines being the other) that kept Italy divided through civil wars during the greater part of the Middle Ages (the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries). The Guelphs were primarily of the merchant middle classes and were sympathetic to the papacy (both the Pope himself and the church in general), while the Ghibellines were primarily of the aristocracy, held contempt for the church, and were instead sympathetic to the Holy Roman Emperor. Dante was born into a contentious period in Florence's history, with power bouncing back and forth between the Guelphs and the Ghibellines.

It helps to know the background of this contention to understand better the context of Dante's belief system, which so influenced his writing. The Ghibellines gained power in Florence in 1249 and immediately banished the Guelphs. Ezzelino da Romano was one of the leaders of the Ghibelline movement and had a reputation for cruelty. He is depicted by Dante as a tyrant in *The Divine Comedy*. When the Ghibelline leader, Frederick II, died in 1250, the Guelphs regained and retained power until 1260. By all accounts, Florence prospered politically and economically during this time. However, when the Guelphs were deemed responsible for the Florentine loss in the battle of Montaperti (1260), the Ghibellines resumed power once again, putting an end to the prosperous times Florence saw under Guelph rule. The ruling Ghibellines restored laws that favored their own party, exiled prominent Guelphs, and destroyed every building belonging to or associated with the principal leaders of the Guelph party in a deliberate campaign of revenge. Dante's father was not affected by this destruction or these exiles, suggesting that he either received some type of exemption or was of such low political standing among the Guelphs that he was deemed insignificant and not worthy of punishment.

Being born into this historic Florentine power struggle, it is no wonder Dante took an active position in the cause. We know that Dante's loyalties lay with the Guelphs, as there is a record of his fighting at the forefront of the Guelph cavalry at the battle of Campaldino (1289) against the Ghibellines. The Guelphs emerged victorious and took back the ruling authority of Florence from the Ghibellines. At this point, Dante took an active interest in

politics, so much so that by 1295 he had earned quite a name for himself in Florentine political circles.

There was serious turmoil in the Guelph party, however, and by 1300, the Guelphs had split into two factions, the *Bianchi* (Whites) and the *Neri* (Blacks). The Whites emerged as the power in Florence. They supported the burgher government (made up of the democratic middle class, or merchant class) and the Ordinance of Justice (restrictive laws primarily directed against all Ghibelline sympathizers, who were primarily of the more noble classes, and requiring that anyone who wished to enter public office must first be actively enrolled in either a commercial or an artisan guild). The Whites were opposed to Pope Boniface VIII and wished to extend the political power of the Florentines as well as their intellectual dominance. The Blacks, though, supported the aristocracy and had the support of the Pope. Naturally, Dante supported the Whites. Dante followed the Aristotelian concept that man is a social/political being, and he held firm to the belief that individuals should put their knowledge and skills to use in the service of their country. His philosophical mind and writing were just some of the skills that he possessed. Therefore, further conforming to the enrollment requirements set forth by the Ordinance of Justice, in 1295 Dante entered the Guild of Physicians and Apothecaries (the only guild suitable for philosophers). By 1300 he maintained an active political and public role with the White faction and was named prior (magistrate), one of the six highest-level magistrates in Florence. He is recorded as having spoken or voted in various councils of the republic. Unfortunately, a substantial portion of minutes from the meetings that took place between 1298 and 1300 were lost during the repercussions suffered by Italy in World War II. As a result, the specifics of Dante's involvement in Florentine councils of the republic remain relatively uncertain.

The dominance of the Whites was relatively short-lived, though, because in 1301 the Blacks were restored to power in Florence and sought payback against whom they deemed to be the more influential and outspoken Whites. As one might expect, Dante fell under the category of those to receive such payback and was one of the first to be ousted from public office. On a phony charge of corruption and hostility toward the church, he was sentenced in January 1302 to permanent exclusion from public office, including the Blacks' promise of death by burning should he ever go against this sentence. Ultimately, in April 1302, the Blacks succeeded in banishing the entire White faction, including Dante, from Florence. At this time Dante was married, with at least three children that we know of: Jacopo, Pietro, and Antonia. Once he was exiled, Dante never returned to Florence and never saw his wife, Gemma, again; his sons and his daughter would join him in later years.

Never seeing his wife again might seem a bit harsh, but there might be a reason why he did not seek out his wife or fight to have his family exiled along with him. As was common at the time, Dante's family promised him in marriage when he was 12 years old to Gemma di Manetto Donati

(ca. 1265–1329/32), daughter of a prominent family in Florence. The actual marriage would take place between three and five years later. As the marriage was an arranged one, there is a good chance he did not have undying feelings toward Gemma. This is another instance in which exploring Dante's work provides some insights into events in his life. As it has been established that Dante tended to put much of himself in his writings, the fact that he didn't mention Gemma in any of his poems (not even a word or a scribble) is perhaps the best indication we have of a lack of passionate love toward her. Or, perhaps Gemma was aware of Dante's emotional devotion to another woman and so did not mind too much when he was exiled. While Gemma is glaringly absent from Dante's work, several of his poems mention or are singularly devoted to this "other woman"—Beatrice. Although they were apparently never involved in a romantic relationship, theirs is perhaps the most romantic of poet-muse relationships to exist in literature, and it is certainly the most popular.

When he was nine, Dante met and fell instantly in love with Beatrice di Folco Portinari ("Bice") (1266–1290), a girl differing only a few months in age from himself who would have a powerful presence in his life and in his writings and who would ultimately become one of the most celebrated fictionalized representations in all of literature. If he was so in love with Beatrice, why didn't Dante's family promise him in marriage to her instead of Gemma? Aside from the fact that love had very little to do with arranged marriages, we do not know for certain. It is quite possible, though, that Dante's family took into consideration her background (though we are unaware of the specifics of her family connections) and may have felt that a marriage to Gemma would prove more beneficial than a marriage to Beatrice.

Dante claimed in his writings that his love for Beatrice was transcendent, a spiritual and mystical love of true friendship rather than a passionate sexual or physical love (though cynics might claim that this sounds like a "we're just friends" defense). Who could blame Gemma for not joining Dante in exile?— transcendent love is a tough act to follow. It is, perhaps, not coincidental that Dante's daughter took the name of Sister Beatrice upon entering the convent at Santo Stefano degli Olivi at Ravenna. It is quite evident that the feelings Dante had for his Beatrice not only held sway over his emotions throughout his lifetime but also had a definite effect on his family. Gemma must have been an incredibly tolerant wife.

Sadly, Beatrice died in 1290, when Dante was in his mid-twenties. After Beatrice's death, Dante was overcome with grief and set out to memorialize his lost love by composing several poems dedicated to Beatrice. The collection he produced at this time was placed together with poems he had previously written and devoted to her in her lifetime. The result was *The New Life*, a collection of poems in which he recounts the first time he ever saw Beatrice ("the glorious lady" of his heart). *The New Life* ends with the promise that he would write of Beatrice "what has never before been written of any woman"—this would ultimately become the *Paradiso* section of *The Divine Comedy*.

LIFE IN EXILE

Where did Dante go during his exile? Some sources claim that he spent two years in Paris, from 1308 to 1310, and some time at Oxford, but these are largely unsubstantiated claims. There is no indication that Dante ever left Italy. He initially joined the other exiles in Arezzo, an area largely controlled by the Ghibellines. Themselves banished from Florence, the Ghibellines tended to sympathize with these newly exiled White Guelphs. We know that Dante attempted to gain his way back into Florence using Ghibelline force, because his name is included on a 1302 document naming the exiled Whites who were forming an alliance with the Ghibellines to enter into war with the Florentine Republic. However, in a similar signed document dated 1303, his name is no longer listed among those in the alliance. Sometime between 1302 and 1303, he sought refuge in Verona.

Dante's interest in philosophy and literary pursuits only deepened in exile, when his time was no longer taken up by Florentine domestic politics as a prior. It is during his exile that Dante wrote his most notable works: *The Divine Comedy*, *The Banquet*, *On the Eloquence of the Vernacular*, and *On Monarchy*. He was quite outspoken during his time in exile, as evidenced by his writings. He openly criticized what he saw as the obvious ecclesiastical corruption of the times and condemned most of the contemporary popes, leading some, both now and then, to question whether or not Dante was a heretic. *The Divine Comedy* has been closely analyzed by contemporary and modern critics and scholars for any signs of heresy, but there is no trace that Dante ever spoke against the supreme doctrine of the church. In fact, from childhood he had always held the highest respect for the divine power of the church. It was the perceived political power of the church that he had problems with: he strongly disagreed with the position that the pope could grant political authority upon Roman Emperors—a strong position he would later explore in *On Monarchy*. In hindsight, we can see Dante's outspokenness against certain ecclesiastical power issues as a forerunner of prominent thoughts leading to the Reformation.

In 1304, he is documented as living in Bologna, where he began (but left unfinished) his Latin treatise *De vulgari eloquentia* (*On the Eloquence of the Vernacular*; ca. 1304–7). In 1306, however, all Florentine exiles were barred from Bologna, and Dante was once again displaced. Later that year we find him in Padua and Lunigiana. His writing during this time centers on lyrical poems, more particularly a series of 14 *canzones* that are primarily allegorical (figurative symbols) and didactic (instructional) in nature. These poems eventually connected *The New Life* with *The Divine Comedy*. In one of the odes he wrote at this time, the "Canzone of the Three Ladies," Dante expresses his outlook on the situation in which he finds himself. In the ode, Dante is visited in his banishment by the personification of Justice and her spiritual children, exiled like him, and he declares that with these as his companions in his misfortune, his counts his exile as an honor.

In 1308, Henry of Luxembourg was elected emperor as Henry VII. In him Dante saw a new hope for Italy, a healer of its bitter wounds, with the potential to retake Florence from the Black Guelphs. Although he had remained

outside of an active involvement in politics since beginning his exile, this new hope for the salvation of his homeland drew him back into a life of political action. This involvement, however, would not end well for Dante. In 1309, highly anticipating the emperor's 1310 arrival in Italy, Dante wrote his famous work, *On Monarchy,* in three books, which proposed a universal monarchy under Henry VII. In 1310, Henry marched 5,000 troops into Italy. In September 1310, Dante enthusiastically announced his hopes regarding Henry VII in a letter to the princes and peoples of Italy. He also sent a letter to Henry VII demanding that he destroy the Black Guelphs in Florence and suggesting several particular targets who just happened to coincide with those he felt were his personal enemies. In 1311, however, Dante wrote to the Florentine government, "the most wicked Florentines within," and blatantly criticized their opposition to the emperor, and later he wrote to Henry VII admonishing him for his delay in taking back the city of Florence. This did not make the Black Guelphs too happy, obviously, and on a decree dated September 2, 1311, Dante was included in the list of those who were permanently exempted from all amnesty and grace by the Florentine republic.

Early in 1312, Dante joined other exiles in Pisa, where the emperor was readying a revolt against the Black Guelphs in Florence. It is believed that Dante's undying reverence for the city of his birth kept him from joining the imperial army as they besieged Florence later that year. The attack on the city, however, proved unsuccessful. The White Guelphs quickly began to disintegrate after this loss and completely deteriorated in August 1313 with the death of Henry VII. With the failure of the Whites and the death of the emperor, Dante's hopes for what could and should be accomplished in Florence were effectively destroyed.

He took refuge at a convent in Santa Croce de Fonte Avellana and later traveled to Lucca under the protection of Uguccione della Faggiuola, a Ghibelline soldier who had temporarily made himself lord of that city. In 1315, as a consequence of his association with this soldier, the Florentines renewed the threat of Dante's death sentence and, perhaps to further ensure Dante's lack of political involvement, included his family in the condemnation as well. His sons and daughter would eventually join him in exile.

In 1316, more amnesty decrees were passed in Florence, and although there appears to have been some attempt made to have Dante included in the list of those to receive amnesty, Dante was vehemently against it. Knowing his innocence in the matters that led to his exile, he refused to return to Florence under such shameful conditions. Later that year, Dante went back to Verona, where he met Cangrande della Scala, an imperial cleric who ruled a large portion of Eastern Lombardy. In Cangrande, Dante saw a personification of the knightly ideal and a replacement for Henry VII as another possible new hope for Italy. Many commentators suggest that Dante represents Cangrande in *The Divine Comedy* as the "Veltro," or greyhound, the hero whose coming is prophesied at the beginning of *The Inferno,* and who is to put into effect the imperial ideals of his *On Monarchy,* succeeding where Henry VII had failed. Dante dedicated *The Paradiso* to Cangrande.

   Throughout his exile, although Dante moved around quite a bit in Italy, he remained eternally devoted to Florence. In *Il Convivio* (*The Banquet*) (ca. 1304–07), Dante provides an emotional account of the poverty and misery he endured during his exile. He also recounts this misery in *The Paradiso*:

. . . Tu lascerai ogne cosa diletta
più caramente; e questo è quello strale
che l'arco de lo essilio pria saetta.
Tu proverai sì come sa di sale
lo pane altrui, e come è duro calle
lo scendere e 'l salir per l'altrui
   scale . . .

. . . You shall leave everything you
   love most:
this is the arrow that the bow of exile
shoots first. You are to know the
   bitter taste
of others' bread, how salty it is, and
   know
how hard a path it is for one who goes
ascending and descending others'
   stairs . . .

   In 1319, Dante received a letter from Giovanni del Virgilio, a lecturer in Latin at the University of Bologna, inviting him to come to Bologna and receive the laurel crown in that city. This circular wreath-like crown, made of interlocking leaves and branches, is generally presented to accomplished individuals with worthy and notable works in their field of study. It is most often seen in portraits of medieval poets, philosophers, and scholars. Several portraits of Dante show him wearing the laurel crown, but this crown is representative of the honor he should have received in life but never did. Dante expressed his unalterable resolution to receive the laurel crown only from Florence—a resolve filled with his intent to one day be recognized by Florence not only for his literary accomplishments but also for his innocence of the crimes for which he was banished. He describes this resolve in *The Paradiso*:

Se mai continga che 'l poema sacro
al quale ha posto mano e cielo e terra,
sì che m'ha fatto per molti anni macro,
vinca la crudeltà che fuor mi serra
del bello ovile ov'io dormi' agnello,
nimico ai lupi che li danno guerra;
con altra voce omai, con altro vello
ritornerò poeta, e in sul fonte
del mio battesmo prenderò
   'l cappello . . .

If it ever comes to pass that the sacred
   poem
To which both heaven and earth have
   set their hand
So as to have made me lean for many
   years
should overcome the cruelty that
   bars me
from the fair sheepfold where I slept
   as a lamb,
an enemy to the wolves that make
   war on it,
with another voice now and other
   fleece
I shall return a poet and at the font
of my baptism take the laurel
   crown . . .

In 1317, Dante settled at Ravenna, and it was here that he would complete *The Divine Comedy*. He died in exile in Ravenna in 1321, where his daughter, the nun Beatrice, had by this time joined him in his exile and cared for him until his death. Dante never returned to Florence and was buried in Ravenna at the Church of San Pier Maggiore. In his final years Dante was admirably received in many noble houses of Italy, most notably by Guido Novello da Polenta, the nephew of the tragic Francesca (represented in *The Inferno*), in Ravenna. Guido saw to it that Dante was given an honorable burial. His funeral was attended by the leading poets and writers of the time. Guido was with Dante at his death, and he requested that he be able to deliver Dante's funeral eulogy—a high honor, showing how highly he favored Dante.

By 1483 Dante's literary contributions were well known, and Bernardo Bembo, a Venetian magistrate, ordered a better tomb be built to house Dante's remains. On his tomb, Bernardo Canaccio, a friend of Dante, had etched the phrase "parvi Florentia mater amoris" ("Florence, mother of little love"). Eventually, after several decades of change, Florence came to regret Dante's exile and made repeated requests to Ravenna for the return of his remains. The church guardians of Dante's body, however, refused to comply. At one point, however, they feared Florence might try to take the bones by force, so they concealed Dante's remains in a false wall of the monastery. In 1829, a tomb was built for him in Florence in the basilica of Santa Croce, but the tomb remains empty to this day, with Dante's body remaining in his tomb in Ravenna. On the front of his Florence tomb is etched a phrase from his *Inferno*: "Onorate l'altissimo poeta" ("Honor the most exalted poet"). In *The Inferno,* this quote depicts Virgil's welcome as he returns among the great ancient poets spending eternity in Limbo. The rest of the line, "L'ombra sua torna, ch'era dipartita" ("his spirit, which had left us, returns") is absent from the empty tomb.

MOST NOTABLE WORKS

La Vita Nuova *(The New Life; ca. 1292)*

The New Life was a celebration of Dante's love for Beatrice. This work was a medley of lyrical verse and poetic prose, also known as *prosimetrum*. It is the first of two collections of verse that Dante would make in his lifetime (the other is *The Banquet*). In each collection, the prose form is a device for binding together poems composed over a 10-year period. *The New Life* brought together Dante's poetic efforts from before 1283 to roughly 1292–93; *The Banquet* contains his most important poetic compositions from just prior to 1294 to the time of *The Divine Comedy* (begun in ca. 1308).

Dante referred to *The New Life* as his *libello* (small book). It contains 42 chapters with commentaries on 25 sonnets, 1 ballad, and 4 canzones; a fifth canzone is left interrupted by Beatrice's death. The prose commentary

provides the story of the collection, which tells of the first time Dante saw Beatrice (when they were nine), the measures he took to conceal his love for her, his anguish at the possibility that she might ignore him, his determination to rise above this anguish and sing only of Beatrice's virtues, and finally his mourning over her death. In the last chapter, Dante expresses his desire to write about her "that which has never been written of any woman"—the writing he is referring to will become his *Paradiso,* in which Beatrice is the ultimate symbol of salvation in *The Divine Comedy*.

The New Life contains many of Dante's love poems in Italian. One of the most famous poems in *The New Life* is "Tanto gentile e tanto onesta pare":

Tanto gentile e tanto onesta pare	So winsome and so worthy seems to me my lady,
La donna mia quand'ella altrui saluta,	when she greets a passer-by,
Ch'ogni lingua divien tremando muta	that every tongue can only babble shy
E gli occhi non ardiscon di guardare.	and eager glances lose temerity.
Ella sen va, sentendosi laudare	Sweetly and dressed in all humility,
Benignamente d'umilta`vestuta,	away she walks from all she's praisèd by,
E par che sia una cosa venuta	and truly seems a thing come from the sky
Di cielo in terra a miracol mostrare.	to show on earth what miracles can be.
Mostrasi si' piacente a chi la mira,	So much she pleases every gazing eye,
Che da' per gli occhi una dolcezza al core,	she gives a sweetness through it to the heart,
Che intender non la puo' chi non la prova.	which he who does not feel it fails to guess.
E par che della sua labbia si muova	A spirit full of love and tenderness
Uno spirto soave e pien d'amore,	seems from her features ever to depart,
Che va dicendo all'anima: sospira	that, reaching for the soul, says softly "Sigh."

Dante's commentary on his own work is also in Italian—both in *The New Life* and in *The Banquet*—instead of the Latin that was almost universally used at the time.

Il Convivio *(The Banquet; ca. 1304–7)*

The Banquet is a collection of allegorical commentaries in prose on several of Dante's own poems. While he projected 15 treatises, the work contains only 4—an introduction and three commentaries. These treatises tell how Dante

became a lover of Philosophy, personified as a mystical woman whose soul is love and whose body is wisdom, she "whose true abode is in the most secret place of the Divine Mind."

In the introduction, Dante represents this work as a metaphorical banquet made of wisdom, in which the poems are the meat and the commentaries the bread. The guests to this banquet are primarily all who are eager for philosophical knowledge but who may be too consumed by political life.

De vulgari eloquentia *(On the Eloquence of the Vernacular; ca. 1304–7)*

A Latin treatise, *On the Eloquence of the Vernacular* is the first theoretical discussion of the Italian literary language. In it, Dante attempts to discover the ideal Italian language, the noblest form of the vernacular, and then to show how it should be used when composing poems. Of the four books he planned, only the first and part of the second were written.

De Monarchia *(On Monarchy; 1309)*

His close involvement in the political controversies of the time led Dante to write *On Monarchy,* one of the major tracts of medieval political philosophy. It is written in Latin to underscore its accessibility to those whom Dante felt most needed to read it—those in power. *On Monarchy* argues for the necessity of a universal monarchy in order to establish universal peace, and this monarchy's relationship to the Roman Church is a necessity as a guide to eternal peace. Entirely familiar with the writers of classical tradition, Dante drew on works from Cicero, Virgil, and Boethius in making his argument.

In *On Monarchy,* Dante attempts to show that a single supreme and earthly monarchy is necessary for the well-being of the world. He writes that the Roman people acquired universal sovereign sway by divine right and that the authority of the emperor is not dependent upon the pope but descends upon him directly from God.

Dante states that man is intended for two purposes: blessedness of this life and blessedness of life eternal. To these two ends man must come by diverse means, for to the first "we attain by the teachings of philosophy, following them by acting in accordance with the moral and intellectual virtues. To the second by spiritual teachings, which transcend human reason, as we follow them by acting according to theological virtues." Although these ends seem clear to Dante, he believed that man would invariably reject them if they were not somehow guided by a universal monarchy: "Wherefore man had need of a twofold directive power according to his twofold end, to wit, the Supreme Pontiff, to lead the human race in accordance with things revealed, to eternal life; and the Emperor, to direct the human race to temporal felicity in accordance with the teachings of philosophy." According to Dante, it is therefore

the duty of the emperor to establish freedom and peace "on this threshing floor of mortality."

Inevitably, *On Monarchy* was condemned by the Black Guelphs and burned after Dante's death in 1321.

La Divina Commedia *(The Divine Comedy; ca. 1308–21)*

"Abandon hope, all ye who enter here" is surely one of the most well known and memorable lines in literature, drawn from Dante's *Divine Comedy*. In approximately 1308, Dante began work on this most notable literary feat and finished it just prior to his death in 1321. Originally called *Commedia* and later called "*divina*" by Boccaccio, this monumental epic poem became known and referred to as *The Divine Comedy*. It is often considered the greatest literary work composed in the Italian language and a masterpiece of world literature. With the trials Dante suffered in exile, it is perhaps even more poignant that he was never able to hear such validation and acclamations of this work during his lifetime.

One of the earliest outside indications that the poem was under way in 1308 is a notice by the law professor Francesco da Barberino in his *I Documenti d'Amore* (*Lessons of Love*) and written circa 1314. He speaks of Virgil and notes an appreciation that Dante followed the classic poet in a poem called the *Comedy* and that at least part of the poem was set in Hell—the *Inferno* portion of *The Divine Comedy*. Da Barberino does not specifically indicate whether or not he had seen or read *The Inferno,* but this does indicate that Dante was quite far along in the poem at this time. *The Inferno* was in circulation by 1317, a year established by contemporary marginal quotes found within dated records from Bologna.

The Divine Comedy is the last great work of the Italian Middle Ages. It effectively sums up the knowledge of the centuries and gives a detailed picture of Catholicism in thirteenth-century Italy. In this sacred poem, Dante presents a Christian vision of human earthly and eternal destiny. It models the spiritual journey through acknowledgment of sin, repentance, and penance, leading to salvation. On its most personal level, *The Divine Comedy* draws on Dante's experience of exile. Dante spoke of truth as a force that transcends any philosophical school of thought or "earthly paradise." He wrote of a truth that he believed the entirety of mankind longs for: the transcendent, universal light. *The Divine Comedy* is written as an allegory in the form of a pilgrim's journey through *Inferno* (Hell) and *Purgatorio* (Purgatory), guided by the classic Roman poet Virgil, and on through to *Paradiso* (Paradise), guided by Dante's love Beatrice. It is from the classical tradition that Dante seems to have derived his conception of the epic poem, a framing story that is large enough to cover the most pressing issues of his time.

While the vision of Hell may be fairly vivid for modern readers, the religious ideas present in Purgatory and Paradise require a certain amount of

knowledge to appreciate. This is perhaps why most modern renditions of Dante's poem tend to focus on *The Inferno,* as it is the more accessible work for readers without prior historical or theological knowledge. *The Purgatorio,* the most lyrical of the three, also mentions the most poets. *The Paradiso,* the most heavily religious in nature, contains beautiful passages in which Dante tries to describe what he confesses he is unable to convey. For example, when Dante looks into the face of God, he states: "all'alta fantasia qui mancò possa" ("at this high moment, ability failed my capacity to describe").

Readers often have difficulty understanding how a poem with such an obviously serious nature came to be titled a comedy. The word "comedy" in the classical sense refers to works that reflect a belief in an ordered universe, in which events move toward a happy or contented ending, generally an ending influenced by divine intervention. By this meaning of the word, as Dante wrote in a letter to Cangrande, the progression of his pilgrimage from Hell to Paradise is a model of classical comedy, because the work begins with his moral confusion and ends with the vision of God.

In the most basic terms, *The Divine Comedy* is an allegory of human life in the form of a vision of the world beyond the grave, written with a purpose, according to Dante, of converting a corrupt society to righteousness: "to remove those living in this life from the state of misery, and lead them to the state of felicity." It is composed of 100 cantos written in terza rima (see the section on his "Influence on Other Prominent Writers" below for more information on terza rima) and grouped together into three canticles, or sections: Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise. Nearly 20 years have passed since the time of the events contained therein when Dante conveys these events to his reader. The life-changing event occurred in 1300, during the year of Jubilee, and consists of an extended vision granted to Dante for his own salvation from a sinful life, taking place over the course of seven days (beginning on the morning of Good Friday). By writing of these events, Dante is able not only to reference his exile in the poem but also to explain the means by which he came to cope with this personal tragedy and to offer suggestions for the resolution of Italy's troubles. Thus, the exile of an individual becomes a representation of the problems of a country. As he passed through the varying realms of Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise, he spoke with the souls in each realm and heard what God had in store for him and for the world.

Virgil, representing human philosophy, guides Dante by the light of natural reason through and away from the dark woods of alienation from God (where the beasts of lust, pride, and greed prevent man from ascending the Mountain of the Lord). Once Dante's journey with Virgil is complete, his companion is Beatrice, representing divine philosophy and revelation, who leads him up through the nine moving heavens of intellectual preparation into the true paradise of eternal life that is found in the sight of God.

It is to Hell that we find condemned the "dear and kind paternal image" of Brunetto Latini, in one of the most moving passages in the poem, as a sinner against nature, though from him Dante learned "how man makes himself

eternal." It is strange that he should place Brunetto here, especially as he places Constantine in Paradise, although it is to him Dante attributes the corruption of the church and the ruin of the world. The pity and terror of certain episodes in Hell—the fatal love of Francesca da Rimini, the useless nobility of Farinata degli Uberti, the fall of Guido da Montefeltro, the fate of Count Ugolino—are extreme portrayals of tragedy.

Dante's conception of Purgatory is a mountain rising out of the ocean in the southern hemisphere and leading up to the Garden of Eden. His meeting with Beatrice on the banks of Lethe, with Dante's personal confession to her of an unworthy past, effectively concludes the story of *The New Life* after the bitter experiences and disillusions of his lifetime.

It is believed that the essence of Dante's philosophy in *The Divine Comedy* is that all virtues and all vices proceed from love. Hell shows how love is abused or manipulated, and Purgatory shows how love is to be prioritized, while Paradise shows how love is made perfect in successive stages of enlightenment until it reaches a union with God's divine love.

Dante was not the first poet to explore Hell. Homer's *Odyssey* (ca. 800 BCE) and Virgil's *Aeneid* (ca. 19 BCE) both represent a visit to the land of the dead in the middle of their poems because this is where the essential values of life are revealed within the poem. Dante, however, begins his journey with the visit to the land of the dead. It is in Hell that Dante must begin his journey and be cleared of harmful values that may somehow prevent him from rising to Paradise.

The visit to Hell, as Virgil and Beatrice explain, is extreme, but it is a painful yet necessary deed before his real recovery can begin. Some readers are disappointed by the lack of drama or severe emotions in the encounter with Satan in *The Inferno*. However, because Dante's journey through Hell is symbolic of the necessary process of separation from harmful vices, and is the first step in full human development, it must then end with a scene that is distinctively anticlimactic. The final revelation of Satan can have nothing new to offer: the sad effects of his presence in human history have already become apparent throughout *The Inferno*.

In *The Purgatorio,* Dante's painful process of spiritual rehabilitation begins. Here Dante suppresses his own personality in order that he may fully ascend into Paradise. In contrast to Hell, where Dante is confronted with a series of exemplary models that he must both recognize and discard, in Purgatory few exemplary models are presented; all of the penitents here are pilgrims along the road of life. Dante, rather than being a fearful and hesitant observer, as he is often represented in *The Inferno,* is represented here as an active participant. In Purgatory he learns to accept life as a pilgrimage, an essentially Christian image. Beatrice reminds Dante that he must learn to reject all deceptive promises of the earthly world and look forward to those promises of the divine world.

Purgatory, then, is the realm of spiritual awakening. It is here that historical, political, and moral landscapes are opened up to Dante. *The Purgatorio* is

widely considered as the section devoted to poetry and the arts. After leaving Hell, Dante proclaims: "But here let poetry rise again from the dead." In Purgatory, Dante encounters the poet Sordello and hears of the destiny of Guido Guinizelli and Guido Cavalcanti. Shortly after he encounters Guido Guinizelli, we have the long-awaited and much anticipated reunion with Beatrice in the earthly Paradise.

Virgil, Dante's guide thus far, must hand over his position to another leader, and in a canticle generally absent of drama, the rejection of Virgil becomes a singularly dramatic event. Dante's use of Virgil is considered one of the richest cultural representations in literature. To begin, with his inclusion of Virgil in this poem, it is clear that Dante is an advocate of classical reason. Virgil is also a historical figure, and he is presented as such in *The Inferno*: "once I was a man, and my parents were Lombards, both Mantuan by birth. I was born *sub Julio,* though late in his time, and I lived in Rome under the good Augustus, in the time of the false and lying gods." Virgil is also associated with Dante's homeland (his references are to contemporary Italian places), and he has an imperial background (born under Julius Caesar, he extolled Augustus Caesar). He is presented quite aptly as a poet; the theme of his great epic *Aeneid* sounds remarkably similar to that of Dante's poem: "I was a poet and sang of that just son of Anchises who came from Troy after proud Ilium was burned." Dante also sings of the just son of a city, in this case Florence, who was unjustly exiled and forced to search, as Aeneas had done—it is clear he speaks of himself—for a better city, a heavenly city.

In his early years, Dante studied Virgil carefully and appropriated his beautiful poetic style. But during his exile, Dante had lost touch with the works of Virgil, so when the spirit of Virgil returns to him, it is a spirit that seems weak from an extended silence. The Virgil that returns to Dante, however, is a poet who has become a *saggio,* a sage or moral teacher.

Though an advocate of reason, Virgil has become a messenger of divine grace, and his return in the poem is part of the revival of those simpler faiths associated with Dante's earlier years. Dante does not reject Virgil; rather he sadly comes to the realization that nowhere in Virgil's work—that is, in his own consciousness—was there found any sense of personal liberation from the allure of history and its processes. In essence, Virgil provided Dante with a moral instruction in the ways of survival as an exile, which is the theme of his own poem (*Aeneid*) as well as Dante's. However, in *The [????] Aeneid* Virgil clung to his faith in history and the Roman Empire and was consoled by this. Dante, though, was determined to go beyond history because it had proven for him to be such a profound nightmare of injustice.

In *The Paradiso*, Dante achieves true heroic fulfillment. It is in *The Paradiso* that the authority of Aristotle, whom Dante held in high esteem, is ranked in supremacy next to that of the scriptures. His poem ultimately gives expression to those historical and literary figures of the past (such as Virgil and Aristotle) who seem, at least to him, to defy death. *The Paradiso* is consequently a poem of fulfillment, retrospection, and completion.

INFLUENCE ON OTHER PROMINENT WRITERS

Dante invented the three-line rhyme scheme he used in *The Divine Comedy*. It is called *terza rima,* a form that consists of 10- or 11-syllable lines in tercets (three-line stanzas) using the rhyme scheme aba bcb cdc ded, and so on. Later English poets who used terza rima include Geoffrey Chaucer, John Milton, Percy Bysshe Shelley, and W. H. Auden.

Giovanni Boccaccio (1313–1375)

Aside from writing the first formal life of Dante, from 1373 to 1374 Boccaccio's commentaries on *The Inferno* were the first public lectures on *The Divine Comedy*. Effectively, as a result of these lectures, Dante was the first of the moderns whose work found its place with the ancient classics in a university course.

The subtitle of Boccaccio's famous framed narrative *The Decameron* (1350–53) is *Prencipe Galeotto*, or Galeotto, the middle man in Lancelot and Guinevere's tragic love. Boccaccio is referencing Dante's allusion to Galeotto, who was blamed for the arousal of lust in the episode of Paolo and Francesca in *The Inferno*.

Throughout *The Decameron* there runs the common medieval theme of Lady Fortune and how quickly one can rise and fall under the influence of the Wheel of Fortune or Destiny. Boccaccio was educated in the tradition of Dante's *Divine Comedy,* which we know used allegorical techniques to show connections between literal events within the story and the Christian message Dante wished to portray. However, *The Decameron* uses Dante's allegorical model not to educate the reader but to satirize this method of learning. This was part of a wider historical trend at the time that openly criticized the powers of the church after the estimated 1.5 million deaths from the bubonic plague ("Black Death") (1348–50) were attributed to unanswered prayers of deliverance.

Geoffrey Chaucer (ca. 1343–1400)

A large portion of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales,* including "The Monk's Tale," were written in the 1370s, shortly after Chaucer's visit to Italy, where he was exposed to Boccaccio's *Decameron* and *Concerning the Falls of Illustrious Men*. In "The Monk's Tale," Chaucer hails Dante: "the grete poete of Itaille that highte Dant" ("The great poet of Italy who was named Dante"). Additionally, one eight-line stanza of Chaucer's "A Complaynt to His Lady," an early short poem, is written in terza rima. His *House of Fame,* a dream vision in which the narrator is guided through the heavens by an otherworldly guide, is a parody of *The Divine Comedy*. The beginning of the last stanza in his *Troilus and Criseyde* is modeled after a passage in *The Paradiso*.

Edmund Spenser (ca. 1552–1599) and John Milton (1608–1674)

Though neither necessarily admitted to being influenced by Dante in their two most famous poems, it is clear that they were both aware of him and his works. Each wrote one epic poem that just happened to carry similar allegorical themes to Dante's *Divine Comedy*.

Though written to celebrate Queen Elizabeth I and the Tudor dynasty, Spenser's epic poem *The Faerie Queen* is an extended allegory about the moral life and what makes for a life of virtue. With its themes of Man's Creation, Fall, and Salvation, Milton's epic allegorical poem *Paradise Lost* (1657) is perhaps most closely associated with Dante's *Divine Comedy* by means of comparison.

Milton put Dante's insistence on the separation of worldly and religious power to use in his treatise *Of Reformation* (1641), where he explicitly cites *The Inferno*. Additionally, Beatrice's condemnation of corrupt and neglectful preachers, found in *The Paradiso* ("so that the wretched sheep, in ignorance, / return from pasture, having fed on wind"), is translated and adapted in Milton's lyrical poem *Lycidas* (1638): "The hungry Sheep look up, and are not fed, / But swoln with wind, and the rank mist they draw," when Milton condemns corrupt clergy.

George Gordon, Lord Byron (1788–1824)

Lord Byron employed terza rima in his "Prophecy of Dante" (1821). Through the main character, Dante, Byron ponders what it means to be a poet and all of the social and political aspects that go along with that title. Its central theme is the relationship between life and art.

Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792–1822)

Shelley pays tribute to Dante in his "Epipsychidion"(1820), the "Triumph of Life" (1822), and "A Defence of Poetry" (1840). In "Epipsychidion" he drew creatively upon Dante's celebration of eternal, constant love in *The New Life*. "Triumph of Life" is a terza rima poem and Shelley's most obvious adaptation of Dante, borrowing not only his verse form but also a Virgil-like figure in Rousseau and a parade of souls in death. In his prose work "A Defence of Poetry," written in 1821 and published posthumously in 1840, Shelley's intent was to demonstrate the similarities and to resolve the differences between Dante and himself. It is in this work Shelley made his famous claim that the "poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world"—similar to Dante's thoughts on philosophers.

Alfred, Lord Tennyson (1809–1892)

Although the character of Ulysses (Odysseus) has been widely explored throughout classical literature (most notably in Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey,*

ca. 800–700 BCE), Tennyson's poem "Ulysses" (1833) is the first modern account and seems to draw most closely on Dante's Ulisse from his *Inferno*. In Dante's retelling, Ulisse is condemned to Hell among the false counselors, both for his pursuit of knowledge beyond human bounds and for his adventures in disregard of his family.

Robert Browning (1812–1889)

Browning admired Dante and his work, and his influence or name is seen in several of Browning's poems, including "One Word More" (1855), "Ixion" (1883), *The Ring and the Book* (1868), and most notably "Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came" (1855). The "Childe Roland" landscape has been described as Hell-like either as a place embodying the possibility of eternal damnation or as a projection of the poem's traveler's state of mind (a psychological Hell). Several critics have noted "Childe Roland" as an adaptation of *The Divine Comedy*.

Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828–1882)

Originally named Gabriel Charles Dante Rossetti, on his art and in his published works he placed the name Dante first, in honor of the great Italian poet. He worked on translations of Dante's *New Life* and adopted some of Dante's stylistic characteristics in his own writing.

William Butler Yeats (1865–1939)

Yeats referred to Dante as "the chief imagination of Christendom." The first two stanzas of Yeats's poem "Byzantium" (1928) closely echo Canto VIII of Dante's *Purgatorio*.

E. M. Forster (1879–1970)

In Forster's novel *Where Angels Fear to Tread* (1905), the character Gino Carella, when first introducing himself, quotes the initial lines of Dante's *Inferno* ("Abandon hope all ye who enter here"). This novel also includes several references to Dante's *New Life*.

Ezra Pound (1885–1972)

Pound's epic poem *The Cantos* (1915–62) (consisting of 120 sections, or cantos) takes as a direct model Dante's *Divine Comedy*. The opening canto echoes Dante's opening and the poet Pound also descends into Hell to interrogate the

dead. Here are some of the more prominent mentions. Cantos 14 and 15 conclude with a vision of Hell, using the convention of *The Divine Comedy* to present Pound moving through a Hell populated by bankers, newspaper editors, hack writers, and other "perverters of language" and the social order. In Canto 15, Plotinus takes the role of a Virgil-like guide. In Canto 16, Pound emerges from Hell into an earthly paradise where he sees some of the people he encountered in earlier cantos. Canto 38 opens with a quote from Dante in which he accuses Albert of Germany of falsifying money. Canto 93 looks at examples of benevolent action by public figures, including Dante and his writing *On Monarchy*. *The Cantos* close with a reference to the following lines from Dante's *Paradiso*:

O voi che siete in piccioletta barca,	O ye who are in a little bark,
desiderosi d'ascoltar, seguiti	desirous to listen, following
dietro al mio legno che cantando varca,	behind my craft which singing passes on,
tornate a riveder li vostri liti:	turn to see again your shores:
non vi mettete in pelago, ché forse,	put not out upon the deep, for haply,
perdendo me, rimarreste smarriti.	losing me, ye would remain astray.

This reference to Dante's *Paradiso* signaled Pound's intent to close his poem with a final volume based on his own Paradise-like vision.

T. S. Eliot (1888–1965)

Modernist poet Eliot elevated Dante to a preeminence he felt was shared by only one other poet, William Shakespeare: "[They] divide the modern world between them. There is no third." Eliot declared that Dante's poetry exercised a persistent and deep influence on his work. The spiritual quest in Dante's *Divine Comedy* greatly influenced the central theme of Eliot's "The Waste Land" (1922), the individual's quest for spiritual meaning through a kind of psychological hell. Eliot uses allusions to *The Divine Comedy,* specifically *The Inferno,* throughout "The Waste Land." Eliot also cites *The Inferno* as an epigraph to "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" (1915). He also cites heavily from and alludes to Dante in *Prufrock and Other Observations* (1917) and "Ara vus prec" (1920).

TRANSLATIONS

The first complete translation of *The Divine Comedy* into English was completed in 1802 by Irishman Henry Boyd (1748/9–1832). He had previously published a translation of *The Inferno* in 1785. The first translation of *The Divine Comedy* by an American was completed in 1867 by Henry Wadsworth

Longfellow (1807–1882). Longfellow spent several years translating this work and recruited the aid of friends in perfecting the translation and reviewing early drafts. He invited friends to weekly meetings, which came to be known as the "Dante Club" starting in 1864. Novelist Matthew Pearl's 2003 novel titled *The Dante Club* tells the story of various American poets translating *The Divine Comedy* in post–Civil War Boston. Longfellow's full three-volume translation was eventually published in 1867, but Longfellow continued to revise the translation; it went through four printings in its first year. Longfellow also wrote a poem titled "Mezzo Cammin" (1845) alluding to the first line of *The Divine Comedy,* and a sonnet sequence (of six sonnets) under the title "Divina Commedia" (1867), published as flyleaves to his translation of Dante's work.

American poet and critic John Ciardi (1916–1986) published a translation of *The Divine Comedy* that is considered to be one of the more accessible translations available. His translation of *The Inferno* was published in 1954, *The Purgatorio* in 1961, and *The Paradiso* in 1970. It is his translation that is now widely used in university literature courses.

DANTE TODAY

The most pressing needs of Dante scholarship today are additional textual study of his work, more thorough acquaintance with every aspect of his more minor works, and a fuller investigation of Dante's position with regard to the great philosophies of the Middle Ages. Several societies have popped up with connections to Dante in an attempt to bring to light some of those needs I just mentioned. The most noteworthy of these societies is the "Società Dantesca Italiana" (Italian Dante Society), established in 1888, with headquarters in Florence (www.dantesca.it/eng/). It welcomes non-Italian-speaking members and is distinguished for its high scholarship. In addition to sponsoring and delivering courses and lectures throughout Italy, the society publishes a quarterly "Bulletino," and a survey of contemporary Dante literature; it has released several volumes in a series of critical editions of Dante's smaller works.

INFLUENCE ON MODERN POPULAR CULTURE

Dante has an active presence in popular culture. A visit to www.4degreez .com/misc/dante-inferno-test.mv allows you to take a quiz that will calculate what circle of Hell you belong to. Dante is infiltrating not only the Internet but also our living rooms; there is a *Dante's Inferno* video game! Electronic Arts released its highly anticipated action adventure in February 2011, for PlayStation 3, Xbox 360, and PSP. *Dante's Inferno* the video game takes players on a colorful (and often gruesome) adventure through Dante's nine circles

of Hell. Somehow, the allegory is lost in the translation of hand-eye coordination. The release of this video game comes on the heels of the comic book/graphic novel on which it is based and the direct-to-DVD film spinoff, though the latter appears to have no obvious relation to the graphic novel or the video game other than its possession of the same title.

The film *Dante's Inferno* (www.dantefilm.com/about.html) was released on DVD in 2008 and places a thoroughly modern spin on the classic poem. It is retold through intricately hand-drawn paper puppets and miniature sets, without the use of CGI. In this world, Dante (voiced by Dermot Mulroney) is a hoodie-wearing alcoholic of indiscriminate age who wakes up (physically and metaphorically) from the previous evening's drunken pass-out to find that he is in a strangely unfamiliar part of town. He asks the first person he sees for some help: enter Virgil (voiced by James Cromwell) sporting a mullet and wearing a brown robe of the bath variety. Because he has no idea where he is or how he will survive alone, Dante follows Virgil on a journey through the depths of Hell, which resembles a decayed urban landscape. There is a cast of contemporary presidents, politicians, popes, and pop-culture icons sentenced to eternal and horrific suffering. Dante eventually comes to understand Hell's merciless punishment and emerges a new man convinced of the necessity to change the course of his life—while still drinking heavily.

Unlike the more modernized film version, the six-issue graphic novel miniseries *Dante's Inferno* stays fairly close to the more traditional version of Hell set forth in Dante's poem. Like the video game, the graphics are telling and disturbing. The first issue was released by DC Comics in 2009 to relatively wide acclaim.

For a version of Dante's *Divine Comedy* that attempts a contemporary political setting, one need look no further than the Bread and Puppet Theater rendition of "The Divine Reality Comedy" (www.loho10002.com/wordpress/?p=1079). "The Divine Reality Comedy" is geared toward adults and is a new and unique translation of Dante's *Divine Comedy* divided into four parts. According to the website, in "Paradise," the old human Born-to-Die gene is replaced by the brand-new Born-to-Buy gene. In "Post-Paradise Horsemanship," a herd of white equestrian cutouts (of all sizes) is manipulated by a crowd of dancers in a picturesque, prancing dance. In "Purgatory," the shadows of the indefinitely detained speak to you. In "Hell," the Guantanamo interrogation process is staged with an eight-inch papier mâché population, which recites actual interrogation transcripts and then witnesses three cases of torture as demonstrated on three larger-than-life-size puppets.

If you would like to have the same benefits of the Bread and Puppet Theater in the palm of your hand, the *Dante's Inferno* puppet show available on YouTube for viewing on a cell phone or computer is your best bet (www.youtube.com/watch?v=TVM1vRm9GI8). This is an imaginative 11-minute stick-figure, sock-puppet, masked-figure rendition of Dante's *Inferno*. There is also iDante, an interactive version of the poem for the iPhone and iPad. The

iPad version features fully colorized illustrations, 3-D reconstructions of key environments, and maps of Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise.

NOTABLE REPRESENTATIONS IN FILM

The 1911 silent film *L'Inferno,* directed by Giuseppe de Liguoro and starring Salvatore Papa, was released on DVD in 2004, with a newly adapted soundtrack by Tangerine Dream. The 1935 film *Dante's Inferno,* directed by Harry Lachman and starring Spencer Tracy, centers on a fairground attraction based on *The Inferno*. In the 1946 Merrie Melodies cartoon "Book Revue," starring Daffy Duck, the Big Bad Wolf falls into the book *The Inferno*. The 1995 film *Se7en,* directed by David Fincher, stars Brad Pitt and Morgan Freeman as two detectives who investigate a series of ritualistic murders inspired by the seven deadly sins. The film makes several references to Dante's *Divine Comedy*.

Perhaps the most visually breathtaking rendition of Dante's *Divine Comedy* is the 1998 film *What Dreams May Come,* directed by Vincent Ward and starring Robin Williams, Annabella Sciorra, and Cuba Gooding Jr. Based on Richard Matheson's 1978 novel, this film makes several connections with and references to the *Divine Comedy,* including its depiction of Hell. The lead character, Chris (Williams), tragically loses his children in a car accident. His wife (Sciorra) retreats from her life as a result of the loss and commits suicide. Chris goes on a journey through Hell, with Gooding as the Virgil character, to redeem his wife and himself and find happiness once again with their children.

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The Orb: On-Line Reference Book for Medieval Studies: http://the-orb.net/encyclop/culture/lit/italian/danindex.html.

The Princeton Dante Project: http://etcweb.princeton.edu/dante/index.html.

Film and Video Documentaries
La Porte de L'enfer d'Auguste Rodin

46 min. Color. 35mm. 1991. France.

Director: Philippe Sollers. Examines "The Gates of Hell" by French sculptor Auguste
    Rodin (1840–1917). On August 16, 1880, the Musée des Arts Decoratifs com-
    missioned Rodin to create a sculpted bronze door based on the work of Dante
    Alighieri. Over 30 years in creation, the door was never completed. Based on an
    original text by Philippe Sollers.

A TV Dante

34 programs, 11 min. each. Color. Video. 1985. Great Britain.

Directors: Peter Greenaway and Tom Phillips. A video adaptation of Dante's *Inferno*,
    combining archival and recent footage with computer-generated paintbox im-
    ages. Dante's text, translated by Phillips, is juxtaposed with images from modern
    times that conjure up a contemporary vision of Hell: a vast bureaucracy shaped
    by two world wars and daily tabloid headlines. Each of the 34 cantos is presented
    as an individual segment.

APPENDIX: CHRONOLOGY OF DANTE'S LIFE

ca. 1265	Dante born in May or June in Florence to Alighiero and Bella.
1274	Dante sees Beatrice for the first time. (According to *The New Life*, he falls in love with her the moment they meet.)
1275–1282	Dante studies at the convents of Santa Croce and Santa Maria Novella.
1283	Dante's father dies.
	Dante marries Gemma Donati (with whom he will have four children: Jacopo, Pietro, Giovanni, and Antonia).
	Writes his first sonnets.
1285	Dante becomes a soldier and takes part in the battle of the Sienese against the Aretines at Poggio Santa Cecilia.
1288	Dante writes the ballad "Ladies who have intelligence of love" and the two sonnets "Love is one with the gentle heart" and "My lady bears love in her eyes."
1289	Dante takes part in the battle of Campaldino. (He recalls this battle in *The Purgatorio*.)
1290	Beatrice dies.
1292	Dante writes *La Vita Nuova* (*The New Life*).
1294	Dante meets Charles Martel of Anjou king of Hungary and heir to the kingdom of Naples and the county of Provence, and establishes a friendship with him. (Dante recounts their meeting in *The Paradiso*.)
1295	Dante enrolls in the Guild of Physicians and Apothecaries and enters Florentine political life.
	Elected to the council of the Heads of the Arts in order to cooperate with the Captain of the People in the selection of new priors.
1296	Dante takes part in the Council of the Hundred.
1300	Pope Boniface VIII proclaims the Jubilee Year.
	Dante named a prior, one of the six highest magistrates in Florence.
	(Eastertime) Fictional date of the journey of *The Divine Comedy*.
1301	Dante takes the floor in the Council of the Hundred to oppose helping Boniface VIII fight the Santafiora of Maremma.
	Sent to Rome as an ambassador to Boniface VIII to convince him to recall Charles de Valois, whom the Pope has sent to Florence as a mediator.
	The Black Guelph Corso Donati reenters Florence and wreaks vengeance on the Whites while Dante detained in Rome by Pope Boniface VIII.
1302	Dante accused of treachery and receives a fine and banishment for two years with permanent exclusion from public office.

1302	After failure to appear in court (due to the Pope's detaining him in Rome), Dante condemned to death in absentia.
1303	Pope Boniface VIII dies.
1304	Dante writes *De vulgari eloquentia* (*On the Eloquence of the Vernacular*). During this same period, writes *Il Convivio* (*The Banquet*).
1306	Dante moves to Lunigiana and appointed procurator to the Marquesses Malaspina.
1308	Dante begins writing *La Divina Commedia* (*The Divine Comedy*).
1309	Dante writes *De Monarchia* (*On Monarchy*).
1310	At the news of the arrival in Italy of Henry VII of Luxembourg, Dante goes to meet his fellow exiles at Forli.
	With other exiles, goes to Asti to pay homage to Henry VII.
1311	Emperor Henry VII crowned King of Italy in Milan.
	Dante writes a letter to Henry VII inviting him to come to Tuscany and restore peace to Florence.
1312	Dante joins Henry VII in Pisa.
	Henry VII camps under the walls of Florence.
1313	Henry VII moves from Pisa toward the Kingdom of Naples. He dies of fever during the journey.
1314	Dante guest of Cangrande della Scala in Verona.
	The Inferno, the first part of *The Divine Comedy,* published.
1315	Dante leaves Verona for Lucca.
	Renewed Florentine sentence against Dante extends to family.
	Dante moves to Verona as guest of Cangrande della Scala. Works on *The Purgatorio* and *The Paradiso* and writes the *Questio de aqua et terra* (*Question Concerning Water and Earth*).
1316–1319	Dante travels between Verona, the Marca Trevigiana, Romagna, and Tuscany.
1319	Dante moves to Ravenna, where he is the guest of Guido Novello da Polenta, lord of that city.
1321	Dante completes *The Divine Comedy*.
	Is ambassador to Venice. On a mission for Guido Novello, stricken with fever and returns to Ravenna. Dies on September 13.
	Guido buries Dante in the Church of Saint Francis, with full honors.

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Effigy of Eleanor of Aquitaine, Fontevrault Abbey, France. Eleanor died in 1204. (Erich Lessing/Art Resource, NY)

Eleanor of Aquitaine (ca. 1122–1204)

Dominique T. Hoche

INTRODUCTION

Eleanor of Aquitaine is known as the Queen of the Troubadours and served, at least in part, as a model for King Arthur's Guinevere in the medieval romance tradition; she was also responsible for the spread of the folk tradition about the fairy Melusine. She was also one of the richest and most powerful women in Europe in the Middle Ages, but we know relatively little about her or her life. She left no autobiographical records and only three letters written in her own hand. What we know about her comes from the writings of chroniclers in her own time and those of centuries later, both of which could be very hostile to her, describing her more along the lines of a whorish Messalina or a witchy Morgan Le Fay. We know a lot about the men in her life, but about her personally all we have are insinuations: that she was a bad wife and a neglectful mother, that she was very beautiful and vain even into old age, that her eyes were blue or gray—yet we don't know many simple details such as the color of her hair.

OVERVIEW

Born in 1122 (an estimated date—her parents were married in 1121), Eleanor was the eldest daughter of Guillaume X duke of Aquitaine and his duchess, Aenor de Châtellerault. When Guillaume X died while on pilgrimage in 1137, Eleanor inherited his lands; now duchess of the richest and largest province in France (Aquitaine, in southwestern France, stretched from the river Loire to the Pyrenees and functioned like a separate nation) and also countess of Poitiers, the teenage Eleanor was the most eligible bride in Europe. A marriage was arranged for her with King Louis VII of France, and he fell deeply in love with her. The two even went on a Crusade to Damascus together—but failed in the attempt to rescue the Frankish kingdoms. After many years their marriage began to fail as well, especially because they had managed to produce only two daughters, and Louis needed a son for the throne. In 1152, they dissolved the marriage by mutual consent, being granted an annulment due to consanguinity (their bloodlines were too close, being third cousins), leaving them free to marry again.

Within six weeks of the annulment, Eleanor married Henry count of Anjou and duke of Normandy. When he became King Henry II of England, the merger of their landholdings created an empire. With Henry, Eleanor had five sons and three daughters over the next 13 years: William, Henry, Richard, Geoffrey, John, Matilda, Eleanor, and Joanna. The years between Henry's accession and the birth of Prince John were tumultuous: the fight to claim Toulouse, the inheritance of Eleanor's grandmother and father, was a failure; and the feud between the king and Thomas Becket, the archbishop of Canterbury, became known all over the continent (see the chapter on Thomas Becket). By late 1166, after the birth of her final child, Eleanor separated from Henry and moved home to Poitiers.

It was in Poitiers that the famous "Court of Love" or "Court of Ladies" began. Away from Henry's adulteries and constant warfare, Eleanor was able to develop her own court that encouraged music, literature, and what we think of today as "chivalric" manners. In 1173, however, the younger Henry made a bid for power against the king, along with his brothers Richard and Geoffrey, and the ensuing revolt resulted in Eleanor being imprisoned for the next 16 years. Upon Henry II's death in 1189, she was freed, and Richard became king. While Richard went off on the Third Crusade, she ruled England in his stead, and, after he died, she helped King John rule as well, even in her late seventies. She died in 1204 at the surprisingly advanced age of 82 and was buried in Fontevrault Abbey.

THE YOUNG DUCHESS

Eleanor was a colorful character, but she came by her color honestly: her grandfather was Duke Guillaume IX of Aquitaine. When he fell in love with Dangereuse, the wife of his vassal the viscount of Châtellerault, he carried her off and made a luxury apartment for her in a newly built tower in his palace at Poitiers. His wife Philippa, who had had enough of his philandering, left him and moved to the Abbey of Fontevrault, though the wayward Guillaume IX cared little what the church might say about his actions because he had been excommunicated the previous year. When the church found out, he was excommunicated a second time for his scandalously immoral behavior. Guillaume and Dangereuse could not marry in this situation, so they did the next best thing: they married Guillaume's son to Dangereuse's daughter Aenor in 1121. From that marriage, Eleanor (possibly derived from *alia Aenor* or "the other Aenor" in Latin) was soon born, and her sister Petronilla arrived in 1124, with a brother—named, of course, Guillaume—arriving a few years later.

Eleanor was a very well educated girl: she learned to read and speak Latin, proved talented in music and literary arts, and was schooled in riding, falconry, and hunting. She learned the business of ruling a land even at her father's knee—when her parents brought her on tours around their realms, she watched the duke and duchess receive homage, hold court, conduct business, and disagree and be reconciled with rebellious and unruly vassals. In 1130, her young brother died; her mother died a few months later, and so by 1136 her father began to worry about who would inherit, and he began to look for a new wife. Yet he soon died, confirming Eleanor as heiress of his vast dominions, and she became the ward of his overlord, King Louis VI "the Fat" of France. Louis himself was gravely ill, and he hurriedly made arrangements for the teenage Eleanor to marry his second son (his heir since 1131), 16-year-old Louis. The young man, along with a huge retinue of barons, knights, and troops, set off to marry his young fiancée, and after expensive and lavish celebrations and feastings, the marriage was celebrated on July 25, 1137. On

August 1, Louis VI died, and suddenly Louis was not just her husband but King Louis VII, and Eleanor became queen of France as well as duchess of Aquitaine.

THE QUEEN OF FRANCE

Young Eleanor's new husband, Louis, was a pious man who had been expected to enter the church, as was common for second sons, who did not stand to inherit. Even though he was supposedly gentle, devout, and very unworldly, he fell madly in love with his sophisticated, fun-loving wife and granted her every wish, including remodeling the Cité Palace in Paris to suit her love of beauty and domestic finery. Her power over him even extended to getting him to fight wars for her. In 1141, Louis became involved in a war with Count Theobald of Champagne, using the excuse of helping Raoul I count of Vermandois to divorce his wife and marry Petronilla, Eleanor's sister. The fact that Petronilla was 18 and Raoul was in his late fifties did not seem to disturb either party, and if all the machinations and warfare went according to plan, Louis would also regain the county of Toulouse for France. The war lasted for two years (1142–44) and greatly angered the pope. The burning of the church in the town of Vitry, where more than 1,300 people died in the flames, earned Eleanor a scolding by Bernard (later Saint Bernard) of Clairvaux. Bernard was a very persuasive and intelligent man with a sharp tongue, but confronted by Eleanor's clever excuse (that she had encouraged her husband to go to war because she was frustrated they had not yet managed to conceive) he became much more kind to her and offered to pray for her to have a child in exchange for her influencing the king to back down from warfare and agree to the church's wishes. It took only a few weeks for peace to return to France, and in April 1145, Eleanor had a daughter named Marie.

Louis felt very guilty about the massacre at Vitry, and, as pious young men often did, he decided to make a pilgrimage to the Holy Land to atone for his sins. The pope seized upon this opportunity and asked Louis to rescue the Frankish kingdoms in the Middle East—and so on Christmas Day in 1145, Louis announced he was going on crusade.

THE CRUSADER

Eleanor did not stay at home—she decided to go with her husband as a result of a sermon preached by Bernard—insisting upon taking part in the Crusade because she was the feudal leader of the knights in Aquitaine. Months of preparation followed, and on March 31, Easter Sunday, Louis started the march to the Holy Land, intending to meet the army of the Holy Roman Emperor Conrad in Constantinople. While a Crusade was meant to be uncomfortable, full of penance and hardship, Eleanor's participation was marked by theatrics

and luxury: she launched her own forces from Vézelay, the supposed location of Mary Magdalene's tomb, to emphasize the role of women in the campaign, and not only did she bring her royal ladies-in-waiting and 300 non-noble vassals, she had a huge train of servants and baggage—and there is a rumor that she and her ladies dressed as Amazons, with one breast bare to dazzle the troops.

While the Crusade itself accomplished little, it meant a lot to Eleanor. She was able to travel, see new places and exotic cultures, and visit friendly foreign monarchs. The Byzantine emperor Manuel Comnenus threw a party for Louis and Eleanor; the Greek historian Nicetas Choniates compared her to Penthesilea, the mythical queen of the Amazons, and it was his report that said she earned the epithet *chrysopous* ("golden-foot") from the fringe of golden cloth that decorated her robe. After Constantinople, though, the Crusade began to go very badly. Food began to be scarce, and the Crusaders were harassed and ambushed by Turks almost every step of the way. They discovered that Conrad's army had been almost annihilated by the Turks in Dorylaeum, and near Mount Cadmos an attack almost cost Louis his life, but they pushed on, hoping to reach Antioch and the court of Prince Raymond of Poitiers, Eleanor's uncle. When they arrived, the army was without food or water, having had to drink the blood of their horses and even eat the flesh of horses and asses killed in the fighting. Eleanor's baggage train had been pitched into a deep canyon, and they were without money, while the army was dressed in rags, starving and sick.

The rest at Prince Raymond's court was exactly what Eleanor and Louis needed, and while they stayed there, she discovered a great friend in her uncle. John of Salisbury (a notorious gossip) reported in his *Historia pontificalis* that she and Prince Raymond were often together, speaking in "constant, almost continuous conversations" that left Louis out. Raymond was Eleanor's father's youngest brother, and like many of her line, was tall, handsome, athletic, aggressive, and very masculine—all things that Louis was not. Raymond was also only eight years older than Eleanor, which fed the rumors that she fell into an adulterous (and incestuous) affair. Despite their like-mindedness, it is quite probable that Raymond simply hoped for military aid to protect Antioch against the Turks and was doing all he could to get it and save his city. Eleanor, for her part, was learning about maritime conventions, which would later become the basis of admiralty law, and she brought those conventions to her own lands, to the island of Oléron, in 1160 and later to England as well. She also was learning how to create trade agreements with Constantinople and trading centers in the Mediterranean and the Holy Land. And so when the jealous Louis demanded to leave Antioch (without helping Raymond with his problems with the Turks) and go at once to Jerusalem, Eleanor balked— she wanted to stay with her uncle and help him fight—and Louis had her dragged out by force and made her come with him to Jerusalem.

Louis and the barely recovered Emperor Conrad, upon discovering that Jerusalem was not in immediate danger of attack, decided to attack the Muslim

state of Damascus—ironically, the only Muslim state willing to be on good terms with Christians—and the Muslim leader called upon his allies to defend him. When Louis heard that a vast army was approaching, he wisely turned his own army back to Jerusalem, then decided to sail home. Eleanor is not mentioned in the chronicles of this period, but it was no doubt because of her quarrel with Louis that they took separate ships home. After an adventure of being shipwrecked and lost for several months, the disillusioned couple sought out the pope for an annulment in 1149, arguing that they were too closely related in blood (an issue of consanguinity) and that was why their union had displeased God and in 12 years only produced one daughter. Pope Eugenius III tried to reconcile the couple, even getting them to sleep in a specially prepared bed so that Eleanor would have sexual intercourse with Louis. Their second child—Alix of France—was the result, but, being a girl, she was useless for dynastic purposes, and the marriage was doomed.

THE ANNULMENT

On March 11, 1152, Eleanor and Louis met at the royal castle of Beaugency to dissolve the marriage under the eyes of Archbishop Hugh Sense, Primate of France, and on March 21 annulment was granted based on consanguinity within the fourth degree (they were indeed third cousins, descended from Robert II of France). Louis received custody of the daughters, and Eleanor's lands were restored to her.

Eleanor's marriage on May 18, 1152, to Henry count of Anjou and duke of Normandy has puzzled historians because it happened within six weeks of the annulment of her marriage to Louis on grounds of consanguinity and because of the fact that Eleanor was more closely related to Henry than to Louis: they were half third cousins (both related to Ermengarde of Anjou and descendents of Robert II of Normandy). This was a marriage that must have been plotted many months, possibly years, before.

In August 1151, Geoffrey Plantagenet count of Anjou and duke of Normandy visited the court of King Louis with his 17-year-old son, Henry, in order to pay homage to Louis for the fief of Normandy and to gain help in the civil war that was being fought between Empress Matilda and the noble-born usurper, Stephen of England. By all accounts, Geoffrey and his son were impressive: handsome, athletic, energetic, and decisive, aspects that must have reminded Eleanor of her own kin. She must have known the annulment was coming and been thinking about what she would do with herself and her lands afterward. She would have to marry . . . but to whom? Geoffrey was still married to Empress Matilda, rightful heir to the throne of England and duchy of Normandy. His son, though, would make a delightful husband—especially because his French domains united with Eleanor's would create a power base greater than Louis's—an advantage for both of them in the match. Eleanor was 29 years old, and by the time of the marriage, Henry was 18, and

the chroniclers say that she was beautiful. She was vastly wealthy, well traveled and educated, and in her sexual prime. And so after the annulment, she went home to Poitiers (two opportunistic suitors tried to abduct her on the journey) and canceled every treaty she had made with Louis. Eleanor's marriage to Henry ignored feudal law because the participants failed to seek the consent of their suzerain, Louis. Louis responded by invading Normandy with the help of the usurping King Stephen of England, but Henry was an able military commander and counterattacked Louis's territories, generally making life miserable for the monkish king. Eleanor toured her own territories, asserting her authority and receiving homage. Her seal at the time shows her great titles: "Eleanor, by the grace of God, duchess of Aquitaine and Normandy, countess of Anjou, Poitou, and Maine." In August 1152, she and Henry spent four months together, and by January 1153 Eleanor was pregnant. When King Stephen of England lost his sons to an illness, he wisely met with Henry and, in order to end the civil war, agreed to adopt him as his heir. In the peace treaty, Stephen was to rule for the rest of his life, and Henry would inherit the kingdom after his death. Indeed, in October 1154, King Stephen died at the age of 58, and on December 19 Henry and Eleanor were crowned king and queen of England.

THE QUEEN OF ENGLAND

Prince William was born in the fall of 1153, and Eleanor quickly became pregnant again when Henry returned from his travels and joined her in June 1154. She had a second son in February 1155, named Henry. With two sons in her lap, a handsome husband, and her own income from her own lands, the newly crowned queen of England enjoyed a luxurious lifestyle: both Eleanor and Henry appreciated the thrill of hunting, enjoyed musicians and poets who could offer sophisticated entertainment at court, and welcomed foreign visitors who gave her gossip about the newest in literature, culture, fashion, and the daring new polyphonic music. Henry deserved his moments of relaxation and amusement, as he worked feverishly to restore order to England after it had been torn apart by the long years of civil war. Eleanor actively helped him with the business of government, often acting as his deputy when Henry was required to oversee his domains in France. While Eleanor had Henry's full confidence in her statecraft, they never met up more than once or twice a year for the first 12 years of marriage, and yet these meetings were very fruitful, as each time Eleanor conceived a child. After William in 1153 and Henry in 1155, Matilda was born in 1156, Richard in 1157, Geoffrey in 1158, Eleanor in 1161, Joanna in 1165, and finally John in 1166 when Eleanor was 44 years old. Henry was expectedly unfaithful, being away from his wife for months at a time, and sired many illegitimate children—including one with a notorious prostitute named Ykenai. Henry brought the woman's son to court, perhaps as a playmate for Prince William, who was a few months older, and Eleanor

became fond of the boy, whom the king named Geoffrey of York. Sadly, Prince William died at the age of three, but Eleanor raised the illegitimate Geoffrey with affection, and when he grew up he had a celebrated career in the church.

Henry was much more difficult to influence than the indecisive Louis had been, but Eleanor managed to have her way despite Henry's stubbornness. The situation with Thomas Becket is a good example: Henry adored the man, giving riches and honors to his friend and constant companion while ignoring his wife. One of the honors Henry steered Becket's way was the archbishopric of Canterbury in 1162—but much to Henry's chagrin, Becket took the position very seriously, transforming from the king's loyal friend into a champion of the church's views, privileges, and authority. Feeling betrayed, Henry fought with Becket for eight years over issues small and large, and ultimately Becket was murdered in 1170. Behind the scenes, there is a strong tradition that Eleanor, who disliked Becket, encouraged Henry to find fault with the man and resent him.

After John was born, it appeared that Eleanor had enough of both Henry and childbearing (although she must have been past the age by the late 1160s) and increased the amount of time she spent in her French territories. The dynasty was settled when in 1170 young Prince Henry was crowned the Young King (while Henry II yet lived) and Prince Richard was confirmed as duke of Aquitaine. Eleanor moved her court to Poitiers and focused on being a patron of the arts.

THE QUEEN OF THE TROUBADOURS

Both Eleanor and Henry loved literature, especially stories about King Arthur. Henry encouraged the tales of fighting and brave knights in order to support his claim to the throne and to strengthen the psychological connection between Arthur's Camelot and his own court, a form of publicity or, perhaps, propaganda. Eleanor, on the other hand, enjoyed the new kind of literature called the romance, and the earliest surviving romances, such as *Tristan* by Thomas of England and *Lancelot* (*The Knight of the Cart*) by Chrétien de Troyes, were written during Eleanor and Henry's reign. The court in which Eleanor grew up was a very cultured place, heavily influenced by the Spanish courts of the Moors, and home to the famous troubadours Cercamon and Marcabru along with dozens of lesser musicians and poets. An extrovert, she responded to fashion and sophistication instinctively, and growing up in a court where the social model was an early version of "courtly love," she was surrounded by clever, witty, educated men who admired Love.

Thus, while Eleanor and her court were in Poitiers, she (along with her daughter Marie of Champagne and Marie de France, a close relative of Henry II) encouraged and developed what has come to be called "the court of love" or "courtly love." Although all but fragmented records of this court have been

lost, the writings of Andreas Capellanus give us an idea of what the festivities were: 12 men and women would hear "cases of love" between individuals, deciding issues of fidelity, vows, proper behavior, and worthiness of love. (This court was later used by Eleanor in a more secular way as a forerunner of the jury system.) Eleanor herself was the subject of songs and poetry, many of which openly convey the poet's sexual desire for her or express hopeless passion for a mistress who is far above him in rank. This type of untouchable love is often called *fin' amors*, a love that not only exists outside of marriage but is actually incompatible with marriage. Lovers give each other love freely, but married people must obey each other out of duty. A husband has a right to enjoy his wife's favors, and a wife her husband's, but a lover must earn his favors, if any, from his lady. Thus a husband gains no worth or virtue in pursuing his wife, but a lover can gain worth in his endeavors or quests to gain favor from his lady. For the men who played this game, Love was an end in itself, and the beloved Woman was an object of worship, unattainable due to the fact of her superior rank and usually her preexisting marriage. The man was the supplicant and had no power over her; indeed, his prayers and wishes were usually denied, and he was supposed to suffer ghastly torments because of this denial. Placing women (who were considered to be powerless by both church and state) in this position was revolutionary because it gave women complete dominance over their lovers, indeed over the whole relationship. Eleanor created a court where, for the first time in Western history, a man's status was based (partly) on his behavior toward women. Some scholars see this as an elaborate intellectual game played solely by aristocrats, an ironic literary joke enjoyed by Eleanor's court, while others see it as an actual cultural shift, the blossoming of the light of chivalry out of the darker androcratic ideals of the time—and today we still see the results of this game, in that men are (or used to be) taught to open doors for "ladies" and to stand up when a lady walks into the room.

In addition to Eleanor's love of romance, her love of music and song led her to support the troubadour style that her grandfather Guillaume IX had introduced in Aquitaine, where this aristocratic music had developed based on Poitevin, the area's vernacular language. Her father, Guillaume X, continued to patronize the troubadours, encouraging their music to become a tradition in its own right. Troubadours were always welcome at her court; in fact she found them to be a necessity and took them wherever she went in her travels: as a patron can create a demand for artists, Eleanor's favoring of the music encouraged other aristocratic circles to welcome the musicians. The budding art form, seen memorably in the *lais* of Marie de France, spread to other courts to meet the demand for the new and fashionable. The music and song soon expanded beyond the Poitevin language barrier and became a style of its own, called *trouvère* music. Eleanor's importation of troubadours to her court in England spread the music to that country and strongly influenced later English music and vernacular song. Her son Richard was a troubadour himself, and her two daughters by Louis helped spread the music throughout

northern France, passing on the tradition of patronage. Eleanor's need for intellectual diversion, her love of music and troubadours, and her desire to turn unruly young men into proper courtiers were powerful factors in the creation of courtly literature as we know it. Without Eleanor's patronage the Celtic legends that she enjoyed might never have been introduced into the literature of educated Europe, nor would the exploits of King Arthur and his court, the love of Guinevere and Lancelot or Tristan and Isolde, the magic of Merlin and Morgan Le Fay, or the tender heroism of Gawain be remembered and cherished today.

THE POWER-BROKER AND PRISONER

The marriage between Henry and Eleanor had a lot of drama and arguments, intrigue and unfaithfulness, but in one of the few letters that we have from Eleanor, she does admit that her marriage to Henry was "a much happier one than my marriage to Louis." It does appear that they loved each other in their own way and definitely respected each other. But the lure of power, and Eleanor's own need to control her own life and children, got in the way of domestic peace in the royal household. For example, when the young Henry quarreled with his father in 1173, Eleanor took her son's side and defended and backed him openly. The king had not allowed young Henry any real power, thus making his son angry and resentful. They fought, and the king forced his son to accompany him north to Normandy, but at Chinon, where they had stopped overnight, the Young King escaped his house arrest and fled south again to Poitou and Eleanor's court. There, he plotted with Eleanor and his brothers Richard and Geoffrey to take over the throne of England.

The revolt of 1173–74 was a family quarrel made large: the king ordered his family to join him, but his sons fled to Paris to seek the help of King Louis in their revolt. Eleanor intended at first to stay in Poitiers, but, upon hearing that Henry was marching south, she decided to flee to Paris disguised as a man. She was captured and handed over to her husband, and he, realizing her deep influence upon their sons, decided to imprison her—an imprisonment that would last for 16 years. Henry disbanded her court at Poitiers and sent the queen to live at Salisbury Castle, but he allowed his sons to make peace with him as long as they promised to obey him. We do not have many records of Eleanor for the next 10 years, although we know she was moved around to various locations in England and was released to see her children on occasions such as Easter and Christmas.

Here we must mention Henry's mistress, Rosamund Clifford. A great beauty, Rosamund had first met Henry in 1166, and they began an affair in 1173—an affair that was so deeply emotional that Henry considered divorcing Eleanor, and he had no problem flaunting Rosamund in front of his wife in 1175 so that Eleanor would become angry and try to annul the marriage, but Eleanor was too wise to be provoked. Rosamund died suddenly in 1176,

and rumors soon arose—and suspicions remain—that the queen had Henry's mistress poisoned for revenge.

Henry the Young King again fought with his father in 1183, but this time the end was not reconciliation, but death. His angry father cut off his allowance, and so Henry tried to relieve his debts by plundering the shrine of Rocamandour; not only did his plan fail, but he contracted dysentery. When Henry realized he was dying, he sent his father a message to free his mother, then he lay down on a bed of ashes to show his penitence and died on June 11, aged 28. After the Young King's death, Eleanor was allowed more freedom—not complete freedom, as she always had to travel with a warden—but freedom enough. In 1184 she traveled to France to tour her lands, then returned to England at Christmas to spend the holidays with Richard, John, and Geoffrey (the historical setting of James Goldman's famous play/film, *The Lion in Winter*).

THE WIDOW

Who would now be the future king of England? Henry preferred John, making him king of Ireland in anticipation of his rule over England; Eleanor favored Richard, and when Richard asked Henry to confirm him as heir, Henry refused. To add insult to injury, the king had seduced Princess Alice, half-sister to the new king of France, Philip II (known as Philip Augustus), and taken her as his mistress even though she was betrothed to Richard—who was himself rumored to have been Philip's lover. In 1189, Richard and Philip combined forces to attack Henry's cities of Le Mans and Tours, but instead of a glorious war all they got was a peace treaty from Henry, because he had been injured in a joust and was dying from an ulcerated wound. Henry died on July 6, 1189, and Richard inherited the throne. One of his first acts was to release his mother, and she ruled England in his stead while he went on the Third Crusade to recover Jerusalem from the victorious Saladin. Eleanor was now 67 years old, but that did not stop her from arranging a marriage between Richard and Princess Berengaria, daughter of King Sancho of Navarre. In 1192 she negotiated Richard's ransom after he was shipwrecked and taken prisoner by Duke Leopold of Austria and held in the Holy Roman Emperor's castle at Hagenau. Eleanor spent most of 1193 collecting the ransom, which amounted to 35 tons of silver. Richard was released in December, and he and his mother toured their French and English territories and arranged a new coronation for Richard in celebration of his return from captivity.

The stress of intense power-brokering and intrigue took its toll on Eleanor, and in 1194 she retired to the Abbey of Fontevrault, her favorite place to rest and find peace. She stayed there for five years, lending her influence as needed, but was called out in 1199 when Richard was wounded in battle on March 25. He had been struck by an arrow; the wound turned gangrenous, and he sent for Eleanor when it was apparent that he would die. She raced the hundred miles to the fortress of Châlus to be with him, and he died in her

arms on April 6. Now that Eleanor had left the abbey, she resumed her active involvement in politics and power-brokering: Richard had named John as his heir, and Eleanor managed to outmaneuver the scheming King Philip II, who was trying to put Arthur, Geoffrey's son, on the throne of England. At the grand age of 77, Eleanor took control of Richard's mercenary forces and helped John recapture territories lost during the fight for the throne, defended his lands while he was crowned at Westminster, took a tour of Aquitaine to remind its inhabitants who their duchess was, and went to Spain in 1200 to fetch her granddaughter Blanche of Castile, who was to marry Philip's son and heir Louis.

In 1202, Eleanor was again drawn out of retirement when Philip tried yet again to seize French territories. In alliance with Arthur of Brittany, Philip attacked Normandy and then marched on Poitiers. Eleanor made her way to Poitiers to prevent Arthur—her grandson, but John's enemy—from taking control, yet Arthur showed no respect for his 80-year-old grandmother and besieged her castle at Mirabeau. John fortunately arrived quickly and captured Arthur by surprise at dawn, taking all of his men as well. Arthur's forces at the siege constituted almost all the rebels fighting against John, so this fiasco put an end to the civil war and secured John's place on the throne of England, though since he soon alienated his allies and lost almost all of the continental empire of the Angevins to King Philip of France.

The crisis, however, took its toll on Eleanor's health. In March 1204, she fell into a coma, in which she died peacefully on April 1. She was entombed in Fontevrault Abbey next to her husband Henry and her son Richard, and her effigy on the tomb shows her reading a Bible, her figure beautifully decorated with jewelry.

THE MYTH

It is surprising how much has been written about Eleanor, as we know so very little about her. Her creation of the "Court of Love" is for many scholars her greatest invention, even though there is little to no evidence that she actually created anything of the sort. Even in writing the present biography, it has not always been possible to stay solely with the facts: some speculation, rumor, and gossip must be invoked in order for the reader to understand not only how she lived, but also how she was perceived. Her myth is a rich mixture of traditions—and, to paraphrase Winston Churchill, she remains a mysterious and enigmatic riddle.

The ingredients of the Eleanor legend can be seen in the concerns of her time: the constantly tilting political balance between France and England, the growing cult of the Virgin Mary in the church, and the resurgence of Celtic literature and mythological figures all used Eleanor as a foundation for their growth, and she in turn used them as well to augment her prestige and achieve her own goals. Eleanor was first queen of France, and then queen of England,

helping England rise in power and strength: to portray her in myth as an evil queen who had gone over to the enemy gave the French a wonderful personage to blame for their troubles. It may be surprising to claim Eleanor as a religious symbol, but when her poets elevated her to the pedestal that women stand on in courtly literature and poetry, she became an ideal: woman as earthly mother, with children of her own, and as a mother to her country, but she also became a spiritual mother, connected to the cult of the Virgin Mary, the intermediary between God and men. Eleanor also became representative of the rebirth of the feminine myth seen in Celtic tales, especially the ancient myth of Melusine, a fairy queen who helped her husband, Raimondin, build his country and his fortune. Melusine was well known from Scotland to the south of France, a half-human fairy princess who married a king and had many strong but strangely gifted children. She would disappear for weeks at a time, but her absences would correspond to the arrival of a new church or castle to add to Raimondin's wealth. In legend, as in history, we have a woman who was the source for a nobleman's chance to become rich and powerful. With her fairy ancestry, Eleanor was easily accepted as a woman who offered a different, alternate world through her love of troubadours, music, and courtly literature, especially the idea of a round table where all men were equal—a social group based on confidence and esteem instead of on aggression and strength—and a place where women were free to choose their lovers and offer their bodies as they willed, instead of being seen as chattels.

As of this date, we do not have a final academic or professional biography of Eleanor of Aquitaine, probably because so little factual evidence survives—even in her own time, chroniclers had to speculate about her life and motivations, and later writers frequently took negative gossip as fact, and thus many of the nasty rumors that arose during her life became "history" after her death—but nevertheless, Eleanor marks a turning point in the history of European civilization. Despite the valid historiographical need to separate fact from fiction, it must be admitted that much of her attraction to readers stems not from her life, but from her magnificent legend.

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APPENDIX: CHRONOLOGY OF THE LIFE OF ELEANOR OF AQUITAINE

1121	Eleanor's parents, Guillaume X and Aenor, marry.
ca. 1122	Eleanor born at Belin, near Bordeaux, or at Nieul.
1127	Geoffrey of Anjou marries Empress Matilda of Saxony.
1129	Philip, son of Louis VI, crowned (associated with his father) as future king of France.
1130	Eleanor's mother and brother (Guillaume, age 8), die.
1131	A fall kills Philip, the crowned heir to France.
1133	The future King Henry II of England, son of Geoffrey of Anjou, born at Le Mans March 5.
1135	King Henry I of England dies at Rouen December 1. A 19-year civil war for the crown of England ensues.
1137	Eleanor's father, Guillaume X, dies at Compostela on Good Friday.
	Abbot Suger leads King Louis VI's embassy to Eleanor in June.
	Eleanor marries Louis VI's son, Louis, in Bordeaux July 25.
	Louis VI dies in Paris August 1. Louis VII and Eleanor assume titles at Poitiers August 8. Eleanor enters Paris as Louis VII's queen.
	Louis VII crowned at Bourges December 25.
1141/43	Trouble at Bourges. Louis sacks Champagne, burns the church at Vitry.
1145	Eleanor's first child by Louis, Marie, born.
	News reaches Paris of Muslim victories in the Holy Land.
	Louis announces intention to go on crusade December 25.
1146	Bernard of Clairvaux calls for Crusade.
	Emperor Conrad accepts Crusade December 25.
1147	Louis and Eleanor march out of Paris May 12.
	French and Angevin armies march on crusade June 11.
	Louis and Eleanor enter Constantinople October 4.
	Armies waste time while leaders tarry in Constantinople in October.
1148	In spring, arguments over strategy strain relations with Raymond. Create rift between Louis and Eleanor. Army leaves Antioch. Jerusalem welcomes Frankish army.
	Later, Louis VII and Eleanor tarry in Palestine.
1149	Louis and Eleanor take separate ships from Palestine after Easter. Both come ashore separately in Roger of Sicily's lands in late July.
	Pope Eugenius refuses Eleanor's divorce plea in October.
1150	Eleanor's second daughter, Alix, born midwinter.
1151	Count Geoffrey (Plantagenet) of Anjou and his son Henry visit Paris in August. Count Geoffrey dies September 7.
1152	Louis VII and Eleanor divorce March 21. Eleanor sets up her court at Poitiers.

Eleanor marries Henry of Anjou May 18. Henry beats back punitive raids by Louis and allies.

Eleanor and Henry tour her lands in summer.

1153   Henry leaves for England in January. Eleanor based in Angers.

King Stephen's heir to England, Eustace, dies in summer.

William, Eleanor's first child by Henry, born August 17.

Negotiations for peace in England succeed in December.

1154   Stephen accepts Henry as his heir January 13.

Henry returns from England in April after negotiating for the throne.

King Stephen dies at Dover October 25.

Henry II and Eleanor crowned at Westminster in December.

1155   Thomas Becket named as Henry's chancellor.

Prince Henry of England born February 28.

1156   Matilda born at London in June.

1157   Prince Richard (the Lionhearted) born September 8 or 13.

1158   Prince Geoffrey of England born September 23.

1160   Eleanor summoned to bring Prince Henry to Normandy in October.

Strategic marriage of Prince Henry, age 5, to Marguerite, age 2, November 5. Henry seizes the Vexin, Marguerite's dowry.

1162   Henry appoints Becket archbishop of Canterbury after Easter.

Eleanor of England born October 13.

1163   Henry and Eleanor return to England after long absence January 25.

Welsh and Scots rulers do homage to Henry and Prince Henry July 1.

1164   Joanna of England born.

1165   Henry, at war in Wales, meets "Fair Rosamund" Clifford in summer.

Philip, the future Philip II (known as Philip Augustus), born at Paris August 22.

1165   Henry divides time between law-making and affair with Rosamund in the winter.

1166   Prince John of England born December 24.

1167   Henry's mother, the empress Matilda, dies.

Eleanor decides to separate from Henry. Leaves England, establishes Court of Ladies at Poitiers.

1168   Young Matilda marries Henry the Lion of Saxony February 1.

1169   Eleanor proclaims Richard duke of Aquitaine in April.

Young Eleanor betrothed to Alfonso, heir to Castile.

1170   Prince Henry crowned "the Young King" in Westminster Abbey June 14.

Henry and Becket attempt reconciliation. Becket returns to England, lands at Sandwich December 1. Is murdered in Canterbury Cathedral by four knights December 29.

1172   Thomas Becket canonized in spring.

	Prince Henry crowned again, with Marguerite, August 27.
	Henry does penance for Becket's death in autumn.
1173	Rift between Henry II and sons, abetted by Eleanor, in spring. Prince Henry flees his father, finds refuge in Paris March 24. Richard and Geoffrey also flee to Paris.
	Henry and three sons attempt reconciliation in autumn.
1174	Henry ransacks Eleanor's allies and her court at Poitiers in spring.
	Exiles royal women, including Eleanor, to England in June.
	Henry does penance for Becket's death, at Canterbury, in summer.
	Louis, Young Henry and Philip of Flanders besiege Rouen in July.
	Henry II beats off the allies' attack on Rouen August 11.
1175	Eleanor refuses Henry's demand for a divorce in October.
1176	Rosamund Clifford dies.
	Joanna marries William II of Sicily February 13.
1177	The curia denies Henry's plea to divorce Eleanor.
	Eleanor of England ("Leonor") marries Alfonso September 22.
1179	Henry compels Eleanor to cede lands to Richard.
	Richard wars on rebellious vassals, razes Taillebourg in May.
	Philip (Philip Augustus) crowned (associated with his father) on All Saints' Day.
1180	King Philip assumes his father's regal powers in February.
	King Philip's first marriage, to Isabelle of Hainault, April 28. The two are crowned May 29.
	King Louis VII dies at the abbey of Saint-Port September 18.
1182	Henry II and Richard crush rebels in Aquitaine in summer.
1183	Strife between Henry II and two sons in spring.
	Prince Henry (the Young King) dies June 11.
	Henry II and King Philip confer in December.
1186	Henry, Eleanor, and sons confer at Windsor in summer.
	Geoffrey dies at Paris August 18.
1187	Saladin's forces capture Jerusalem September 17.
1188	Henry and Philip make peace, take the cross January 21–22.
	Henry prepares English and Welsh barons for Crusade in February.
1189	Henry lies ill in Le Mans during Lent.
	Matilda dies at Brunswick June 28.
	King Philip and Richard dictate terms to the dying Henry at Chinon. Henry II dies July 6. Eleanor freed, assumes regency of England.
	Richard invested as duke of Normandy July 20.
	King Richard crowned September 3. Decides to go on Crusade December 11.
1190	Richard and Philip agree on Crusade strategy, leave Vezelay July 4.
	Richard sails, ahead of army, from Marseilles August 7. Lands at

Messina, Sicily, ahead of troops September 24. Philip joins Richard at Messina in autumn.

Richard rescues sister Joanna and property from Tancred in winter.

1191   Richard and Philip quarrel over Joanna and Alix February 2.

Eleanor brings Richard's bride, Berengaria, to Messina March 30.

Richard marries Berengaria May 12.

1192   Christians and Muslims reach a "three-year truce" August 9.

Richard leaves Palestine October 9. Captured by Leopold near Vienna December 20.

1193   Eleanor works to collect Richard's ransom. Escorts Richard's ransom to Mainz in December.

1194   Richard released; he and Eleanor return to England February 3.

1195   Death of Alix, Eleanor's second daughter by Louis.

1198   Death of Marie of Champagne, Eleanor's firstborn, March 11.

Eleanor's grandson Otto crowned emperor July 12.

1199   Pope Innocent III imposes a truce on Richard and Philip January 13.

Richard dies April 6. John becomes duke of Normandy April 25.

Crowned king of England at Westminster May 27.

Joanna delivers a son at Rouen; both die, September 4.

1200   Eleanor travels to Castile January 1. In February, selects Blanche to marry French heir.

Blanche marries future Louis VIII May 23.

Widower John marries Isabella August 26.

Isabella crowned at Westminster October 8.

1201   John and Isabella return to Normandy in summer.

Amicable relations between Kings John and Philip in July.

1202   Philip, Arthur, and Lusignans attack Normandy in spring. Eleanor flees Fontevrault for greater safety in Poitiers in July. Arthur of Brittany besieges Eleanor at Mirebeau July 30. John's forces break the siege, capture Arthur August 1.

1203   Probable death of Arthur in John's custody on Good Friday Eve.

1204   Eleanor dies April 1; buried at Fontevrault.

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Thorfinn Karlsefne (*left*), Guðríðr ("Gudrior"), and Leif Eriksson ("the Lucky," *right*), from a stained-glass window cartoon by Edward Burne-Jones of the William Morris firm, about 1883. (Lisle, Fortunee de. *Burne-Jones*, 1906)

Leif Eriksson (ca. 975–1020)

Paul Acker

INTRODUCTION

Leif Eriksson (spelled Leifr Eiríksson in Old Icelandic)[1] is known primarily as the first European to set foot on North American soil, almost 500 years before Columbus. According to one version of events, the continent was actually discovered even earlier, by one of Leif's countrymen: Bjarni Herjólfsson spotted parts of it a few years earlier when blown off course while sailing from Norway to Iceland and on to (he thought) Greenland. But Bjarni did not step ashore on the strange land; he turned back to Greenland, for which many people there "thought him short on curiosity." (*The Greenlanders' Saga*, ch. 2, trans. Kunz).[2] Leif retraced Bjarni's voyage and explored a region he named Vínland, staying over the winter, perhaps building and sheltering in the very houses that archaeologists in the early 1960s uncovered in L'Anse aux Meadows at the tip of Newfoundland.[3] Before that site was excavated, the Norse claim could not be substantiated, and Leif's landfall was proposed all up and down the Atlantic coast. As things look now, Leif may have been the first European explorer of (modern) Canada, but perhaps not the United States (of course Christopher Columbus did not make it to [modern] U.S. shores either).

Leif is sometimes also known as the man who converted Norse medieval Greenland to Christianity; indeed, U.S. President George H. W. Bush, in officially proclaiming Leif Erikson (so spelled) Day in 1989, called Leif a "courageous Norse missionary and explorer."[4] The earliest firmly datable account of Leif describes him in this connection.[5] In about 1230, Snorri Sturluson in his historical work *Heimskringla* mentions that Iceland was Christianized (in the year 999 or 1000), and then:

> That same spring King Olaf [Tryggvason] dispatched Leif Eriksson to Greenland to preach Christianity there, and he left that summer for Greenland. He rescued at sea a crew of men who had been shipwrecked, and then he discovered Vínland the Good. He arrived in the summer in Greenland and had brought with him a priest and clerics. He went to stay with his father Erik at Brattahlíð. Thereafter people called him Leif the Lucky, but his father Erik said that the two things balanced each other out: Leif had rescued the ship's crew, but he had also brought to Greenland a great imposter, namely the priest. (ch. 104)[6]

Clearly Erik, who died a pagan, was less than grateful for Leif's missionary activity, especially when his wife (and Leif's mother) Thjoðhild converted and then refused to sleep with him (*Erik the Red's Saga,* ch. 5). Her little chapel has been excavated in Greenland and a reconstruction of it can now be seen there, doubtless haunted by Erik's grumpy old ghost.[7]

Other than Snorri's account, the main sources for material about Leif Eriksson are the two so-called Vínland sagas: *The Greenlanders' Saga* and *Erik the Red's Saga*.[8] The former was written down in a manuscript called the *Flatey*

Book (*Flateyjarbók*) in the year 1387, where it is woven into *The Saga of Olaf Tryggvason* (king of Norway 995–1000). *Erik the Red's Saga* was written down in two different manuscripts in about 1306 and 1420. Opinions differ widely about how much earlier than their manuscripts the Vínland sagas might have been first composed, and about which saga was composed first; they may both go back as far as 1200 in something like their preserved form. The two sagas differ considerably in their accounts of the voyages to Vínland taken by Leif and his kinsfolk and thus likely derive ultimately from different oral traditions.

THE LIFE OF LEIF IN *THE VÍNLAND SAGAS*

The story of Leif Eriksson begins with his father, Erik the Red (Eiríkr inn rauði). Like many early Icelanders, Erik had come to Iceland from western Norway, in his case because of "some killings" he had committed there. Erik arrived around 970, well after the initial Icelandic Settlement Period (874–930), so that most of the good land had already been taken. He settled in Drangar in the far north-northwest (a desolate place known for its lack of farmland) but married into a better situation farther south in Haukardalr, at a farm called (predictably) Eiriksstaðir (Erik's Stead). His wife Thjoðhild was descended from such notable Icelandic settlers as Helgi the Lean and Auð (or Unn) the Deep-Minded; their son Leif was born at Eiríksstaðir in about 975. Erik's disposition does not seem to have improved much, however. When his thralls started a landslide that destroyed a nearby farm and were killed for it, Erik killed the killer (named Eyjolf the Filthy) and then another man named Hrafn (Raven) the Dueller, who doubtless deserved it. Erik was banished to some nearby islands, then outlawed from there, after which he set out to rediscover and explore a land he had heard about farther west. He stayed the first winter at Erik's Island, then sailed into Erik's Fjord (now Tunulliarfik Fjord) and stayed in Erik's Isles.[9] He snuck back to Iceland briefly and told all his friends they should come live with him in this new land, which he named Greenland, saying "people would be attracted there if it had a favorable name" (*The Greenlanders' Saga*, ch. 1, tr. Magnusson and Pálsson; cf. *Erik the Red's Saga*, ch. 2). He brought his wife and children with him, sailed into Erik's Fjord, and named his new farm not, surprisingly, Erik's Stead II, but rather Brattahlíð (Steep Slope; now Qassiarsuk). It was in one of the greenest spots in all of Greenland. Living there with Leif were his half-sister Freydís and his brothers Thorstein and Thorvald, the last named for Erik's father Thorvald; indeed, it has been suggested that Leif's full name was Thorleif, so that the names of all Erik's children paid homage to the Norse gods Thor and Frey.[10] Leif's brother Thorstein married a woman called Gudrid (Old Norse Guðríðr), a Christian woman who nonetheless had knowledge of pagan songs and sang them for a seeress named Thorbjörg to help with her prophecy (*Erik the Red's Saga*, ch. 4).

Leif started out as a bit of a "bad boy," impregnating a woman in the Hebrides of whom it was said that "she knew a thing or two" (*Erik the Red's Saga*, ch. 5). The love child (named Thorgils) eventually made it to Greenland and was said to be a bit odd, but we are given no details by which to judge (the late-Victorian translator of *Erik the Red's Saga*, John Sephton, suppresses this entire episode).[11] Leif left the Hebrides and went to Norway, where King Olaf asked him to go back and convert Greenland. According to *Erik the Red's Saga* (ch. 5), it was on this voyage back to Greenland that Leif got blown off course and discovered a land of "self-sown wheat and [grape] vines."[12] On his way back to Greenland he rescued a shipwrecked crew, earning the name "Leif the Lucky" (Leifr inn heppni), as we have already heard tell from Snorri Sturluson. The saga writer comments: "He showed his great magnanimity and goodness by bringing Christianity to the country and by rescuing these men" (ch. 5, tr. Magnusson and Pálsson).

The Greenlanders' Saga tells a longer version of this voyage, which Leif undertakes on purpose to explore the land Bjarni Herjólfsson had already glimpsed. Leif crosses west and then sails south, naming the regions Helluland (Stone Slab Land, usually identified as Baffin Island); Markland (Forest Land, on the Labrador coast) and Vínland (Wineland). The Vikings sail up a river teeming with salmon. A crewman named Tyrkir comes back to the group acting a bit strangely (drunkenly?) and carrying grapes, which he recognizes from his childhood in Germany. Current scholarly opinion (which is to say, the scholarly opinion that I most agree with) holds that in that era, river-grapes grew as far north as New Brunswick, and salmon bred as far south as the Gulf of Saint Lawrence; hence Vínland was most likely the region from the tip of Newfoundland down into the Gulf of Saint Lawrence.[13] Leif and company build some houses ("Leif's booths"), stay the winter, and then return to Greenland with a load of grapes and grape-wood. During its account of this expedition, *The Greenlanders' Saga* describes Leif thus: "Leif was a large, strong man, of very striking appearance and wise, as well as being a man of moderation in all things" (ch. 2(3), trans. Kunz). The accent on moderation aims at distinguishing him from his father Erik.

Subsequent voyages to Vínland were attempted by Leif's brother Thorstein (who never found it); Thorvald (who was killed by an indigenous arrow, *The Greenlanders' Saga,* ch. 5, or a Plinian "uniped," *Erik the Red's Saga,* ch. 12);[14] his former sister-in-law Gudrid with her new husband Thorfinn *karlsefni* (who were hugely successful, until they were overrun by natives called *skrælingar* in skin canoes); and his sister Freydís (who was successful but homicidal, having inherited the paternal temperament; at one point she frightens off the *skrælingar* by slapping her naked breast with a sword; see *Erik the Red's Saga,* ch. 11).[15]

While I do not present a full summary of these voyages because Leif is not involved, a few other details are picked up by later retellings that I discuss below. On his voyage (as more fully recounted in *Erik the Red's Saga*, ch. 7–12), Thorfinn *karlsefni* (his nickname means "manly stuff") names additional locales, among them *Furðustrandir* (Wonder Strands, perhaps along the

Labrador coast), *Straumsfjörðr* (Stream Fjord, perhaps the Strait of Belle Isle), and Hóp (Tidal Pool, perhaps Miramichi Bay).[16] With Thorfinn's crew was a man called Thorhall the Hunter, who prayed to the god Thor for food and a whale washed ashore; its meat, however, made the others ill, so they prayed to the Christian God to better effect. Also among the crew are two Scottish runners, Haki and Hekja, whom King Olaf had given to Leif (*Erik the Red's Saga,* ch. 8). Thorfinn trades milk (*The Greenlanders' Saga,* ch. 7) or red cloth (*Erik the Red's Saga,* ch. 11) with the natives for furs and other goods. They are frightened by the Vikings' bellowing bull but when the natives return in numbers, the Vikings kill one for trying to steal weapons (*The Greenlanders' Saga,* ch. 7) and then a wholesale battle ensues, in which a number on both sides are killed, including Thorbrand Snorrason (*Erik the Red's Saga,* ch. 11).[17] While in Vínland, Gudrid had given birth to a boy they named Snorri (who is therefore the first European said to be born in the New World); on their way back to Greenland, Thorfinn and his crew capture two *skraeling* boys and baptize them (*Erik the Red's Saga,* ch. 12). Thorfinn and Gudrid later return to Iceland; after her husband dies, Gudrid goes on a pilgrimage to Rome.

LATER NOTICES OF THE VÍNLAND VOYAGES

The Vínland voyages begin to be mentioned in print in the seventeenth century, with the 1629 publication of Adam of Bremen's "Descriptio insularum Aqvuilonis," appended to his *Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum*; and two works by Arngrímur Jónsson, *Specimen de Islandiæ historicvm* (1643) and *Gronlandia* (written ca. 1600 but not published until 1688; it mentions Leif specifically, for the first time), followed by the 1715 *Historia Vinlandiæ Antiquæ* of Torfaeus (Thormóður Torfason).[18] In his *Introduction à l'histoire de Dannemarc* (1755), Paul Henri Mallet paraphrased *The Greenlanders' Saga* based on Torfaeus, and his work was translated into English by Thomas Percy as *Northern Antiquities* (1770).[19] Late eighteenth-century historians, such as David Crantz, author of *The History of Greenland* (London, 1767), also helped disseminate Mallet's account. But the major impetus for the modern reemergence of the legend of Leif is Carl Rafn's *Antiquitates Americanæ* (1837), which included texts of *The Greenlanders' Saga* and *Erik the Red's Saga* with translations into Danish and Latin. The matter became known almost immediately in English, through reviews of Rafn, his English abstracts in 1838, and in the form of a "dramatic dialogue" or mock debate published by Joshua Toulmin Smith in 1839.

VÍNLAND IN LITERATURE

Unfortunately, much of the nineteenth-century debate centered not on Leif but on the location of Vínland (which always seemed to be more or less in

the author's backyard, usually in New England) and on the authenticity of such spurious monuments as the Newport Tower, built not by Vikings but by a colonial governor of Rhode Island in about 1670.[20] The Tower figured in Longfellow's 1841 poem "The Skeleton in Armour," mainly inspired by another spurious Viking artifact, the skeleton (of an Indian, actually) unearthed in 1832 in Fall River, Massachusetts.[21] The poem, mainly spoken by the skeleton itself, tells how a Viking abducted a princess but was blown off course (to America) by a hurricane:

> As with his wings aslant,
> Sails the fierce cormorant,
> Seeking some rocky haunt,
> > With his prey laden,
> So toward the open main,
> Beating to sea again,
> Through the wild hurricane
> > Bore I the maiden. (39)

This Viking erected the tower "for [his] lady's bower," but she dies in childbirth, so he buries her under the tower, then wanders off (to Fall River, presumably) and kills himself by falling on his spear. He ascends, apparently to Valhalla:

> Thus, seamed with many scars
> Bursting these prison bars,
> Up to its native stars
> > My soul ascended!
> There from the flowing bowl
> Deep drinks the warrior's soul,
> *Skoal!* to the Northland! *skoal!*
> > —Thus the tale ended. (41)

The poem was illustrated in a wall painting by Walter Crane as part of the decoration for a Newport mansion called Vínland, which also included stained-glass windows designed by the William Morris firm (see below).[22]

Similarly, John Greenleaf Whittier wrote a poem called "The Norsemen" (1841), which took its cue from "the Bradford statue," a chunk of stone that had in fact been chiseled in colonial times.[23] It was found along the Merrimack River in Massachusetts. Whittier asks in Blakean mode:

> Who from its bed of primal rock
> First wrenched thy dark, unshapely block?
> Whose hand, of curious skill untaught,
> Thy rude and savage outline wrought?

The poet is transported in a dream to the Viking times of its purported making:

> But hard!—from wood and rock flung back,
> What sound come up the Merrimac?
> What sea-worn barks are those which throw
> The light spray from each rushing prow?
> Have they not in the North Sea's blast
> Bowed to the waves the straining mast?
> Their frozen sails the low, pale sun
> Of Thulë's night has shone upon;
> Flapped by the sea-wind's gusty sweep
> Round icy drift, and headland steep.
> . . .
> A sound of smitten shields I hear,
> Keeping a harsh and fitting time
> To Saga's chant, and Runic rhyme;
> Such lays as Zetland's [Shetland's] Scald has sung.

Whittier shows at least that not only British Victorians were inspired by the skaldic muse (on which, see Wawn's *The Vikings and the Victorians*).

The Vínland voyages themselves (rather than their dubious artifacts) had given rise to verse as early as 1819, when Scottish poet James Montgomery in "Greenland: A Poem, in Five Cantos" spurns the heroic and monkish muses:

> Rather the muse would stretch a mightier wing,
>   Of a new world the earliest dawn to sing
> How,—long ere Science, in a dream of thought,
>   Earth's younger daughter to Columbus brought,
>   And sent him, like the Faerie Prince, in quest
>   Of *that* "bright vestal thron'd in the west."
>   —Greenland's bold sons, by instinct, sallied forth
>   On barks, like icebergs drifting from the north,
>   Cross'd without magnet undiscover'd seas. (4.145–53)

Of these Viking adventurers, only Leif Eriksson's German crewman Tyrker is mentioned by name; just before he finds grapes, he crosses a river "Swarming with alligator-shoals" (4.169). Montgomery thus imagines Leif and company as discovering in effect all of North and South America.[24]

The New Englander James Russell Lowell (1819–1891) wrote a poem called "The Voyage to Vinland" (1850–1868), which however mostly passes over Leif to muse on Bjarni Herjólfsson as a figure of lost opportunity and Gudrid as prophetess for the New Land.[25] Gudrid's stanzas are alliterative and echo the Eddic cosmological poem *Völuspá*, finding the Twilight of the

Gods and the rebirth of the White Christ (as he was called by Scandinavian missionaries) in the New World:

> Looms there the New Land:
> Locked in the shadow
> Long the gods shut it,
> Niggards of newness
> They, the o'er-old.[26]

Sidney Lanier, a native of Georgia, drew on the Vínland voyages for his compendious historical poem "Psalm of the West," completed in 1876 in time for the nation's centennial:

> Then Leif, bold son of Eric the Red,
>   To the South of the West doth flee—
> Past slaty Helluland is sped,
>   Past Markland's woody lea,
> Till round about fair Vinland's head,
>   Where Taunton helps the sea.
> The Norseman calls, the anchor falls,
>   The mariners hurry a-strand,
> They wassail with fore-drunken skals
>   Where prophet wild grapes stand,
> They lift the Leifsbooth's hasty walls,
>   They stride about the land—
> New England, thee! (p. 121)

The mention of the Taunton River (in Massachusetts) is no doubt due to the Dighton Picture Rock located nearby, another of the (spurious) New England Viking antiquities mentioned by Rafn.[27] Leif's booths are the temporary homes he built, mentioned in the Vínland sagas, and now sometimes identified with the buildings excavated in L'Anse aux Meadows, Newfoundland.

THE WILLIAM MORRIS VÍNLAND WINDOWS IN NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, a New England devotee of Leif Eriksson and the Vínland voyages was responsible for perhaps the most aesthetically significant visual arts monument to them. In Newport, Rhode Island, which as we have already seen was home to the so-called Viking Tower, a wealthy tobacco heiress named Catherine Lorillard Wolfe had begun construction of a "cottage" (the Newport term for a mansion or stately home) to be named Vínland. No mansion was complete without stained-glass windows, so Wolfe in 1883 commissioned the firm of William Morris and Co. to

design appropriately themed windows for her. Some of Morris's letters to her (and her decorator) survive, and they record Morris deliberating about which figures to include. Erik the Red had never actually made it to Vínland, and Freydís was "a horrible wretch according to the Leif's Saga whereas Guðriðr has something pleasing and womanly about her."[28] Thorfinn Karlsefne and Leif the Lucky would make up the other two portraits flanking Guðriðr.

While unfortunately the windows were removed in 1934 and sold into private hands in 1937, there survives a cartoon for the windows.[29] One can see that all three figures are standing on rock platforms amid a sea of blue, swirling waves with the paler blue sky (rendered in a kind of brickwork pattern) above them, where their names are written on scrolls. According to Morris, Guðriðr holds a rune-staff to represent her knowledge of pagan incantations (*Erik the Red's Saga*, ch. 4). Thorfinn holds a shield and spear, Leif a shield and ax.

Above the Vínland adventurers (as he called them), Morris (and his chief designer for stained glass, Edward Burne-Jones) arranged three figures of Norse gods (Thor, Odin, and Frey), accompanied by their associated beasts and attributes. Above them appear Sol, the sun; Luna, the moon; and a Viking ship, with the golden boar of Frey gleaming on its sails; the handsome window for this last is now owned by the Delaware Art Museum and toured in a recent exhibition.[30]

Morris, who had become a socialist and an advocate for relief to the poverty-stricken Iceland of his time, could not help but comment on the political irony involved in the fact that "the poor fishermen & sheep farmers of Greenland & Iceland have so curiously found a place among the worthies connected with the great Modern Commonwealth."[31]

LEIF ERIKSSON IN JUVENILE LITERATURE

In the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Leif and his companions (real and imagined) began to figure in novels for juveniles such as (in the United Kingdom) R. M. Ballantyne's *The Norsemen in the West* (1872) and J. F. Hodgett's *Edric the Norseman* (published serially in *The Boy's Own Paper*, 1887–88)[32] and (in the United States) Ottilie Liljencrantz's *The Thrall of Leif the Lucky* (1902; later adapted into a silent film; see below) and Jennie Hall's *Viking Tales* (1902; see the illustrated chapters "Leif and His New Land" and "Wineland the Good"). In her appended "Suggestions to Teachers," Jennie Hall comments:

> The historical value of the story of Leif Ericsson and the others seems to me to be not to learn the fact that Norsemen discovered America before Columbus did, but to gain a conception of the conditions of early navigation, of the length of the voyage, of the dangers of the sea, and a consequent realization of the reason for the fact that America was

unknown to mediæval Europe, of why the Norsemen did not travel, of what was necessary to be done before men should strike out across the ocean. Norse story is only one chapter in that tale of American discovery. (202–3)

RUDYARD KIPLING, "THE FINEST STORY IN THE WORLD" (1891)

Another sometime writer for juveniles from this period, Rudyard Kipling, also paid homage to the legends of Leif. In 1891, a few years before he wrote *The Jungle Book* (1894), Kipling published a story titled "The Finest Story in the World."[33] Its anonymous narrator is a writer acquainted with a Charlie Mears. Mears is a young London banker but with literary ambitions; when he has trouble with a story he is attempting to write, the narrator offers to hear it. The narrator thinks that the story fragment Mears presents him with is badly written but that when told out loud, the "notion" behind the story is really quite fine. As he relates his story, it becomes clear to the narrator that Mears, who has never been at sea, knows in astonishing detail about the daily life of an ancient Greek galley-slave; that indeed in a former life he must have been the very slave who features in his story. Moreover, when Mears says he (the slave) had also rowed to the Long and Wonderful Beaches, the narrator asks, "Furdurstrandi[r]?" realizing that Mears had gone to Wineland in America with Thorfin Karlsefne. Unfortunately, Mears has begun to read prodigiously and becomes more interested in quoting from Longfellow about Viking voyages than recounting his own firsthand experiences. On another occasion, however, he blurts out, "When they heard *our* bulls bellow the Skrœlings ran away." The narrator muses:

> Now it is written in the Saga of Eric the Red, or that of Thorfin Karlsefne, that nine hundred years ago when Karlsefne's galleys came to Leif's booths, which Leif had erected in the unknown land called Markland, which may or may not have been Rhode Island, the Skrœlings—and the Lord He knows who these may or may not have been—came to trade with the Vikings, and ran away because they were frightened at the bellowing of the cattle which Thorfin had brought with him in the ships. But what in the world could a Greek slave know of that affair?

He concludes that Mears's soul must have known "half a dozen several and separate existences spent on blue water in the morning of the world!" The narrator longs for an opportunity to transcribe an hour's worth of Mears talking uninterrupted. As he muses about the possibilities, he is accosted by a young Bengali law student he knows, named Grish Chunder. He tells the Hindu about Mears's case, knowing that Chunder will be familiar with the "remembering of previous experiences." Grish tells him that Mears will soon begin to forget, especially once he meets a woman: "One kiss that he gives back again and remembers will cure all this nonsense."

Mears visits the narrator and reads an awful poem he has composed, and will only impart a bit more of his Viking adventures. Without Mears's full account, the narrator realizes any story he writes "would be nothing more than a faked, false-varnished, sham-rusted piece of Wardour Street work at the end." (It is interesting to note here that William Morris's archaizing translations of Old Norse sagas and other ancient works were sometimes denigrated as "Wardour Street antiques," after the Soho street where sham-antiques were sold.)[34] On another occasion Mears tells some more about his adventures with the "red-haired man" (Thorfin), rowing for three days among floating ice. But the next time Mears visits, he has written a love poem and produces a photograph of a girl "with a curly head and a foolish slack mouth." The narrator concludes, "Grish Chunder was right. Charlie had tasted the love of woman that kills remembrance, and the finest story in the world would never be written."

The story plays cleverly with both the pretensions of bad, youthful writers and the longing for fame of more accomplished ones. Kipling himself of course hardly needed help in spinning a fine adventure yarn. For him, the voyage to Vínland serves as one of most wondrous adventures in history, if perhaps too remote a source for genuine rather than Wardour Street fiction. To emphasize this note of wonder, Kipling has Mears begin with the "Long and Wonderful Beaches" of Thorfinn's discoveries rather than the Wineland of Leif. We can perhaps blame Mears's scatteredness for conflating Markland (a forested area clearly north of Vínland, most likely in Labrador) with Leif's booths, which "may or may not have been" in Rhode Island.

LEIF ERIKSSON AND THE SCANDINAVIAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY

In the decades running up to 1892 and the 400th anniversary celebrations of Columbus's encounter with the New World, Scandinavian Americans sought to advance the cause of Leif Eriksson, who (they claimed, although the matter was not regarded as proven) had come to America almost five centuries before the Italian sailor. Professor Rasmus Anderson proposed a monument and recruited Ole Bull in the effort, a violinist who was one of the best-known Scandinavians of his day (a sort of nineteenth-century Victor Borge). The statue was planned for the University of Wisconsin campus in Madison, where Anderson taught, to help make it a chief center of Scandinavian studies in the nation (which indeed it is to this day). Attention shifted to Cambridge and Boston, however (where Leif Eriksson and Vínland fever were strong, spurred by baking-powder magnate Eben Horsford), and in 1887 a statue by Ann Whitney was erected on Commonwealth Avenue overlooking Back Bay, Boston. In his autobiography, Anderson comments: "The statue is subject to criticism. Miss Whitney made a figure more or less resembling Ole Bull. Leif Erikson has a smooth face, and upon the whole it is in all its outlines more a Roman than a Norse work of art, but is a great work of art nevertheless" (207). He might have added that the figure's circular breast plates, long flowing

hair, miniskirt-length tunic, and half-akimbo posture (as he scans the horizon) make him look a little less than rugged. An inscription in Norse and runic letters translates as "Leif the Lucky, Eric's son." In the same year, a replica was commissioned for Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

For the 1893 Columbian celebrations themselves (aka the Chicago World's Fair), a replica of the recently unearthed Gokstad ship sailed from Bergen, Norway, to Newfoundland, to New York, and ultimately via the Erie Canal to the Great Lakes and Chicago. (The ship would then reside in Lincoln Park until it was moved in 1996 to Geneva, Illinois, where it awaits restoration.)[35] Of course replicas of the *Niña*, the *Pinta*, and the *Santa Maria* also sailed to Chicago, from Spain. With regard to Leif, the most significant event was the commission of a painting by Norwegian artist Christian Krohg (1852–1925). Titled "Leif Erikson Discovering America," the painting is perhaps the best-known artistic representation of our hero.[36]

Statues of Leif continued apace; Norwegians in Chicago funded another statue (by Sigvald Asbjørnsen), erected in 1901. Perhaps the best-known Leif Eriksson statue was erected in Reykjavík in 1930, a gift from the United States to commemorate the 1,000th anniversary of Iceland's Althing, its parliament. It was sculpted by Stirling Calder, father of the famous maker of mobiles Alexander Calder; the competition runner-up to Calder's statue, by Nína Sæmundsson, now stands at Eiríksstaðir in Iceland.[37] The *Milwaukee Journal* (August 5, 1931) noted that Calder's statue showed a "sturdier Viking" than their own. Indeed, the lantern-jawed visage does connote a tough customer, a bit like Klaus Kinski in the film *Aguirre, Wrath of God* (dir. Werner Herzog, 1972).[38]

Rasmus Anderson lived to see another one of his pet projects realized, the proclamation of a Leif Eriksson Day, signed into law in Wisconsin in 1929. President Franklin Roosevelt proclaimed the day in 1935, but it seems to have needed continual reinforcement; President Johnson proclaimed it in 1964, and President George W. Bush during each year of his presidency. The day chosen, October 9, is sometimes said to commemorate the first Norwegian immigrant ship to America on that day in 1825. But Anderson reportedly suggested "that a day be fixed in the first or second week of October because that is the time of ripe grapes."[39] Nor was it likely mere coincidence that the timing, as Inga Dóra Björnsdóttir expresses it, enabled "Scandinavian-Americans to pre-empt Columbus Day by some seventy-two hours."[40]

LITERARY AND FILM ADAPTATIONS IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Perry Marshall, Vinland, or The Norse Discovery of America; An Historical Poem *(ca. 1920)*

To return to literary adaptations, in about 1920, Perry Marshall, a minister and medical doctor living in New Salem, Massachusetts, published *Vinland, or The Norse Discovery of America; An Historical Poem*. According to his

preface (p. 3), Marshall's source is the *Saga of Thorsefni* (i.e., *Erik The Red's Saga*) as recorded in the manuscript *Hauksbók*. The saga's account had been "sifted anew" by Professor Fiske—that is, John Fiske, a professor of history at Washington University in Saint Louis, author of *The Discovery of America* (Boston, 1892). Accordingly, Marshall feels he can claim: "I dare indeed to call my Thorfinn story true." Marshall interweaves a claim for Boston as the site of Leif Eriksson's landing (where, as noted above, a statue of Leif had been erected in 1886):

> Nine hours, precisely, was the winter's shortest day,
> Which marks the latitude, exact, of Boston Bay,
> And when upon the wings of spring the south winds came,
> Ten hundred one, brave Leif reloads his ship of fame
> With timber, such as oft before Norse eyes had seen
> Afloat and sought to trace unto its sources green;
> And with this freight he started toward his father's land. (14)

Despite his claim for a historic authenticity, one of Marshall's more interesting contributions to Vínland lore is pure fiction: he provides a death scene for Leif Eriksson. As we read in *The Greenlanders' Saga* (and not in fact *Erik the Red's Saga*), Leif, retired in Greenland, hears that his sister Freydís murdered many of her co-voyagers to Vínland, to increase her own profits. But he does not have the heart to punish his sister as she deserves (ch. 9). It is the last we hear of Leif in *The Greenlanders' Saga*. But Marshall adds that Leif took the news mortally hard:

> Brave Leif had often wiped an iron eye and brow,
> But sorrow gathers on his silvered features now.
> "My bones to Vinland take and bury by the main,"
> And then expired in sorrow for his sister's slain. (26)

William Carlos Williams, "Red Eric" (1925)

Beginning in 1922, a poet of more lasting fame, William Carlos Williams, undertook a series of historical essays that would eventually be called *In the American Grain* (1925). The book begins with a piece called "Red Eric," a monologue in the voice of Eric the Red, who interests Williams primarily as an outlaw: "Rather the ice than their way," he begins, referring to his exile from Norway to Iceland. Eric continues in the manner of a swashbuckler or Western film hero: ". . . a man that can throw a spear, take a girl, steer a ship, till the soil, plant, care for the cattle . . . but they have branded me." He first mentions his son Lief (spelled thus) as having sailed to Norway and back from "a new country" (Vínland): "At the same stroke he brings me pride and joy-in-his-deed . . . and poison," in the form of Christianity. "Thorhild bars me, godless, from her bed . . . Let her build a church and sleep in it."

Eric then goes on to narrate the voyages of Karlsefne and Freydis (following first *Erik the Red's Saga* and then *The Greenlanders' Saga*). He concludes:

> In Greenland, Lief, now head of the family, has no heart to punish his sister as she deserves: But this I predict of them, that there is little prosperity in store for their offspring. Hence it came to pass that no one from that time forward thought them worthy of aught but evil. Eric in his grave. (9)

The Viking *(1928, dir. Roy William Neill)*

Mention was made above of a juvenile novel, Ottilie Liljencrantz's *The Thrall of Leif the Lucky* (1902). It has the distinction of having been made into a two-strip Technicolor silent film called *The Viking* in 1928, starring Donald Crisp. Since this is the only cinematic version of Leif that I have found (aside from documentaries, and an animated feature I will discuss below), I will give it a full summary.[41] Unlike the novel upon which it was based (in which Alwin is "barely seventeen," and Helga "a year or two younger"), the film begins with its protagonists as adults, and it begins in Northumbria rather than Norway.

Lord Alwin returns home to his castle in Northumbria and greets his mother at her needlework (we can tell he is English because he has trimmed black hair and eyebrows and no facial hair, unlike the Vikings who have long fair or red hair and sport beards and/or mustaches). His sister is at her Bible and offers up a version of the famous Irish prayer: "From the sword and the chains of the Vikings, O Lord, deliver us and from all other manner of evil, protect us, O Lord." Unfortunately, the Vikings choose that moment to attack (as announced in a title card where the words grow ever larger: THE VIKINGS!). The Vikings take their plunder back to a trading post in Norway, where a big Viking and a dwarf take inventory of the loot, including the needlework of Alwin's mother, which he, now a captive, looks upon with sadness.

A Viking rides up and dumps a young warrior woman on the ground: Helga Nilsson, "an orphan of noble blood—living the life of a Viking sea rover under the protection of the famous Leif Ericsson." She has the winged helmet and strapless chainmail of a valkyrie, and indeed Richard Wagner's *Ride of the Valkyries* is her musical theme. Her friend Sigurd buys a Greek slave woman from the trader. Helga decides to buy Alwin and take him back to Leif Ericsson's camp, where Egil the Black, "Leif's Danish sailing master," is practicing his swordplay. Sigurd gives the female slave to his (beefy) wife, and Helga shows her slave Alwin to Egil, but they scuffle. Helga tells Alwin to lead her horse to the pens. He mounts it and starts to gallop off, but Helga stops him, saying horses are not for slaves. She chastises Egil for lifting a sword against a slave, at which he confesses his jealousy and love. She suggests they just stay friends, words piercing enough to make the fiercest Viking grow disconsolate.

At the court of King Olaf, a man is receiving the Christian faith. Vikings look on, including "Leif Ericsson, famed throughout the North for his strength, courage and justice." After the other Vikings pass out drunk, Leif discusses with Olaf his intention to sail west of Greenland, which his father, Eric the Red, had discovered. He points on a map to where the edge of the world drops off into the clutches of dragons. Olaf gives Leif a cross to put around his neck and wishes him success on his journey.

Back at camp, Alwin has snuck off to go read a book, so Helga attempts to whip him. Egil draws his sword, Alwin calls for a weapon, and the Vikings laugh, but the noble Leif rides up and asks, "Since when have Vikings scoffed at a man of courage?" Alwin and Egil duel until Egil's sword breaks and Alwin spares him in Helga's name. She decides to give Alwin over to Leif, who, in contrast to Helga, simply admires Alwin's horsemanship as he rides off.

Leif and company set sail for Greenland. Alwin disobeys Kark, Leif's chief slave, and is taken again and whipped against the mast. Helga intervenes and then Leif shows Alwin the dragon map; Alwin is not afraid. Above deck Leif strokes the hair of Helga, who has doffed her chainmail, but she gazes upon Alwin.

In Bratthahlid, Greenland (where "hard, stubborn paganism still held sway"), Eric the Red adjudicates a case and has the men bow to a statue of Thor. One is reluctant and is exposed as a Christian, at which Eric strikes him down with his ax.

Back on Leif's ship, Alwin continues to ignore Helga despite her several costume changes. She inquires about his diffidence and he rejoins, "You forget that I am still a slave." He shows a bit of pluck when she nuzzles his shoulder, but then he turns away again, sobbing.

Leif and his men arrive at Greenland's shores, and Leif confesses to his parents his plans to marry Helga. Egil is displeased to hear this, and he eggs on Kark, whose place Leif has now given to Alwin. Kark's father confronts Leif for favoring this Christian slave, and Leif is forced to confess that he, too, is Christian. Erik throws his ax at Leif, and a scuffle ensues, while Leif gets his men to take stores from the granary for his voyage. Leif tells Helga she must stay behind, but she dons a false beard and stows away. As Leif and his crew make it back to his ship, Eric is forced to admit, "Christian or no Christian, he is a son of Eric the Red!"[42]

On board, Alwin discovers Helga, who promptly jumps his Northumbrian bones, at which point he finally kisses her. Leif does not see this, however, and announces his plan to marry her on board. Meanwhile, some crewmen fear they are nearing the edge of the world and are again egged on by Egil. Kark seizes Leif's crucifix and throws it overboard. A mutiny threatens, until Leif adopts a heroic stance by the ship's ropes and exhorts his crew: "We are bound on the greatest adventure man has ever known—and we do not turn back!" Steersman Sigurd beats time, and they all set to their oars.

The marriage ceremony begins, but just as Egil is about to strike Leif with his sword, Alwin intervenes and takes the blow instead. Leif then fatally stabs

Egil. Alwin lies wounded on the deck, with Helga embracing him. She kisses him, and when Leif looks on, dumbfounded, she announces, "I love him!" Leif is on the verge of striking Alwin when he recalls his Christian principles, touching the cross around his neck. Sigurd stands by Egil, who confesses, "It was all for love of Helga," and then dies. Leif stands against the mast but then the music stirs, the crew act excited, and a title card reads, "LAND! LAND!"

Leif steps onshore with a cross made of oars. Subsequently, "as his Viking fathers had done in other lands, Leif built a watch tower of stone." In front of this tower, Leif puts a cross around the neck of a native leader (as King Olaf had done to him). Alwin and Helga exult in their happiness in this "fresh new land," intending to stay with some of the crew while Leif returns to Greenland. "What became of this Viking colony, no one knows. . . . But the watch tower they built stands today in Newport, Rhode Island." The film closes with a shot of this tower in the present day (an out-of-focus car drives by it) and we hear on the soundtrack: "o'er the land of the free, and the home of the brave."[43]

Some aspects of this adaptation of the Leif Eriksson material deserve comment (aside from any further sniggering about its comical helmets and mustachios). As we have seen, Leif was never involved in any love triangle (or quadrilateral, if we count Egil), but in fact some Icelandic sagas do involve a (more rugged) version of this theme.[44] Leif's crewmen never mention the edge of the world, although Norse cosmogony did conceive of the world as a disk encircled by a giant serpent. Nor do they threaten mutiny, although the concurrent theme of Christianity triumphing over paganism is present in *Erik the Red's Saga* especially. As previously noted, Leif converted while his father Erik did not, and in one instance in *Erik the Red's Saga*, Christian prayers succeeded while pagan ones did not (see above, regarding the pagan Thorhall). Leif's genial demeanor and tolerant governance suits the traditional American view of its leaders, but also has some counterpart in Leif's character as described in the Vínland sagas. *The Viking* presents Leif's voyage as "the greatest adventure by sea that man had ever known," appropriately enough for a film of love and adventure. When Leif plants a makeshift cross, the title card reads "the first white man set foot on the shore of the New World," which is still the main American gloss put on his voyage (though we certainly prefer now to substitute "European" for "white man"). The film is confident in this assertion, and offers as historical evidence the Newport Tower, thus taking a firm stance on the Viking versus Columbus controversies, and the American (New England) versus Canadian location of Vínland, with the soundtrack's final notes weaving in the finale of the American national anthem.

Henry Chapin, Leifsaga *(1934)*

A more highbrow, epic attempt at retelling our hero's story was made in *Leif-saga* (1934), by Henry Chapin, a minor poet who at least had some major friends, F. Scott Fitzgerald and Robert Frost.[45] The poem follows the Vínland

sagas with one principal added motif, that of Leif the Lucky's ill luck in love. In *Eric the Red's Saga* (ch. 5), the Hebridean woman Thorgunna had made some ominous statements to Leif when he left her unwed and pregnant. For Chapin, this threat takes the form of a curse. In her Complaint, which swells beyond the usual iambic pentameter, Thorgunna avers:

> . . . nor rest nor peace shall he,
> The horizon-breaker, at the end of the whale-path find;
> Never a nesting place for the wild bird of his mind.
> . . . he himself shall be
> Lodestar for love of eager women, but they shall find
> That a gold-bright, sorrowful ghost possesses his mind. (11)

(The lines also show something of what Chapin takes from Old English and Old Icelandic verse, especially in the kenning "whale-path.") Towards the end of the poem, Thorgunna's bastard son Thorgils makes a surprise appearance as a surly confidant of Leif's sister, accompanying her to Vínland. When Freydís adopts her memorable warrior stance against the natives (*Eric the Red's Saga,* ch. 11), Thorgils (hiding behind the name Gest) is placed rather unconvincingly alongside her:

> She foamed with berserk rage, she stripped her shift,
> and waved her naked blade and slapped it hard
> against her great up-standing breasts and howled.
> Gest stood beside her grinning, and these two
> there turned the tide of battle for the Norse. (101)

Both hyperbole and iambic pentameter are to blame for turning Freydís's one exposed breast into [two] "great up-standing breasts." An added bit of drama concludes the poem, when back in Greenland Freydís's murders are revealed and Leif outlaws her henchman "Gest." He attacks, but Leif slits his throat:

> Gest looked surprised. He slumped upon the ground.
> His hand went up; his life came squirting out
> between his five great fingers. Freydis cried,
> . . . "'Tis Thorgils dead. This Leif has killed his son.
> This lucky Leif. Thorgunna's lucky Leif." (108–9)

Surprised indeed. This time, while the number of his fingers (five) cannot be said to be exaggerated, the poetic effect is both more and less than epic.

The poem has a few good touches, mainly in passages describing northern, maritime life:

> The wall of ice retreated up the coasts.
> On the dark mountain-sides the silver-quick

and many-gleaming snakes of melting snow
raced down the barren fells and met the sea.

Nonetheless, a contemporary reviewer (S. I. Hayakawa) in the magazine *Poetry* was unimpressed by the poet's facility in iambic pentameter, singling out such lines as "'Now listen, chief,' says Gunnar, 'I am plain. / I never was a man for lofty thoughts'" (63; Gunnar, an added, ostensibly comic first mate, is unimpressed by the delights of Vínland because there are no women about). Reading the poem reminds me of a dismissive comment I once heard made by a contemporary poet (Robert Bly, perhaps?) that after some practice one could easily learn to speak in iambic pentameter (and thus our observations all would mark their wordy course in iambs, five by five). Or one could repeat Chapin's own mournful admission at the age of 89: "But it's narrative verse. People don't read it today."[46]

Ingri and Edgar Parin d'Aulaire, Leif the Lucky *(1941)*

In the same year that Donald Crisp (the actor who had played Leif in *The Viking*) won an Oscar for *How Green Was My Valley* (1941), a children's book appeared, *Leif the Lucky,* that merits attention. It was written and illustrated by Ingri and Edgar Parin d'Aulaire, a husband and wife team originally from Norway and Germany respectively, many of whose books are still in print, including their *Book of Greek Myths* and *Book of Norse Myths*. The illustrations incorporate design motifs from Old Scandinavian woodcarving, especially the gripping beasts from the Oseberg, Norway, ship burial (Erik's dragon-head prow carving is modeled on its Oseberg counterpart).

The story follows a synthesis of the two Vínland Sagas, although with many elements tailored for an audience of children. Accordingly, Erik is banned from Norway and then Iceland not for killing his countrymen but because "his temper was wild," causing him "to quarrel and fight." A number of pages are devoted to the young Leif growing up in Greenland, whose shores he gazes upon: "his eyes were keen as the eyes of a snake and blue as steel as he watched the rows of waves rising like a thousand fences between him and his new home in the West." Erik steers the ship ashore (his name is carved in runes on the rudder), and Leif removes the dragon head from the prow so as not to "anger the spirits of the land." On his farm, Erik sacrifices to Odin, whom Leif imagines he sees in the Northern Lights above him. Young Leif hunts for seals at their breathing holes in the ice, and he plays with a (muzzled) polar bear cub indoors by the fire.

A sailor named Bjarne tells of distant "forest-clad shores still further west" (as in *The Greenlanders' Saga*), and now teenage Leif sails to Norway. He meets King Olaf, who asks him to convert Greenland to Christianity and gives him two fleet-footed Scottish thralls (this detail is thus inserted in its proper place, rather than as an afterthought as in *Erik the Red's Saga,* ch. 8). He

sails back toward Greenland but is blown off course and sights Vínland (as in *Erik the Red's Saga*), his piercing eyes and pointing finger the only parts of him visible in the fog. The Scottish pair (here called Haig and Haigie) are sent to reconnoiter, jogging about in the garment called a *kjafal* in *Erik the Red's Saga,* chapter 8, here depicted as a hooded white leotard. Leif builds houses and spends the summer (rather than the winter, as in *The Greenlanders' Saga*), enjoying the wild grains and grapes (the drunken Tyrkir, a poor role model no doubt, is not mentioned, but a man is shown stomping grapes).

Leif sails back to Greenland, rescuing the shipwrecked crew and their goods, for which he is called Leif the Lucky. Later, Gudrid and Torfinn Karlsevne (a Norwegianized form of Thorfinn *karlsefni*) sail to Vínland, stopping off on an island where "there were so many birds and eggs there was hardly room to put a foot" (cf. *Erik the Red's Saga,* ch. 8). These birds are depicted as the flightless, hapless, and now extinct great auks; a couple in the background is shown frying their endangered eggs in a skillet, sunny-side up. Gudrid gives birth to Snorre, and she and Torfinn begin to trade with the Skraellinger (see *The Greenlanders' Saga,* ch. 7, and *Erik the Red's Saga,* ch. 11), who later attack until they see "a Viking woman sharpening a sword on her own skin" (i.e., the pregnant Freydís slapping a sword upon her naked breast, cf. *Erik the Red's Saga,* ch. 11). The Norsemen sail back to Greenland, picking up two Skraelling boys along the coast (*Erik the Red's Saga,* ch. 12). Back in Greenland, these two get to ride Norse hobbyhorses while Leif tosses young Snorre up in the air.

The book ends by bringing the reader up to date. For "hundreds of years," ships continued to go to America to bring timber, but the Greenlanders suffered long periods of cold (i.e., the so-called Little Ice Age) and began to grow smaller, ultimately blending in with the Eskimos. Across the sea, "for many hundred years the Indians in America could enjoy their land in peace." (It is true the Norse Greenland colony died out sometime after 1408, although the cause is debated.[47]

"Jimmy Olsen's Viking Sweetheart" (1963)

Moving ahead to the literature of my own youth, we find Leif Eriksson making a surprise appearance in the comic *Superman's Pal Jimmy Olsen*, number 69, from June 1963.[48] Cub reporter Jimmy, together with members of his fan club, goes to a ski resort, where his heartthrob Lucy Lane snubs him for Olympic ski champion Ron Baxter. Thinking to impress her, he attempts to leap across Daredevil Chasm, where he crashes, concusses, and awakens to hear a woman's voice calling to him from beneath a snowdrift, in the Old Norse language (her speech balloon in fact says "Hilf"—i.e., "Help" in German, written in runes!). He frees her, and she calls him Leif, mistaking him for Leif Ericsson because of his red hair.[49] She tells her story: she had landed on the shores of Vineland with Leif, her beloved, but some days later fell into

a snowbank (Eeeyah!). Her name is Holga; thinking to help her, Jimmy takes her hands, and they are cold—not because she has been frozen for nearly a millennium, but because she is in fact a robot being manipulated by Jimmy's fan club! They plan to use her to make Lucy Lane, whom they want to fall for their Jimmy, get jealous.

Holga manages to jump Daredevil Chasm (as Jimmy says, "The Vikings invented skis"), and Lucy does indeed start to reevaluate the freckle-faced doofus. Holga becomes a national celebrity and is invited to the White House, where she is given a model of a Viking ship as a memento by none other than First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy. When Jimmy and Holga board a plane, stewardess Lucy observes them; later, in the fan club, she discovers the monitor and control panel and realizes Holga is a robot. To punish him, she presses the "treat Jimmy coldly" button, at which Holga dumps him, discarding the gift he had just given her, which Lucy had assumed was an engagement ring. But in fact it was her amulet, accompanied by a note saying that he, Jimmy, can only love Lucy, no matter how much she scorns him. The discovery makes Lucy melt, and she kisses Jimmy in his Leif Ericsson outfit. The members of the fan club congratulate themselves while watching on their monitor. Will Lucy marry Jimmy? Keep reading *Jimmy Olsen* to find out!

The allusion to Leif Eriksson in this opus is not particularly integral to the narrative, except that Jimmy under the influence of the Viking princess's (programmed) love takes on the guise of the Vínland explorer, as a manly Nordic counterpart to his Olympic skier rival (he even dresses as Leif toward the end of the story "for publicity pictures"). The main focus, however, is on a motif I remember well: the robot imposter. I suppose if science fiction films of the 1950s reenvisioned lurking communists as alien body snatchers, then the comics of the early 1960s did something similar with robots; or else pre–sexual revolution anxieties turned seemingly interested partners into deceiving robots; or else we are all just pawns of fanboys watching us on closed-circuit TV.

Charles Olson, The Maximus Poems *(1975)*

American poet Charles Olson is the first of our writers to take into account the discovery of Norse ruins in L'Anse aux Meadows in Newfoundland, having read Ingstad's 1964 account of it in *National Geographic*.[50] In 1965, Olson composed a poem that reads a bit like some notes taken from Ingstad, if in Olson's characteristically jaunty fashion. He begins with George Decker, the man who first pointed Ingstad to the site, who thus deserves to be at least a minor hero in the modern Vínland saga. Olson later incorporated the sketch into his ongoing opus *The Maximus Poems* (3.76, 1975):

And George Decker (when he got there) sd
Anything goes on

at Lancey Meadow
I know—there is
evidence down at
Black Duck Beach.
There was. Norse
persons,
by carbon date
1006 had
come ashore
here Had built
houses, had set up
a peat bog iron
forge. Were
living
Lancey Meadow
1006
AD

(The section goes on to mention the Skraelings, or Indians, as having been there first. Black Duck Beach was, in Ingstad's account, Black Duck Brook, and Ingstad gives a range of dates rather than 1006 specifically.)

George Mackay Brown, Vinland *(1992)*

In 1992, Orkney native George Mackay Brown published the historical novel *Vinland,* about Ranald Sigmundsson, son of a foul-tempered sea trader, Sigmund Firemouth. Sigmund intends to bring a load of timber to Greenland, having heard that it is "the most fertile and delightful place in the world"— that is, he has heard tell and accepted Erik the Red's propaganda about Greenland being green. His wife, Thora, sensibly wonders why such a fertile and green place would need a load of timber, but Sigmund tells her to mind her own affairs, slamming a board with his fist for emphasis. Sigmund plans to take young Ranald with him on his voyage despite the objections of his mother, who wants the boy to become a farmer like his grandfather.

Once on board ship, Sigmund shows his bad temper by striking a man whom he says had fallen asleep on his watch. The crew lands in Reykjavik, where Ranald sees a skipper who is "a tall handsome man, who didn't need to shout like his own father to get things done." The ship is called *West Seeker* and its skipper is Leif Ericson. He wants to "sail west as far as we can," but first is headed for Greenland. Sigmund calls for Ranald, and when they meet he strikes his son furiously and repeatedly for having wandered off.

Next day at first light Leif's ship departs. At breakfast time, Wolf the cook finds Ranald stowed away among the ale barrels. Leif's ship is a far happier one than Sigmund's, and Leif is much liked as a skipper. Ranald is viewed

as a lucky omen and is accepted by the crew. The cook wonders if they will find the "Stoor-Worm" at the world's end (an Orkney folk tale version of the Norse World Serpent). A poet, Ard, improvises about the many shapes of water (Norse skaldic poets liked to collect and employ many different names for poetic concepts). Leif mentions how welcome their cargo of timber will be in Greenland; next morning the wooden fragments of a wrecked ship float past, and Ranald realizes his father has drowned.

Leif swiftly takes care of his affairs in Greenland and then sets off toward the west. The crew hear splashing noises and see dark shapes, and the cook mentions the Stoor-Worm again, but Leif knows it is only a company of whales, "seeking pastures among the ice floes." After the wind swings round, Leif lets loose a caged raven; it flies high and then shoots "westward like an arrow," and Leif claims land is near. The crew have to keep rowing in the becalmed sea, but Leif insists he can hear the shore; an old sailor comments that Leif "had ears as keen as a wolf" (in *The Greenlanders' Saga*, it is said that Leif had keener eyesight than his crew). Ranald hears something too, and soon the crew spies a low headland. They go ashore, and while the crew drink and celebrate, Leif sketches a map with coal on a piece of parchment. He says they will spend the winter and remarks that "this new-found-land is a far more promising place than Greenland." He also comments on the lack of any other inhabitants, but after dusk Ranald spies a young boy, who waves at him.

Next morning the shore is lined with natives, their faces painted and with feathers in their hair. Their chief cries out like a bird and then more men come, carrying baskets filled with salmon, venison, and "bunches of small fruit." These Leif tastes and identifies as grapes, but the old sailor (like many an antiquarian scholar before him) pronounces it impossible to find grapes so far north. Leif offers the natives ale, a bad idea because they soon start to get a bit wild, but it is one of his men who strikes and kills first. As the crew retreats, they are beset with arrows, and Ranald is struck by a stone thrown by the boy he had seen before. Leif decides they should sail farther south, but first he names the place Vínland.

They come to a place that is even more fertile, teeming with fish and game, and they begin to build log houses, hoping they have frightened off the "skraelings." Ranald goes wandering in the woods and espies the native boy again. Ranald waves, but his hand is struck by a bone knife thrown by the boy. Next morning the natives attack in force but are driven off and do not attack again. Some time passes, and the poet Ard recites ancient poems (one is recognizable as the Eddic poem *Grottasöngr*). But Ranald, wandering along the shore, sees a pattern of shells pointing at their settlement and once again sees the skraeling boy staring at him.

One day some watchmen fail to return, and that night on board ship Leif sees his house on fire. In the morning they find one of the watchmen dead and scalped. After they care for the body, Leif announces that they might find better prospects yet farther south, but for now they should return to Greenland. As they sail off, the natives watch them go, the boy among them. On their

return trip, Leif shares navigational lore with Ranald. A whale spouts near the ship, and the crew wish they could kill it. Leif, however, thinks it a good thing that "there are still some creatures too big and strong for the greed of men to compass" but that eventually "men will devise weapons to kill even the greatest whale. The skraelings, that we thought so savage and ignorant, were wiser than us in this respect. . . . Did you not see what reverence the Vínlanders had for the animals and the trees and for all living things?"

Ranald stays a while with Leif in Greenland, where he proves a fine horseman. People talk of returning to Vínland, but Leif has had a dream that the "skraelings and the animals and trees were dancing together" until they were joined by a blue-eyed man in a gold mask. The dancers left one by one, until in the end "only the man in the gold mask was left on that shore." Leif will not return to Vínland, and although Ranald would like to, he must first return to Orkney. He does so, and for the remainder of the novel his adventures shift to a different historical source, the events pertaining to the earls of Orkney as told in the *Orkneyinga saga*. At the end of his life, he does dream of returning to Vínland, a mystical place that has become overlaid in his mind with Saint Brendan's Island of the Blessed and the Celtic land of Tir-nan-og. "I'd like to make peace with that skraeling lad before I die." On an Easter Monday morning, Ranald sets off along the shore toward the village of his birth, stumbling in the seaweed, until one last time when he falls and fails to get up again.

The first section of *Vinland* has much in common with historical novels for juveniles, with the young lad stowing away on the famous sailing adventure and meeting another young lad on the other side of the world. Brown's Leif has the qualities of moderation and seamanship that derive appropriately enough from the older Vínland sagas, but he has also taken on some 1980s environmentalism. He must have been quite a proto-anthropologist indeed to have intuited the skraelings' "deep ecology" while dodging their rain of arrows. But in this regard the novel shares one other detail of the sagas: the Norsemen kill first.[51]

LEIF ERIKSSON: THE MILLENNIUM CELEBRATIONS

The year 2000, aside from bringing the dreaded Y2K scare, marked the millennium of Leif's voyage to Vínland. There were certainly more academic studies published in 2000 that commemorated the millennial apocalypticism of Europe (when the world failed to end in 1000, fortunately) than Leif's more hopeful discovery, but a few books and activities honored our hero. Three books about Vínland that have been cited often in this study appeared in or about 2000: Fitzhugh and Ward's *Vikings: The North Atlantic Saga* (in connection with a touring exhibition from the Smithsonian Institute, 2000); Geraldine Barnes's *Viking America: The First Millennium* (2001); and Andrew Wawn and Þórunn Sigurðardóttir's *Approaches to Vinland* (2001). The first complete translation of all the Icelandic family sagas into English had been

issued in Reykjavík in 1997 by a publisher invented for the occasion, Leifur Eiríksson Publishing. A copy was given to Hillary Clinton when she visited Iceland in the year 2000 (as two of my own translations were included in the volumes, this is the closest I have ever come to the reins of power). The 2000 paperback selection from Penguin Publishing highlighted the Vínland sagas, with an introduction by Jane Smiley, author of *The Greenlanders*. In the same year, Snorri Sturluson, who had written about Leif in his *Heimskringla* (ca. 1230), was named Icelandic scholar of the millennium.

Iceland cooperated with Greenland on "Project Leif," and a Viking ship called "Íslendingur" (Icelander) sailed from Erik the Red's home in Iceland to his home in Greenland in July 2000, piloted by a 28th-generation direct descendant of Leif Eriksson (it should perhaps be pointed out that in the close-knit society of Iceland, almost everyone can be shown to descend from Leif or, more often, Snorri Sturluson). The ship went on to L'Anse aux Meadows in Newfoundland and eventually to Manhattan, where it was greeted by Hillary Clinton. The replica of Thjodhild's church in Greenland was inaugurated as part of the festivities, and a "three-metre tall" statue of Leif was raised looking out to sea from Erik's farm (a copy of the statue erected at the Seattle World's Fair, mentioned above).

Leif Ericson: The Boy Who Discovered America *(2000, dir. Phil Nibbelink)*

The year 2000 also saw the release of an animated feature, *Leif Ericson: The Boy Who Discovered America*. Writer, director, and animator Phil Nibbelink, who had worked with Walt Disney Studios on *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* (1988) and Stephen Spielberg on *An American Tail: Fievel Goes West* (1991), left to become an independent animator, working very much on the cheap. He made *Leif Ericson* on an Amiga computer with *Deluxe Paint*.[52] The foreground features tend to waver back and forth against backgrounds executed without much detail and sometimes incorporating video effects (of fire, for instance). Occasionally the technique is sufficient, as when young Leif is stranded among some ice floes in Greenland, but more often it is difficult to see past the film's technical limitations.

The story focuses on young Leif, first in Iceland when his father is outlawed, then in Greenland, and on his quest to acquire luck. Vínland discoverer Bjarni Herjólfsson is made into a long-faced villain with a falcon sidekick, not unlike Jafar and parrot Iago in *Aladdin* (1992). When Eric returns to Greenland with a boatload of settlers, having taken Bjarni's slave girl (and Leif's love interest) Thorgunna, Bjarni attacks them with his crew until a subterranean volcano disrupts the proceedings. Bjarni chances upon a new land inhabited only by the wolf Fenrir (a figure borrowed from Norse mythology). Back in Greenland, Bjarni makes it seem as if Leif has killed his father, so Leif sails off to the new land himself, where Fenrir (Leif's spirit guide, apparently) tells him he must make his own luck. Young Leif sails back to Greenland, rescuing

a shipwrecked Thorgunna on the way, and saves his father with the help of the ethereal Fenrir. The settlers shout "Leif the Lucky," and the voiceover tells us that "In the fullness of time, Leif became chieftain of Greenland. Because farmland was scarce, others followed Leif's trail and settled in Newfoundland.[53] Leif never returned to the New Land he discovered." Leif watches from atop a cliff as a wobbly Viking ship heads toward Newfoundland on a shining, digital sea.

LEIF ERIKSSON AND TOURISM

The Leif Eriksson tourist industry is not particularly robust, except that one can visit the (rather remote) site and reconstruction at L'Anse aux Meadows, Newfoundland; take a cruise ship to Erik's farm and his wife Thjoðhild's church at Brattahlið, Greenland; or fly into Leifur Eiríksson Terminal in Keflavík, Iceland, and make one's way from Reykjavík about two hours north to the Leifur Eiríksson Heritage Centre (Leifsbuð) in Búðardalur near Eiríksstaðir in Iceland, where Leif was born.[54] Here one may view a newly created "Vinland Tapestry," designed by Sigurjón Jóhansson.[55]

The Vinland Tapestry

The tapestry (really a backlit wall display) depicts scenes from the Vínland sagas drawn in the style of the Bayeux Tapestry and incorporating some of its imagery (the Bayeux Tapestry or embroidery depicts the Norman William the Conqueror, the English King Harold Godwinsson, and events leading up to and including the Battle of Hastings in 1066). The four scenes are set within top and bottom borders; some figures at the top are copies of the confronted lions and griffins often depicted in the Bayeux Tapestry borders. But the artist has added in some properly Vínland items: butternuts, grapes, Viking axes, a stone cross, a Thor's hammer, and the Norse pin found at L'Anse aux Meadows. The first scene shows the wonders of Vínland: a woman on the left carries "self-sown wheat"; a small man (Tyrkir, based on a servant at William's feast) carries bunches of grapes; big fish leap from the bottom border straight into the hands of man at the right. The pointing or calling figure at his right [Leif?] is based on young Harold at William's court. As if to signal this wondrous bounty, the hand of God reaches down from the clouds (cf. the Bayeux Tapestry scene depicting Edward's funeral). In the bottom border, a man threatens a bear with his sword, in reference to the bear killed at Bear Island (*Erik the Red's Saga,* ch. 8). The depiction is from a bottom border of the Bayeux Tapestry, beneath an early scene of William's messengers on horseback.

The second scene shows men building a boat (as William's men do in the Bayeux Tapestry, before the Battle of Hastings) and other men smelting iron. Excavations at L'Anse aux Meadows showed that Vikings there had made

boat repairs and smelted iron for boat nails. The griffins in the top border most resemble those in the Bayeux Tapestry above a scene of Harold on a ship returning from France. In the bottom border, a man slings stones at some birds (from a bottom border in the Bayeux Tapestry, below the depiction of the dwarf Turold). At the right are the two Scottish runners, Haki and Hekja (*Erik the Red's Saga,* ch. 8).

The third scene shows Vikings trading red cloth for furs from the Indians (as Thorfinn *karlsefni* does in *Erik the Red's Saga,* ch. 11). The peculiar tree at the center is of the type often seen in the Bayeux Tapestry. The mustachioed man with the red cloth (Thorfinn) is modeled on King Harold, seen in the prow of his ship about to land in France. In the bottom border, a uniped takes aim at Thorvald in his ship (*Erik the Red's Saga,* ch. 12) and three natives carry a bag on a stick (the mysterious weapon mentioned in *Erik the Red's Saga,* ch. 11).

The fourth and final scene shows natives in loincloths attacking (some based on Norman archers) while a bull bellows and Freydís bares her breast (*Erik the Red's Saga,* ch. 11; the bull is taken from a scene where William's men seize food before the Battle of Hastings). Gudrid stands at the right, holding the infant Snorri. The borders below this scene cull naked figures from early on in the Bayeux Tapestry (the bosomy centaur is from above the scene of William's messengers; the squatting nude man is found under the Tapestry's depiction of Ælfgyfa and the cleric; and the nude pair appear under a scene of Harold and William on horseback carrying their hawks).

WOMEN RIVALS TO LEIF ERIKSSON

Although Leif may never be totally eclipsed as the first European to encounter North America, he has had to stand lately in the shadow of Gudrid Thorbjarnardóttir (Guðríðr Þorbjarnardóttir), one of the first Icelandic (temporary) settlers in America and mother of its first European infant, Snorri Thorfinnsson. We have already seen that William Morris chose her as one of three Vínland adventurers to depict in stained glass. In 1998, Jónas Kristjánsson, former director of the Icelandic Manuscript Institute (later the Árni Magnússon Institute), wrote a novel called *Veröld víð* (*The Wide World*), the subtitle of which translates as "a novel about the life and destiny of Guðríður Þorbjarnardóttir, the most widely traveled woman in the Middle Ages." In the year 2000, the catalog for an exhibition entitled *Living and Reliving the Icelandic Sagas* featured "sagas that describe the Norse encounter with North America and the life of Guðríður Þorbjarnardóttir, a remarkable Icelandic woman whose journeys carried her to the New World and to Rome." Despite the exhibition being partly supported by the Leifur Eiríksson Millennium Commission of Iceland, Leif does not get a mention in this New World connection.[56] Also in 2000 Margaret Elphinstone, a Scottish author of historical novels (living in Shetland, a group of islands once settled by Vikings) published *The Sea Road,*

"an ambitious re-telling of the Viking exploration of the North Atlantic from the viewpoint of one extraordinary woman," according to its back cover, on which also Magnus Magnusson writes "for a thousand years [Guðríðr] has deserved a saga in her own right. Margaret Elphinstone has made good the omission at last." Most recently, Nancy Marie Brown has published a beautifully written re-creation of Guðríðr and the world she lived in, entitled *The Far Traveler: Voyages of a Viking Woman*. The book was released on Leif Eriksson Day, 2007.[57]

NOTES

1. The –r at the end of the Icelandic form is a nominative ending and is vocalized, so the name is pronounced as in the tennis player (Rod) *Laver*. The Americanized version is usually pronounced "leaf" rather than (more properly) "lafe." Leif's surname (patronymic) is spelled in numerous ways, often Erics(s)on. The first –s is genitive: Erik's son.

2. The Magnusson and Pálsson translation includes as its first chapter a section concerning Erik the Red from earlier on in the manuscript (*Flateyjarbók*). Kunz omits this chapter, so the chapter numeration of the two translations differs by one.

3. See Helge Ingstad, "Vinland Ruins Prove Vikings Found the New World," *National Geographic* 126, no. 5 (November 1964): 708–34, and the more recent works of Birgitta Wallace.

4. In the presidential proclamation of Leif Erikson Day (October 9) in 1988, President Ronald Reagan remarked that "This explorer with a missionary spirit challenged the unknown with courage and faith," while President Bush's proclamation of 1990 noted Leif's conversion to Christianity and "his return to Greenland as a missionary," characterizing him as "This daring navigator with a missionary zeal." Reagan was the first president to emphasize that Leif was "to spread religion among the Greenland settlers" (1982, though he didn't specify "Christianity" except in 1985–87); Bush dropped the religious references in 1992 and they have not reappeared since, being replaced by paeans to Nordic immigrants, cooperation, and shared freedom. [note by LMM]

5. Vínland alone is mentioned earlier, by Adam of Bremen ca. 1075; in the Icelandic annals for 1121; and in Ari the Wise's *Íslendingabók*, ca. 1133. Some scholars find it "historically doubtful" that Leif was "Óláfr Tryggvason's agent in the Christianizing of Greenland." Geraldine Barnes, *Viking America: The First Millennium* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2001), 75.

6. Translation mine from the text online at Netútgáfan (fornrit), http://www.snerpa.is/net/snorri/heimskri.htm. A similar version of this account is found in *Erik the Red's Saga*, ch. 5.

7. Erik plays a brief role in *Flóamanna saga,* which records that "Some men said that Eirik held onto the ancient beliefs" (ch. 25; ed. Viðar Hreinsson, 3.295).

8. *Erik the Red's Saga* has sometimes been called *Thorfinn karlsefni's Saga* (e.g., by Rafn), since it does in fact treat Thorfinn more than it does Erik.

9. Erik's discovery of Greenland is also mentioned in *Eyrbyggja saga,* where it is said to have happened "fourteen years before Christianity was adopted by law in Iceland," i.e., 986 (ch. 24; ed. Viðar Hreinsson, 5.157).

10. See Ólafur Halldórsson, "The Vínland Sagas," in *Approaches to Vinland*, ed. A. Wawn and P. Sigurðardóttir (Reykjavík: Sigurður Nordal Institute, 2001), 39. Old Norse names are usually made up of two separate elements, although there are also some shortened forms. Leif by itself means "leaving" or inheritance. (Leif's sons also have Thor- names; see below.) Leif is mentioned briefly as living with Erik in Greenland in *Bárðar saga* (ch. 5; ed. Viðar Hreinsson, 2.242).

11. According to *Fóstbræðra saga* (ch. 20; ed. Viðar Hreinsson, 2.373), Leif had a (second?) son named Thorkell, who was head chieftain after him in Erik's Fjord.

12. The detail of "self-sown wheat" sounds like it may originate from tales of a paradisiacal land at the edge of the known world; in Norse mythology, when the world arises again after final battle of Ragnarök, it is said that the fields will grow "without sowing." Carolyne Larrington, trans., "Völuspá," in *The Poetic Edda* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), ed. C. Larrington, st. 62. On the other hand, Vínland scholars have often compared various beach grasses, such as strand wheat (Elymus arenarius), which may have seemed particularly noteworthy given the comparative lack of tall grasses on Icelandic or Greenlandic beaches.

13. See Birgitta Wallace [Ferguson], "L'Anse aux Meadows and Vínland," in *Approaches to Vinland,* ed. Wawn and Sigurðardóttir, 142–43. Other details point to this same general area, such as the use of skin canoes by the natives; according to Wallace, canoes were "only rarely used south of central Maine" (143). She concludes: "Anyone sailing due west from the Western Settlement [of Greenland] ends up in Baffin Island, or north of Labrador if leaving from the Eastern Settlement. Proceeding south from there leads automatically along the Labrador coast to the Strait of Belle Isle. The Strait forms a funnel into the Gulf of St. Lawrence. This is by far the most natural route from Greenland to resources such as those described for Vínland." (144)

14. In *The Saga of the Greenlanders* (ch. 5), Thorvald and his men come upon nine natives under their skin boats; they capture eight and then kill them, with no reason given. The ninth presumably informs his tribesmen and they attack, killing Thorvald. Barnes discusses nineteenth-century American commentary on the incident in *Viking America,* 80–87.

15. Leif is mentioned briefly for the last time in *The Saga of Greenlanders* (ch. 9) when he hears in Greenland about Freydís's having murdered other members of her expedition. He decides not to punish her but foretells that she and her descendants will not prosper.

16. I provide the geographical equivalents favored by Wallace; for a chart (by Gísli Sigurðsson) showing locales proposed by 15 scholars from Rafn to Wallace, see Keneva Kunz, trans., *The Vinland Sagas* (London: Penguin Books, 2008), 66–67. In chapter 8 of *Erik the Red's Saga*, in the Hauksbók manuscript only, Vínland is called Vínland the Good (so also in *Heimskringla*), a name adopted by some later writers (such as Jennie Hall and William Carlos Williams).

17. According to *Eyrbyggja saga*, ch. 48 (ed. Viðar Hreinsson 5.195), the man killed in Vínland the Good was Snorri Thorbrandsson. Another member of Thorfinn's crew, Thorhall Gamlason (not the same man as Thorhall the Hunter) is called "the Vínlander" in *Grettis saga* (ch. 30; ed. Viðar Hreinsson 2.97).

18. The Icelandic annals for 1121 mention that Vínland was sought in that year by Eiríkr Gnúpsson, bishop of Greenland. In his *Grønlandske Cronica*, printed in 1608, C. C. Lyschander mentions Vínland in this connection (see Barnes, *Viking America,* 71). Adam of Bremen mentions an island called Winland for the grapevines found there.

19. The 1847 edition adds material from *Erik the Red's Saga*, based on Rafn.

20. See Carl Christian Rafn, *Antiquitates Americanæ. Supplement* (Copenhagen: Royal Society of Northern Antiquities, 1841), 3–10, with illustrations at the end of the volume. In his 1827 novel *Red Rover*, James Fenimore Cooper describes the tower and comments that it "has suddenly become the study and the theme of that very learned sort of individual, the American antiquiarian" (ch. 3, p. 82). Characters discuss whether it might have been a mill or a fortress, but no reference is made to any Viking origins.

21. See Birgitta Linderoth Wallace and William W. Fitzhugh, "Stumbles and Pitfalls in the Search for Viking America," in *Vikings: The North Atlantic Saga*, ed. W. Fitzhugh and E. Ward (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institute, 2000), 377–78.

22. For the Crane fresco, see Stephen Wildman, *Waking Dreams: The Art of the Pre-Raphaelites from the Delaware Art Museum* (Alexandria, VA: Art Services International, 2004), 136–37.

23. See Barnes, *Viking America,* 120–21.

24. In his notes to the poem (142–44), Montgomery retells *The Greenlanders' Saga*, citing David Crantz's *History of Greenland* (1767; see above). James Montgomery, *Greenland and Other Poems* (London: Printed by Strahan and Spottiswoode, for Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1819), http://www.archive.org/details/greenlandandothe00montuoft.

25. See Barnes, *Viking America*, 128–30.

26. Ibid., 131.

27. See Rafn, *Antiquitates Americanæ,* 356–61. For an account of these and other "Viking hoaxes," see Erik Wahlgren, *The Vikings and America* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1986), and, Wallace and Fitzhugh, "Stumbles and Pitfalls," 374–84. The most spectacular is probably the Kensington Rune Stone, whose runes tells of a group of Vikings who make the Northwest Passage in 1362 and end up in Minnesota, burying their runestone in what would eventually become the farmyard of a late nineteenth-century Swedish immigrant with some knowledge of runes. More recently the so-called Vinland Map, acquired by Yale University in 1965, continues to be debunked and re-vindicated.

28. Norman Kelvin, ed., *The Collected Letters of William Morris* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 2.1.182–83 and 2.2.422–25.

29. See Charles A. Sewter, *The Stained Glass of William Morris and His Circle*, 2 vols. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1974–75), 2.224–25, and Edward R. Bosley, "Two Sides of the River: Morris and American Arts and Crafts," in '*The Beauty of Life': William Morris and the Art of Design,* ed. Diane Waggoner (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2003), 134–67 at 140–43, with a color reproduction on p. 142. The color cartoon is actually for an installation in Folkestone, Kent; Morris and Co. often re-used their designs in several locations. Burne-Jones's gray cartoons for the Vínland windows are owned by the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery.

30. See Wildman, *Waking Dreams,* with color reproduction on p. 293. For the Vínland windows, Morris planned runic scrolls in the windows flanking the Viking Ship, rather than the Sol and Luna used for Folkestone. Kelvin, *The Collected Letters,* 2.1.181.

31. Kelvin, *The Collected Letters,* 2.1.183.

32. For commentary on these novels, see Andrew Wawn, *The Vikings and the Victorians: Inventing the Old North in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2000), 322–25, and Barnes, *Viking America,* 92–103.

33.   The story was first published in *The Contemporary Review* and then included in *Many Inventions* in 1893.

34.   The term was used memorably by Archibald Ballantyne in 1888, with reference to Morris's translation of the *Odyssey*. For a list of Morris's translations, see the Morris Online Edition.

35.   See the "Friends of the Viking Ship," http://www.vikingship.us/.

36.   In Norwegian, "Leiv Eriksson oppdager Amerika." Another picture with the same title was painted by Hans Dahl (1881–1919), with Leif onshore in a pose not unlike at the end of the film *The Viking* (see below).

37.   See Peter van der Krogt, "Leif Eriksson Monuments Pages," http://www. vanderkrogt.net/leiferiksson/index.php (accessed March 7, 2011). A copy of the Calder statue was placed in Newport News, Virginia, in about 1938; it also figures on a six-cent stamp issued on Leif Eriksson Day in 1968 and on a commemorative Icelandic coin issued in connection with a U.S. silver dollar in the millennial year 2000.

38.   There is also a statue of Leif by John Karl Daniels in Leif Ericson Park, Duluth, Minnesota (erected 1956) and another by August Werner in Shilshole Bay Marina, Seattle, Washington (erected in 1962 in connection with the Seattle World's Fair). Both locations were areas of modern Scandinavian immigration. A statue by Einar Jónsson of another Vínland adventurer, Thorfinn *karlsefni*, was erected in Philadelphia in 1920. For statues of Gudrid and her son Snorri, see below.

39.   Sundby-Hansen, "Saga of Leiv," 2.

40.   Inga Dóra Björnsdóttir, "Leifr Eiríksson versus Christopher Columbus: The Use of Leifr Eiríksson in American Political and Cultural Discourse," in *Approaches to Vinland*, ed. Wawn and Sigurðardóttir, 224. An episode of the children's animated TV series "SpongeBob SquarePants," originally aired in 2000, begins with SpongeBob waking up in a Viking helmet and red beard, saying, "Hey everybody, it's Leif Ericsson Day! Hinga dinga durgen!" (The relevant excerpt may be seen on YouTube.)

41.   Although I have not seen any of the documentaries, one IMAX version, called *Vikings: Journey to New Worlds* (dir. Marc Fafard, 2004), has location footage in Iceland, Greenland, and Newfoundland, and digital graphics to illustrate shipbuilding techniques. One could also mention films in which Vikings (but not Leif) come to the New World: *The Norseman* (dir. Charles B. Pierce, 1978); *Pathfinder* (dir. Marcus Nispel, 2007); *Severed Ways: The Norse Discovery of America* (dir. Tony Stone, 2007); and the truly peculiar *Valhalla Rising* (dir. Nicholas Winding Refn, 2009). A TV show called *Tales of the Vikings* (1959–60) featured a main character named Leif Ericson (see imdb.com); I do not know whether he goes to the New World or otherwise relates to our hero in any way other than as a generic Viking.

42.   In the novel, Leif stops the fight and there is a further Greenlandic interlude, during which he converts a number of Greenlanders and Alwin learns from a seeress (a version of Thorbjörg) that his fate lies to the west, in the land first seen by Biorn Herjulfsson (Bjarni Herjólfsson).

43.   By contrast, the novel follows the sagas a bit more closely at least insofar as Leif and company stay a while in Vínland, finding self-sown wheat and grapes and so on, until they encounter savage natives, after which they all depart for Greenland, Helga and Alwin included. There is no mention of the Newport Tower or a Lost Colony (on which see Barnes, *Viking America*, 76–77).

44.   See Robert Cook, "Gunnar and Hallgerðr: A Failed Romance," in *Romance and Love in Late Medieval and Early Modern Iceland: Essays in Honor of Marianne*

Kalinke, ed. Kirsten Wolf and Johanna Denzel, Islandica, 54 (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008), 5–31.

45.   See E. M. Broner and Paul Pines, "A Poet's Perspective: An Interview with Henry Chapin," *North American Review* 257, no. 1 (March 1982): 55–58.

46.   Broner and Pines, "A Poet's Perspective," 58.

47.   For possible explanations, see McGovern; also Jane Smiley's novel, *The Greenlanders,* 1988).

48.   The story is entitled "Jimmy Olsen's Viking Sweetheart" and was reprinted in no. 122, September 1969 (DC Comics). Most but not quite all the panels of the reprint are reproduced online by Mister Kitty and Friends, under Stupid Comics, http://www.misterkitty.org/extras/stupidcovers/stupidcomics55.html.

49.   In the first version of the comic, she in fact calls Jimmy Eric the Red, which is changed to Leif Ericsson in the 1969 printing. Eric the Red's (presumed) red hair matched Jimmy Olsen's, but the authors must have realized in the interim that Eric never made it to Vínland.

50.   As Butterick points out, 581–82.

51.   See the note above concerning Thorvald and the natives in *The Saga of the Greenlanders.*

52.   See the interview at http://coldhardflash.com/2006/10/one-man-one-movie-112000-drawings.html.

53.   In fact the archaeological evidence indicates that Vikings stayed only a short while on Newfoundland. The Vínland sagas also report that the would-be settlers of Vínland had to return to Greenland.

54.   In Eiríksstaðir itself, one may visit a picturesquely located reconstruction of Erik's longhouse.

55.   Images of the tapestry, no longer labeled as such, can be found with some difficulty on the site www.leif.is (choose English, then choice of leisure and travel options, then Búðardalur, then "see more" for Leifsbuð / Leifur Eiríksson Heritage Centre).

56.   According to its author Cullen Murphy (http://www.theatlantic.com/past/docs/issues/99dec/9912murphy.htm), the comic strip *Prince Valiant* in 1999 also commemorated the Vínland millennium by incorporating not Leif but instead a character named Gudrid. Three copies of a statue of Gudrid and her son Snorri by Ásmundur Sveinsson (1893–1982; the original was first exhibited in 1940) were erected in Iceland and in Ottawa in 2000; see van der Krogt, "Leif Eriksson Monuments Pages."

57.   Some of the research for this article made use of the Fiske Icelandic Collection, Cornell University Library. I thank Patrick J. Stevens and Thomas D. Hill for their hospitality.

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Saint Francis of Assisi talking to the birds. Engraving from a thirteenth-century psalter. (Steven Wynn Photography)

Francis of Assisi (1181/1182–1226)

Anna Kirkwood Graham

INTRODUCTION

Saint Francis of Assisi is one of the best known and most beloved figures of the medieval era. Although the scion of a privileged class, he has inspired generations of followers through his radical renunciation of wealth and physical comforts and through his works of charity, to the extent that his influence today reaches most of the nations of the world and well beyond the limits of the Catholic Church. His embrace of absolute poverty made him both an exemplar and a thorn in the side of the thirteenth-century church, which found him useful to counteract the image of the luxury-loving priesthood and also to elevate the status of the poor and humble, but he also served to embarrass some by the contrast and worry others who saw the necessity of possessions toward the future stability of his Order. He founded the three Franciscan Orders—the First, the Order of Friars Minor or OFM; the Second, the Order of Saint Clare or Poor Clares; and the Third or Tertiary Order of Saint Francis (which allows members of the laity to observe vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience within their stations in secular life)—all of which thrive today. Although he was personally a little suspicious of learning, his followers would include some of the great philosophers and theologians of the late Middle Ages. His love of nature and of animals has rendered him dear to many who might not be moved by more conventional forms of religious piety. He was a nature mystic, and he is today the patron saint of animals and ecology. He was responsible for staging the first living Nativity scene, or crèche, in Christian history; and he was also Christianity's first stigmatic. He shares the honor of being patron saint of Italy with Saint Catherine of Siena. His feast day is celebrated on October 4, the day of his death; many churches, including the Anglican, Lutheran, and Episcopal churches, commemorate this with a blessing of the animals.

Saint Francis's sanctity was acknowledged immediately after his death, with the result that his life was well documented from the first, in part by eyewitnesses and people who knew him and accompanied him on his travels. This occurred initially at the behest of Pope Gregory IX, toward the process of canonization. One of these early authors was Thomas of Celano, who wrote Francis's *First Life* (1228), *Second Life* (1247), and *Treatise on the Miracles of Blessed Francis* (1253). Thomas of Celano is, however, unreliable and contradictory on details of Francis's youth, and it is very difficult to construct a chronology from his works. A second whose writings contributed to our knowledge was Francis's secretary and confessor, Brother Leo, along with Brothers Angelo di Tancredi and Rufino; their reminiscences provide the basis for the thirteenth-century *Legend of the Three Companions* and *The Assisi Compilation*: "both texts provide facts about and insights into Francis not found in the earlier lives and, as such, are indispensable in knowing the details of his life and vision."[1] These latter two have been described as the most authentic of the early lives, because they contain many anecdotes that could come only from everyday association with Francis. The authorship of many of

the early documents (aside from Thomas of Celano's) has been much debated; both of the authoritative anthologies of works by and about Saint Francis (see below) contain the arguments of various scholars in the introductions to each work, and it is not necessary to address the issue here.

In addition to the earliest figures, the great Saint Bonaventure, elected Minister General of the Friars Minor in 1257, wrote two early biographies of Francis, the *Major* and *Minor Legends,* by 1263, but it is unlikely that he ever met Francis, despite legends to the contrary. The thirteenth-century Anglo-Norman poet Henry of Avranches wrote one of the most important literary artifacts of the era, a life of Saint Francis in Latin verse, shortly after Francis's canonization. Although it was based on Thomas of Celano's *First Life,* it contains many "poetic expansions and embellishments" and a "much more critical account of [Francis's] misspent youth."[2] A number of other lesser, early biographies exist, in addition to the many that have been written more recently.

A difficulty in dealing with the early accounts of Francis's life, as with all medieval hagiography (and medieval biography in general), is that medieval saints' lives are very formulaic: they abound with stories and images that are repeated in one life after another, so that what survives today is often more symbolic of the general virtues that saints are supposed to have had—and that Francis undoubtedly had in abundance—rather than authentic and individualized portraits of characters. Thomas of Celano's work is more characteristic of this tendency than the more authentic-seeming works by Leo and his companions. The very language used by early hagiographers like Thomas can be highly ritualized. As A. G. Rigg[3] puts it: "[hagiography] was at times a minor literary industry," and hagiographers, as "professional" writers, were familiar with all of the *topoi* available for portraying their lives: "over time a collection of traditional themes or *topoi* emerged which reoccur in accounts of saints' lives . . . one of the consequences of this is that it is possible to group together saints whose stories follow a common pattern."[4] The early lives of Francis are by no means free from this tendency, and it is necessary to sift through them carefully to present a more factual account of Francis's life.

For instance, in accounts of his individual dealings with lepers, it is probably wiser to view the episodes in general as representative of his kindness to them and other unfortunates, because other saints are associated with lepers and, indeed, the Order of Saint Lazarus was founded for their care.[5] On the other hand, there is no doubt that Francis and the Franciscan friars made a point of helping lepers and other outcasts and frequented their dwellings and hospitals, and some of the episodes described are probably rooted in fact. The same may be said of many of the legends of Francis and his dealings with birds and animals; an ability to communicate with animals and birds is a frequent *topos* of a certain category of saints' lives (Saint Cuthbert, who spent years in hermitage off the coast of Scotland, communing only with seals and birds, springs to mind). But this is not at all to say that Francis did not love nature and demonstrate kindness to creatures, and whole books have been

written on the topic. Other *topoi* of saints' lives concern the dreams and visions that saints had or others had about them, their encounters with other holy men or women, their forbearance in suffering, their misspent youths, and the like. All of this said, we are very fortunate in having so much detail about Francis's life that must be regarded as authentic; the same cannot be said about many another saint.

Francis himself was the author of a number of works, dictated most probably to Brother Leo, although two examples exist in Francis's own handwriting: a *Letter to Brother Leo* and the *Praises of God,* written for Leo. Francis wrote in both Latin and Umbrian Italian (he also spoke French); his Latin is not of a very high quality. In addition to the two works aforementioned, Francis wrote a number of letters and prayers, his *Testament* on his deathbed, and two versions of a rule for his order, one in 1209/10 (the original lost today, but existing still as revised in 1221) and one in 1223. Of these rules, the prominent scholar and biographer of Francis, Paul Sabatier, believed that the early or "primitive" rule was closer to Francis's true intent, and that "the latter Rule represented not what Francis wanted for his order, but what Cardinal Ugolino and the Church forced upon Francis." Sabatier was not a Catholic, however, and it is possible that he overstates the degree to which Francis was compelled against his will: a later, Catholic theologian suggests instead that the *Rule* of 1223 was simply the primitive rule expanded by revisions in 1221 and then rendered more legalistic in 1223.[6] Other writings by Francis are known to be lost. One last work that must be mentioned is the beloved *Canticle of Brother Sun,* perhaps the work most popularly known today, so expressive of both Francis's love of creation and his profound faith:

> "All praise be yours, my Lord, through all that you have made,
> > And first my lord Brother Sun,
> > Who brings the day; and light you give to us through him."

Francis's works, however, were never intended to be autobiographical, so it is primarily to his biographers that one must look for the details of his life.

Physical artifacts and early artistic depictions of Saint Francis abound. At Greccio, which Francis first visited in 1217 and where he sited one of his favorite hermitages, there is a depiction of him on a wood panel dating from the early thirteenth century (possibly during his lifetime) and originating from the accounts of people who knew him and could describe his appearance; it shows him mopping his eyes because of the eye affliction (possibly trachoma) from which he suffered beginning around 1220. His burial place, the Basilica di San Francesco in Assisi, built in his honor shortly after his death, contains frescoes by Giotto and Cimabue illustrating his life, as well as the twelfth-century crucifix from San Damiano that inspired his pivotal experience of religious conversion. Samples of his own handwriting remain, most notably on a parchment containing his *Blessing for Leo*; Leo's handwritten description of Francis's experience at La Verna exists on the same

parchment, housed at the Basilica (which also houses one of his habits). His very remains were exhumed in 1978 to provide for scientific analysis and then, after a special rite, reinterred in the lower church of the Basilica. Indeed, it is not common for a figure from the Middle Ages, other than royalty, to be so well and early documented and depicted.

EARLY LIFE

The man we know today as Saint Francis was born Giovanni di Pietro di Bernardone in Assisi, a town in Umbria, Italy, in 1181 or 1182. Perhaps to reflect his love for France, where he traveled often in the course of business, the young Giovanni's father changed his name to Francesco soon after his birth. His parents were Pietro and Pica di Bernardone. The family belonged to the wealthy merchant class; his father dealt in cloth, and the young Francis was brought up to follow in his father's footsteps. His father was indeed one of the wealthiest men in Umbria and owned a number of estates in the vicinity of Assisi as well as dealing widely in cloth.

Although the amount of education that Francis received is debated, it is clear that he received enough to express himself eloquently in a variety of ways. He attended the parish school of San Giorgio near his home. He was never intended to be a scholar, though his biographers describe him as clever; much spoiled by his parents, he grew up instead pursuing pleasure. His mother, in particular, who may well have come from France, instilled in him a love of poetry and song, of courtly manners and chivalry; his model then was the troubadour. Many sources tell us that the young Francis had a strong interest in the Arthurian legends and that he and his future followers shared the secular value of chivalry, whatever the church may have felt about it. Early sources are very kind to Pica, but much less so in their descriptions of Pietro, despite the fact that his father would seem to have indulged Francis's excesses rather than to have driven him very hard.

The young Francis led a very different life from the one he would later lead. He enjoyed finery and lavish parties, spending a great deal of money and running around with a wild crowd of youths who ate and drank too much and scandalized the community, although more by wildness than by viciousness; both Thomas of Celano and Henry of Avranches suggest that he was by no means celibate at this period of his life. In appearance he was small and slight, "his face a bit long and prominent," dark-haired and dark-eyed, "his nose symmetrical, thin and straight" (*First Life* 83); later he would sport a tonsure and a beard, but he dressed like a popinjay in his youth.

Although he helped his father with the family business, he showed little interest in settling down to anything serious at all, and in fact Thomas of Celano notes that "he squandered and wasted his time miserably . . . outdid all his contemporaries in vanities and came to be a promoter of evil" until his twenty-fifth year. Even his faults, however, reflected the generosity, gaiety,

and charm that would make him so charismatic as a religious leader; he early demonstrated the love of nature that would make him the patron saint of animals and ecology in later eras, as well. He never, before or after his religious conversion, displayed the animosity against and contempt for women so characteristic of clerics of the time, adopting instead an attitude of friendship, respect, and chivalry.

We know that Francis accompanied his father to France in 1197, to the cloth fair in Champagne; Pietro Bernardone had the reputation (as well of the success) of a ruthless businessman, and no doubt when Francis accompanied and assisted his father, he was expected to follow suit. On their return, however, they found a region thrown into turmoil by the death of the Holy Roman Emperor, Henry VI. Tensions among rival cities across Italy were exacerbated, including one between Perugia and neighboring towns in Umbria. Francis got caught up in the conflict, first as a builder, helping to fortify Assisi against attack, then as a soldier himself, in 1202 at the Battle of Collestrada. Unfortunately, the force that Assisi sent forth against the Perugians was inadequate to the task; the battle was described as a massacre, and the Assisians soundly beaten. Mistaken for a noble, Francis was taken prisoner rather than put to death, and he found himself imprisoned for almost a year, until a ransom was negotiated and paid by his father; his cellmate was Angelo di Tancredi, who would become his lifelong friend. His health, and perhaps his soul, was permanently affected by his imprisonment; some scholars believe that he contracted tuberculosis and that this would be the ultimate cause of his death.

His character, at least, was not immediately affected. He left prison emaciated and weakened, but he still sought out revelry and indulgence, and he toyed with the notion of a military career. He even ventured forth to become a soldier in the retinue of Walter de Brienne, in 1205, but a second illness and a fateful dream sent him back to Assisi—or perhaps it was the death of Walter in Apulia (later he would encounter Walter's brother, John de Brienne, in Egypt; see below). At any rate, Francis would return home from this experience to spend the next year discerning his mission; part of this discernment involved a pilgrimage to Rome and another, consultation with his lifelong mentor, Bishop Guido of Assisi. The latter had arrived in Assisi in 1204, and hearing accounts of a prodigal youth who may have seemed debauched by night, but who gave away quantities of money and food to the poor all the while, was one of the first to recognize religious genius in Francis. He would frequently assist Francis in negotiating the intricacies of church politics and hierarchy as Francis's mission became more concrete.

Perhaps with Guido's encouragement, Francis journeyed to Rome at the end of 1205 or the beginning of 1206; here he had his first experience of begging, when he exchanged clothing with a beggar and stood in his shoes for a day. He witnessed the abject poverty of the beggars there, in the midst of the grandeur of the city and the wealth of the church. His return to Assisi marked a new sobriety in him.

In medieval Europe at this time, most people felt an almost supernatural horror of leprosy (probably a blanket name for a number of diseases with similar symptoms, including leprosy, *Mycobacterium leprae,* itself), which led to the ostracism and mistreatment of the unfortunates who were afflicted by it. Lepers were condemned to live outside the walls of the city, to abandon their homes, families, and livelihoods, to wear distinctive clothing and carry clappers to warn people of their approach, and to beg for their living. Many stories surround Francis's humane treatment of lepers who lived around Assisi, including his charity to them at this critical period of his life, when he was said to have first dismounted and kissed the hand of a leper, suppressing physical revulsion at the sight and smell, and then to have taken a great sum of money to the leper hospital and distributed it to the inmates there, kissing each one's hand as he did so. Later, he would use the humane treatment of lepers by new recruits to the Order as a sort of "trial by fire," for them to demonstrate their poverty and humility: "thus at the beginning of the religion, after the brothers grew in number, he wanted the brothers to stay in hospitals of lepers to serve them . . . whenever commoners or nobles came to the religion . . . they had to serve the lepers and stay in their houses" (*Assisi Compilation* 9).

Although he still spent his evenings in revelry, his companions noticed a new sobriety in him; when asked whether he would be married, "'Yes', he replied, 'I am about to take a wife of surpassing fairness.' She was no other than Lady Poverty whom Dante and Giotto have wedded to his name, and whom even now he had begun to love."[7]

Another phenomenon that marked this period of Francis's life was his increasing need to find seclusion for prayer and his continual lapses into trances; he underwent constant emotional turmoil, constant vacillation between doubt and faith, in this process of discernment. He began to retreat to Mount Subasio, to the southeast of Assisi, where he sought out caves in which he could spend time in contemplation, first demonstrating his profound bent toward finding God in nature. He probably became known to the Benedictine monks who inhabited the monastery of San Benedetto on Subasio at this time; they were to become his friends and benefactors.

One day in 1206, Francis visited the church of San Damiano, which lay, neglected and in poor repair, to the south of Assisi. *The Legend of the Three Companions* tells us that Francis knelt in front of the crucifix there to pray, and while absorbed in the image of the suffering Christ, heard a voice saying, "Francis, don't you see that my house is being destroyed? Go, then, and rebuild it for me." Trembling and amazed, he undertook what he was commanded, and as the legend continues, "From that hour his heart was stricken with melting love and compassion for the passion of Christ; and for the rest of his life he carried in it the wounds of the Lord Jesus" (*Legend of the Three Companions* 13–14). While it might be that the legend of this experience was embroidered, there is no doubt that Francis was always deeply devoted to the cult of the crucified Christ and his sufferings on the cross.

At first Francis simply gave the priest in charge of San Damiano some money to keep the lamp burning in the church. But a sense of mission grew in him until he did something that would seem rather disgraceful today—although Francis and his followers would undoubtedly hold that the real disgrace lay in the condition of the church and the disparity of wealth that left some poor and others with more than they needed—he "stole" bolts of his father's most valuable cloth while his father was away, took them to Foligno, and sold them (along with the very horse that he rode), and then returned to San Damiano to attempt to give the priest there the money to restore the church. The priest, doubting that Francis could be serious, sent him on his way again without taking it, but Francis persisted, trying to rebuild the church with his own hands. When Pietro returned, he was indeed furious about the theft from his stores and demanded that Francis return the money. Francis hid from his father for weeks.

When Francis emerged from hiding, filthy and unshaven, and returned to Assisi looking like a madman, the people of Assisi, including his relatives, pelted him with filth and abuse, and rather than helping him, Pietro seized him and kept him imprisoned for awhile. This was the beginning of the rift with his son that would last until the end of Pietro's life; no doubt Pietro felt betrayed by Francis and embarrassed by his erratic behavior. When the soft-hearted Pica freed him at length, Francis took leave of his home once more and returned to San Damiano to continue the work of building the church; no plea or demand from Pietro moved him. Throughout this time, however, Bishop Guido had remained Francis's friend and would now mediate between father and son. When brought before the bishop and ordered by him to repay his father's money, Francis did so immediately, but did more besides: he stripped himself naked and returned the bundle of his clothing to his father as well. He renounced Pietro and embraced God as his true father, leaving Pietro to stalk home in anger and grief, bearing Francis's clothes with him, while Guido wrapped him in his own cloak: "he realized that a great mystery lay behind the scene he had just witnessed, and from now on helped and watched over Francis with loving concern" (*Legend of the Three Companions* 20).

THE EMBRACE OF LADY POVERTY

The course of Francis's life hereafter must be understood in the context of his radical devotion to the poverty of Christ and to his sufferings on the cross: for Francis, the poor and the sick were (in the wording of *The Assisi Compilation* 114) "a mirror for us in which we should see and consider lovingly the poverty and weakness of our Lord Jesus Christ which he endured in His body for the salvation of the human race." Possessions were a barrier between man and God. This indeed was the mission that Francis gave the Franciscan order in his *First Rule* (9): to abandon all worldly goods, abase the self, and serve the poor, trusting in the charity of others to provide for one's daily needs.

"Alms are an inheritance and a right which is due to the poor because our Lord Jesus Christ acquired this inheritance for us." He viewed even the unjust poor—for instance, robbers—as worthy of Christ's mercy, and in emulating Christ, his companions were admonished to give everything they had to alleviate the distress of others. Hence it is that, even today, a postulant to the Franciscan Order is required to give away all of his or her worldly possessions before entering orders; Francis kept only breeches, robe, and cincture, gave everything else he had to give to the poor, and begged for his daily sustenance, when he embraced his religious life.

Poverty as a form of religious discipline was a problem for the church then, and it is difficult to overstate how critical an issue it would become for the Franciscan Orders. Both the religious and laypeople could and did criticize the church for its wealth and possessions, while the church hierarchy preferred that even monastic foundations have common possessions in the form of endowments for their maintenance, rather than depending on alms. The church vigorously suppressed groups that practiced extreme asceticism, like the Cathars and Waldensians, which it considered heretical, and which criticized it in turn for its materiality. On the other hand, how could the church restrain a genuine desire to live as Christ did himself? The genius of the movement that Francis originated lay in its adaptation of radical poverty to the rules and approval of the church. These early Franciscans were ardent supporters of the papacy and were granted the so-called privilege of poverty in return.

Poverty, however, would be more problematic for the women who followed Saint Francis under the future leadership of his beloved friend and protégé, Clare di Favarone. Clare, born in Assisi in 1193 or 1194, was a nobleman's daughter who ran away from her family and the comforts of her home before she was 20, to follow Saint Francis and establish a women's foundation on his model; this became the Second Order of Franciscans, and later the Poor Clares. Clare idolized Francis, and she seems to have shared the gifts of sincere fervor and charisma that made Francis so magnetic a leader, besides showing remarkable maturity and skills of leadership. Before long, she attracted almost as many followers as Francis himself. The church did not permit women religious to beg for alms, however, and Clare and her followers were not initially allowed to adopt absolute poverty formally, despite their desire to; friars provided for them instead. Finally, the privilege of poverty was granted to her foundation as well, though there is debate about when this happened. Clare died in 1253; soon afterward, in 1255, the church canonized her. Her body is interred in the church dedicated to her, Santa Chiara of Assisi, not far distant from the Basilica di San Francesco.

Francis also adopted active bodily mortifications for himself, although he forbade the most extreme for his followers. He neglected his own health: "the love that filled his soul since his conversion to Christ was so ardent that, despite the prayers of his brothers and of many other men moved by compassion and pity, he did not trouble himself about taking care of his sicknesses" (*Legend of the Three Companions* 37). Francis's mortifications of the flesh and

fasting undoubtedly diminished the span of his life: "when he was exhumed in 1978 his skeleton bore the signs of osteoporosis and advanced if not fatal malnutrition."[8]

Francis's deep and direct experience of Christ's sufferings reflects his profound mysticism. Mysticism, as a religious practice, involves a direct union of the soul with the Divine, which often occurs while the subject is in a trancelike state. Such a trancelike state might be induced by meditation and repetitive prayer, much the way transcendental meditation might be practiced today; it might also be produced by fasting and physical mortification, in some cases. Francis, of course, engaged in all of these activities, and whatever the cause, experienced many visions and dreams that influenced his own behavior and that of others. Thus Francis's greatness (or perhaps wisdom) as a theologian, as a preacher, and as a teacher stemmed not from formal education or from a great intellect as we would define it today, but from genuine goodness and, as a mystic, a direct experience of God. But much of the aforesaid was still in the future for Francis and Clare, after Francis had founded an order, after he had met Clare, and after she had followed him.

RELIGIOUS LIFE

When Francis parted from his father and home for good, in 1206, he intended to return to his mission of repairing San Damiano. But as he walked through the forest outside Assisi, robbers beat and robbed him of his last possession, the cloak that Bishop Guido had given him; even so, "he jumped out of the ditch . . . [and] glad with great joy, he began to call out the praises of God" (*Legend of the Three Companions* 23). This great joy in the face of adversity or in the most ordinary moments of life was one of the most distinctive parts of Francis's character.

To support himself and win materials for rebuilding San Damiano, he begged in the streets of Assisi, using his skills as an actor and minstrel as much to entertain as to beg. He received scraps of food (some spoiled) and ate them, first with distaste but then joyfully, and managed to drag vast amounts of stone back, but his begging and antics mortified and grieved his family: "when his father saw him in this pitiful plight, he was filled with sorrow . . . he was both grieved and ashamed to see his son half dead from penance and hardships and . . . he cursed Francis" (*Ibid*.). Francis paid no attention to his father's curses or the mockery of his brother but persisted until the work was done, living as a hermit near San Damiano all the while and winning the admiration of passersby for his patience.

Soon he became inspired to share his insights by preaching in public; this was when he began to attract followers. Francis and the early Franciscans preached with a direct and heartfelt simplicity, in the vernacular, in a style that was far removed from the dry Latin sermons that the people would have heard in church. Two of his first followers were Bernard di Quintavalle, a

wealthy property owner of Assisi, and Peter of Catanio, a lawyer. Both gave all of their worldly possessions to the poor, donned the habit, and joined Francis in wandering the streets in search of materials and rebuilding another church, San Pietro della Spina. Next to join was Brother Giles, a man of Assisi. And they continued to come—Sabbatino, Morico, John of Capella, Barbaro, Bernard of Viridente, Philip the Long; even Angelo di Tancredi, Francis's childhood friend and a noble, joined them soon—until there were 12; a number of these first adherents would be Francis's closest companions for the rest of his life. They endured mockery and suspicion (their ragged and dirty appearance being against them) but persevered in preaching publicly, not only in Assisi but in the surrounding countryside, and in repairing churches, until Francis realized that he was there not only to rebuild small churches but to renew the whole institution of the church. During this period, Francis attended Mass regularly at Santa Maria degli Angeli, which was associated with the Abbey of San Benedetto; it later became the mother church of the Franciscan Order.

Through the example of their lives, their works of service and charity, and most important, the charisma and energy (Adrian House calls it "an almost radioactive energy") of Francis, the Franciscans became increasingly influential around Assisi and well beyond. Much of their effort during this phase was directed at missionary work: they wandered about Italy and beyond in pairs looking for new recruits who would help them to expand. Bernard and Giles even ventured through France and Spain, as pilgrims to Santiago de Compostela. Although sometimes the early friars were received with suspicion, mockery, or violence, on other occasions they were given food and shelter— Francis would not allow them to accept money as alms—and, best of all, their message began to take hold.

They called themselves the Friars Minor, the Lesser Brothers. As Francis would say, "the Lord has willed that they be called Lesser Brothers, because they are the people whom the Son of God asked of the Father . . . *what you did for one of these, the least of my brothers, you did it for me*" (*Assisi Compilation* 101). The designation marked their humility, and it would be codified in their first Rule.

With the advent of followers and the expansion of the original mission, it became necessary to formalize a rule to guide them. The Rules that were in place for other monastic orders or for the regular clergy did not work for Francis's ragged little band. The problem that it presented for the norm was in the novelty of a mendicant order of friars: they did not inhabit a monastery, like the Benedictines or other monastic orders that already existed; they roamed freely, rejecting permanent houses and living in wattle huts, caves, or other rough shelters instead. They begged for their sustenance as opposed to depending on endowed funds or farming extensive estates, as many monastic foundations did. They had no possessions in common, not even books; Francis's original intent was that they would own nothing at all. What Francis would have seen around him was monks and priests living in relative

ease—if not luxury—in sturdy and comfortable houses with steady supplies of food and books to use for liturgical purposes as well as for education and edification—well above the standards that the truly poor were forced to endure. And for another thing, few of Francis's followers were priests, as yet; Francis himself was never to become one. (A priest of Assisi named Silvester, who had earlier chiseled extra money out of Francis for stones that he had already sold him, had a change of heart and became the first priest of the fledgling First Order.) So Francis devised a new rule, drawing mostly on passages from scripture; it was simple on the surface, but deceptively so: there was no doubt that Francis expected rigid adherence to his precepts. His way of life, then, might well have threatened established norms and been suppressed, had it not been for his personal magnetism and the enthusiasm that he raised in his listeners, as well as his complete devotion to the church as an institution.

Francis's First Rule exists today as revised in 1221. First and foremost it requires obedience and reverence to the pope and his successors, but immediately upon that, it enjoins obedience to one another, chastity, and abnegation of property. A postulant to the Order will be given "two tunics without a hood, a cord and trousers, and a caperon reaching to the cord" (*First Rule* 2), the sum total of permissible possessions; the brothers were frequently observed giving even these few garments away to someone in need of them. The rule goes on to prescribe modes of prayer and fasting, of punishment and service to the poor and sick, of missionary work (including missions to the Saracens), and of relations with women. Friars are forbidden to ride on horseback unless compelled by sickness—early stories tell of barefoot traveling friars leaving bloody footsteps in the snow.

Francis's Rule, like any other, required approval from the church in order not to be deemed heterodox. Fortunately for Francis, it was evident to church authorities even early on that the popular religious movement that he would inspire would be beneficial to them.

Francis and his band accordingly set off to Rome to visit the Papal See. Here they encountered their old friend, Bishop Guido of Assisi, who was able to advise and assist them in negotiating the bureaucracy of the See. After conferring with lesser figures for a few days, they were eventually granted an audience with Pope Innocent III himself. Thomas of Celano reports that Innocent had had a vision shortly before, of the Lateran basilica about to fall into ruin, "when a certain religious, small and despised, propped it up by putting his own back under it lest it fall" (*Second Life* 17). When Innocent met and talked to Francis, he was supposed to have recognized that small and despised man who would save the church, and he readily granted his approval of the Rule. This dream was famously depicted by Giotto di Bondone among the frescoes on the walls of Francis's basilica. Francis became a great admirer of Pope Innocent III, and Innocent promoted the interests of the Order in turn, recognizing its great value in evangelizing among the poor and humble and countering the popular perception of the clergy as addicted to luxury and leisure.

After their visit to Rome, the friars returned to the valley of Spoleto. They had previously inhabited a variety of hermitages, but now they shared a single cowshed. They occupied themselves in labor and prayer, continuing to beg for food, according to the rule of poverty. As yet, Francis did not allow them even to own prayer books, so they prayed from memory and in contemplation of the cross. They slept on the floor, each in the space allotted for him; Francis himself wrote their names on the beams under which each had his place. Soon, however, it became clear that they would need a place for prayer, so they erected an oratory made of reeds, along with a cell for private meditation. Here they lived until a peasant claimed it as a stall for his ass.

When they were evicted from this initial abode, Abbot Maccabeo of the Benedictine monastery of San Benedetto offered them the church of Santa Maria degli Angeli, "a dilapidated little chapel in a forest . . . [which] with the surrounding land was also known as the Porziuncula, or Little Portion," [9] outside Assisi, where Francis had been attending Mass. Francis accepted with a proviso: as they could not own property, they would be considered to be renting it for an annual fee of a basket of fish from the river. This was the condition that Francis wished to impose on any house that the Order would occupy in the future—that it be known that the friars were mere renters, not owners, of the property—and it would be a sore point as the Order grew.

Here, around the mother church of the Order and the permanent home of Saint Francis, the friars built huts in which to live. There was no abbot, Francis having refused such a designation for himself; all were to be equal in rank. Eventually there would be priors of individual settlements and a Minister General of the Order, but it would not officially be Francis, who always refused to appoint himself leader, even when most regarded him as such. He did retain control of admitting novices to the Order in the early days, however, as well as dictating the terms of membership in his Rule. He was determined to admit no one who could not comply with his understanding of absolute poverty.

The Third Order, the lay order of people who embraced poverty, chastity, and obedience appropriate to their stations in life, perhaps arose during this phase (between 1209 and 1215; some insist that it was considerably later), when laypeople in the area chose to follow Francis more closely, inspired by his early disciples. And the Second Order, founded by Clare in 1212, grew almost as rapidly as the First; the women were granted San Damiano as a headquarters by the bishop.

The First and Second Orders maintained close connections in the early days, visiting freely with one another; indeed, the friars begged for alms to support the nuns, because everyone recognized that it would be unadvisable for them to do so on their own behalf. The friendship between Francis and Clare was especially intense and might be described as romantic, although unquestionably platonic—a meeting of minds and understandings of spirituality. Theirs was an unusual conjunction of two charismatic and inspired leaders

who had the ability to sway many followers from a wide variety of stations and places.

Many of Francis's best-known followers and closest companions were in place by 1215: the first 12, of course; Brother Leo, a priest who would be Francis's confessor and secretary; Rufino di Scipione, scion of a wealthy and influential family of Assisi; Masseo di Massignano; Brother Juniper, who became the trusted companion of Clare; and later the biographer Thomas of Celano, the troubadour Brother Pacifico, and the scholar Brother Elias, whose future would be so brilliant and so troubled.

During the period from 1212 to 1215, Francis made two abortive attempts to evangelize the Saracens. The first, in 1212, found Francis en route to Syria, but he was shipwrecked on the way and forced to return to Italy. Again, in 1214, he set out for Morocco, but was sidelined in Spain by illness. In the meantime, he occupied himself with preaching in Central Italy and in contemplative retreats at his mountain refuge of La Verna, but he never forgot his desire not only to convert the infidels but to bring peace between warring Christians and Muslims. Across Europe, the rhetoric surrounding crusades inspired a number of sad attempts: the Children's Crusade of 1212, which ended at the Mediterranean shores of Italy with many of the children dying of disease or starvation, or straggling home in failure; a second children's effort, wherein the children were sold into slavery by the men who offered to take them to Jerusalem; and a third featuring adults in Spain, which had the limited success of confining the Moors to Andalusia.

HIERARCHY

In 1215, Innocent convened the Fourth Lateran Council, which Francis attended. Here he brushed shoulders with the princes of the church and made the acquaintance of Dominic de Guzman, the founder of another great thirteenth-century mendicant order, the Dominicans, the Order of Preachers. Before Dominic founded his own order, in 1216, he attempted to join the Franciscans, but because he did not forego a regular income, Francis would not admit him. Ultimately, Dominic did renounce worldly possessions on his own behalf and that of his order. Francis and Dominic remained friends until Dominic's death in 1221. And the Dominicans would produce one of the great minds of the Middle Ages in Saint Thomas Aquinas.

Two items on Innocent's agenda for the council affected the Franciscans in particular: the attempt to regularize the mendicant orders and to compel them to accept property in common, and the call for a fifth crusade. The former distressed the early Franciscans and especially Clare, because it burdened the women's houses to a greater degree, but the latter appealed to Francis and would shape his future, while other reforms were more palatable from the outset—that the mendicant orders should contain more regularly trained priests, in particular. Innocent is said to have granted the privilege of poverty

verbally to Claire when she appealed to him directly after the council, although officially it was not granted until just before her death. Innocent died not long after the Lateran Council and was succeeded by Cencio Savelli, who took the name Honorius III.

Another rising luminary whom Francis would have encountered at the council was Ugolino dei Conti di Segni, later (after Honorius's death in 1227) Pope Gregory IX. Pope Honorius III appointed Ugolino plenipotentiary legate to Northern Italy in 1217; as such, he would exert much influence on the fledgling Order, in which he took an interest sometimes for the better, and sometimes not. In particular he kept his thumb on the Second Order, frequently compelling the women to adopt practices and policies that they did not desire; conversely, he was among Clare's greatest admirers (in fact, all of the churchmen with whom Clare had dealings came to view her with extraordinary respect). Two of Francis's practices worried Ugolino especially: his embrace of absolute poverty and his rejection of "book learning" and of the very books themselves. Not surprisingly, Ugolino was convinced that endowments and education would help the Order become more stable and influential.

Francis's suspicion of education and prohibition of books might strike modern readers as uncharacteristically narrow-minded. Francis, on the other hand, might retort that Jesus Christ, his Lord and his paradigm, was a carpenter, not a theologian. Francis experienced theological truth through the most direct method possible: received *sapientia,* or wisdom, rather than through years of training in school acquiring mere *scientia,* or knowledge; he might be said to represent what Etienne Gilson called the Augustinian family of philosopher theologians, who believed that "all the rational truth about God that had been taught by the philosophers could be grasped at once, pure of all errors, and enriched with many a more than philosophical truth by the simple act of faith of the most illiterate among the faithful."[10] Francis's narrow-mindedness might be said to lie more in not recognizing that this direct route was not available to all of his followers than in rejecting knowledge for its own sake. He believed, most fundamentally, that the quest for knowledge interfered with simplicity and humility, and that the friars would benefit more by spending time in prayer than in poring over books: "blessed Francis did not want his brothers to be desirous of learning and books, but wanted and preached to the brothers to be eager to have and imitate pure and holy simplicity, holy prayer, and Lady Poverty, on which the holy and first brothers had built" (*Assisi Compilation* 103). For Francis, brothers who forsook simplicity for education, who preached to impress others, had abandoned their vocation and would become puffed up in vanity and self-congratulation. But his position on education would ultimately fail, as more men entered the First Order: some of the finest and best-educated minds of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries would be Franciscans, including Saint Bonaventure, Roger Bacon, William of Ockham, Ramon Llull (who was a tertiary), Saint Antony of Padua, John Duns Scotus, and a number of others less well known.

As the Order grew in its first decade of existence, then, and particularly between 1215 and 1220, Francis lost control over the process of recruitment. Newer recruits came in who had a desire for better accommodations and also for books and the opportunity for education. Their motives for joining the Order became less focused on Francis's ideals—for some, entering upon a religious life was actually a road to better living, education, and advancement, and the Franciscan Order, which enjoyed the high favor of the church, might well advance their cause. And so, during this period and beyond, there was continual tension between those who wanted to follow Francis absolutely, renouncing everything, and those who favored a more liberal approach to the religious life (Ugolino tended to side with the latter). The former eventually split off into the suborder known as the Spiritual Franciscans, who endured persecutions of their own, as heretics, in the fourteenth century; some were burned at the stake. There was a sad and fundamental irony in this: that the more Francis-like Franciscans were the ones who became the heretics, in the end.

Increasing numbers also made it necessary to organize the Order into 12 provinces—8 in Italy and 4 beyond the Alps—under the supervision of Ministers elected by their subordinates; these provinces would meet at semiannual General Chapters at Porziuncula. The first General Chapter was held at Pentecost in May 1217; the second yearly conference would be held at Michaelmas. Among the things decided at the first General Chapter was that missionaries would be sent out on more ambitious journeys, across Europe and even to Outremer (the crusader states of the Middle East: the County of Edessa, the Principality of Antioch, the County of Tripoli, and the Kingdom of Jerusalem), to found missions and gain recruits. The notion of hierarchy, in which one man was master over others, did not please Francis, but he acknowledged that the weight of numbers made it necessary. New recruits insisted on regarding Francis as Minister General, although he never claimed the title for himself and wished to be considered instead one of the humblest of the brothers.

Francis was finally forced to accept that they all would need permanent accommodations, and so he began to permit houses and chapels to be built for them in lieu of caves and hermitages, and he reluctantly allowed the possession of a few service books in common—Franciscan service books are known for their small size, making them not only more portable but less costly and ostentatious. He also adopted the observance of the Divine Office to organize their days, which made them increasingly like other monastic foundations. Francis himself and his ideal of apostolic poverty had become remote to the majority of the friars.

As had been decided at the General Chapter, much of the work of the Order became focused on missions abroad, including Outremer, a mission to which Brother Elias was dispatched as leader immediately after the first chapter. Although Francis wished to focus on France for his own missionary work, he was dissuaded by Ugolino, who recognized his value at home. So Francis

spent much of the year 1218 roaming Italy, arousing extraordinary enthusiasm among his listeners and inspiring a popular religious movement that was of great interest and utility to the church, because first and foremost, it emphasized obedience to church tenets, and it also discouraged lawsuits and complaints that might be levied against the hierarchy. Francis usually preached outdoors, in simple but enthusiastic and approachable language that the common people loved. His listeners sometimes snatched at his clothing, hoping to tear off a piece of it as a relic of the holy man: "So great was the faith of the men and women, so great their devotion toward the holy man of God, that he pronounced himself happy who could but touch his garment" (*First Life* 62).

THE FIFTH CRUSADE AND ITS AFTERMATH

In 1219, Francis made the fateful decision to join the Fifth Crusade, as a peacemaker rather than a soldier. The *Second Life* (30) records that he went with "the desire for martyrdom"; he would be a knight for Christ in the best chivalric tradition. He left for Acre in the summer, accompanied by Peter of Catanio (this was not the same Peter of Catanio who was one of the early members of the order, who had died before this date) and a handful of others. Brother Elias was in charge of the mission in Acre, and after a brief sojourn in his company, Francis continued on with one companion (or several, according to Sabatier), Brother Illuminato, to the crusaders' camps outside the Muslim city of Damietta, at the mouth of the Nile in Egypt. These camps were the bustling headquarters of perhaps 40,000 Christian soldiers under the secular leadership of John de Brienne, king of Jerusalem in exile. Unfortunately for the mission, Pope Honorius had also put Cardinal Pelagius of Saint Lucia as legate in charge of his own expedition to Damietta, and Pelagius began to dispute the strategy and command with John of Brienne. Their mission was to recover Jerusalem from the Muslim forces and the Ayyubid dynasty, but in the course of this undertaking, they made a base outside Damietta and laid siege to the city, which they wished to turn into a center for trade. This siege began in May 1218 and lasted until after Francis's arrival in Egypt; when it began, the city had some 80,000 inhabitants and was an important and prosperous trading port in the Mediterranean. A surprise attack won the defensive watchtower of the city, situated on a small island in the Nile, for the crusaders in August 1218.

The news of the fall of the tower of Damietta, its first and perhaps most important line of defense, caused the death of the elderly sultan al-Adil. His son al-Malik al-Kamil became sultan of Egypt; he had already been the leader of the forces trying to battle the crusaders. Now the crusaders were able to besiege the city in earnest, and the situation became more critical for al-Kamil and the Muslim forces. The siege went on through the blistering heat of two Egyptian summers, during which the crusaders and the occupants of Damietta

alike were wracked by plagues of disease-bearing flies and epidemics of dysentery and scurvy.[11] By the time Francis and Illuminato arrived, gangrene and disease were rampant not only in the camps, but also in the city.

Tensions rose inevitably as conditions worsened. It became clear that battle could not be postponed much longer. The *Second Life* (30) describes a vision that Saint Francis had, in which the Lord showed him that if the battle were to take place, it would not go well for the Christians. After some hesitation, he went before the Christian forces "with salutary warnings, forbidding the war, denouncing the reason for it." And indeed, the Christian forces were turned back on August 29, when some 5,000 crusaders may have died. It was then that Francis resolved to approach the sultan toward an attempt at peacemaking.

When Francis and Illuminato approached Sultan al-Kamil, they may first have been seized and maltreated: "for before he gained access to the sultan . . . he was captured by the sultan's soldiers, was insulted and beaten" (*First Life* 57). They were then received "very honorably" by the Sultan himself, given gifts, and listened to courteously, but sent away empty-handed (although with a protective escort), succeeding neither in converting the sultan nor in achieving peace. Steven Runciman describes his visit in terms that are not complimentary to Francis but evocative of the circumstances:

> The battle had been watched with sad dismay by a distinguished visitor to the camp, Brother Francis of Assisi. He had come to the East believing, as many good and unwise persons before and after him have believed, that a peace-mission can bring about peace. He now asked Pelagius to go to see the sultan. After some hesitation, Pelagius agreed, and sent him under a flag of truce to Fariskur. The Moslem guards were suspicious at first but soon decided that anyone so simple, so gentle, and so dirty must be mad, and treated him with the respect due to a man who had been touched by God. He was taken to the Sultan al-Kamil who was charmed by him and listened patiently to his appeal. . . . Francis was offered many gifts, which he refused, and was sent back with an honourable escort to the Christians.[12]

Not long after his visit, however, the sultan, determined to save Damietta, offered a trade to the crusaders: he would cede them Palestine, if they would leave Egypt. Although John of Brienne and his troops were eager to accept the offer, Cardinal Pelagius would not agree. And thus the stage was set for the final disgraceful episode of the siege of Damietta. The crusaders stormed the city walls on November 4 and found a mere 3,000 emaciated inhabitants alive, the other 70,000-odd souls having died of disease or starvation. The Christians promptly looted the city, raping and beating the last sickly inhabitants, or taking them to sell into slavery. To all of this were Francis and Illuminato witnesses, no doubt appalled by the savagery surrounding them.

Brother Elias and the other missionaries came from Syria to join them. The brothers spent their time in prayer and caring for the sick and the wounded. Francis wore himself out in caring for others; his health, never vigorous, was permanently broken, and he would return to Europe in 1220 with a chronic inflammation of the eyes that would eventually leave him blind. No doubt he also experienced traumas of the spirit after witnessing the ugliness of war and the behavior of the crusaders.

In 1935, medical historian Edward Frederick Hartung collated all of the symptoms Francis suffered after his time in Egypt and concluded that the affliction of the eyes from which Francis would suffer for the rest of his life was trachoma, which even today is the world's most common infectious cause of blindness and endemic in Egypt since ancient times. Today, the disease can be treated (if caught early enough) with antibiotics; untreated, it causes constant discharge, with other symptoms similar to pinkeye. Blisters on the eyelids and their eventual inversion follow; the inversion causes constant abrasion by the eyelashes, which in turn causes ulceration of the corneas and ultimately blindness. Hartung's diagnosis fits the symptoms described by Francis's biographers well, but of course it is impossible to know for sure. In Francis's day, trachoma was a chronic, painful, and debilitating disease for which there was no effective treatment: "for it St. Francis' physicians applied eye bindings, salves, plasters and *urina virginis pueri*, the sovereign eye wash [of the time]. In final resort the doctors applied hot irons to the Saint's face."[13] Hartung also speculated on the cause of Francis's stigmata and death (see further below).

While the crusaders won the day at Damietta, they would not win the war. The Fifth Crusade ultimately saw the crusaders return home in shame, with nothing to show for their efforts and Damietta again in the hands of the infidel. Runciman, in his three-volume history of the Crusades, categorizes the Fifth among "Misguided Crusades."

Following Francis's time in Damietta and before he returned to Acre, there is a gap in the records. No one knows where he was or how he spent his time; perhaps lying sick somewhere in the Middle East between the two cities, perhaps journeying to sites in the Holy Land. Even today, following the Franciscan mission to Acre led by Elias and Francis's time in Egypt and Syria, the Franciscans retain a special right of access to and care of Christian sites in the Holy Land.

RETURN TO EUROPE

Francis returned to Italy unhealthy and subdued. He spent some time in retreat on an island near Venice, praying and preparing for his return to Assisi and the altered circumstances that he knew he would find there. His order had changed in his absence: the vicars Gregory and Matthew whom he had left in charge had brought the Franciscan houses even further into line with the established monastic orders and further away from their simple beginnings.

New fasts, even more rigorous than the old, had been prescribed. Ugolino had imposed a rule, his *Constitutions*, on the Second Order that rendered them little different from Benedictine nuns, without regard for their unique beginnings or their desire to live as their male counterparts did. John of Capella was attempting to split off from the rest to found an order of lepers. Friar Peter of Staccia was known to be living in a comfortable house in Bologna with a library of books and a group of other friars, in utter disregard of Francis's wishes. Several friars had been martyred in Spain, the first Franciscan martyrs.[14] Furthermore, a rumor that Francis had died abroad left many uncertain of their future direction. Francis undoubtedly had much to deal with on his return, and little energy with which to do it.

Francis, uncharacteristically enraged, swept the house in Bologna clean of its inhabitants, even the sick who were lying there, much in the spirit of Christ purging the Temple of its money-changers. Then he proceeded directly to Pope Honorius at Orvieto, there to bare his soul to the pope and seek his guidance. Honorius, while sympathetic, did not waver: the Order was to be led by the dictates of the Lateran Council, the curia, and the pope. Ugolino would be the Order's Protector, and it would be to him that Francis would now appeal. To Ugolino's credit, at Francis's appeal he reversed some of the more objectionable innovations that he had previously sanctioned or prescribed, but Francis resigned any role of leadership in the Order, and bowed to the inevitable.

At some time before this period, Francis was said to have had a vision of a small black hen that "had so many chicks that it was unable to gather them all under its wings, and so they wandered all around her in circles" (*Legend of the Three Companions* 63). He recognized himself in the hen, and his brethren in her chicks, his many sons whom he could no longer protect. From this he learned the lesson that he must resign his order into the care of the church, but he hesitated to burden Honorius himself with the charge. And so he was glad to hand them over to Ugolino as protector, despite their differences. As Pope Gregory IX, Ugolino would be "a remarkable benefactor and protector of the brothers as well as of other religious, and above all, of Christ's poor" (*Legend of the Three Companions* 67).

Peter of Catanio then became Vicar General of the Order (or Minister General; the terms are often confused in the sources); when Peter died shortly afterward, the position went to the brilliant but flawed Brother Elias. Elias was extremely devoted to Francis and was appointed by the pope to oversee the construction of Saint Francis's Basilica in Assisi, but power corrupted him in the end. He lapsed into luxury and treated his confreres so highhandedly that he had to be ousted and excommunicated.

Another outcome of Francis's exile and return was that Ugolino had ended the informal and easygoing relations between the men's houses and the women's. Francis could no longer spend time in long conversation with Clare. Nor did he take an active interest in women's foundations, despite Clare's wishes; in part, this was at Elias's insistence, but it was also in line with Ugolino's *Constitutions*. Francis was perhaps more willing to part company with the

women's houses than they were to lose him and the brothers. Ugolino became most truly the guide of the Second Order, in Francis's absence, although the friars continued to act as visitors to the houses and deliver sermons, hear confessions, and administer the sacraments, generally performing the services that the sisters were unable to perform on their own behalf.

ILLNESS AND DEATH

By 1221, Francis "suffered from infirmity of the eyes, stomach, spleen, and liver" (*Second Life* 96); accordingly, his behavior and temper had become erratic. Perhaps his most trying behavior toward others involved his rejection of books; one poor novice begged him repeatedly to be allowed to own a breviary or a psalter, and Francis seems to have lost his temper with him repeatedly:

> The same one spoke to him again about a psalter. And blessed Francis told him: After you have a psalter, you will desire and want to have a breviary; after you have a breviary, you will sit in a fancy chair, like a great prelate telling your brother: 'Bring me the breviary.' And speaking in this way with great intensity of spirit, he took some ashes in his hand, put them on his head rubbing them around his head as though he were washing it, saying: 'I, a breviary! I, a breviary!' He spoke this way many times, passing his hand over his head. The brother was stunned and ashamed. (*Assisi Compilation* 104)

This stubbornness extended to property and to his own health, as well; when the friars implored him to seek the aid of a doctor (which would have availed nothing in any case, given his ailments and the state of medical practice at the time), he refused to do so; when he finally gave in to their wishes, his situation was too dire to treat. Thomas of Celano attributed his ill health to his lifestyle, "in as much as he had chastised his body and brought it into subjection during the many years that had preceded . . . his body had had little or no rest while he traveled" (*First Life* 97) in order to spread the message of God. It was necessary for him now to ride an ass rather than walk to do his customary outdoor preaching and evangelizing, but he prayed standing erect, not sitting. His primary concern was never the care of his body, only the preservation of spiritual joy: "Blessed Francis had this as his highest and main goal: he was always careful to have and preserve in himself spiritual joy internally and externally, even though from the beginning of his conversion until the day of his death he greatly afflicted his body" (*Assisi Compilation* 120).

Despite his illnesses, Francis traveled to Rome as needed. In 1223, he was there to discuss the revision of his rule with Ugolino, for which purpose he was housed in the cardinal's palace; the Rule of 1223 was approved in November

of that year and has remained in place ever since. *The Assisi Compilation* (97) tells that even while he was a guest in Ugolino's palace, he went out to beg for alms on the street and not only ate the scraps of food that he received but shared them with the dignitaries who were also guests, to Ugolino's embarrassment. Once, when returning from a visit to Rome, it was raining, and "since he was very sick, he was riding on horseback, but he got off his horse [to pray], standing on the road side despite the rain which completely soaked him." His manifold sufferings seem to have intensified in him the mystic's fervor, or, as Adrian House puts it, "as his body decayed, 'the inner man was renewed' and burned even brighter."[15]

Another frequent destination of Francis during this period was Greccio, a site south of Assisi where he had a hermitage. Here, also in 1223, Francis introduced a Christmas tradition that lives on today: he staged the first living crèche in history. He had a manger prepared, and to call to memory the birth of Christ, he set before living eyes the hay in which the infant lay, the ox, the ass, and the miracle of Bethlehem: "the night was lighted up like the day, and it delighted men and beasts" (*First Life* 85). The people present were filled with joy, and communities throughout the Christian world adopted the living Nativity scene.

According to the *Little Flowers of St. Francis,* in 1224, Francis decided to spend the 40 days before the feast of Saint Michael in fasting at his retreat at La Verna. He traveled there with his old companions, Angelo, Masseo, and Leo, who insisted that he ride on an ass, because he was ill and the summer was hot. Here he lived in a hut made of wattles, and he spent his time at first in teaching the others "the observance of holy poverty" and how to live in hermitage. Later, as he meditated alone, he was observed by his brothers "rapt in God and raised from the ground . . . sometimes as high as three feet, sometimes four, at others times halfway up or at the top of the beech trees."[16] Leo would go to him then, and embrace and kiss his feet, if they were in reach. Francis sought out a location even more remote, had a hut made for him there, and withdrew from the others; only Leo could come to him with bread and water for him to eat, and they would celebrate matins together.

In this hut, Francis kept fast "with great abstinence and severity," prayed fervently, and scourged his already dying flesh; at the same time, he increased in virtue and inspiration. He received visits from both devils and angels and, more mundanely, wild birds. *The Little Flowers* tells us that Francis was visited there by a seraph, a six-winged angel, during whose appearance the whole mountain appeared to be on fire, and shepherds keeping watch in the fields were afraid. Most miraculously of all, during this vigil the stigmata of Christ's crucifixion were imprinted on Francis's hands, feet, and side, where they would remain for the remainder of his life, making him the first stigmatic in history. The wound in his side, the mark of the spear wound in Christ's side, oozed blood constantly and left marks on his clothing and dressings, while his hands and feet needed to be bandaged, and for the first time in years, Francis was forced to wear foot coverings.

Francis tried to keep these wounds a secret, although several of his brothers, including Leo, Angelo, Rufino, and Elias, all caught glimpses of them, and ultimately everyone knew. After his death, his body was examined, and the church was satisfied that not only were the wounds real, but they were neither self-inflicted nor caused in some way by the friars: "the undeniable truth of those stigmata appeared most brilliantly through sight and contact not only in his life and death, but also after his death, the Lord revealed their truth even more brilliantly by many miracles shown in different parts of the world" (*Legend of the Three Companions* 17). Even today the Catholic Church regards their appearance as a bona fide miracle. Others have sought a scientific explanation: could they have been psychosomatic, for instance? Or caused by a disease like tuberculosis, malaria, or leprosy, all of which can cause skin lesions and damage to the extremities, and all of which are plausible given Francis's other symptoms? Adrian House's biography of Francis contains an extended discussion of the possible scientific and medical causes of the stigmata; his own thesis is that they were caused by lymph-node tuberculosis, *Lupus vulgaris* or scrofula, which causes pink or reddish nodules, ulcers, and scarring of the tissue, which happen suddenly as tissue deteriorates.[17] He thus accounts for the lung hemorrhages as well. No matter what the cause, natural or supernatural, the stigmata have always been accounted among the proofs of Francis's sanctity, and since then, hundreds of stigmatics have been documented.

Francis became more reclusive as he neared the end of his life. He could no longer bear sunlight because of the pain it caused in his eyes, and he preferred darkness to lamplight at night. Clare had a hut made for him outside her own accommodations at San Damiano, where she could tend to him; according to *The Assisi Compilation* (83), he lay there for 50 days. He suffered continual pain and sleeplessness, which he embraced, composing praises and consolations for Clare and his male companions, which he dictated as he lay in the darkness. This was the period during which he composed the beloved *Canticle of Brother Sun,* which became an immediate success: he bade his brothers to go forth, preach to the people, and sing it to them afterward, and so it was popularized around the countryside. *The Assisi Compilation* tells us that Francis recited it daily until his death.

Finally, Ugolino prevailed on him to receive treatment: "Brother, you do not do well in not allowing yourself to be helped with your eye disease, for your health and your life are of great value not only to yourself but also to others . . . you must not be cruel to yourself in such a serious and manifest need and illness" (*Assisi Compilation* 83). Brother Elias, by now General Minister of the Order, also commanded him to receive treatment and expressed a desire to be present when it happened.

With a special *capuche* (hood) covering his head and more especially his eyes, he was brought on horseback to a specialist in Rieti, Master Nicholas. Here Francis postponed his treatment as long as possible until Elias could arrive, but Elias was detained by business, so the treatment began without him.

The only remedy that the doctor could suggest was cauterization of the tissue "from the jaw to the eyebrow of the weaker eye" (*Assisi Compilation* 84). This terrible solution, in an era without anesthetic, might possibly end the continual discharge from his eyes. At the time of the procedure, Francis prayed to Brother Fire for mercy while the doctor heated the iron instrument. Witnesses fled in dread of watching his torment, but when they returned, Francis chided them for lack of faith: "I felt no pain nor even heat from the fire. In fact, if it's not well cooked, cook it some more!" (*Ibid.*). While his biographers attributed this lack of sensation to the generosity of the fire, it too has been explained by modern scholars as a symptom of his underlying disease. A characteristic symptom of leprosy, for instance, is the loss of sensation in the affected area; if Francis was suffering from advanced leprosy, given his prolonged exposure to the lepers whom he was trying to help, this could account for why he was able to withstand the unbearable pain of the cauterization.[18] Unfortunately, the procedure did no good whatsoever.

He was spared from fire on another occasion as well. Once, while sitting close to the fire, his breeches caught on fire. Untroubled by this, he refused at first to put them out. It was necessary for someone else to do it for him. In *The Canticle of Brother Sun,* Francis praised fire among the other elements as part of God's creation: "All praise be yours, my Lord, through Brother Fire, through whom you brighten up the night. How beautiful is he, how gay! Full of power and strength."[19]

Another doctor tried puncturing Francis's eardrums to solve the problem; not only did this not work, but Francis suffered a great deal in the process. He was fortunate only in receiving careful and constant attendance: "[he] was continuously cared for by his closest and most devoted companions, all experts in nursing the sick, all familiar with the problems of his stigmata and the agony from his lungs, stomach and eyes."[20] Indeed, accounts of his final year present a poignant picture of constant suffering in general and the decline of his strength and senses, as well as the patience with which he bore it and his concern for other beings and things in spite of it. Even while suffering desperately himself, for instance, he was eager to help a poor woman who came to his doctor for help for her own eye ailment. He sent her a mantle, pretending that it had been borrowed from her and then returned again along with loaves of bread, and saw that she received food regularly afterward. He apologized to his caregivers for his weakness and assured them that God would reward them, not for helping him, but for the good works that God knew they would have done if they had not been preoccupied with him. Many other such stories surround the last few months of Francis's life; he continued to deprive himself and give his scanty possessions to those in greater need until the end, while praying constantly and offering praises to God and creation.

Accounts of miracles performed by him abound during this period, as well. The miracles of his insensitivity to fire, of hearing beautiful music from nowhere, of restoring wine to a distracted caregiver when it had all been drunk by his clerical admirers while visiting him, all occurred during his final

months. His companions moved him about as best they were able, from one city to another in search of medical assistance, and from hermitage to hermitage in search of respite. A crowd greeted him whenever he entered a new town, while he was sometimes driven even from his hermitages by visitors. Elias kept a watchful eye over his care, seeing that his dearest companions were able to be with him even while others complained of favoritism.

At a friary north of Siena, Francis began to vomit blood. Many believed that the time of his death was imminent; they begged him for final words. He encouraged them again to embrace Lady Poverty and obey the church, but he did recover enough to be moved on toward Assisi. They continued to break their journey at hermitages; at La Celle, where he suffered a relapse, his symptoms were described as "bleeding from the stomach and an enlarged liver and spleen," suggesting that "apart from chronic undernourishment and possible TB, he was suffering from a peptic stomach ulcer and the side effects of malaria. His abdomen began to swell—his hands and feet too—from dropsy; he could take no solid food."[21] He was very near the end.

By early September 1226, he was in Assisi, blind and weak, but still mentally alert. Soldiers carried him to Bishop Guido's palace there near his parents' house, where he welcomed Sister Death, dictated a final verse of his *Canticle* in praise of her, and looked forward with joy to union with God; Elias was forced to reproach him for the unseemly joy that he was experiencing at the approach of death, when he might be contemplating sin and death instead, but Francis would leave life as he had led it—in joy and celebration of Creator and creation. Here he dictated his *Testament* from his bed: "Many find its forty simple sentences the purest and most moving distillation of his *modus vivendi* because it emerged straight from his heart" without intervention by church authority.[22] In a way, it contradicted the formal Rule of the Order approved by the church, because it resurrected the absolute poverty that Francis had always desired for the friars without the admixture of possessions imposed by Ugolino. But Ugolino would have the final say.

Finally, sensing that he had but days to live, Francis had himself conveyed back to Porziuncula. This was always his home, then and now the geographical heart of the Order, although the official headquarters is the Basilica de San Francesco. He lay on the earth naked for awhile, but was persuaded to dress again in obedience to his comrades. He began to dictate final letters to those dearest to him, including beloved Clare, who was too ill to visit and afraid that she might die without seeing him again. She would see him again, but only after his death. His dear friend and patron of the order Giacoma de Settesoli of Rome brought him a shroud, candles, and some almond cookies of which he was especially fond, even as he was dictating a letter to her asking for those very things, another of the miraculous events surrounding his dying and death. The gatekeeper admitted her despite the rule against commingling of the sexes, at Francis's behest.

At the end, Francis summoned all of his dearest companions to his bedside—those present included Bernard of Quintavalle, first of the brothers

to renounce every worldly good on his behalf; Elias; Angelo, his boyhood friend; and Giles. And after blessing them all and, through them, all of his order, commending the order into their care, and reciting Psalm 142, Francis slipped into death on the evening of October 3, 1226, at the age of 44 (in the reckoning of the day, this was already October 4, which is why Francis's feast day is celebrated on October 4 today). Giacoma, too, was there, while friars had come from many countries and from all over Italy to keep vigil. In accordance with one of Francis's final wishes, they laid his naked body on the earth, giving expression to the poverty and humility in which he had lived, and to the love that he had for the earth and all creation.

FRANCIS, THE PATRON SAINT OF ANIMALS AND ECOLOGY

Professor Lynn White Jr., the eminent historian of science, wrote the following in his 1967 essay, *The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis*:

> Possibly we should ponder the greatest radical in Christian history since Christ: Saint Francis of Assisi. . . . The key to an understanding of Francis is his belief in the virtue of humility—not merely for the individual but for man as a species. Francis tried to depose man from his monarchy over creation and set up a democracy of all God's creatures. With him the ant is no longer simply a homily for the lazy, flames a sign of the thrust of the soul toward union with God; now they are Brother Ant and Sister Fire, praising the Creator in their own ways as Brother Man does in his.

It was he who first suggested that Saint Francis be recognized as the patron saint of ecology, a designation that he was granted formally in 1979, by Pope John Paul II. Roger D. Sorrell puts it this way: "He showed how much he valued [creatures] in the way he applied standards of chivalric behavior to them, in his beliefs about the proper use of creation's bounty as food, and in his contemplative experiences amid the glories of creation."[23]

Sorrell finds "chivalric compliment" in the form of address that Francis uses in the *Canticle of Brother Sun*: "And first my lord Brother Sun . . . through Sister Moon and Stars," and so forth. This was "Francis' unique way of showing his high regard for creatures by giving them the same type of chivalric honors he also gave to his human 'companions of the Round Table.'"[24] Chivalry is related to almsgiving for Francis as well; magnanimity demonstrated to the poor reflects well on the giver, and it is part of *noblesse oblige*.

One of the most famous episodes involving Francis and creatures was his sermon to the birds, during the summer of 1213. Here, according to Thomas of Celano, Francis "ran eagerly" to a flock of various kinds of birds that he encountered along the way, and, finding that they seemed to expect something, began to address them in a sermon: "My brothers, birds, you should praise

your Creator very much and always love him: he gave you feathers to clothe you, wings so that you can fly, and whatever else was necessary for you. God made you noble among his creatures" (*First Life* 58). The birds listened to him with rapt attention, and Francis resolved then never to neglect to include birds, animals, and "even creatures that have no feeling" in his evangelizing. This indeed was not simply to treat them with concern and affection, but also to acknowledge that they had intellects and perhaps even souls that could be stirred to love of God.

As noted above, it is sometimes difficult to know how much credence to give individual anecdotes in saints' lives. Where powers of communication with birds and animals are concerned, many saints have been said to have possessed them. What Lynn White recognized in Francis was that, rather than exerting power over creatures to demonstrate that they were within human dominion, he exerted power over them by acknowledging their equality with him as fellow parts of God's creation (although more orthodox theology would not admit the degree of equality that Professor White and others have found in Francis's beliefs). There is, finally, no real reason to doubt that Francis truly loved and drew inspiration from the natural world—every account of his life and deeds abounds with such joy in nature that this becomes the dominant sensibility underlying all else. Another saint might perhaps have been named patron of Italy in his place; no other saint but Francis could have been named as patron of animals and ecology.

Francis always sought out wild and beautiful places for his solitudes with God, from the first throes of his conversion until the end of his life; indeed, many have observed that central Italy is riddled with caves and groves associated with his hermitages. In the account of Francis's fateful days at La Verna in 1224, *The Little Flowers* abounds in natural description, vividly portraying not only the dramatic scenery surrounding the friars but also Francis's contemplation of it: "Francis began to study the location and the scenery," and

> a few days later St. Francis was standing beside that cell, gazing at the form of the mountain and marveling at the great chasms and openings in the massive rocks. And he began to pray, and then it was revealed to him by God that those striking chasms had been made in a miraculous way at the hour of Christ's Passion when, as the Gospel says, "the rocks split."

Francis's propensity for seeking out the wilderness and his standing rapt in contemplations reflect the medieval notion that all of creation consists of visible signs by which the Creator can be known, and that every creature symbolizes some truth about God: "from these visible things, therefore, one mounts to considering the power and wisdom and goodness of God as being, living, and understanding," in the words of Francis's follower Saint Bonaventure, in *The Mind's Road to God*.[25]

If one truly believes that all of creation is a road to union with the Creator, one cannot help but treat all of creation with extraordinary care. Francis demonstrated such care to every creature that he encountered. He released birds and rabbits from traps, and he set fish free when they were caught. He pleaded for room for flowers among the vegetables—"He used to tell the brother who took care of the garden not to cultivate all the ground . . . for vegetables, but to leave a piece . . . that would produce wild plants that in their season would produce 'Brother Flowers'" (*Assisi Compilation* 88)—and for some part of each tree that was cut to be spared to allow it to regenerate. He made a pet of a pheasant that he had been sent for food. He moved frogs, toads, worms, and other creatures out of danger. He even converted a "dangerous" wolf to Christianity and sent it on its way tamed. Late in life, he befriended a crow, who was said to have followed his coffin to the grave and to have pined away after his death. In a world where the smallest of God's creatures was a symbol of the greatness and mystery of God's works, Francis seems to have been one of few who had the depth to see and apply this ethos consistently. No wonder, then, that even a scientist mourning mankind's destructive role in the natural world could appreciate and recognize the wisdom and chivalry of Saint Francis.

AFTERLIFE

After they raised Francis from the earth again, the friars washed his body and anointed him with spices. All who were present were then witnesses to the stigmata, although many there already knew of it. Witnesses reported as well that his body was restored to youth and suppleness. Elias made the stigmata known then to all of those keeping vigil outside, as well; during the night that followed he allowed the friars sometimes to kiss them and sometimes merely to see them.

Messengers were sent to bring word of Francis's passing to Clare, the church authorities, and secular leaders. Clare could not come, owing to her own illness, but others came to pay respects and to witness the stigmata.

Francis's body was finally placed in a coffin and carried in a procession toward Assisi and the church of San Giorgio, Francis's childhood church and school. Singing, on the way there, they stopped by San Damiano, where Clare and the nuns could mourn and then rejoice over his life. They kissed his wounded hands and sent him again on his way home to Assisi. His requiem Mass was then held in San Giorgio; many attendees waited in the piazza outside because the church could not accommodate them all. San Giorgio would be his first resting place.

In 1227, Ugolino succeeded Pope Honorius as Pope Gregory IX. By then, so many miracles had occurred since Francis's death and through his intervention that Pope Gregory had no hesitation in beginning the process of his canonization; besides, Gregory knew the living Francis so well and, despite

their differences, revered him so highly that he bore personal witness to Francis's sanctity. On July 16, 1228, Francis was proclaimed a saint in the Piazza del Comune in Assisi; the pope's procession included John of Brienne king of Jerusalem among other dignitaries. Bishop Guido, Francis's lifelong patron, was able to be present as well, although he would die the same year.

On the day following the canonization, the cornerstone of his basilica was laid by Pope Gregory himself. Elias, who had been passed over initially as the new minister general of the order, was put in charge of the building. Francis would be interred here for good, although his body was moved once within it, in 1978.

The Franciscan Order continued to be vexed by the question of poverty after Francis's death. His most faithful adherents, including Clare, continued to petition for Francis's ideal, whereby brothers and sisters would own nothing, not even the buildings they lived in, while Pope Gregory and brothers like Elias insisted that money could be held in common for their needs, that they could have large and permanent dwellings for their housing, and that they could own books and become educated. There are still streams in the First Franciscan order—Friars Minor Conventual, Friars Minor, and Friars Minor Capuchin—some more strict, like Francis, and others more relaxed, but they all abide by the governance of the Papal See, in the end. After being elected Minister General in 1232 and supervising the construction of the basilica, Elias became so devoted to his possessions that they became his downfall; his opulent lifestyle and arrogant behavior were a subject of disgrace throughout the Order, and he was replaced and ultimately excommunicated; a sad ending for a man who seemed truly to have loved Francis while living and who had great ability. Today there are some 30,000 members of the three branches of the First Order.

Clare died in 1253. She was attended in her last illness by Giles, Leo, Angelo, Rufino, and Juniper, Francis's own favorite companions. Pope Innocent IV, Gregory's successor, was her great admirer, and before her death, he finally approved the rule that she desired for her order—poverty as Francis had understood it. Innocent wanted to proclaim her a saint immediately but was prevailed upon to begin a formal process instead. She was canonized in 1255, and her body lies in her own basilica in Assisi. Thomas of Celano wrote of her life, as well. The Poor Clares, as the Second Order was officially renamed around 1263, now number around 18,000 members.

And finally, there are hundreds of thousands of members of the Third Order, some living in community, some in the world, all inspired by the life of history's humblest man.

CONCLUSION

It can be difficult for moderns, living in a skeptical world where almost everything can be explained by science, to understand the medieval notion of sanctity, of miracles, and of the supernatural, at least among non-Catholics. Why

indeed would not bathing for years, wearing hair shirts and scourging the flesh until the body was abscessed and oozing, eating fetid scraps, or kissing the decaying lips of a leper be particularly "holy" behavior? Why would anyone believe accounts of someone resisting the torments of demons, when there are no demons, and pronounce that man or woman holy? And if there are no miracles, how can they be proof of sainthood? It is difficult for most people living today to enter into a past world where the supernatural was vividly real; where scourging oneself reflected the humility and suffering of Christ and a willingness to assume burdens for his and for others' behalf; where everything that was, was a sign of God or some sacred truth of his; and where miracles were ever-present signs of a voice interceding for salvation with God.

Perhaps what makes Francis so charismatic, so enduring, and so far-reaching today is that anyone can understand what made him a saint. It was not just his mortifications of the flesh that made him holy, it was also the love and humility that compelled him to spare others' sufferings, to offer every little thing he had to someone poorer. It was not just his belief in the omnipresent supernatural forces of good and evil, of the signs and symbols of God's work in the natural world, it was also his appreciation of the natural as beautiful and intrinsically worthwhile, and of man's humble place in both the natural and the supernatural spheres. And it was not just the miracles performed by him and through his name that made him so revered through the ages, but the manifest goodness, profound faith, joyousness, and true charity of his life that enabled and still enable him to touch believers and skeptics alike, making followers of them all. He remains for many the best exemplar of true Christianity who ever lived, after Christ himself.

NOTES

1. *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents, Vol. II: The Founder,* ed. Regis J. Armstrong, J. A. Wayne Hellmann, and William J. Short (New York: New York City Press, 2000), 62: this three-volume set on Francis of Assisi contains all of the early documentation of Francis's life in the most recent edition and translation available.

2. A. G. Rigg, *A History of Anglo-Latin Literature: 1066–1422* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 184.

3. Ibid., 12.

4. University of York, *Pilgrims and Pilgrimage: Saints in Medieval Society,* at http://www.york.ac.uk/projects/pilgrimage/content/med_saint.html.

5. See Luke Demaitre, *Leprosy in Premodern Medicine* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), 147: "[Saints] were venerated as models of charitable dedication, who suppressed the revulsion toward loathsomeness. Saint Francis . . . was portrayed as kissing a leprous wanderer (on the lips, in some iconography) and then hastening to the leprosarium of Assisi, where he distributed alms to the inmates. Saint Elizabeth of Hungary (1207–1231) reportedly nursed a leprous beggar and took him into her bed."

6. This demonstrates that modern biographers are no more free of biases than their medieval counterparts, with some trying to ascribe behaviors and miracles to

post-traumatic stress and psychoses and others eager to defend the truth of sanctity, the church, and miracles; the truth is undoubtedly somewhere near the middle.

7. Paschal Robinson, "St. Francis of Assisi," in *The Catholic Encyclopedia: Vol. 6* (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1909). Available at http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06221a.htm (accessed Nov. 18, 2010).

8. Adrian House, *Francis of Assisi: A Revolutionary Life* (Mahwah, NJ: Hiddenspring, 2001), 170.

9. Ibid., 79–80.

10. Etienne Gilson, *Reason and Revelation in the Middle Ages* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1938), 16–17.

11. House, *Francis of Assisi,* 207.

12. Steven Runciman, *A History of the Crusades: Volume III. The Kingdom of Acre and the Later Crusades* (London: The Folio Society, 1994), 134–35.

13. "Medicine: St. Francis' Stigmata," in *Time* magazine, Monday, 11 March, 1935, available online at http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,883261,00.html.

14. "During the General Chapter of 1219 Francis sent a group of six friars to the missions of North Africa. Their names were Vitale, Berardo, Pietro, Accursio, Adiuto and Ottone. Vitale, the superior, fell sick in Spain, and had to abandon his resolve to go to Morocco to evangelise the moors. The others proceeded under the leadership of Berardo. They first went to Seville, in southern Spain, which was occupied by the moors, and preached Christ publicly. They were taken in front of the emir, who gave them freedom to proceed to North Africa. They crossed over to Morocco, and preached in front of the king himself. Pope Sixtus IV canonised them in 1481. The account of their martyrdom is found in Analecta Miramolin. The king expelled them from his country, but they returned in their resolve to preach the Christian faith. On 16 January 1220, after cruel torments, they were slain by the king." *Franciscana* III, pp. 579–96. The Franciscan Experience, Franciscan Saints and Mystics http://198.62.75.1/www1/ofm/fra/FRAsnt03.html.

15. House, *Francis of Assisi,* 253.

16. Marion A. Habig, *St. Francis of Assisi: Writings and Early Biographies. English Omnibus of the Sources for the Life of St. Francis* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1973), 1439. (References to the *Rules,* the *First and Second Lives of St. Francis* by Thomas of Celano, *The Little Flowers of St. Francis,* and the *Canticle of Brother Sun* are from this edition.), 1439.

17. House, *Francis of Assisi,* 258–64.

18. Cf. Joanne Schatzlein and Daniel Sulmasy, "The Diagnosis of St. Francis," *Franciscan Studies* 47 (1987): 181–217; the authors make a convincing case that Francis suffered and died from leprosy.

19. Habig, *St. Francis of Assisi,* 130.

20. House, *Francis of Assisi,* 267.

21. Ibid., 276–77.

22. Ibid., 280.

23. Roger D. Sorrell, *St. Francis of Assisi and Nature: Tradition and Innovation in Western Christian Attitudes toward the Environment* (New York, Oxford University Press: 1988), 69.

24. Ibid., 71.

25. Saint Bonaventura, *The Mind's Road to God*, trans. George Boas (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1953), 1.13 (p. 12).

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ICONS OF THE MIDDLE AGES

ICONS OF THE MIDDLE AGES

Rulers, Writers, Rebels, and Saints

Volume 2

Lister M. Matheson, Editor

Contents

Hildegard of Bingen was a twelfth-century visionary abbess and an established theologian, medical authority, and musician. (Walker/Topham/The Image Works)

Hildegard of Bingen (1098–1179)

Vincent J. Corrigan

BACKGROUND

Hildegard of Bingen lived in a period of history when very strong and creative women thrived and found their expressive outlet in the Catholic Church: Hrotsvitha of Gandersheim (935–1002), Elizabeth of Schönau (1129–1165),[1] Yvette of Huy (1158–1228), Juliana of Mont Cornillon (1193–1258), Eve of St. Martin (ca. 1210–1264), and Julian of Norwich (1342–1416), to name a few.[2] Each of these women made significant contributions to the culture of their time, and each was able to do so because of membership in the "First Estate," the Catholic Church.

There were three "estates" within medieval society, each with its own responsibilities to society at large. The First Estate, the church, comprised those whose duty it was to pray. It included all of the church hierarchy, and especially members of monastic communities, whose day was taken up with prayer. The Second Estate, the nobility, included those whose responsibilities it was to govern and, if necessary, to fight. The most prominent members of this estate were knights and those who ruled them. Finally, the Third Estate, the peasantry, raised food and provided goods and services for the whole of society, but especially for the first two estates. This terminology is still with us.[3] We now use the term "Fourth Estate" to refer to the press, whose duty it is to inform the rest of society about events of importance, and the media as a whole.

Women had a special threefold ranking of their own: virgin (unmarried woman), wife (married), and widow (a woman whose husband had died). The categorization described the assumed course of female life in the society, but it could be useful for other purposes as well. When Hildegard tried to justify the unusual dress and ritual practices within her convent to the Abbess Tengswich (see below), she referred to the fact that her nuns were virgins, not wives, and thus not subject to the same strictures.

People were born into the Second or Third Estate, but they could move into the First Estate if they or their parents wished. This was done through donations, or oblations.

THE MONASTIC WORLD

Families might dedicate one or more of their children to the church, promising to send them to monastic communities for life. Parents had many possible motives for doing so: assurance of a place in heaven for themselves or their children; a desire for the education of their offspring; care for children whom they themselves could not support; donation to the most important cultural and political entity in society; and perhaps others. Something like this practice still exists: the boarding school, where children are delivered for extended periods of time to an institution charged with educating them. Entering a monastery

was far different from entering a boarding school, however; it meant giving up the right to any private property. Parents could not, under any circumstances, give things to their children, either directly or though others. Rather, any letters, gifts, or tokens were to be given to the abbot, who could dispense them as he saw fit.[4] In other words, parents donating their children to a monastery effectively lost all contact with them. This was, of course, a stressful time for the family. Hildegard records that her parents delivered her to the Disibodenberg monastery "with sighs." Those two words convey much!

By accepting these children into the community, monasteries in turn promised to feed, clothe, house, and educate them. But this took money, and the children came to the monasteries with significant money, or the equivalent in goods and land. Daughters especially would come to the communities with endowments, or dowries, as though they were brides coming to a wedding. The endowment became the property of the monastery, and the number of such novices entering an establishment determined the wealth of the institution. Some monasteries became very wealthy as a result of these endowments.

From a modern perspective, one of the most unusual features of monasticism was the position of recluse (male anchorite; female anchoress). Such a person withdrew completely from public life and, in Hildegard's day, went to live in a small cell, or "anchorhold." It was connected to the sanctuary of a church by a small window through which the recluse could experience the liturgies and receive Communion. Another window, facing the outer world, allowed for the exchange of food and other necessities of life, through which the recluse, who had achieved a reputation for sanctity, could provide spiritual advice. By the thirteenth century, a third window was customary, through which the recluse could be in contact with an assistant. The service in which one became a recluse had much in common with the burial service, and cell the person entered was referred to as the "tomb." When Jutta and Hildegard entered Disibodenberg, they did so as recluses, Jutta the recluse and Hildegard her companion.

Formal education could be had only through the church, at first through monastic communities, and later through church schools. Here both male and female novices learned to read and write Latin, absorbed the rituals of the services, memorized the major body of poetry from the Bible (the psalms), experienced the writings of the church fathers, and, where possible, were exposed to the educational system derived from the classical world of Greece and Rome: the trivium (grammar, rhetoric, and logic) and the quadrivium (arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music).

Daily life within the monastery was organized by the Rule of Saint Benedict. Benedict of Nursia (480–547) wrote the Rule as a guide for his own monastic communities of men, and by about the seventh century it was adopted for communities of women. Both Disibodenberg and Rupertsberg were Benedictine communities and were required to follow the Rule.

All monastic communities were required to perform a round of liturgical observances each day, known as the Work of God, or *Opus Dei*. These were the office hours, and there were eight of them, placed at regular intervals throughout the day. Their goal was the recitation of the complete body of 150 psalms each week. This was the monks' and nuns' private worship, although in cathedrals the public could attend matins, lauds, vespers, and compline. Here they are, with the approximate performance times:

Matins:	After midnight
Lauds:	At sunrise
Prime:	6:00 A.M.
Terce:	9:00 A.M.
Sext:	Noon
Nones:	3:00 P.M.
Vespers:	Sunset
Compline:	Before retiring

This schedule, however, is misleading. There were no clocks to tell the monastery when it was 6:00 A.M. In fact, the process worked the other way around—it was 6:00 A.M. when the monastic community was called to prime.

Moreover, the length of the day changes over the course of the year. The times for sunrise and sunset vary depending on the season. In summer, sunrise comes early, there is ample daylight for work, and nights are short. Conversely, in winter, the days are short and the nights are long. Latitude is the determining factor in this variation: closer to the equator, days and nights are relatively equal in length throughout the year; farther from the equator (in Europe, farther north), the more drastic the difference gets in summer and winter. Bingen lies almost exactly at the latitude of 50°N, very close to Mainz. Currently in Mainz, on the summer solstice (the longest day of the year, June 21), the sun rises at 5:18 A.M. and sets at 9:40 P.M., for 16 hours and 22 minutes of daylight. The situation is almost reversed on the winter solstice (December 22): sunrise occurs at 8:23 and sunset at 4:28, for only 8 hours and 5 minutes of daylight. The eight office hours, along with masses and meals, had to be accommodated to these changing lengths. All meals, for instance, had to take place during the daylight hours.[5] Matins, at two to three hours' performing time the longest of the hours, could be a leisurely affair in winter but quite hurried in the short summer nights.

The Mass was the public worship of the community. Benedict mentions the Mass only incidentally, because his monks were not priests and so had no responsibilities for saying Mass. Later in the Middle Ages, especially in secular cathedrals, a main mass of the day took place between Terce and Sext—that is, at approximately 10:00 A.M. If a second mass was needed, and often for special occasions it was, it took place early in the morning, shortly after lauds.

THE SECULAR WORLD

The Crusades

The world outside the monastic walls was a tumultuous place in the twelfth century. Shortly before Hildegard's birth, Pope Urban II preached the First Crusade, the goal of which was the recapture of Jerusalem, which had been taken by the Muslims in 1076. The expedition was initially successful. First Nicea, then Antioch, was taken. Then Jerusalem was recaptured in 1099 and the Kingdom of Jerusalem established.

A Second Crusade, preached by Pope Eugenius II and Bernard of Clairvaux, was undertaken in 1147. Its goal was the recapture of the Christian city of Edessa, which had fallen to the Muslims in 1144. This one was a catastrophe. The Christian armies under Conrad III were decisively defeated, and the Crusade fell apart in 1150. The Third Crusade occurred only after Hildegard's death, in 1189–92.

The Papacy

An astounding number of 24 popes reigned during Hildegard's lifetime. The following 12 are considered authentic popes, succeeding each other through the line from Saint Peter:

Urban II (r. 1088–99)
Paschal II (r. 1099–1118)
Gelasius II (r. 1118–19)
Callistus II (r. 1119–24)
Honorius II (r. 1124–30)
Innocent II (r. 1130–43)
Celestine II (r. 1143–44)
Lucius II (r. 1144–45)
Eugenius III (r. 1145–53)
Anastasius IV (r. 1153–54)
Hadrian IV (r. 1154–59) (the only English pope, Nicholas Breakspear)
Alexander III (r. 1159–81)

Three of them, Eugenius III, Hadrian IV, and Alexander III, had a direct impact on Hildegard's life, and she communicated with all of them, and also with Anastasius IV.

A string of antipopes began in 1058, when a group of Italian noblemen had Benedict X elected pope. Benedict was later excommunicated as a papal usurper and perjurer. Nonetheless, antipopes continued to be appointed for political reasons throughout Hildegard's life. The first antipope after Benedict X was Clement III, whom Emperor Henry IV appointed. More important, from

Hildegard's perspective, was the appointment of Victor IV in 1159, whom Frederick supported in opposition to Alexander III. This caused a "papal schism" between Alexander and the next four antipopes that lasted throughout Hildegard's life. The crisis came to a head when Frederick appointed the antipope Paschal III in 1164. The schism was not resolved until the Peace of Vienna in 1177. The line of antipopes includes the following:

Clement III (1080–1100)
Theodoric (1100–1101)
Adalbert (1101)
Silvester IV (1105–11)
Gregory (VIII) (1118–21)
Celestine (II) (1124–25)
Anacletus II (1130–38)
Victor IV (1138)—resigned
Victor IV (1159–64)
Paschal III (1164–68)
Callistus (III) (1168–78)
Innocent (III) (1179–80)

The string of antipopes is largely a result of the Investiture Controversy, and the struggle between these popes was really a political struggle between the papacy, whose supporters in Italy were known as Guelphs, and the Holy Roman Emperor, whose supporters were known as Ghibellines.

The struggle began in 1075 and concerned the question of who had the right to appoint, or invest, bishops—the pope or the emperor. Because the position of bishop held significant political power and involved considerable wealth, the question was an important one. Pope Gregory VII forbade secular leaders to appoint bishops.

The controversy later expanded to involve the question of whether popes could depose emperors or whether emperors could depose popes. This was a question of hierarchy of power. It was resolved temporarily in 1122 at the Concordat of Worms, where Pope Callistus II arrived at a compromise with the Holy Roman Emperor Henry V. Nonetheless, the dispute continued for the rest of the century and beyond.

In 1144, the controversy reached another flash point, involving the temporal powers of the papacy, on the one hand, and the desire on the part of the citizens of Rome to return to the democratic ideals of the Roman Republic, a movement that generated the Commune of Rome, on the other. Arnold of Brescia (ca. 1090–1155) was a monk from Italy who opposed the pope's temporal powers. He called on the church to renounce ownership of property and became the intellectual leader of the Commune. The Commune declared allegiance to the Holy Roman Emperor, first Conrad III, later Frederick Barbarossa. It tried to force Pope Lucius II (1144–45) to renounce his temporal powers. Lucius refused, gathered his forces, and attacked Rome. However, he

died when a stone launched by the opposition hit him in the head, and the attack was unsuccessful.

Almost immediately Eugenius III was elected, but he had to be consecrated outside of Rome, because by that time the Commune was in control of the city. Eugenius was allowed to Rome on and off from 1145 until 1152. In 1148, during one of his stays in Rome, he excommunicated Arnold. Eventually Arnold was arrested and hanged; his body was then burned and his ashes thrown into the Tiber.

The Holy Roman Empire

The dominant political unit in Hildegard's life was the Holy Roman Empire, an expanse of land embracing Germany, eastern France, northern Italy, and Bohemia. It began in 962, when Pope John XII crowned the German King Otto I as Roman emperor, and for the next eight centuries German kings held the position. The empire lasted until 1806, when Napoleon forced the last emperor, Francis II, to renounce the title. Voltaire famously remarked in the eighteenth century that the empire was "neither holy, nor Roman, nor an empire." Hildegard lived through the reigns of the following five German kings:

Henry IV (r. 1056–1106)
Henry V (r. 1106–25)
Lothar III (r. 1125–37)
Conrad III (r. 1138–52)
Frederick I, Barbarossa (r. 1152–90)

The most significant of these for Hildegard was Frederick Barbarossa. He became king of Germany in 1152 and was named Holy Roman Emperor by Pope Hadrian IV in 1155. Frederick carried out military campaigns in Italy to expand the territories of the Holy Roman Empire, and in this capacity came into conflict with the popes, first Hadrian IV, then Alexander III. As a result of this friction, he supported the election of alternative popes. The resulting rift in the papacy between competing claimants, the "Papal Schism," began in earnest in 1159 with the election of antipope Victor IV.

Frederick was a proponent of Victor IV (actually the second antipope with that name) and his successors Paschal III and Callistus III, and they were supporters of his. All of them were opposed to Alexander III, the officially recognized pope. The critical tone of Hildegard's letters to Frederick was a result of the fact that Hildegard, by virtue of her position as leader of her convent, supported the legitimate pope and deplored the conflict between the emperor and the papacy.

The conflict between Frederick and Alexander III came to a head in 1165, when Frederick, at the Diet of Würzburg, tried to force the recognition of

the antipope Paschal III. Conrad the archbishop of Mainz fled Würzburg to support Alexander, and Frederick replaced him as archbishop with Christian de Buch, who served in Mainz until his death in 1183. Christian had led forces against Alexander, but he was also instrumental in reconciling Frederick and Alexander at the Peace of Vienna in 1177.

The division between the Guelphs and the Ghibellines described above was established during Frederick's reign. The Guelphs, who supported the papacy, were the party of wealthy merchants, while the Ghibellines, proponents of the emperor, were landowners whose wealth derived from agriculture. The two parties tended to identify with particular cities, and the choice of which party a city identified with depended on which of the two rulers, pope or emperor, was seen as the more threatening. Florence and Genoa were Guelph cities, while Pisa and Siena were Ghibelline.

Heresies

The later Middle Ages saw the rise of a great many heretical sects, each led by a particular individual. Some of them have names: the Albanenses, Bagnolenses, and Concorrezenses in Italy, and the Albigensians in Languedoc. Among the heretical sects, the Cathars ("Purists" or "Puritans") were the most prominent and the sect by whom the church felt most threatened. The name has been applied to many groups over a vast span of time, most particularly to the Manicheans of the late third century. The Cathars of the eleventh and twelfth centuries are descended from this group, although the two are not by any means identical in doctrine.

The faith of the Cathars is described as dualist, with a belief in the equality, or near equality, of good and evil. The degree to which they were considered equal determined the nature of the individual sect. Total equality was preached by the Albanenses in Italy and by most of the Cathars elsewhere in Europe. The other two Italian sects were mitigated dualists, in which good was supreme and eternal, while evil was inferior and temporal.

The principle of good created the supernatural world, including the human soul; the evil principle was responsible for all natural phenomena, including man's physical being. Preservation or continuation of any aspect of the natural world was seen a preservation of evil. Taken to its extreme form, this led Cathars to the beliefs that marriage was unlawful, perpetual chastity was required, and some forms of suicide, in particular self-starvation, were praiseworthy. Putting these views into operation would lead to the annihilation of the human race; in any event, these beliefs limited the extent to which the sect could continue without converts.

Although Cathars were not widespread in Germany, they were well organized in the Rhineland area in which Hildegard lived, to the extent that they had their own bishop. In 1143 Cathars were discovered in Cologne, and other pockets were soon discovered in Bonn, parts of Bavaria, and Swabia. This is

known because there are records of heretics being burned at the stake in these areas. Hildegard was born into this tumultuous situation.

EARLY LIFE

Hildegard was the tenth child of Hildebert and Mechtild of Bermersheim, members of the free nobility in Rheinhessen, northern Germany. At her birth, her parents promised her to the church, offered as a tithe, or a tenth portion of their wealth. We know the names of most of her siblings, some of whom also joined the ecclesiastical world. There were three brothers: Drutwin was the eldest, about whom nothing else seems to be known. Hugo became precentor at Mainz, and Roricus was canon at Tholy monastery on the Saar River. There were also four sisters: Irmengard, Odilia, Jutta (not to be confused with Jutta of Sponheim), and Clementia, who joined Hildegard's convent. We thus know of 8 children, not the 10 implied by the "tithe." It would have been remarkable if all of her siblings survived childhood, and so it may be that these eight were the only ones to reach maturity.[6]

At age eight, in 1106, the promise made by her parents was formalized ("with sighs," Hildegard tells us): she was "offered to God into the spiritual way of life" and entered the Benedictine monastery at Disibodenberg. She was the companion of Jutta of Sponheim (1091–1136), another member of the local nobility who also joined the monastery then. Together they became recluses, or anchoresses, living in a stone cell ("tomb") until Jutta's death in almost total isolation within the monastery walls. Jutta became Hildegard's first influence, teaching her the psalter, Latin, and strict religious practice. Hildegard was to spend the next 44 years of her life at Disibodenberg. At age 14, on November 1, 1112, she and Jutta took the vows of a nun.

The monastery at Disibodenberg was dedicated to Saint Disibod (619–700; feast day: September 8), an Irish monk who undertook missionary activities on the European continent from approximately 650, ultimately settling at the confluence of the Nahe and Glanz rivers near Bingen, where he became an anchorite and supervised a monastic community as bishop. Originally it was a small community, but in the early eleventh century it was expanded and was the site of an Augustinian monastery. In 1098, the year of Hildegard's birth, it became a Benedictine establishment and a building project began, the fruits of which were a new basilica and cloister. Work was completed in 1143. Although the monastery was intended to house only men, a women's cloister was built in 1112, when Jutta and Hildegard joined the community. The buildings were abandoned in 1560, and today only ruins remain.

In her autobiographical statements, Hildegard relates that, from her earliest years, she had suffered from ill health, accompanied by visions. She described these visions in great detail: a great brightness, concentric circles, shooting stars, and shining lines resembling, according to Hildegard, the ramparts of a celestial city. These were all superimposed on external objects, and when she

asked her nurse whether her nurse saw anything but the external objects, the nurse replied, "Nothing." The details of these descriptions have led many to conclude that Hildegard suffered from "scintillating scotoma," visual images that often precede migraine headaches, and that the migraines constituted the ill health she suffered.[7]

At first these visions frightened her, and she did not tell anyone of them. When the visions were upon her, she often told of future events or made other statements that were incomprehensible to those who heard her. When the visions passed, she was embarrassed at her behavior and returned to her customary silence. At approximately the age of eight, when she entered Disibodenberg, she began to discuss these visions with Jutta, who later told the monk Volmar about them. He, in turn, encouraged Hildegard to write them down and show them to him, so that he could determine if they were truly from God. He concluded that the visions were of divine origin. Volmar became Hildegard's secretary and friend, and together they began create a record of her visions. Manuscript illuminations show Hildegard in her scriptorium writing down the visions she receives from heaven, while Volmar looks on. Their collaboration lasted until Volmar's death in 1173.

Hildegard was convinced that these visions were a gift of prophecy from God. She said that they allowed her to understand scripture (both Old and New Testament), the writings of church fathers, and the writings of certain philosophers, all without human instruction. They also allowed her to compose and perform poetry and music, although she said she had never learned musical notation or singing. She thus joins that group of artists (Beethoven, Toulouse-Lautrec, Monet) who were able to create works not in spite of their physical infirmities but because of them.

Virtually nothing is known about Hildegard's actual life at Disibodenberg. Hildegard herself, in her autobiographical statements, is more interested in detailing her spiritual development. The primary sources of information we have about her life—her letters—do not begin until 1148, and the biographies compiled later had as their goal the justification for sainthood, not the recording of history.

It seems clear that a growing number of women were attracted to Disibodenberg and that the number of nuns grew over the course of Hildegard's life there, but we have no idea how the two-person anchorhold of 1106 became the thriving Benedictine convent of 1136. We know that Jutta, as senior member of the convent, became its mother superior, possibly with Hildegard as assistant. We also know that Volmar became the confessor and spiritual advisor to Jutta and Hildegard and that later he served as teacher, counselor, and secretary to Hildegard. But we have no evidence of what her educational experience was like, either with Volmar or as a member of the community. Certainly she heard the divine office chanted every day, and she probably participated in its performance. Certainly she learned Latin, the psalms, the structure of the liturgy, the basic tenets of the Rule of Saint Benedict, and

the many things necessary for her to be a functioning member of the community. Perhaps she worked in the scriptorium and learned to write both Latin and music. Perhaps she worked in the hospital facilities and acquired the medical knowledge she later related in *Physica* and *Causae et curae*. The first certain piece of evidence we have comes from 1136. In that year Jutta died, and the nuns selected Hildegard as the mother superior to succeed her. Little, however, is known about the daily course of Hildegard's life for the next five years.

BEGINNINGS OF PUBLIC LIFE

A most important event occurred five years after Hildegard was named mother superior. In 1141, at the age of 42, she experienced a vision so intense that she became ill. At Volmar's urging, Abbot Kuno of Disibodenberg gave her permission to record her visions, and she regained her health. At approximately the same time, Hildegard felt a physical strength that she had not experienced at any time previously, and she began her creative life in earnest. The first visions she recorded were later collected into the volume known as *Scivias,* or, more completely, *Scito (or Sci) vias Domini* (*Know the Ways of the Lord*).

The event that was to propel Hildegard's public life came in 1147, when Pope Eugenius III (r. 1145–53) convened a synod at Trier (November 1147–February 1148). He reviewed the unfinished version of *Scivias,* read it aloud to the assembled church hierarchy, declared it to be of divine origin, and, with the synod's approval, commanded Hildegard to continue recording her visions. By doing so, Eugenius declared her to be a prophetess of the church, a title that authorized her to preach. This event changed her life. Pilgrims came to Disibodenberg to consult her; novices, with their donations, were attracted to her convent; people from all walks of life wrote to ask her advice or for consolation; and she undertook four preaching tours in the surrounding area of Germany.

The period 1147–49 was a busy one for Eugenius, and Hildegard's visions were certainly not the only item on his ecclesiastical agenda. He held a series of synods at Paris, Rheims, and Trier in 1147 and 1149 that were primarily devoted to the reform of clerical life inspired by his Cistercian background and the influence of Bernard of Clairvaux. Shortly after the Synod at Trier, at the Council of Reims (March 21–31, 1148), Eugenius reviewed the ideas of Gilbert of Poitiers. He had been accused of heretical teachings, especially concerning the Trinity. Unlike the outcome with Hildegard, Gilbert's works were condemned until they had been revised according to the demands of the church. Gilbert acceded and was allowed to return to his position as bishop of Poitiers. At least in this instance, gender had nothing to do with church approbation.

RUPERTSBERG

Hildegard received another vision in 1148 that ordered her and her nuns to establish a convent at Rupertsberg near Bingen. Saint Rupert of Bingen (712–732; feast day: May 15) was the son of a Christian mother, Bertha, and a pagan father, Robold. After a pilgrimage to Rome at age 15, Rupert lived with his mother on the hill at the point where the Nahe River meets the Rhine, and where he was buried after dying from a fever at the age of 20. It was the site of a small church, and later a chapel, but it had no long history of ecclesiastical use. This was the site that Hildegard chose for her new convent.

At first the abbot was reluctant to release her. Her fame had brought Disibodenberg to prominence, and the endowment of novices drawn to Hildegard had significantly increased the monastery's wealth. The story goes that Hildegard fell into a paralytic fit and stiffened to such an extent that the abbot could not raise her. After Kuno agreed to allow the Rupertsberg project to proceed, the trance departed and Hildegard's health returned.

Establishing the convent was a difficult process. Hildegard records that there was grumbling among the nuns. They were accustomed to the relatively comfortable life at Disibodenberg and now had to deal with considerable poverty. However, the move gave Hildegard some degree of independence from the monastery, although she still remained under its jurisdiction. Her nuns were no longer part of a double house (male and female) under male supervision, and she was able to put into effect her ideas of the proper architecture for a monastic establishment. Archbishop Henry of Mainz consecrated the convent church in 1152, and many scholars believe that Hildegard's *Ordo virtutum* was performed for this occasion, that the nuns acted and sang the roles of the virtues, and that Volmar performed the part of the devil.

In 1155, she reached an agreement with Kuno, shortly before his death, to transfer to the Rupertsberg convent the endowments brought by her nuns to Disibodenberg. She used these endowments, along with donations from royal families, to begin a building project at Rupertsberg: dormitory, refectory, and convent church. In 1158, Archbishop Arnold of Mainz officially recognized Rupertsberg convent as a Benedictine monastery, and Hildegard thus became *de facto* abbess of Rupertsberg, although she never held the title officially. In 1163 Emperor Frederick Barbarossa issued a letter of protection, ensuring the free election of an abbess for the convent and freedom from the requirement of a secular advocate. In short, it ensured the political independence of the community from external pressures.

An engraving by Daniel Meissner (1585–1625) in the *Thesaurus philopoliticus* shows the state of the monastery in the early seventeenth century. The institution continued to function as a convent until the nuns were forced to flee to Eibingen during the Thirty Years' War. Swedish troops destroyed the convent in 1632, and the remainder succumbed to railway construction in

1857. Nothing now remains of it. After 1148, when her letters begin, we have much more evidence about Hildegard's life. Three events, recorded in the letters, show something of life at Rupertsberg.

THE TENGSWICH EPISODE

Although Hildegard was generally recognized by the late 1140s as a prophetess of the church and a reliable guide on theological questions, she was not without her critics. In order to fund her Rupertsberg project, she would accept as novices only daughters from wealthy families; others she rejected outright. Moreover, she allowed her nuns to engage in flamboyant dress during feast days, apparently contravening the Rule of Saint Benedict concerning female dress. This came to the attention of Abbess Tengswich (d. ca. 1152), superior of the canonesses at nearby Andernach, and, under the guise of seeking clarification, she wrote to criticize Hildegard for these faults.

The details of the episode are recorded in the first volume of letters to and from Hildegard. In Letter 52, written sometime between 1148 and 1150, Tengswich writes to Hildegard, raising the following points:

1. On feasts, the nuns stand with unbound hair and wear white silk veils touching the floor.
2. The nuns also wear crowns of gold filigree, with crosses inserted on both sides and back, and the figure of a lamb in the front.
3. Hildegard admits only women from noble families and absolutely rejects those of lower birth or less wealth.

Tengswich attacks the first two on the basis of I Timothy 2:9–10:

[9]In like manner women also [shall pray] in decent apparel: adorning themselves with modesty and sobriety, not with plaited hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly attire,
[10]But as it becometh women professing godliness, with good works.

She attacks the third from three verses:

Acts 10:34–35
[34]And Peter opening his mouth, said: In very deed I perceive, that God is not a respecter of persons.
[35]But in every nation, he that feareth him, and worketh justice, is acceptable to him.

Romans 2:11
[11]For there is no respect of persons with God.

I Corinthians 1:26–28

[26]For see your vocation, brethren, that there are not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble:

[27]But the foolish things of the world hath God chosen, that he may confound the wise; and the weak things of the world hath God chosen, that he may confound the strong.

[28]And the base things of the world, and the things that are contemptible, hath God chosen, and things that are not, that he might bring to nought things that are.

In Letter 52r from 1148–50 Hildegard responds to Tengswich's charges. She begins by praising women in general:

> The beauty of woman radiated and blazed forth in the primordial root, and in her was formed that chamber in which every creature lies hidden. Why is she so resplendent? For two reasons: on the one hand, because she was created by the finger of God and, on the other, because she was endowed with wondrous beauty. O, woman, what a splendid being you are! For you have set your foundation in the sun, and have conquered the world.

She then quotes Paul on the duty of a woman towards her husband and from the Gospel of Matthew:

Ephesians 5:22 ff.

[22]Let women be subject to their husbands, as to the Lord:

[23]Because the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ is the head of the church. He is the savior of his body.

[24]Therefore as the church is subject to Christ, so also let the wives be to their husbands in all things.

Colossians 3:18

[18]Wives, be subject to your husbands, as it behoveth in the Lord.

I Thessalonians 4:4

[4]That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honor.

Matthew 19:6

[6]Therefore now they are not two, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder.

But these restrictions, she says, do not apply to "virgins"—that is, unmarried women. Perhaps she is referring to the "estates" of women mentioned above. Nuns, Hildegard says, are "to be married" to the Holy Spirit, and it is appropriate that they come dressed in white. She cites Revelations 14:1 and portions of 14:4–5 as justification of the figure of the lamb on the crown.

[1]And I beheld, and lo a lamb stood upon Mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty-four thousand, having his name, and the name of his Father, written on their foreheads.

[4] . . . for they are virgins. These follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were purchased from among men, the first fruits to God and to the Lamb:

[5]And in their mouth there was found no lie; for they are without spot before the throne of God.

Regarding the charge that she admits only the daughters of the wealthy, Hildegard points out that God establishes ranks of humans on earth, as he does the ranks of angels in heaven. (The nine orders of angels that Hildegard would have known come from Denis the Areopagite (Pseudo-Dionysius), *De coelesti hierarchia*. They are, from lowest to highest: angels, archangels, principalities, powers, virtues, dominations, thrones, cherubim, seraphim). Further, she cites Job 36:5 as justification for appealing to the mighty (wealthy).

[5]God doth not cast away the mighty, whereas he himself also is mighty.

It is not the rank that appeals to Hildegard, she says, but the good works that their wealth can enable (John 4:34).

[34]Jesus saith to them: My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, that I may perfect his work.

Finally, she says: "Who would gather all his livestock indiscriminately into one barn—cattle, asses, sheep, kids?" In other words, Hildegard justified her position on admitting only the daughters of the wealthy by an astounding agricultural analogy: women of different social classes could no more live together than could sheep, goats, and cattle live in the same barn! Is it any wonder that canonization efforts stalled?

THE RICHARDIS TRAGEDY

The sad affair of Richardis von Stade occupied Hildegard around the time of the move to the Rupertsberg and is played out in a series of letters dating to 1151–52.[8] It has been the subject of much contemporary commentary, some of which has been fanciful, to say the least. I can do no better than echo Fiona Maddocks's appeal for moderation:

The danger for a reader today, because of its uniqueness in satisfying our need to understand Hildegard's occluded personality, is to exaggerate its importance or misconstrue its nature. Let the facts stand alone. The existence of an extensive correspondence allows the story to tell itself.

Richardis von Stade was one of Hildegard's nuns at Disibodenberg. Her mother was the Margravine Richardis von Stade, who was a strong advocate of Hildegard and who had provided funding necessary for Hildegard to move to Rupertsberg. Her brother Hartwig was, by 1151, archbishop of Bremen.

When Richardis joined the convent is unclear, but it must have been early enough for her to have developed a close relationship with Hildegard by 1141, when work on *Scivias* began in earnest. Hildegard records in her *Vita* that both Richardis and Volmar helped her in the writing of *Scivias*. *Scivias* was completed in 1151, coincident with the move to Rupertsberg.

Shortly after the move, Richardis, apparently with her consent, was elected abbess of Bassum, and Hildegard was ordered to release Richardis from Rupertsberg so that she could assume her duties at Bassum. Hildegard refused to do so, and she began efforts to keep Richardis at Rupertsberg, and, when that failed, to have her returned. Her first letter was to Richardis's mother (Letter 11), then to Archbishop Henry of Mainz. Henry responded strongly in the last line of an otherwise complimentary and friendly letter: Richardis must be released, or Henry would continue to demand it even more strongly (Letter 12). Hildegard initially rejected Henry's authority (Letter 13), but ultimately had to capitulate.

After the transfer, Hildegard wrote to Richardis's brother Hartwig, reporting that a "horrible man" had dragged Richardis from the cloister against the wills of Hildegard, the other nuns, and her friends (Letter 14). She implies that Richardis's appointment was the result of simony (appointment to religious office through the influence of family or money), that Richardis was not ready for such a position, and that it was against God's will. Finally, she asked Hartwig to return Richardis to Rupertsberg.

When that request too was unsuccessful, Hildegard wrote to Pope Eugenius, asking him to intervene; this letter has not survived, but Eugenius's response has (Letter 15). He denies her request and delegates the matter to Henry, who had already made his position clear. Henry's task, Eugenius says, is to ensure that the Benedictine Rule is strictly observed in Richardis's new position. If it is not, Richardis will be returned to Hildegard.

At some point Hildegard wrote Richardis herself (Letter 16). In this letter she seems to accept, with humility, Richardis's appointment as a judgment of God against her. Still, she asks Richardis: "What are you doing?"

In 1152, Hartwig wrote to Hildegard announcing that Richardis, approximately 28 years old, had died unexpectedly on October 29, just as she was planning to undertake a visit to Rupertsberg (Letter 17). At the same time, he seems to accept some of the blame for the whole unfortunate incident, and he promises to visit Hildegard instead in the near future. Hildegard's response (Letter 18) is a eulogy to Richardis, with no mention of simony or the differences that had distanced Hartwig from Hildegard.

All of this activity took place around the time that the *Ordo virtutum*, Hildegard's morality play, was written. There is the notion that portions of the *Ordo virtutum* are meant to represent Richardis. A line in the letter strengthens

this assumption: "O virginity, you remain within in the royal chamber." This is also the statement of Castitas in the *Ordo virtutum:*[9]

> O Virginity, you remain within the royal chamber. O how sweetly you burn in the King's embraces, when the sun blazes through you, never letting your noble flower fall. O gentle maiden, you will never know the shadow over the falling flower! (*Ordo virtutum* No. 37)

BURIAL OF THE EXCOMMUNICANT

One of the rights enjoyed by Rupertsberg was the ability to bury wealthy or noble individuals of the area in its cemetery. The person could provide, before death, for his or her own burial, or the family could do so afterward. In any event, the burials were accompanied by endowments to the convent, increasing its wealth.

In 1178, Hildegard had permitted the burial of a certain nobleman—whose name has not come down to us—in consecrated ground at Mount Saint Rupert. However, the dead man had once been excommunicated, which barred his burial in sacred ground, and no one in the Mainz establishment was aware that the excommunication had been lifted. The archbishop was in Italy serving as mediator between Frederick Barbarossa and Alexander III, and the prelates acted in his name, but without his knowledge. Hildegard was ordered, under pain of excommunication herself, to disinter the body and remove it from the cemetery.

She refused, saying that the nobleman had been reconciled to the church some years before his death, that he had received the last sacraments, and that his priest had approved the burial and attended the service. The result was that the Rupertsberg convent would no longer hear Mass, receive Communion, or sing the divine office. She saw this as a path preferable to desecrating a tomb.

The controversy plays out in three letters. Letter 23 (ca. 1178–79) summarizes the situation, records the penalties she and her nuns have received, and reports the fact that she is observing them. She then goes on to describe the symbolic meaning music (both vocal and instrumental) has for the medieval mind and warns the prelates in her prophetic voice that imposing silence of this sort thwarts God's will, and those who do so may be subject to punishment themselves.

On 1179 Hildegard also wrote Archbishop Christian of Mainz, who had succeeded Conrad, whom Frederick had deposed in 1165. Apparently Hildegard had written Christian earlier, and Christian had sent a letter of his own to Mainz. In this letter (Letter 24), Hildegard explains the situation more fully. She had gone to Mainz to request that the ban on singing be lifted, but the prelates refused to relent. The letter also relates that the archbishop of Cologne came to Mainz with a witness that the dead man had indeed been forgiven. Furthermore, Hildegard brought with her the priest who had witnessed

this reconciliation, and that priest, acting in Christian's name, had lifted the prohibition on singing. But letters crossed in the mail. Hildegard subsequently received a letter from Christian imposing the ban, apparently sent before the witnesses had testified in Mainz. Hildegard was forced to obey this, until such time as Christian could hear the truth of the matter.

In March 1179, Christian finally responded to Hildegard (Letter 24r), telling her that she had committed a very dangerous act in defying the Mainz clergy and that she should have waited for definitive proof that the excommunication had been lifted before allowing the man to be buried at Rupertsberg. Nonetheless, confronted with the evidence, Christian lifted the ban, and services returned to normal.

THE END

Six months after the ban on singing was lifted, on September 17, 1179, Hildegard died in the Rupertsberg convent. Guibert of Gembloux began a *Vita Sanctae Hildegardis* (*Life of Saint Hildegard*), though he did not complete his book. Gottfried of Disibodenberg began another, longer *Vita* while Hildegard was still alive and to which she contributed, in the hopes that it would be the first step in the process of canonization. He drafted Book I. Books II and III were completed in 1189 by Theodoric of Echternach, who assembled several sources, including Guibert's unfinished work, and revised the whole work. Formal attempts at canonization began in 1227 but were never completed. Hildegard still resides at the level of beatification, although many sources refer to her as Saint Hildegard, parish churches are dedicated to her, and she is celebrated as a saint in Germany and elsewhere (feast day: September 17).

WORKS

Hildegard was a polymath, in that she produced important works of vastly different types: letters, music, poetry, and books. They are recorded in two principal manuscripts, the Dendermonde manuscript, copied at the Rupertsberg monastery under Hildegard's supervision, and the Riesencodex, probably copied between 1177 and 1180. A recently discovered third manuscript, now housed in the British Library, is especially valuable as a second source for the *Ordo virtutum*. It was copied in 1487 by order of Johannes Trithemius abbot of Sponheim.

Visionary Works (1151–73)

Scivias (*Sci* [or *Scito*] *vias Domini* (*Know the Ways of the Lord*)), 1151. This is the first of Hildegard's visionary works, composed over a 10-year period

from approximately 1141 (although we know that portions existed before that date) to 1151. In compiling the visions and the commentaries, Hildegard had the help of Volmar and Richardis.

The 26 visions that compose the work are divided into three parts: "The Creator and Creation" (6 visions), "The Redeemer and Redemption" (7 visions), and "The History of Salvation Symbolized by a Building" (13 visions). Each section begins with a statement of the vision, followed by its interpretation. Vision 1 will give an idea of the ambiguous nature of these passages:

> I saw a great mountain the color of iron, and enthroned on it One of such great glory that it blinded my sight. On each side of him there extended a soft shadow, like a wing of wondrous breadth and length. Before him, at the foot of the mountain, stood an image full of eyes on all sides, in which, because of those eyes, I could discern no human form. In front of this image stood another, a child wearing a tunic of subdued color but white shoes, upon whose head such glory descended from the One enthroned upon that mountain, that I could not look at its face. But from the One who sat enthroned upon that mountain many living sparks sprang forth, which flew very sweetly around the images. Also, I perceived in this mountain many little windows, in which appeared human heads, some of subdued colors and some white.[10]

Hildegard says that the One enthroned ordered her to promulgate her vision to instruct those who are "lukewarm and sluggish in serving God's justice." She then explains the symbolism of the vision as though she were explaining a scriptural passage (exegesis): (1) The mountain of iron symbolizes the strength and stability of the heavenly kingdom; (2) The image full of eyes represents the Fear of the Lord; (3) The child embodies the poor in spirit, upon whom the One imparts power; (4) the sparks flying from the One are the strong virtues emanating from God.

Liber vitae meritorum (Book of the Merits of Life), **ca. 1158–63.** Hildegard's second book also contains a collection of her visions and, like *Scivias*, has a time frame of childhood to adulthood. Also like *Scivias,* it contains a description of each vision, as well as Hildegard's own attempts at explaining their meanings. The book is thought to be a sort of sequel to *Scivias*. It is a description of the life of virtue and its opposite.

De operatione Dei (Concerning God's Activities), **aka** *Liber divinorum operum (Book of Divine Works),* **1168–73.** Thought to be yet another continuation of *Scivias, De operatione Dei* is very similar to the *Liber vitae meritorum*. The book contains several visions, to which Hildegard attributes various possible meanings. The visions included in *De operatione Dei* are what Hildegard believed to be God's instructions to her, and the book is a contemplation of all of nature.

Scientific and Medical Works (1151 and 1158)

The overall title for Hildegard's two scientific works is *Liber subtilitatum diversarum naturarum creaturarum* (*Book of the Subtleties of Diverse Natural Creatures*). The first part has its own title: *Liber simplicis medicinae* (*Book of Simple Medicine*). When it was published in 1533 it received the title *Physica* (*Medicine*, or *The Art of Healing*), the title by which it is known today.

Physica was Hildegard's first scientific book and is the earliest German natural history text. It is a medical encyclopedia divided into nine chapters: plants, elements, trees, stones, fish, birds, animals, reptiles, and metals. Each chapter contains a number of entries and gives the healing properties for each. In its conflation of medical knowledge and magic with scriptural passages (particularly Genesis), common practice at the time, it gives a picture of twelfth-century medical practice. Hildegard also records medicinal recipes and folk remedies, and her ideas continued to be influential into the sixteenth century. In fact many of them are still used in alternative medicine.

The second part of *Liber subtilitatum diversarum naturarum creaturarum* again has its own title, *Liber compositae medicinae*. Now known as *Causae et curae* (*Causes and Cures*), it is a medical handbook covering what would now be considered holistic healing. Although written in Latin, it gives also the corresponding German medical term for many of her topics. The work is divided into five books, each composed of individual paragraphs devoted to specific topics. The books are not separately titled, except for the third, but each deals with a different topic. The opening book, for instance, covers the external world, beginning with creation and covering astrology, a summary of parts of Genesis, especially the creation of the world, the story of Adam and Eve, and Lucifer as the cause of disease. Book Two deals with the causes of illnesses, Books Three and Four list cures, and Book Five covers symptoms.

Miscellaneous Literary Works

Lingua ignota (Unknown Language). *Lingua ignota* (before 1159) is one of the strangest books in Hildegard's output. It consists of a glossary of 1,012 terms in what Hildegard calls an "unknown language," arranged according to various subjects. Each word is given a Latin and, in one manuscript, German translation. Hildegard presents these strange words using an invented alphabet (*litterae ignotae*—"unknown letters"). One of the songs in the *Symphonia armonie celestium revelationum*, "O orzchis ecclesia," uses a text that combines both Latin words and words in this unknown language, but it does not use the *litterae ignotae*.

The glossary is divided into three large parts: the spiritual realm (words 1–18), the human realm (words 19–751); and the natural realm (words 752–1,012). The first part includes words for spiritual entities (God, angels, and the devil), human beings (man, woman), and sacred persons (patriarchs, prophets, apostles, martyrs, etc.). The second and longest section contains

words for every aspect of human life, as least far as it was possible for Hildegard to list them. The third gives names for trees, plants, flying animals (birds, bat, and gryphon!) and insects. Nearly all of the words are nouns; adjectives and verbs play little part.

Some of the terms would have had special importance for the residents of Rupertsberg. Here, for instance, are the names of some of the office hours (words 478–83):

  Ginschiz—Prime
  Scoinz—Terce
  Anischiz—Sext
  Ioinz—Nones
  Kalizinz—Vespers
  Nuschanz—Compline

Some of the groupings have a special kind of humor about them. Terms 410 through 428 concern "Entertainers, Sinners, and Criminals." This broad category includes minstrels and fiddlers, along with prostitutes, gluttons, drunkards, and dwarfs.

Hildegard seems to refer to this unknown language in her letter to Pope Anastasius IV (Letter 8), although it is not altogether clear:

But He who is great and without flaw [God] has now touched a humble dwelling [Hildegard], so that it might see a miracle and form unknown letters and utter an unknown tongue. And this was said to that little habitation: You have written these things in a language given to you from above, rather than in ordinary human speech, since it was not revealed to you in that form, but let him who has the pumice stone not fail to polish it and make it intelligible to mankind.

Because Anastasius's reign was so brief (July 12, 1153– December 3, 1154), we know when this letter was written and so may form some idea of when the "unknown language" was constructed.

Hagiographies

Hildegard's writings on Saints Disibod and Rupert, written late in her life, have been criticized as being historically worthless. Such a criticism, however, misses the point of the works. Both of them are hagiographies—works meant to display the sanctity of the individual—not biographies, and such works had as their immediate goal inspiring those who read them to live better lives. Hagiographies are often divided into three parts: wonders performed by the saint while a youth; virtues and good works of maturity, including miracles performed by the saint as an adult, and miracles performed after death in the saint's name.

There were at least two purposes for these writings. The first was to provide the monastery library with an authoritative description of the virtues of its namesake. These would have formed a valuable resource for the whole community. The second purpose is a much more practical one, having to do with the performance of matins. The matins service was divided into four nocturnes (three in secular cathedrals, but Disibodenberg and Rupertsberg were monasteries and had different matins formats). Each nocturne consisted of the recitation of the psalms with their attendant antiphons, and long, intoned lessons that alternated with responsories. *Vitae* (lives) of the saints formed the raw material for the lessons, and excerpts from them were used in each nocturne. The *Vita* could be used in its entirety, or passages could be excerpted. What was not used in the office ceremony could be read at meals. This situation would apply to the saint's feast day and any other observation of the saint's life the monastery celebrated.

Hildegard herself composed two *Vitae* in her late years, the *Life of Saint Rupert* (*Vita sancti Ruperti*), and the *Life of Saint Disibod* (*Vita sancti Disibodi*). About the *Life of Saint Rupert* we know nothing. It may have been written after 1170, but it may also have been written around the time that the convent of Rupertsberg was established, in the 1150s.

The *Life of Saint Disibod* was composed at the request of Helengerus (Letter 77, ca. 1170):

> In this regard, all of us in full unanimity pound upon the gate of your love, beseeching you earnestly, fervently, for a written account of the deeds, virtues, and life of our patron, the blessed Disibod—and not only ours, of course, but yours, for you were nourished under his roof from your earliest years. And we earnestly urge you, pious lady, and, with unwearying prayers poured forth, desire that you make known to us whatever God reveals to you about him, so that the memory of your own blessedness may be preserved through this record in praise of this our father.

Kuno had already asked in 1155 for material on Disibod, at which point Hildegard sent three compositions for use at Disibod's Mass and office (see below). Now she composed a complete *Vita,* parts of which could also be used in the office. In the 1170s, Hildegard contributed to her own *Vita*. Gottfried of Disibodenberg began it in 1173, but he died in 1176, having completed only Book I. In 1189 Theodoric of Echternach completed the work. He revised and reworked Gottfried's work and wrote Books II and III. The last two books contain extended autobiographical statements by Hildegard.

Other Works

***Expositio Evangeliorum (Discourse on the Gospels)*.** This work consists of 58 homilies on 27 Gospel passages common to monastic lectionaries, most of

them following the liturgical year from Christmas to Advent, and ending with two sermons for the dedication of a church. They may be a record of some of the homilies Hildegard used on her preaching tours.

Solutiones triginta octo quaestionum (Solutions to 38 Questions). Dating from approximately 1176, the work consists of answers to 38 questions of scriptural interpretation posed by the monks of Villers that Guibert of Gembloux transmitted to Hildegard on their behalf. It and the *Expositio Evangeliorum* are the only works of scriptural exegesis authored by a woman in the Middle Ages.

Tractatus de sacramento altaris (Treatise on the Sacrament of the Altar). As the title indicates, this is a treatise on the sacrament of the altar—that is, the Mass. Other, later, similarly titled treatises dealt especially with the bread and wine and its transubstantiation into the body and blood of Christ. It would be interesting to know if Hildegard anticipated these later writings, but as far as I know, this work has not yet received a modern edition or translation.

Explanatio Symboli S. Athanasii (Explanation of the Athanasian Creed). In the Catholic Church there are three statements of belief. The Apostles' Creed appears as a part of the introductory material of the Mass, the prayers at the foot of the altar. The Nicene Creed is the familiar element of the Ordinary of the Mass. The Athanasian Creed, which begins with the words "Quicumque vult," is less familiar now, since it is used at one of the office hours, prime, on feast days. If it were used at Rupertsberg, it would have been recited at prime on May 15, Rupert's feast day. Although Saint Athanasius probably did not write it, it does seem to have originated around the fourth century. Unlike the other two creeds, this one concentrates on the dogmas of the Trinity and the Incarnation.

The work is divided into three sections. In the introduction, Hildegard describes the move to Rupertsberg and the transfer of endowments. She then exhorts the nuns to persevere in charity, and she curses those who would destroy the community. Athanasius's name first appears halfway through the document at its second section, when Hildegard explains the nature of the Trinity and its indivisibility under the metaphor of fire. The Father is the fire, the Son is the mobile flame hiding in the fire, and Holy Spirit is the wind that moves the flame, causing it to glitter or coruscate. This is followed by justification of the doctrine of Incarnation near the end.

Explanatio Regulae S. Benedicti (Explanation of the Rule of St. Benedict), ca. 1160. This short work is really all that we have concerning Hildegard's view of the Benedictine Rule. Sometime before 1158 a community of men following the Rule of Saint Augustine wrote to Hildegard asking for a summary of what was necessary to follow the rule of Saint Benedict. She replied with this brief work, written in her prophetic voice ("And I heard a voice from the True Light . . ."). It was completed by 1158 and is mentioned in the *Liber vitae meritorum*.

The whole consists of 38 short chapters. Hildegard begins by listing the virtues of Benedict: discretion, fear, piety, charity, and chastity. There follows

an abbreviated digest of the Rule, beginning, as Benedict did, with the types of monks, the importance of silence, and the organization and performance of the divine office. Then she covers aspects of daily life: sleeping arrangements, punishments, the various service positions within the monastery (cellarer, kitchen servers, hospital staff, and those charged with performing the readings at meals), and the amount of food the monks receive. Then questions of discipline and penance, hospitality characteristics of a Benedictine monastery, prescribed clothing for monks, and bedding. Finally, recruitment and reception of novices, and relationships among members of the community. She concludes with an *envoi,* repeating the authoritative nature of her text: "Therefore I, a poor little female in form, heard these words from Wisdom who taught me the obscure things in the Rule of blessed father Benedict so that I could present them openly."

Letters

Hildegard's 390 letters form a significant resource for tracking events in her life. Individual letters do not survive, of course. Rather, the letters as a whole were assembled in the Riesencodex and occupy a very large portion of that manuscript (folios 328–434, approximately 212 pages). They show the wide range of people with whom she communicated. There are letters to and from 3 popes, 2 emperors, Bernard of Clairvaux, 10 archbishops, 9 bishops, 49 abbots, 23 abbesses, and a host of priests, teachers, monks, nuns, and religious communities.[11] The letters to popes and emperors will be discussed in greater detail below.

Musical Works

Hildegard's musical works embrace both lyrical and dramatic texts. Her compositional work began at least in the 1140s and may have extended to her last years. These 159 melodies in all constitute the largest body of monophonic music—music written as an unaccompanied melody—that can be attributed to a known individual. All of them are in Latin, and all are, in some way, sacred. They are organized into two groups.

Symphonia armonie celestium revelationum (Symphony of the Harmony of Celestial Revelations). The *Symphonia armonie celestium revelationum* (the title is a modern one, not found in the sources) is, in its complete form, an assembly of 77 pieces. There are nine compositions for the Mass: seven sequences, an Alleluia, and a Kyrie. The remaining 68 pieces are intended for various office hours. Most of them (43) are antiphons, short pieces to be sung in alternation with psalm verses at office hours. Eighteen are responsories, much longer works, most of which are sung at matins. There are also three

hymns and four miscellaneous items. The whole is organized hierarchically according to the individual to whom the texts are addressed:[12]

> First and Second persons of the Trinity—Father and Son (7 pieces)
> Virgin Mary (16 pieces)
> Third person of the Trinity—Holy Spirit (5 pieces)
> Celestial Hierarchy (Angels, Saints, etc.) with each receiving two or three text apiece (12 pieces)
> Patron Saints (14 pieces, including five for Disibod, and four for Rupert)
> Pieces specifically for virgins, widows, and innocents (5 pieces)
> Saint Ursula and the 11,000 virgins (13 pieces)
> Ecclesia, for the dedication of a church, including one, "O orzchis ecclesia," in Hildegard's *lingua ignota* (5 pieces)

Fourteen of these pieces and portions of the *Ordo virtutum* appeared as part of Vision 13 in *Scivias,* so we know that the texts at least must have been written before 1151. Dating of the other works is very problematic. Barbara Newman suggests three periods: 14 works and the *Ordo virtutum* by 1151, 36 additional pieces from the late 1150s, and the remainder after the 1150s.[13]

Ordo virtutum (Play of the Virtues). The *Ordo virtutum* from circa 1151 is regarded as the first morality play set to music throughout, a century before any other similar work. It is also the earliest Latin play not associated with any liturgy. The text presents in dramatic verse the contest between 16 (or 17, including Scientia Dei) virtues and the Devil for an individual soul, Anima. The whole work is introduced by a chorus composed of patriarchs and prophets, presumably all males. This means that the work could not be performed as written with only the nuns and Volmar—others must have been enlisted to perform, perhaps from Disibodenberg.

There are melodies, 82 in all, for all of the characters except the Devil. It is often assumed that the Devil's lines were spoken, but other performance possibilities exist. The term Hildegard uses for the mode of delivery is *strepitus diaboli*. It refers to a loud noise, a din, and perhaps, by extension, to yelling, shrieking, shouting, or growling. Neither simple speech nor the elevated declamation of the theater would carry sufficiently, and speech of any sort would not convey what the term "strepitus" implies.

HILDEGARD'S INFLUENCE IN HER OWN TIME

Hildegard never really ceased to have an influence, in that her works continued to be known, copied, and published long after her death. *Physica* received its current name when it was published in 1533. Even such a short work as the *Explanatio Symboli S. Athanasii* was published in Cologne in 1566 and in Lyon in 1697. When Jacques-Paul Migne began his

monumental publishing effort, the *Patrologia Latina,* some of Hildegard's works appeared (Volume 197) as a matter of course. They are being re-edited today as part of the series *Corpus Christianorum: Continuatio Mediaevalis*. Both of these publication efforts attempt to present the complete body of Catholic Church writings, to which Hildegard's works are significant contributions.

In Hildegard's day, it was possible to be a master of several fields. Hildegard was exceptional in that she was skilled in so many: abbess and administrator, prophetess and preacher, correspondent and diplomat, musician, and scientist. She made significant contributions, and had an importance, in each of these fields.

Abbess/Administrator

Ironically, though she founded two monasteries, she was never accorded the title abbess and was always under the jurisdiction of the abbot of Disibodenberg, first Kuno, who died in 1155, then Helengerus, who was abbot for the rest of Hildegard's life. Her first administrative position was that of mother superior to the nuns at Disibodenberg. This occurred in 1136 on the death of Jutta, when the growing number of nuns made a mother superior necessary. Over the next decade, the population continued to increase until, in the late 1140s, there were approximately 20 nuns at Disibodenberg. At this point Hildegard received her vision to found a convent at Rupertsberg. This was accomplished, not without difficulties, by 1152, when Henry archbishop of Mainz consecrated the church at Rupertsberg. There is speculation that the *Ordo virtutum* was performed at this ceremony, that the nuns themselves sang the roles of the 17 virtues and the character Anima, and that Volmar performed the role of the Devil. This gives some approximation of the number of inhabitants at Rupertsberg in its earliest years. By 1155 the considerable wealth that the nuns had brought to Disibodenberg was successfully transferred to Rupertsberg.

In 1165, the number of nuns at Rupertsberg had increased to about 50, and Hildegard established a second convent across the river at Eibingen that could house 30 nuns. Apparently this sister house was intended not for the wealthy daughters who formed the kernel of the community of Rupertsberg but for those of humble birth who had joined it after its founding. Hildegard administered both houses and, while continuing to live exclusively at Rupertsberg, visited Eibingen at least twice a week until her death.

Prophetess/Preacher

A few words on the medieval view of the prophet/prophetess are in order. These people were seen not as elevated fortunetellers but as people who were

in direct contact with God and who formed a communicative link between the celestial and the terrestrial world. Because of this status, their word was viewed as coming directly from God and so carried great weight. Like Old Testament prophets, one of their primary responsibilities was to advise secular rulers on the proper course of conduct and warn them if their actions displeased God. Hildegard treated this responsibility seriously, as her letters to Emperor Conrad III and especially Emperor Frederick Barbarossa show.

In March 1148, Pope Eugenius III (r. 1145–53) reviewed the record of Hildegard's visions complied by Volmar, determined that they had come from God, and, in effect, declared her to be a prophetess. He directed her to write down her visions more comprehensively than she had done before, and so she began her extensive creative undertakings, with *Scivias*. By validating her visions, Eugenius gave her the right—in fact, the responsibility—to preach. She pursued this responsibility in a number of ways. Her visionary writings and her letters to various ecclesiastical and secular rulers are the most prominent of her preaching activities.

She also undertook, in the course of her life, four preaching tours, symbolically enough to the four corners of the globe. The fortuitous location of Rupertsberg, situated as it was at the confluence of the Rhine and Nahe Rivers, made this possible. The Rhine allowed access to the north in one direction, and traveling in the opposite direction along the Rhine to the Neckar River opened up the south. A short trip on the Rhine to the Main River allowed her to travel east, and the Mosel River, which joins the Rhine north of Rupertsberg, gave access to the west.

The first tour took place in 1158 and extended to the east along the Main River, visiting the cities of Mainz, Wertheim, Würzburg, Kitzingen, Ebrach, and Bamberg. The second, in 1160, went north on the Rhine, then west and south along the Mosel, visiting Trier (where the momentous Synod had occurred), Metz, and Krauftal. From 1161 to 1163 she traveled north on the Rhine to Boppard, Andernach, and Siegburg, then to Cologne and Werden. Her final tour of 1170 took her south on the Rhine and Neckar Rivers, to Cluniac houses at Maulbronn, Hirsau, Kircheim, and Zweifalten.

What were her sermons like? We know the topic of at least one of them. Werner the abbot of Kircheim wrote to her after her visit asking for a copy of her sermon on priestly negligence. Indeed, the topic of church reform has always been appropriate. She probably also dealt with the heresies sweeping Europe at the time, especially that of the Cathars, who were finally annihilated by the astonishing brutality of the Albigensian Crusade.

Correspondent and Diplomat

The collection of Hildegard's extant letters has been published in translation by Joseph Baird and Radd Ehrman.[14] This three-volume work divides the many letters according to the position of the correspondent: Volume 1

contains letters to church officials, from the pope through various bishops and archbishops. Volume 2 contains letters to individual abbots, abbesses, monks, and nuns. Volume 3 continues with letters to individual members of the clergy, to Emperors Conrad III and Frederick Barbarossa, and to assorted laypersons. The numbers given for the letters in the following discussion refer to the numbers they carry in this edition.

The correspondences begin in 1146 or 1147, but definitely by 1148, with a letter from Hildegard to Bernard of Clairvaux, seeking his support for her visions. Then follows the series of letters to all members of society. I will concentrate here on two types of letters: those to popes and those to emperors. Many of them have a diplomatic purpose, because they deal with controversy concerning the schism between the church and the emperor.

Letters to Popes

Hildegard corresponded with four popes over the course of her public life: Eugenius III, Anastasius IV, Hadrian IV, and Alexander III. The exchanges between Hildegard and Eugenius III are the most numerous of these. In her first letter to him (Letter 2, ca. 1148), Hildegard expresses a desire that the pope validate her visions, and she pleads with Eugenius to support her writings. Letter 3, written in 1153, exhorts the pope (represented as an eagle) to protect ecclesiastical powers from being usurped by the emperor (allegorically a bear), and probably referred to the German secular leadership in general. Conrad III died in 1152, and Frederick was too new in the position for Hildegard to determine his policies (see below, Letter 312, Hildegard's first communication with Frederick).Letter 4, written in 1151, forms a part of the sad Richardis tale. In it, Eugenius rejects Hildegard's plea to keep Richardis in the Rupertsberg community. In Letter 5 (1153), Hildegard writes to Eugenius in support of Henry archbishop of Mainz, one of Hildegard's proponents, who had been removed from office by Frederick Barbarossa. Finally Hildegard writes to Eugenius in 1153 (Letter 6) regarding a vision she had experienced and exhorts the pope to bring Christians back into the fold.

The pontificate of Anastasius IV was very brief (1153–54), and only one letter from Hildegard to Anastasius survives (Letter 8). The topic of the letter seems to concern the appointment of the archbishop of Magdeburg made by Frederick Barbarossa that Eugenius had refused to ratify before his death. When Anastasius's envoys could not reach an agreement with Frederick, Anastasius reversed Eugenius's decision and allowed the appointment to proceed. Hildegard wrote to Anastasius in her prophetic voice, criticizing him harshly for giving in to the demands of Frederick and his supporters at the expense of the papacy.

Nicholas Breakspear, the only Englishman to hold the position of pope, became Hadrian IV upon the death of Anastasius IV. Hildegard's single

letter to him (Letter 9) seems to have been written shortly after he was elected. Hildegard introduces herself to him and encourages him to withstand the political pressures he will face. She is referring to the ongoing problems between the papacy and Frederick Barbarossa. Hadrian crowned Frederick emperor in 1155, but the relationship between the two was generally fractious.

Alexander III was the pope around whom the "papal schism" raged, yet Hildegard seems never to have written him on the subject. Instead, the one letter to Alexander (Letter 10, 1173) concerns an internal dispute between the abbot of Disibodenberg, Helengerus, and Rupertsberg. Hildegard's longtime secretary Volmar had died in 1173, and Helengerus refused to replace him. Alexander intervened (Letter 11), resulting in the election of Gottfried of Disibodenberg as her secretary. Gottfried began a *Vita sanctae Hildegardis* in the hopes that it would be a first step toward her canonization, but he died in 1176 without having completed it. Hildegard then chose Guibert of Gembloux to succeed him, and there seems to have been no disagreement about his election. He served as her secretary until her death in 1179.

Letters to Emperors

The letters to the Holy Roman Emperors are part of Volume 3 of Baird and Ehrman's complete correspondence. When Hildegard was recognized as a prophetess at the Synod of Trier, she became a person of importance to the German sovereigns. Correspondence begins sometime between 1150 and 1152 with a letter from Conrad, "King of the Romans" (Letter 311). In it, Conrad introduces himself to Hildegard, asks for her prayers ("for we have lived far otherwise than we ought"), promises her any aid she might need, and commends his son to her. In her response, she gives a detailed prophecy of difficult times ahead for the church and admonishes Conrad to restrain his pleasures and return to God. There are the only two letters between Conrad and Hildegard. Conrad died in 1152 and was succeeded by his nephew, Frederick of Swabia, known as Barbarossa.

Frederick Barbarossa became king of Germany in 1152, and Hadrian IV crowned him Holy Roman Emperor in 1155. Perhaps mindful of the aid Conrad had promised, Frederick issued a letter of protection for the Rupertsberg in 1163, ensuring its political and physical safety, including free elections for the community and freedom from external advocates.

Hildegard begins the exchange of letters in 1152 (Letter 312), urging the king to beware of deceitful advisors, not to misuse his office, to rule justly, and to be abstemious. However, in 1159, Frederick began to support a series of antipopes, and the tone of Hildegard's letters changes. In Letter 313 (written perhaps in 1153 but also perhaps as late as 1164) Hildegard criticizes Frederick for improper governance and warns him that he may lose the grace

of God. She tells him that he appeared to her in a vision as a little boy or a madman and that he should change his ways.

A letter from Frederick to Hildegard of circa 1156–58 refers to a visit Hildegard had made to his court at Ingelheim, and he tells her that what she had predicted had come true (though we have no idea what that was), that he will strive for the honor of the kingdom, and that he will rule justly, being swayed in his judgments neither by friendship nor by hatred.

The final two letters from Hildegard to Frederick are harsh criticisms and probably refer to Frederick's continued support of antipopes against Alexander III. The first (Letter 315), very short and very harsh, warns that God will do away with obstinacy and rebellion, by the sword if necessary. Perhaps this refers to the events of the Diet of Würzburg in 1165, at which Frederick advanced the antipope Paschal III. The second (Letter 316), longer and milder in tone, urges him to rule justly and righteously. This may have been written before the crisis point occurred at Würzburg. No letters survive that refer to the Peace of Vienna in 1177, when Frederick made peace with Alexander III.

Musician

Hildegard's musical output has been described above. She was known as a composer in her day, and her reputation continued until at least 1487, when Johannes Trithemius ordered that the *Ordo virtutum* be copied for use at his monastery at Sponheim. There are two other records of her musical influences that should be mentioned, however.

Letter from Abbot Kuno to Hildegard. Sometime shortly before his death in 1155, Abbot Kuno wrote to Hildegard (Letter 74), asking for whatever information she had on Saint Disibod, so that he and the brothers might honor Disibod appropriately. He also mentions his age and his sins and asks for Hildegard's prayers.

Hildegard responds to Kuno (Letter 74r) with a modest reprimand referring to the foolishness of one who cannot amend his own life yet interferes in the lives of others. Nonetheless, she says, she has received revelations about Disibod in a vision, and understood them by way of poetry and music. She then includes three works, the antiphon "O mirum admirandum," the responsory "O viriditas digiti Dei," and the sequence "O presul vere civitas."

These works would have allowed the monks of Disibodenberg to perform an office hour, presumably First Vespers on September 7, with an antiphon specific to Disibod to surround the psalms. The responsory would also have been included in the same office hour (vespers often had responsories as part of their liturgies), while the sequence could have been used at Mass on the feast day (September 8). Because Abbot Kuno died in 1155, we know these works were composed before that date.

The texts[15] for "O viriditas digiti Dei" and "O presul vere civitas" show the nature of the vision Hildegard had received:

"O viriditas digiti Dei" Responsory

O invigorating power of the finger of God in which God planted a garden which shimmers on the heights like a steadfast column:
You are glorious in the eternal garden of God.
And you, O lofty mountain, you will never be brought low by God's judgment. And yet you stand afar like an exile; still, you stand not in the power of the armed man who would carry you off /
You are glorious in the eternal garden of God.
Glory to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. You are glorious in the eternal garden of God.

"O presul vere civitatis" Sequence

O prelate of the true city, you who ascend to heaven in the temple of the cornerstone; you were laid low on earth through God's will.
You, O pilgrim, set apart from worldly seed, you desired to be an exile for the love of Christ. O mountain of the cloister of the mind,
you diligently disclosed your beautiful face in the mirror of the dove.
You hid yourself in a secret place, inebriated by the fragrance of flowers, shining for God through a lattice of saints.
O pinnacle in the cloisters of heaven, you sold this world for the resplendent life: this prize, O sustaining confessor, you have always in the Lord.
In your mind the living fountain poured forth the purest rivers in blazing light through the way to salvation.
You are a mighty tower before the altar of the most high God, and you have covered the summit of the tower with the smoke of aromatic herbs.
O Disibod, through your light with patterns of pure sound you have built a body of wondrous praise in two choirs through the Son of man.
You stand on the heights, unashamed before the living God, and with life-sustaining dew you protect those who glorify God in this song.
O sweet life and O blessed perseverance, which brought forth, ever, in celestial Jerusalem the glorious light in this blessed Disibod.
Now, praise be to God for the manly work in the form of a beautiful tonsure.
And let the heavenly citizens rejoice over those who emulate them in this manner.

"O mirum admirandum" is by far the shortest of the three compositions. The work is an antiphon, a type of piece that surrounded the recitation of the psalms at the office hours. Although it could be used at any office hour, it probably was intended for First Vespers for the feast of Saint Disibod, the evening office preceding the feast day itself.

Letter from Hildegard to the prelates at Mainz. It is not often that we have the opportunity to read a medieval description of the effect of chant on those who performed it and listened to it, but this is exactly what we have in Hildegard's Letter 23 of 1178–79 to the Mainz prelates. Because she refused the order to disinter the body of someone they thought had been excommunicated, the Mainz prelates banned the Rupertsberg community from singing the divine services (see above). The immediate goal of Hildegard's letter was to convince the prelates to lift this ban, but she took the opportunity to express her ideas about the nature of sacred music in general, both vocal and instrumental.

She begins factually. Since the interdict was imposed, her nuns had been reading the office, not singing it, but she has had visions telling her that this was an incorrect way to perform the office and that she must seek permission to resume singing. She then explains the allegorical and tropological (or moral) meaning that music conveys. Music recalls the divine melody of praise Adam experienced in paradise before the fall. Through music, those who hear it might be taught about inward things. Instrumental performance that requires flexing of the fingers recalls Adam himself, who was formed by God's finger, the Holy Spirit. Some persons sigh and groan at the sound of singing, remembering the nature of celestial harmony. Then a warning: those who impose silence on a church (i.e., the Mainz prelates) will lose their place in the choir of angels. As was seen above, this argument held no water with the clerics, and the ban was not lifted until Archbishop Christian received evidence that the person buried had indeed been reconciled to the church.

Scientist

In her own day, Hildegard was famed as a scientist and healer. Many of the miracles recounted in her *Vita* have a medical component—for example, her cure of the blind boy using Rhine water. Moreover, they remained important sources for over 400 years. But as medical and scientific knowledge increased, her writings became less important as reliable reference works and more important as a record of her time. They are no less valuable for that, but valuable in a different way.

HILDEGARD'S INFLUENCE TODAY

Although her works never entirely disappeared from view, over the centuries they became more and more the property of Catholic Church scholars and antiquarians. As far as the general public was concerned, she ceased to exist, and it was not until the twentieth century that she was "rediscovered." Music had a prominent role in this rediscovery. Thanks to the work of scholars interested in the contributions of women in music, Hildegard's musical

works began to be published and recorded from about the late 1980s onward. Those recordings generated interest in other aspects of Hildegard's work, and today Hildegard's influence continues to grow. There are now three Hildegard *personae,* with influences on three different audiences: the historical Hildegard, the popular Hildegard, and the fictional Hildegard.

The Historical Hildegard

The historical Hildegard is beginning to emerge with some clarity. We have learned a great deal about her life, not only from her autobiographical statements, but also from hagiographies of those who lived with her and shortly after. We also have her works, available in good editions and translations in greater and greater number as time goes on. Her visionary works give us insights into aspects of medieval culture that were previously unknown, based on sources not previously available: the nature and influence of the visionary experience and of mysticism on all aspects of medieval religious practice, and the role of women in medieval Catholicism. Her scientific works show us something of the knowledge of the natural world in the twelfth century, and of how that knowledge was put to use in medical practice. Her musical works show us much about the composition of sacred music beyond Gregorian chant, and recordings of them are now much more historically informed than the earliest attempts. Her letters, published now in translation, offer the most accessible entrance into many of the daily events of her life.

The Popular Hildegard

The second influence is that of her works on various corners of popular culture. For some decades now, there has been ongoing interest in holistic medicine, homeopathic cures, folk remedies, spiritual healing, ecology, and the like. Hildegard is now used as a touchstone, and *Physica* and *Causae et curae* are often cited as forerunners of this interest. There is at least one website devoted to "healing chants," using four pieces by Hildegard, including the antiphon "O mirum admirandum" given above.[16] There is also a variety of books devoted to Hildegard's medicine, her healing plants, and spiritual remedies, all derived from either *Physica* or *Causae et curae.* However, a "Note to the Reader" on the copyright page of Priscilla Throop's translation of *Physica* warns:

> This book is intended as an informational guide. The remedies, approaches, and techniques described herein are meant to supplement, and not to be a substitute for, professional medical care or treatment. They should not be used to treat a serious ailment without prior consultation with a qualified health-care professional.

At the same time, there has been interest in women's spirituality, and Hildegard again figures prominently in both scholarly and popular print and online publications.[17] These often take the form of musical improvisations on texts by Hildegard or artwork derived from Hildegard's descriptions of her visions.

Early recordings of her music, and some more recent ones, presented the chants in a way that Hildegard would never have imagined. Accompaniments of various sorts have been invented, even electronically generated backdrops. These have nothing to do with the chant environment in which Hildegard grew up; they are instead re-imaginings of the repertory, intended to attract a wider audience. Jennifer Bain has provided a summary of the recording history of Hildegard's music and shows how marketing strategies have often blurred the actual nature of the music.[18]

Finally, Hildegard finds a place in the health-food movement as well. It is possible to find websites devoted to recipes attributed to Hildegard, the most frequently encountered being the one for the so-called Cookies of Joy, a very spicy cinnamon cookie. Although *Physica* contains recipes involving plants, birds, and fish, they are meant as medicinal cures, not dishes. Yet there is a cookbook, *From Hildegard's Kitchen,* containing many of the recipes from *Physica* modified to serve for modern dining.[19]

The Fictional Hildegard

A third influence may be described as the use of Hildegard to create a mythical medieval person who behaves in the way modern writers think she should. This persona is often found among groups of people who have taken on the techniques of women's studies, gender studies, literary studies, deconstruction, and postmodernism and used those techniques for their own purposes.

There have been speculations about her sexuality, especially with regard to the Richardis affair, and there is even a website devoted to lesbian saints, with this fictional Hildegard as a member.[20] The reader should recall Maddocks's cautionary remarks given above about "exaggerated importance" and "misconstrued nature." There have also been suspicions about Hildegard's relationship with Volmar. None of these notions recognizes the importance Hildegard and her contemporaries placed on the vows they took, and any suggestion that she did not understand the erotic nature of her relationships put the whole topic beyond any sort of rational discussion. In the end, all of this is irrelevant to Hildegard's creative work itself.

A film purporting to cover a part of the life of Hildegard has this as its description:[21]

> Hildegard of Bingen was one of the most remarkable women of the
> Middle Ages—an abbess and woman of God, a visionary, naturalist,

playwright, mystic, political moralist and composer. Yet, despite her outpouring of religious creativity, her visions were called into question, and she was put on trial by the Church in 1148. This is the story of the events leading up to that trial and of the trial itself.

The setting is the monastery of St. Disibod on the Rhine in central Germany. Hildegard's befriending of a young persecuted girl and the care she shows for a dying crusader eventually lead her into conflict with her Abbot. She is placed under an interdict, which results in Hildegard and her nuns being forbidden from taking communion and singing the divine service. After enduring the punishment for some time, Hildegard protests, and it is her subsequent examination and trial by the Archbishop of Mainz around which the story revolves.

Very little of this description after the first sentence applies to the real Hildegard. She was never given the title of abbess, remaining always under the jurisdiction of the abbots of Disibodenberg. Also, before 1148 there was no "outpouring of religious creativity." She had just begun to write *Scivias* at that point, at the instigation of Volmar and Kuno. Her "outpouring" would come only in the future. Third, her visions were not "called into question." On the contrary, both Volmar and Abbot Kuno validated them locally, and those two men brought them to the attention of the pope with the intent of having them validated universally. Fourth, the Synod of Trier was not a trial. It had a number of goals, only one of which was the review of the incomplete *Scivias* to see if the opinions of Volmar and Kuno were correct.

Finally, as the second paragraph accurately describes, the film contains events from Hildegard's life, but so grotesquely shuffled in time and so completely distorted that one has no idea of what actually occurred when and for what reasons. The "young persecuted girl" is indeed named Richardis, but this Richardis is completely unrecognizable as the Richardis known from the records. Her mother, the Margravine Richardis, was not the harsh critic of Hildegard portrayed in the film, but a strong supporter. The episode of the buried excommunicant took place in the late 1170s at Rupertsberg, not in the early 1150s at Disibodenberg. An interdict was indeed imposed, but in the late 1170s by the prelates of Mainz, not in the 1150s by the abbot. All of this took place after the founding of Rupertsberg, not before as in the film, and not a single one of these events led up to the "trial."

The Hildegard of this film is a fictional character, whose life events have been extracted from the life of the real Hildegard and distorted for dramatic effect. This is not a problem if one knows the true state of affairs, but it is a very great problem if the film is taken to be a historical record. Unfortunately the producers seem to want the viewers to do just that, to judge by the flier accompanying the film. One question asks if the death of Richardis could have motivated Hildegard to found the Rupertsberg convent, when in fact it could not, because Richardis died *after* the move to Rupertsberg. Absolutely pointless! The last discussion question on the flier asks: "What have we learned

about the medieval church and Christian faith in that era?" The answer must be "absolutely nothing that is reliable."

Far more nuanced and deserving of serious attention is the 2009 German film *Vision: From the Life of Hildegard von Bingen* (original title *Vision: Aus dem Leben der Hildegard von Bingen*), directed by Margarethe von Trotta and featuring Barbara Sukowa as Hildegard.[22]

Daniel DiCenso, in the wonderfully clear and convincing article "Hildegard on Trial: A Note Regarding the Narrow Reception of a Medieval Abbess-Composer," describes appearances in print of the fictional Hildegard, illustrates the unreliability of the stereotype this persona represents, shows the number of scholarly publications that adopt the stereotype unquestioningly to their peril, and warns that relying on this stereotype obscures the real contributions Hildegard made.[23] Happily, cautionary views like this one are on the increase. In the end, the fictional Hildegard is not really necessary. As has been seen, the real Hildegard is interesting enough.

NOTES

1. Elizabeth's biography reads exactly like that of Hildegard, with whom she corresponded. Like Hildegard, Elizabeth suffered poor health as a child, was subject to ecstatic visions, and was ordered by her abbot to record them. She hesitated to do so for much the same reasons as Hildegard but was convinced to proceed. The monk Egbert aided her in this enterprise, and her works appeared in three books, the first of which, *Liber viarum dei,* seems to be modeled on Hildegard's *Scivias*. With so much in common between these two lives, one begins to suspect that this sort of biography is also a literary trope or rhetorical posture, rather than simple history.

2. See Anneke B. Mulder-Bakker, *Lives of the Anchoresses*, trans. Myra Heerspink Scholz (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005).

3. In seventeenth-century England, the terms referred to the kings, lords, and commons—related, but not identical, to the description above.

4. This is specified in the Rule of Saint Benedict, Chs. 54 and 59.

5. Rule of Saint Benedict, Ch. 41.

6. See Sabina Flanagan, *Hildegard of Bingen, 1098–1179. A Visionary Life*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 1998), and Fiona Maddocks, *Hildegard of Bingen: The Woman of Her Age* (New York: Doubleday, 2001).

7. See Maddocks, *The Woman of Her Age*, 63–65, for a summary, and Flanagan, *Hildegard of Bingen*, 193–213, for an even more complete account.

8. See Maddocks, *Hildegard of Bingen*. The complete series of letters appears in chronological order in Joseph L. Baird and Radd K. Ehrman, trans., *The Letters of Hildegard of Bingen,* 3 vols. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994–2004), vol. 3, letters 11–19, the numbers used here.

9. It is perhaps significant that this passage does not occur in the abbreviated version of the *Ordo virtutum* in *Scivias,* Vision 13, lines 245–454.

10. Columba Hart and Jane Bishop, trans., *Hildegard: Scivias* (New York: Paulist Press, 1990), 67.

11. See http://www.newadvent.org/cathen, s.n. Hildegard.

12.   See *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan, 2001), s.n. Hildegard.

13.   Barbara Newman, *Symphonia: A Critical Edition of the "Symphonia armonie celestium revelationum,"* 2nd ed. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998).

14.   For the complete letters, see Baird and Ehrman, *The Letters of Hildegard of Bingen.*

15.   See Barbara Newman's translations in Hildegard of Bingen, *Symphonia: A Critical Edition of the 'Symphonia armonie celestium revelationum'* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 180, 182, 186–88.

16.   See http://www.healingchants.com/hct.omirum.html.

17.   See, for instance, http://www.womenspirit-twincities.org/.

18.   Jennifer Bain, "Hildegard on 34th Street: Chant in the Marketplace," *Echo: A Music-Centered Journal* 6, no. 1 (Spring 2004), http://www.echo.ucla.edu/Volume6-issue1/bain/bain4.html (accessed June 22, 2011).

19.   Jany Fournier-Rosset, *From Hildegard's Kitchen: Foods of Health, Foods of Joy,* trans. Victoria Hébert and Denis Sabourin (Liguori, MI: Liguori Publications, 2010).

20.   "Queer Saints and Martyrs (and Others): Hildegard of Bingen," http://queering-the-church.blogspot.com/2010/09/hildegard-of-bingen.html (accessed June 22, 2011).

21.   *Hildegard.* An Omnibus/CTVC BBC Production. Worcester, PA: Distributed by Gateway Films/Vision Video, 1994.

22.   Information and blurb about various aspects of the film are available at http://www.zeitgeistfilms.com/vision/, together with a short biography (not, however, error-free) and a timeline of Hildegard's life. There is also an associated CD of music from the film.

23.   Daniel DiCenso, "Hildegard on Trial: A Note Regarding the Narrow Reception of a Medieval Abbess-Composer," *Marginalia* 5 (2007), http://www.marginalia.co.uk/journal/07trial/dicenso.php.

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Illustration by Howard Pyle titled "Robin and the Tinker at the Blue Boar Inn." (Howard Pyle, *The Merry Adventures of Robin Hood*, 1890)

Robin Hood

Stephen T. Knight

Robin Hood is a contemporary icon of medievalism, the modern practice of using images and themes from the Middle Ages to both distance and also represent modern issues. But many quasi-medieval elements of his widely understood tradition are themselves recent. Medieval Robin Hood was a yeoman, not an earl; he had no interest in Marian or any other woman; he did not represent the Saxons against the Normans; he robbed the rich on behalf of only himself, not the poor. Those modern developments in the outlaw tradition can themselves be interpreted as indexes to the changing ways in which Robin Hood has stood as a figure of resistance to wrongful authority, as a hero of natural law.

ORIGINS AND EARLY DEVELOPMENT

The origins of Robin Hood are unclear. Historians committed to empirical identity as reality like to speculate about a "real" medieval Robin or Robert Hood who was in trouble with the law and became a mythic hero, like a medieval Jesse James. Contenders are William Lefevre from Reading, alias "Robehod," in 1261–62 and a Robyn Hode of 1324, perhaps from Wakefield in Yorkshire, who served and then left the king as Robin does in *The Gest of Robin Hood*. Both of them have been held to be the originals behind the first reference to "rymes of Robin Hood" in William Langland's *Piers Plowman* (ca. 1375) and the tough yeoman of the ballads that survive from the later fifteenth century on.

This view ignores other early Robin Hood types. One, whose priority might seem attractive to historians, was in trouble for allegedly murdering a servant of the abbot of Cirencester around 1214—presumably both the unappealing crime and the westerly location repressed this unsettling figure. A fact more structurally opposed to the idea that the original Robin Hood was a criminal is that as records emerge in the early fifteenth century, both small towns in the southwest of Britain and also places in lowland Scotland attest to the deployment of Robin Hood, usually in early summer, as the central figure in the nature-linked celebration of a procession, communal sports, and a feast. Operating mostly in those restricted regions until about 1600, "play-game" Robin was a peaceful and communally central figure, not an outlaw—though such carnivals could sometimes turn into riots, as in Edinburgh in 1561.

The distribution of the play-games suggests this Robin is the same as the Robin of the thirteenth-century French *pastourelle*, a youthful peasant who plays with his rustic friends and occasionally defends his Marian from gentry seducers. The southwest of England knew France well through the wine trade (southeastern England traded principally with the low countries, Germany, and the Baltic), and lowland Scotland was already involved in the "auld alliance" with France: a ship called "Le Robin Hood" anchored in Aberdeen in 1438.

If France provided play-game Robin, one question is how did he gain the English surname Hood, as he is always named in the play-game records? Hardly

through a historical English criminal with that name: play-game Robin is never a lawbreaker, and the one appearance of the sheriff has him wearing green and celebrating seasonally along with Robin. A more probable source of the sur-name is that Hood—designating either a wearer or a maker of hoods—implies both relative poverty (hats were expensive), and also a form of disguise, the par-tial concealment still realized in the modern "hoodie." A second question is how amiable, communal Robin of the play-games became the tough outlaw popular in ballads. A real outlaw might indeed be a source for this robbing Robin, but the play on the two words was common in the fourteenth century, and it may simply be that the representative of small-town communality became criminal-ized in response to the financial and social upheavals of that stark period. It began with bad weather and blighted harvest after 1305 and grew worse when mid-century and recurrent plagues brought wholesale death and impoverish-ment, as well as repressive laws to restrain wages as labor became scarce; then general socioeconomic distress hit a population both falling in numbers and urbanizing in a rapid and disorderly manner. An English outlaw myth that real-izes both contemporary conflict and a utopian response to it seems highly cred-ible as the creation of a century not matched for disaster until the twentieth.

THE FOURTEENTH-CENTURY ROBIN HOOD

References to an outlaw tradition of Robin Hood cluster from the later four-teenth century, and before texts themselves survive it is clear that the figure is a common man—a "yeoman" is the usual term, meaning neither serf nor gentry, and essentially independent; he is linked to nature, in a forest that is always close to a town, so this is not a refuge as much as a displacement of social normality; he has real power—very few, says a popular proverb, could string his mighty bow; and the fact that it is a longbow implies the physical force of the common man, well-known from victories at Crécy and Poitiers against mounted French gentry. Other early proverbs stress his mysterious and elusive qualities, and he is an opponent of established order whether clerical or civil: essentially he is a figure of natural law against legalized oppression.

THE FIFTEENTH-CENTURY ROBIN HOOD

The references from the fourteenth century have a sharper edge than the more utopian image of Robin that appears in the ballads that survive from the late fifteenth century. They are themselves not "popular" in the sense of being simple songs orally and communally performed—the first two, "Robin Hood and the Monk" and "Robin Hood and the Potter," are quite long and have no trace of a chorus. This literary genre also goes very rapidly into print—*The Gest of Robin Hood* is now dated to the later fifteenth century and may well have been composed expressly for printing. This first literate formation seems

at some distance from the popular and resistance-oriented Robin of the earlier references and proverbs, and when we first see a Robin Hood text, the myth of natural law may already have become to some degree acculturated and euphemized. It seems likely that the outlaw ballad genre itself relates to the mediations of tension in urban development, not the more robust and direct forms of rural political conflict: as Robin boldly ventures into town and then escapes into the always nearby forest: he figures a dream of freedom for citizens who feel oppressed.

THE POST-MEDIEVAL ROBIN HOOD

The seventeenth-century riches of the Robin Hood ballads were in the mercantile form of the broadside, sold for cash, and they were sold to be sung as well as read. But the tunes that are often mentioned with the broadside texts were usually borrowed from other songs: this is literary work being oralized. Some broadside ballads are derived from the *Gest* (Robin robs the clergy, outwits the sheriff, wins an archery tournament, encounters the king as a near equal). Two with traceable earlier origins reiterate Robin's tough side. When young, he becomes an outlaw because the foresters insult him, and he kills them all; then he rescues a widow's three sons from execution for poaching and hangs the sheriff instead.

In the commonest broadside story, Robin meets a stranger in the forest and fights him, but this is about community, not heroic triumph. The normal outcome is an honorable draw and the opponent joins the band, be he Tanner, Tinker, Pinder (beast-warden), or even a fighting friar (this last appeared in play form at the end of a reprint of the *Gest* circa 1560; a modernized version of the text is printed as an appendix to this chapter). The broadside ballads, more than 30 of them, flourished in the mid- and late seventeenth century. There appears to have been some identification of Robin with anti-royalism, and in 1661 a short play was staged in Nottingham on the day of Charles II's coronation. In it, a spiritless Robin submits to the new (and also old), order, but the continued, even increased, popularity of a somewhat resistant Robin in ballads and increasingly common verse and prose "Lives" suggests that the Robin Hood stories acted as a safety valve for muted dissent.

THE GENTRIFIED ROBIN HOOD

Yeoman Robin survived long in broadside form and in small ballad-collections called garlands, which circulated into the nineteenth century through Britain and were sold and even reprinted in America, which had its own take on resistance to the king and his officials. But there was an early modern rival to yeoman Robin in the gentrified earl of Huntington. One of the conservative moves of Tudor culture was to reverse the politics of Robin

Hood, first in chronicles (John Major, 1521, and Richard Grafton, 1569) and then in the prestigious genre of drama, in Anthony Munday's *The Downfall of Robert, Earle of Huntington* (1598–99). Elevated as an earl, Robin falls out with a bad king: his resistance to royalty is now in the service of true kingship and lordship, the opposite of the politics of the yeoman outlaw. King John provided the bad monarch (Richard III must have been too recent)—and the return of Richard I from Crusade brings a happy resolution to Robin's noble, pro-royal resistance. In the *Gest* Robin had been pardoned and taken to court by the king, but the king was called Edward and had no number, and in any case Robin soon left for the forest.

Other features are also new in gentrification. Lord Robin has a lady, presumably to provide his lands with an inheritor, and we see the return of Marian from the *pastourelles*: she had appeared occasionally in the play-games but was, with outlaw credibility, absent from the forest of the ballads. Though the king restores Robin, this is a tragic story. Robin's enemies—in Munday a Catholic clergyman and a faithless steward (archetypal threats to the Tudor aristocracy)—cause his death by poison (they are aiming for the king), and in the gloomy sequel, *The Death of Robert Earle of Huntington* (1599), after Robin's early murder Marian is hounded by John to her eventual death.

Ennobled though the gentrified tradition is, it had little literary power. Munday is not a weak writer, but Lord Robin has almost nothing to do. It is his "downfall" to be in the forest, where the yeoman flourished, and the lively, comic, violent deeds of ballad Robin are below this lordly self—in Munday's first play the widow's sons are rescued, but Robin only initiates the sequence. The problem for gentrification was that it had no focal heroic action. Ben Jonson wrote half an outlaw masque in *The Sad Shepherd,* elevating the tradition with pastoral material, writing some fine scenes between Robin and Marian and cranking up some masculine anxiety with a witch who impersonates Marian, but even though he had synopsized a full plot, he never finished it. Scholars suggest that Jonson started writing *The Sad Shepherd* shortly before his death and this is why it is unfinished, but it may be more likely that his noble-outlaw story just ran out of narrative steam.

Gentrification does generate one other outlaw genre: with Robin as a man who owns both land and powerful identity, there is reason to memorialize him with a formal biography and an epitaph. Starting with the manuscript Sloane *Life* of about 1600, short prose accounts appear for over two centuries, sometimes prefacing garlands; there also emerges a frequently deployed epitaph, dated to 1247, in splendidly fake Middle English:

> Hear underneath this laitl stean
> laiz Robert erl of Huntingtun
> near arcir ver az hie sa geud
> an pipl kauld im robin heud
> sick utlaws as hi an iz men
> vil england nivr si agen.

Material culture is also fabricated for the heroic afterlife. A grave slab lies in the grounds of what was Kirklees Abbey, where the *Gest* has Robin dying. Improbably located in a wood near the road, it bears the epitaph, but no body lies underneath. Then a dramatically extended grave in Hathersage churchyard is the alleged resting place of Little John. This is a masculine memoriality: though she died onstage like Robin, a grave has never been created for Marian.

THE OUTLAW ROBIN HOOD OF THE BROADSIDE BALLADS

Gentrification hardly touched the broadside ballads: their lively action focused on the yeoman and his vigorous, even violent, anti-authoritarian deeds. A few traces of elevation appear, quite unconvincingly. In "Robin Hood and Maid Marian" (ca. 1680), she bravely disguises herself as a man, goes to seek Earl Robin in the forest, and gets into a fight with him. As usual, the contestants bond, but this gentry variant was not a popular ballad. The literary mashup "Robin Hood's Birth, Breeding, Valour and Marriage" (ca. 1660) starts in gentrified mode, making Robin the nephew of a squire, with Little John his servant: he meets a pastoral-sounding lady called Clorinda, but things go socially downhill and they end up dancing at Tutbury fair.

There were some traces of gentrification on the stage in the recurrently popular eighteenth-century Robin Hood operettas, but the choice of mode was no doubt stimulated by the need to deploy women's voices—Marian and her maid make a quartet with Robin and Little John as well as providing romantic solos and duets. Yeoman Robin does appear occasionally in eighteenth-century criminal lives, in which he is presented beside highwaymen, and like some of them, he can have genteel origins. But none of these modes is memorable: even in the garlands and ballads, the outlaw tradition seems by this time to be ebbing in energy.

THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY ROBIN HOOD

As in so many other areas, Romantic writers injected new vigor into the phenomenon of Robin Hood. The ballad material itself became widely available in Joseph Ritson's anthology of 1795. Juxtaposing the yeoman and the lord, he reprinted almost all the early ballads, missing only "Robin Hood and the Monk," but prefaced them with a full "Life" in which he espoused Lord Robin as the real man, though the earl hardly appeared in the edition itself.

Sir Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe* (1819), his first England-based novel, has a similar double use for the tradition. Known mostly as Locksley (named for a village first given as his origin in the Sloane *Life*), Robin is tough, illiterate, a formidable bowman, and leader of forest outlaws. He helps King Richard, reveals his own rustic authority, then fades from the story. Scott gives him two indelible elements: Robin is for the first time a Saxon, a serious enemy to the French lords—a potent

motif just four years after the battle of Waterloo and the final defeat of Napoleon Bonaparte. Then, when he performs the impossible feat of splitting a Frenchman's arrow into slivers, English chauvinism and phallic triumphalism are condensed. Both features have become central to the modern icon. Scott also knew the gentrified story. His conservatism presumably prevented him from making the outlaw a lord, but he still acknowledges that part of the tradition: the lands of the noble Saxon crusader Ivanhoe have been stolen by bad Prince John and his Norman friends, and King Richard will restore him.

If Scott in this inventive way juxtaposed the two major Robin Hood strands that Ritson had transmitted, Thomas Love Peacock had the technical brilliance to interweave them, working in parallel to Scott. He wrote most of *Maid Marian* before *Ivanhoe* was published, and he provided the final chapters for publication in 1822. Here emerges the modern Robin Hood: an earl who resists John and loves Marian, he is also the hero of many a fight, jape, and song, and he consciously flouts the punitive forest laws, which in the recent period of enclosures had become a major issue in British consciousness. Peacock himself lived near Windsor Forest, which was being forcefully enclosed by the royal family. In 1814, there was strong resistance by local landowners and peasants acting together, and in "The Last Days of Windsor Forest," Peacock later reminisced about meeting a man calling himself "Little John" who was looking for the leader of the anti-royal forces, a farmer known as "Robin Hood."

The strongly independent, nature-linked voice of the common people appealed to the more liberal Romantics. John Keats produced his casually brilliant "Robin Hood: To a Friend" (1818) in response to sonnets on the same theme by John Hamilton Reynolds. Between them they generate a nature-related, anti-urban, morally authentic hero; the radical Leigh Hunt, who had just spent two years in prison for mocking the prince regent, developed this theme in a more overtly political way in a series of ballads.

These stimuli gave rise to a number of novels, much longer and far less elegant than Peacock's. Some authors, like G.P.R. James and Thomas Miller, linked Robin with the liberal fantasy that Simon de Montfort, earl of Leicester, had in the mid-thirteenth century founded an early version of parliament. Others developed ludicrous plots involving exotic villains (Pierce Egan has one called Casper Steinkopft), orientalism (Joachim Stocqueler has Robin return from Crusade with a bellydancer), and sheer fantasy (George Emmett involves Robin with a wood demon).[1] This last is called the "Young Englishman's Edition," and Robin Hood begins to play a part in the development of children's literature.[2]

STAGE

The richest of Peacock's influences was theatrical. The dramatist and producer J. R. Planché had *Maid Marian* on the stage for Christmas 1822, using Peacock's own fine songs, and it played on and off throughout the nineteenth

century. This success inspired a wealth of Robin Hood pantomimes and musicals, culminating in Alfred, Lord Tennyson's *The Foresters* (1891), with music by Sir Arthur Sullivan, and Reginald de Koven's *Robin Hood* (1890) and *Maid Marian* (1901). All of these were successful in the United States and were the vehicles that transmitted newly active Earl Robin, his beloved Marian, and his villainous but handsome love rival into film, the genre in which Robin Hood has girdled the world.

FILM AND TELEVISION

There were, amazingly, seven Robin Hood films made before 1914: four from Britain and three from Hollywood. These were basically continuous with the popular theatrical tradition, and the 1913 Éclair film has recently been discovered and restored: it combines action and comedy in the context of a distinctly American valuing of family and dislike of nobles and kings who are distant from the common people.

This early film tradition was apotheosized in the 1922 Douglas Fairbanks silent movie, which was as magnificent as it was lucrative. With a cast and set that still look very large, it opens at a major chivalric tournament and then Lord Robin leaves for the Crusades. When Marian calls him back to help restore order at home, natural law and American isolationism coalesce via Fairbanks's sprightly theatricality. Sound and color were to create their own level of outlaw splendor in the 1938 Warner Brothers film (which won three technical Oscars, for editing, artistic direction, and Wolfgang Korngold's stirring score). Errol Flynn, Olivia de Havilland, Basil Rathbone, and Claude Rains were a mighty cast; the pace and condensation of Michael Curtiz's direction is a standard in media schools; and the film, though 70 years old, still dominates as a Christmas favorite on television. It also had a political voice, linking the goodhearted liberalism of Robin's speeches to the unmissable links between the violent Norman solders and Nazi Brownshirt excesses on the streets of modern Germany.

It has been argued that film has been the master genre for the Robin Hood tradition, linking to and projecting further the theatricality of the ballads and the dramatic tradition. The hero's brisk story and direct meanings may not be so well-suited to thoughtful novels or intense poetry, and there has been a continuous flow of outlaw movies and television. Low points have appeared, such as the outlaws on cowboy ponies in *The Bandit of Sherwood Forest* (1946), June Laverick as a shrill daughter pretending to be *Son of Robin Hood* (1958), and the three dull, if occasionally ridiculous, British Hammer films from the 1950s and 1960s.

The immediacy of television has reshaped the outlaw tradition several times. *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (1955–58) was enormously successful around the world, attracting massive audiences and running to 143 episodes. Starring Richard Greene (an Irishman who had worked in Hollywood before World

War II) as a British-officer version of Robin, the series was made in the United Kingdom but was devised and scripted, and given a firmly democratic political edge, by blacklisted American writers, including Ring Lardner Jr. In the same resistant spirit was *Robin of Sherwood,* written by Richard Carpenter, starting in 1984 and combining anti-Thatcherite politics, mystical elements, and up-to-date technology with the youthful glamour of long-haired Michael Praed as Robin. Television introduced feminist outlawry, if diluted with comedy, in the 1988 *Maid Marian and Her Merry Men,* written for BBC children's television, with a doughty Marian, a dress-designer outlaw named Robin of Kensington, and writer Tony Robinson in the choice part of the sheriff.

After years of television energy in the tradition, and reportedly in response to the success of Michael Praed in the United States, film made a comeback with Kevin Costner as *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves* (1991).[3] This major entertainment was not popular with critics (they objected to Costner's American accent, especially in the United States), but it turned out to be very successful at the box office. The film also, at the time of the first Gulf War, foregrounded American issues, starting with another return from Crusade and creating a new Little John in Azeem, a noble black Muslim, strongly played by Morgan Freeman. In the same year (1991) *Robin Hood,* written partly by the radical British playwright John McGrath, combined grittiness and mythicism and benefitted from the lively and wry figure of Patrick Bergin as Robin and from Uma Thurman, a Marian with unusual strength of personality. The long-standing tradition of outlaw parody (which goes back right to the beginning) was continued in 1993 in the farcical but also shrewdly referential *Robin Hood: Men in Tights* by, and including, Mel Brooks.

Visual media continued in the lackluster *New Adventures of Robin Hood* (1995), with a tendency toward Californian psychobabble, and the 2006 BBC series *Robin Hood* offered a somewhat over-rich combination of postmodern improbabilities, a strong Marian, a new man Robin, a sturdy Arab girl outlaw, and a distinct critique of the second Gulf War. Such lively variety seemed deliberately excluded from the 2010 film with Russell Crowe as a glum, soldierly Robin and Cate Blanchett as a determinedly unglamorous Marian and making a claim on historicity via outlaw democracy. That this lackluster epic achieved considerable international box-office success suggests the continued appeal of the Robin Hood tradition.

MODERN PRINTED FICTION

Fiction has also seen vigor and variety. In 1883, the turgid and improbable Victorian novels gave way to a sprightly retelling of the ballad tradition, with his own excellent illustrations, by the American Howard Pyle: this is still in print. Robin Hood stories for the young became a major sub-genre, with widely successful early-twentieth-century versions by Henry Gilbert and J. Walker McSpadden. The outlaw story also became part of the new English syllabus

in secondary schools—probably in part because, unlike Arthurian literature, Robin Hood stories appeared to lack sexual overtones. In both Britain and the United States, Robin Hood plays and short stories proliferated for schools as well as children's fiction across a wide range, from the 1930s Marxism of Geoffrey Trease to the mainstream retellings of Roger Lancelyn Green and Antonia Pakenham. More up-to-date was the firmer historicism of Parke Godwin and "Nicholas Chase" and the youth-aimed feminism of Robin McKinley and Theresa Tomlinson. This elevation of Marian to hero status, much more seriously than has occurred in television, has an adult formation in Jennifer Roberson's well-imagined *Lady of the Forest* (1992) and Gayle Feyrer's not unthoughtful bodice-ripper *The Thief's Mistress* (1996). So far, apart from the farce-euphemized 1988 Maid Marian and the partial independence of Uma Thurman's Marian, film has approached liberating Marian only in the little-known Disney production *Princess of Thieves* (2001) with the young Keira Knightley as Robin's energetic daughter, puzzlingly named Gwyn.

CONCLUSIONS

Robin Hood is undying as a hero, and also in narrative terms. In some instances he can die, as in the somewhat perfunctory conclusion of the *Gest,* the *Downfall,* and many nineteenth-century novels, but this is generally very rare. When in 1976 Richard Lester presented in *Robin and Marion* a fine version in which hero and heroine (with the mature power of Sean Connery and Audrey Hepburn) grow old and tragically die, the audience's understanding of, and attachment to, the innate vitality of the genre made the film reportedly the first about Robin Hood to lose money.

  Robin Hood lives on and can mean many things. His name can symbolize what is in the United States called "libertarianism," resistance to any social constraints, but it can also be used to charge President Obama with something that might be taken as socialism. Robin Hood is known everywhere as the international mythic figure of the legitimate outlaw, often coexisting with local figures of specific resistance. Most recently he has developed an identity through not only popular culture, but also university studies: in conferences and publications the new disciplines of medievalism and medieval cultural studies have found Robin Hood to be an absorbing and revealing focus. Journalism and local history may still quest naively for a "real" Robin Hood, but the richness, variety, and contextually relevant nature of the myth over time is the actual and abiding reality of the outlaw tradition.

NOTES

  1. Pierce Egan the Younger, *Robin Hood and Little John; or, The Merry Men of Sherwood Forest*, serialized in 1838, published in book form in 1840; J. H. Stocqueler, *Maid Marian, the Forest Queen*, a 31-part serial, published in book form in 1849

(Stocqueler also wrote a Robin Hood comic opera); George Emmett, *Robin Hood and the Outlaws of Sherwood Forest*, a weekly serial from 1868 to 1869.

2. In Mark Twain's *Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876), Tom is quite familiar with *Robin Hood and His Merry Foresters* (1844), a children's book by Stephen Percy, a pseudonym for Joseph Cundall. Several of Tom's play-acting scenes are strictly based on the book, which, indeed, Tom quotes as his authority for the action.

3. *Le prince des voleurs* (1872) was the title of one of two French Robin Hood novels attributed, perhaps wrongly, to Alexandre Dumas the Elder; its English translation was titled *The Prince of Thieves* (1903).

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APPENDIX: *THE PLAY OF ROBIN HOOD*
(LONDON: WILLIAM COPLAND, CA. 1560)

Lister M. Matheson

Reference was made above to "a fighting friar" who features in a Robin Hood play appended to a reprint of the *The Merry Gest of Robin Hood* that was published circa 1560 by William Copland at his shop on the Three Crane Wharf in London. The main text is based on an earlier print by Wynkyn de Worde, William Caxton's apprentice and successor, to which Copland has appended a two-scene play of Robin Hood, suitable to be acted at May games. Apart from a 21-line extract, or schematic text, for a Robin Hood play that survives in a document of 1475–76, the play in Copland is the earliest dramatic version of episodes starring (though not entirely complimentarily) Robin Hood. It is, therefore, a precursor of the later plays that in their turn formed the basis for film and television productions. A modernized version of the text printed in Copland appears below, with occasional marginal glosses to now-obsolete words and words whose meaning has changed.

Here beginneth the Play of Robin Hood, very proper to be played in May Games.

[SCENE 1: ROBIN HOOD AND FRIAR TUCK]

Robin Hood

	Now stand ye forth, my merry men all,	
	And hark what I shall say;	*hark*: hear
	Of an adventure I shall you tell,	
	The which befell this other day.	
5	As I went by the highway,	
	With a stout friar I met,	*stout*: strong
	And a quarter-staff in his hand.	
	Lightly to me he leapt,	
	And still he bade me stand.	
10	There were stripes two or three,	*stripes*: strokes, blows
	But I cannot tell who had the worse;	
	But well I wote the whoreson leapt within me	*wote*: know; *within*: near to
	And from me he took my purse.	
	Is there any of my merry men all	
15	That to that friar will go,	
	And bring him to me withall	*withall*: immediately
	Whether he will or no?	

Little John

<div style="padding-left:2em">

Yes, master, I make God a vow,
To that friar will I go,
20   And bring him to you,
Whether he will or no.

</div>

Friar Tuck

<div style="padding-left:2em">

Deus hic, Deus hic—God be here!
Is not this a holy word for a friar?
God save all this company!
25   But am not I a jolly friar?
For I can shoot both far and near,
And handle the sword and buckler,   *buckler*: small shield

And this quarter-staff also.
If I meet with a gentleman or yeoman,
30   I am not afraid to look him upon,
Nor boldly with him to carp;   *carp*: talk
If he speaks any words to me,
He shall have stripes two or three,
That shall make his body smart.
35   But, master, to show you the matter
Wherefore and why I am come hither,
In faith I will not spare;
I am come to seek a good yeoman,
In Barnisdale men say is his habitation.
40   His name is Robin Hood,
And if that he be better man than I,
His servant will I be, and serve him truly;
But if that I be better man than he,
By my truth my knave shall he be,   *knave*: serving boy

45   And lead these dogs all three.

</div>

Robin Hood

<div style="padding-left:2em">

Yield thee, friar, in thy long coat.

</div>

Friar Tuck

<div style="padding-left:2em">

I beshrew thy heart, knave,   *beshrew*: curse
thou hurtest my throat.

</div>

Robin Hood

I trow, friar, thou beginnest to dote—   *trow*: believe;
                                                  dote: go crazy

Who made thee so malapert and so bold   *malapert*: cheeky
50   To come into this forest here
        Among my fallow deer?

Friar Tuck

Go louse thee, ragged knave.   *louse thee*:
                                                  delouse yourself

If thou make many words,
I will give thee on the ear,   *give thee*: give
                                                  you [a blow]

55   Though I be but a poor friar.
        To seek Robin Hood I am come here,
        And to him my heart to break.   *break*: open

Robin Hood

Thou lousy friar, what wouldest thou with
him?
He never loved friar nor none of friars' kin.   *kin*: sort, type

Friar Tuck

60   Avaunt, ye ragged knave,   *Avaunt*: Begone
        Or ye shall have on the skin!   *have*: get it
                                                  [a blow]

Robin Hood

Of all the men in the morning thou art the
worst,
To meet with thee I have no lust;   *lust*: wish,
                                                  pleasure

For he that meeteth a friar or a fox in the
morning,
65   To speed ill that day he standeth in jeopardy.
        Therefore I had liefer meet with the devil of   *liefer*: rather
        hell,

Friar, I tell thee, as I think,
Than meet with a friar or a fox
In a morning, ere I drink.

Friar Tuck

70 Avast, thou ragged knave, this is but a mock!
If you make many words, you shall have a
knock.

Avast: Stop

Robin Hood

Hark, friar, what I say here;
Over this water thou shalt me bear;
The bridge is borne away.

is borne: has been
carried

Friar Tuck

75 To say nay I will not;
To let thee of thine oath it were great pity
and sin;
But upon a friars back and have even in.

let . . . of: hinder,
prevent

Robin Hood

Nay, have over.

Friar Tuck

Now am I, friar, within, and, thou, Robin,
without,
80 To lay thee here I have no great doubt.

lay thee: lay you
out

Now art thou, Robin, without, and I, friar,
within,
Lie there, knave; choose whether thou wilt
sink or swim.

Robin Hood

Why, thou lousy friar, what hast thou done?

Friar Tuck

Mary, set a knave over the shone.   *shone*: shoes (i.e.,
                                                     knocked a rogue
                                                     head over heels)

Robin Hood

85   Therefore thou abye!   (You'll pay for
                                                     that!)

Friar Tuck

Why, wilt thou fight a pluck?   *a pluck*:
                                                     bravely(?)

Robin Hood

And God send me good luck!   *And*: If

Friar Tuck

Then have a stroke for Friar Tuck!

Robin Hood

Hold thy hand, friar, and hear me speak.

Friar Tuck

90   Say on, ragged knave,
      Me seemeth ye begin to sweat.   *Me seemeth*: It
                                                     seems to me

Robin Hood

In this forest I have a hound—
I will not give him for a hundred pound!   *give*: sell
Give me leave my horn to blow,
95   That my hound may know.

Friar Tuck

Blow on, ragged knave, without any doubt,   *doubt*: fear
Until both thine eyes start out.   *start*: pop

Here be a sort of ragged knaves come in,
Clothed all in Kendal green,
100   And to thee they take their way now.

Robin Hood

Peradventure they do so.

Peradventure:
Perhaps

Friar Tuck

I gave thee leave to blow at thy will;
Now give me leave to whistle my fill.

Robin Hood

Whistle, friar, evil might thou fare,
105   Until both thine eyes start!

Friar Tuck

Now Cut and Bause!

(nicknames of the
friar's men)

Bring forth the clubs and staves,
And down with those ragged knaves!

Robin Hood

How sayest thou, friar, wilt thou be my
man,
110   To do me the best service thou can?
Thou shalt have both gold and fee.

fee: reward

And also here is a lady free—
I will give her unto thee,
And her chaplain I thee make
115   To serve her for my sake.

Friar Tuck

Here is an huckle duckle,

OED *huckle*: hip,
haunch

An inch above the buckle!
She is a trull of trust,

trull: strumpet,
wench

To serve a friar at his lust,

120   A pricker, a prancer, a tearer of sheets,
         A wagger of ballocks when other men
         sleeps.
         Go home, ye knaves, and lay crabs in the   crabs: crabapples
         fire,   *(probably)*
         For my lady and I will dance in the mire for
         very pure joy!

[SCENE 2: ROBIN HOOD AND THE POTTER]

Robin Hood

         Listen to, my merry men all   *Listen to*: Listen
                                                           up
         And hark what I shall say   *hark*: hear
         Of an adventure I shall you tell
         That befell this other day.
5   With a proud potter I met;
         And a rose garland on his head,
         The flowers of it shone marvellous fresh.
         This seven-year and more he hath used this   *way*: road, route
         way,
         Yet was he never so courteous a potter
10   As one penny passage to pay.   *passage*: toll
         Is there any of my merry men all
         That dare be so bold
         To make the potter pay passage, either
         silver or gold?

Little John

         Not I, master, for twenty pound ready told.   *ready told*:
                                                            counted out
15   For there is not among us all one
         That dare meddle with that potter man for
         man.
         I felt his hands not long agone,   *agone*: ago
         But I had liefer have been here by thee.   *liefer*: rather
         Therefore I know what he is;
20   Meet him when ye will or meete him when
         ye shall,
         He is as proper a man as ever you meddle   *meddle*: deal with
         withall.

Robin Hood

I will lay with thee, Little John, twenty   *lay*: bet; *so read*:
pound so read,   on the nail
If I with that potter meet
I will make him pay passage, maugre his   *maugre*: despite
head.

Little John

25   I consent thereto, so eat I bread;   *so*: as
        If he pay passage, maugre his head,
        Twenty pound shall ye have of me for your   *mead*: reward
        mead.

Jack (the potter's boy)

        Out! alas! that ever I saw this day!   *Out!*: Argh!
        For I am clean out of my way
30   From Nottingham town.
        If I hie me not the faster,   (If I don't hurry up)
        Ere I come there the market will be done.

Robin Hood

Let me see, are the pots whole and sound?

Jack

Yea, master, but they will not break the
ground!

Robin Hood

35   I will them break for the cuckold, thy mas-
        ter's sake,
        And if they will not break the ground,
        Thou shalt have three pence for a pound.

Jack

Out! alas! What have ye done?
If my master come, he will break your crown.

The Potter

40   Why, thou whoreson, art thou here yet?
        Thou shouldest have been at market.

Jack

        I met with Robin Hood, a good yeoman;
        He hath broken my pots,
        And called you "cuckold" by your name.

The Potter

45   Thou mayst be a gentleman, so God me
        save,
        But thou seemest a naughty knave.
        Thou callest me "cuckold" by my name,
        And I swear by God and Saint John,
        Wife had I never none—
50   This cannot I deny.
        But if thou be a good fellow,
        I will sell my horse, my harness, pots and   *panniers*: baskets
        panniers two,
        Thou shalt have the one half, and I will
        have the other.
        If thou be not so content,   *so content*:
                                                        satisfied with this
55   Thou shalt have stripes, if thou were my   *stripes*: blows; *if*:
        brother.   even if

Robin Hood

        Hark, potter, what I shall say;
        This seven-year and more thou hast used
        this way,
        Yet were thou never so courteous to me
        As one penny passage to pay.

The Potter

60   Why should I pay passage to thee?

Robin Hood

        For I am Robin Hood, chief governor
        Under the greenwood tree.

The Potter

This seven-year have I used this way, up
and down,
Yet paid I passage to no man;
65   Nor now I will not begin to—do the worst
thou can!

Robin Hood

Passage shalt thou pay, here under the
greenwood tree,
Or else thou shalt leave a wed with me.   *wed*: pledge,
security deposit

The Potter

If thou be a good fellow, as men do thee
call,
Lay away thy bow,
70   And take thy sword and buckler in thy
hand,
And see what shall befall.

Robin Hood

Little John, where art thou?

Little John

Here, master, I make God a vow.
I told your master, so God me save,
75   That you should find the potter a knave.
Hold your buckler,
And I will stiffly by you stand,   *stiffly*: resolutely
Ready for to fight.
Be the knave never so stout,   *stout*: strong
80   I shall rap him on the snout,
And put him to flight!

**Thus endeth the Play of Robin Hood, imprinted at London upon the Three
Crane Wharf by William Copland.**

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Joan of Arc, the young French peasant woman who believed herself destined by God to help the French defeat the English, became a saint and remains a powerful symbol of French nationalism. Though she was unable to convince everyone of the truth of her visions, the "maid of Orléans" proved an inspiration for the beleaguered French troops. (Bettmann/Corbis)

Joan of Arc
(ca. 1412–1431)

Margaret Joan Maddox

INTRODUCTION

The girl who led an army and was burned at the stake has been the subject of art and poetry since the fifteenth century, but popular notions of Joan of Arc do not always conform to the historical facts. What we know about Joan of Arc comes to us from a wealth of contemporary and near-contemporary documents. From a French transcript of her trial of condemnation in 1431, we have some of her own words. From an investigation conducted 25 years after her death, we have depositions of villagers, soldiers, and noblemen who had known her in childhood or during her brief military career. Numerous personal letters and diaries of the time contain references to her. Not all of this material can be accepted uncritically, colored as it is by rumor, myth, and deliberate slanting or omission of information. Nevertheless, more information is available about Joan of Arc than just about any other historical figure who lived before the modern period.

JOAN'S FAMILY AND THE TIMES THAT SHAPED HER

During her life, the medieval personage known as Jeanne d'Arc in French and Joan of Arc in English never called herself by that name. When she was born, about 1412, surnames were still in flux. People were known chiefly by their first names, with the addition of their place of birth, some physical characteristic, or a word associated with an achievement they were proud of. Joan testified that in her part of the country, sons would take the father's last name and daughters would take the mother's. Joan's father was known as Jacques Dart or Darc. Even more spelling variations occur in the original documents: Dars, Day, Dai, Darx, Darc, Tarc, and Tard. The familiar modern form, "d'Arc," with the apostrophe, is a modern spelling that caught on in the nineteenth century.

Joan's mother was known by two surnames: Isabeau of Vauthon and Isabeau Romée. Vauthon was her place of birth. She may have adopted the name Romée to celebrate having completed a pilgrimage to the holy city of Rome. It cannot be proven that she ever traveled the 560 miles from Domrémy (where Joan was born) to Rome, but while her daughter was being interrogated at Poitiers in 1429, Isabeau was on a pilgrimage to a shrine of the Virgin in the town of Le Puy-en-Velay, about 250 miles from home. When Joan left her family, she broke with local custom by choosing a different surname. She referred to herself as "Jehanne la Pucelle." Usually translated as "maid/maiden" or "virgin," the word *pucelle* as Joan used it meant a young girl who was not quite a woman. Being a *pucelle* was a temporary state. Unlike other medieval saints, for whom the vow of virginity was for life, Joan was committed to virginity only for the duration of her mission. By calling herself "la Pucelle" Joan implied her virginity but also assumed a special status between childhood and mature womanhood that enabled her to act outside the female sphere.

Joan belonged to the peasant class and is often depicted in art as living in poverty, but her father was not a poor man. He and his family lived in a two-story stone house next to the village church. Joan had one sister, Catherine, and three brothers. The eldest boy, Jacquemin, had already left home by 1429, when Joan took up her mission, and Catherine is thought to have died shortly before. The other brothers, Jean and Pierre, followed Joan into the king's service and eventually changed their names as well. When the family was ennobled at the end of 1430, Jean and Pierre took the surname du Lys.

Jacques Darc was not only well-to-do, he was a village spokesman who had occasion to convey messages to and from the French military governor stationed in the town of Vaucouleurs, 10 miles from Domrémy. His house would have been a frequent meeting place for villagers, travelers, and messengers. Joan would have grown up overhearing discussions of current affairs. When she set off on her mission at the age of 16 or so, she was well-informed as to the political situation in France. For example, she knew quite a lot about the dauphin and his problems. "Dauphin" was a title held by the heir to the French throne. The dauphin Charles had been disinherited in 1420 by the Treaty of Troyes, which transferred the succession to the children of his sister Catherine and King Henry V of England; the dauphin was trying to ensure the support of the Scots by arranging a marriage between his son Louis and a Scots princess; when both Kings Henry V and Charles VI died in 1422, the dauphin Charles retreated south of the river Loire and started signing himself Charles VII. He set up headquarters south of the Loire and relied heavily on Scottish troops. The fact that the dauphin had not been officially crowned troubled Joan.

The ceremonial anointing of a king symbolizes divine approval. In Joan's mind, and in those of many of her contemporaries, the dauphin would not be the true king of France until he was anointed with sacred oil kept in the cathedral city of Reims. Nearly every French monarch from the time of Clovis (ca. 466–511) had been crowned at Reims. According to a widely believed legend, the oil for the anointing of French kings had come directly from heaven. Guarded between coronations in the Abbey of Saint-Remi in Reims, the oil was stored in an ancient vial called the "Sainte Ampoule" ("Holy Ampulla") and carried to the cathedral of Notre-Dame in Reims for the ceremony. The city, spelled "Rheims" in Joan's day, had been named for Saint Rémy, the bishop who converted Clovis and his Frankish subjects to Catholic Christianity in 496. Joan's own church in Domrémy was dedicated to Saint Rémy, and the village name reflected the saint's name as well. Not only did Charles need to be crowned, he needed to be crowned at Reims—not an easy proposition because the cathedral city lay deep in enemy territory.

It is not surprising that Joan occupied her adolescent mind with thoughts of the plight of France. She had grown up against a background of war and talk of war. Her oldest relatives would not have been able to remember a time of peace. When Joan was three years old, the disastrous battle of Agincourt inflicted tremendous losses on the French. As many as 10,000 Frenchmen died, and perhaps as many as 2,000 noblemen were taken prisoner and held for ransom, among them Charles duke of Orléans, the dauphin's first cousin.

Eight-year-old Joan would have heard her family and neighbors talking about the Treaty of Troyes, by which King Charles VI and his queen disinherited their own son, marrying the dauphin's sister Catherine to the English king Henry V. Upon the death of Charles VI, the child of Henry and Catherine would succeed to the throne of France. Against this background of war and unrest, Joan grew into adolescence.

Joan's home was located in what were called the "marches" of Lorraine, borderlands between the kingdom of France and the possessions of the duke of Burgundy. Charles VII and Duke Philip of Burgundy, though both members of the French royal family, were enemies because of a blood feud beginning in 1403 when Philip's father murdered Charles's uncle, the duke of Orléans. The feud created warring political parties known as the Burgundians (who supported Burgundy) and the Armagnacs (supporters of the duke of Orléans). The feud worsened in 1418 when Philip's father was murdered by some of Charles's officers. Philip allied himself with the English, creating an Anglo-Burgundian party that supported the English claim to the French throne.

In Joan's neighborhood, local landowners such as the dukes of Bar and Lorraine owed their allegiance to the duke of Burgundy, but villagers and townspeople were of mixed loyalties. The sympathies of the villagers of Domrémy and the adjacent village of Greux lay with the French king, but just across the River Meuse from Domrémy, the villagers of Maxey considered themselves Burgundians. Sometimes the village boys acted out their parents' political conflicts by getting into fights with one another.

Although not attacked directly until 1428, the village of Domrémy was often under the threat of attack by French or Burgundian raiders, and nearby skirmishes affected Joan's family and friends. In 1412 the duke of Lorraine attempted to seize the French town of Neufchâteau, six miles from Domrémy. When Joan was about seven years old, a Burgundian raider captured 30 prominent men of the district, among them the husband of one of Joan's godmothers, and held them for ransom. In 1423 the husband of one of Joan's cousins was killed in a French action against the town of Sermaize. The captain in charge of the action was a mercenary soldier named Etienne de Vignoles, better known as "La Hire." In 1429 La Hire and Joan would lead a charge together against the English at Orléans. At about the same time, another of Joan's future comrades-in-arms, the mercenary Poton de Xaintrailles, was fighting in the employ of the duke of Burgundy. Joan's continual awareness of war and her deep religious sensibility combined to create the state of mind that sent her to the aid of the dauphin.

JOAN'S VOICES

Thousands of words have been expended in the attempt to explain what Joan called her "voices," everything from schizophrenia to the effects of moldy wheat, but explanations of her voices that might satisfy a modern reader are

irrelevant. Joan believed that God conveyed his will to her by means of external voices. Whatever the source or nature of Joan's voices, the only thing that matters in her story is that she and her enemies did what they did because of them. Her voices sent her to the aid of Charles VII. And her voices sent her to the stake.

Joan was about 13 years old the first time she heard the voices, according to her testimony at her trial in 1431:

> . . . the first time I was very fearful. And came this voice, about the hour of noon, in the summer-time, in my father's garden . . . I heard the voice on the right-hand side, towards the church; and rarely do I hear it without a brightness.

At first the voices told Joan to be a good girl. Later they began to tell her that she must "go into France." Although Lorraine later became a French province, in Joan's day it was considered a separate country.

As far as anyone knows, Joan told no one about her voices until she was ready to embark on her mission. The fact that she didn't immediately tell a priest about them would be held against her later. In most popular versions of Joan's story, the voices are identified as belonging to the archangel Michael and Saints Catherine and Margaret only, but Joan also attributed the voices to Saint Agnès, Saint Louis, Charlemagne, and the angel Gabriel. Some historians speculate that until her judges subjected her to intense questioning, Joan had only a vague idea of who was speaking to her. Her only certainty was that they were from God.

Joan's voices did not have the effect of separating her from village or family life. More than 20 years after her death, witnesses testified to Joan's ability to make friends and maintain relationships. She left home against her parents' wishes but made up with them by means of letters. In July 1429, father, mother, and several villagers made the 93-mile journey from Domrémy to Reims to witness Joan's triumph at the coronation of Charles VII. The greatest reward she received from King Charles VII for her services benefited not herself, but the inhabitants of Domrémy and Greux: in July 1429, the king granted the villagers freedom from taxation "in perpetuity," a privilege that endured for 360 years before being terminated by the antimonarchists of the French Revolution.

Joan's extended family included an uncle who was a roofer and another who was a priest. She was close to her cousins and to her many godparents. The first person she told about her divine mission was Durand Laxart, the husband of one of her cousins. She referred to him as her "uncle." It was Laxart who escorted Joan to Vaucouleurs and looked after her interests while she was there.

Joan's life in Domrémy followed the pattern of any peasant girl. Her mother was her chief teacher, instructing her in spinning, sewing, and other household skills. Although frequently referred to as a "shepherdess," both in her lifetime

and later, Joan made it clear at her trial that minding animals had not been her chief function while she still lived at home. She was proud of her mastery of women's work. From her mother, Joan learned to recite the Pater Noster, the Ave Maria, and the Credo, but not the alphabet. According to her own statement, when she left home in 1429 she didn't know "A from B." Her signature on surviving letters shows that she did learn to write her name, and she may have learned to read during her lengthy captivity in the home of John of Luxembourg. During her trial in 1431, she asked to take a transcript back to her cell.

As atypical as many of Joan's actions were, she could not have traveled far without a male escort. Laxart accompanied her to Vaucouleurs on her first attempt to gain the governor's help in 1428, and again in 1429. When she grew impatient of waiting for official approval, Laxart was even prepared to take her to the king's court at Chinon.

JOAN BEGINS HER MISSION

Joan made two trips to Vaucouleurs, the first in the spring of 1428. When she first told him about her mission to save France, the governor of Vaucouleurs, Sir Robert de Baudricourt, told Laxart to take her home and see that she got a beating. A few weeks after that interview, the village of Domrémy suffered its first direct attack from Burgundian troops. Joan's family and neighbors fled to the walled town of Neufchâteau, where they stayed for about two weeks. They returned home to find the village church in ruins. Some historians speculate that the attack on Domrémy was a warning to Joan to abandon her mission.

By now Joan's mission to help the dauphin was common knowledge. Her father dreamed that he saw her leaving home in the company of soldiers. The dream upset him so much that he told his sons he'd rather see Joan dead than have her follow the army. He told Jean and Pierre to drown their sister before permitting her to become a camp follower. Jacques and Isabeau may have tried something less drastic than drowning to force Joan to give up her mission. In the summer or fall of 1428 Joan was summoned before a church court in the cathedral city of Toul. The charge was breach of promise. Because Joan had already taken a vow to remain a virgin until she'd completed her mission, it is not likely that she had betrothed herself willingly to anyone. At Toul Joan proved her ability to speak before ecclesiastical judges by successfully defending herself against the charge.

The events of 1428—Baudricourt's rejection, the attack on Domrémy, and the breach-of-promise suit—served only to strengthen Joan's resolve. Then, in October or November, news came that the English had laid siege to the city of Orléans. If Orléans were to fall to the English, the cause of Charles VII would almost certainly be lost. Joan determined to seek a second audience with Baudricourt.

Joan's second journey to Vaucouleurs took place in January 1429. She left home on the pretext of helping Laxart's wife, her cousin Jeanne, with a new baby. The couple lived at Burey-le-Petit, a village only three miles from Vaucouleurs. Baudricourt again refused to help her, but this time Joan did not go home. She found lodgings with the Royer family in Vaucouleurs and proceeded to spread the word about her mission. She made friends with at least one of the governor's men-at-arms, Jean de Metz. He was the first person of any rank to believe in her and her mission. When Joan finally did obtain an escort from Baudricourt, de Metz and a colleague, Bernard de Poulegny, financed the journey to the king's residence at Chinon.

Vaucouleurs was a garrison town. Joan must have spent many hours in the vicinity of Baudricourt's headquarters, waiting to be admitted and watching the soldiers as they drilled. A woman loitering about in a dress would certainly have been the target of prurient interest. By adopting doublet and hose, Joan greatly reduced the possibility of a spontaneous assault on her body. According to a description of her clothing recorded at her trial in 1431, Joan wore

> shirt, breeches, doublet, with hose joined together, long and fastened to the said doublet by twenty points, long leggings laced on the outside, a shot mantle reaching to the knee, or thereabouts, a close-cut cap, tight-fitting boots or buskins, long spurs, sword, dagger, breastplate, lance and other arms in the style of a man-at-arms.

Even Joan must have found this type of clothing an inconvenience. The hose were laced to the doublet in 20 places along the bottom edge, and then the leggings were pulled up over the hose.

Joan borrowed her first male outfit from Laxart. It must have fit none too well. DeMetz replaced it with a young servant's hand-me-downs. Before her departure, Joan was fitted for a tailor-made page's costume in black and gray, the gift of the citizens of Vaucouleurs. She would not wear a dress again until a few days before her death in 1431.

Joan's clothing has received almost as much attention as her voices. Before the second half of the twentieth century, when trousers became acceptable public attire for women of all classes, defenders of Joan of Arc insisted that she wore doublet and hose to protect her virginity and for no other reason. Yet even when Joan passed nearly half a year in the protected environment of the Luxembourg home, she refused to put on women's clothing. Joan's choice of clothing, like her choice of a name, was an important part of the persona that set her apart. Men's clothing freed Joan from the subservient role of a woman. It bestowed authority. For her friends it was acceptable because of the unusual nature of her mission. For her accusers it symbolized female depravity and heresy.

Joan did not wait passively for Baudricourt to grant her an escort to the king. During the nearly two months he refused to see her, she proclaimed her mission to the citizens of Vaucouleurs. The siege of Orléans that had begun in

October was on everyone's mind. If the English succeeded in taking the city of Orléans, Charles VII would probably have to flee the country. The general view was that only a miracle could save him. People wanted to believe that God had not forsaken France. When 16-year-old Joan came along, calling herself "la Pucelle" and asserting that God had sent her to save France, people were ready to associate her with the "girl" of prophecies that had been circulating for several years.

Joan was a product of a time when most people saw the hand of God in every event. Christian kings employed court astrologers in an attempt to know the future. Prophecies mentioning a "girl" or a "maiden" began to attach themselves to Joan. One popular prophecy was "France, lost by a woman, will be restored by a maid." Others mentioned a virgin carrying a banner, a virgin ascending the backs of archers, and a virgin coming from an oak wood to work miracles. Joan seemed to fit the prophecies: she called herself "la Pucelle" ("the Maid"); she wanted to drive the English forces, famous for their archers, out of France; an oak wood stood in the vicinity of her home. Before long, a frequently repeated prophecy was "France will be saved by a maiden from the marches of Lorraine." As unusual and as difficult as Joan's mission was, her way was paved by a widespread willingness to believe that she was the maid of the prophecies. The existence of these prophecies was at the root of both Joan's acceptance by the French court in 1429 and the trouble and expense the English went to in 1431 to prove that Joan owed her successes to the devil.

Joan of Arc had a temper, but she was also blessed with good sense. Angry and impatient after nearly a month of waiting, she decided that she would go without Baudricourt's help. Laxart and a friend bought a horse for her, and they set out for Chinon. They had not gone far when Joan realized that this was a bad idea, and they returned to Vaucouleurs. By then, news of the girl from the marches of Lorraine had reached the ears of the old duke of Lorraine, a vassal of the duke of Burgundy. Sending her a safe-conduct pass for the trip, the duke of Lorraine invited Joan to visit him at his home in Nancy, about 60 miles from Vaucouleurs. Accompanied as always by Laxart, and possibly by Jean de Metz, Joan went.

The duke of Lorraine was an old man, with many aches and pains. Although married, he'd been living for many years with a concubine, with whom he'd had five children. His chief interest in Joan seems to have been in determining whether she was the kind of holy woman who could cure his ailments. Joan was less than diplomatic. She told the duke that she wasn't a healer but that she could give him some advice. She urged him to go back to his wife and pray. What the duke said is not recorded. He did, however, give Joan a little money before sending her back to Vaucouleurs. One account says that he gave her a horse.

Another clue that Joan was well informed about the French political situation is the fact that she asked the duke for the help of his "son." In the closely entwined network of royal marriages, the duke of Lorraine's son-in-law, René of Anjou, was Charles's brother-in-law.

Joan's visit to the duke of Lorraine marked a turning point in her efforts to obtain Baudricourt's help. When she returned to Vaucouleurs, the governor agreed to receive her. During this third interview, on February 12, Joan told Baudricourt that a battle was taking place between the English and the French near the besieged city of Orléans and that the French were getting the worse of it. She said that she needed to be with the king before mid-Lent, about the middle of March. Shortly after this conversation, news of the battle of Rouvray reached Vaucouleurs. Better known as the Battle of the Herrings, this skirmish had occurred on February 12 between the French defenders of Orléans and an English supply train bringing food to the besiegers. The battle earned its nickname from the salted fish that got scattered about during the fighting. Perhaps because of Joan's apparently miraculous knowledge of the battle, or perhaps because of her visit to the duke of Lorraine, Baudricourt finally made up his mind to provide her with an escort. Joan claimed that her voices belonged to divine messengers, but Baudricourt had to consider that the voices might be of the devil. Before granting Joan an escort and letter of introduction, he called for a priest to perform an exorcism over her. Joan submitted, but complained afterward that "It was wrong of him, for, having heard my confession, he ought to have known me."

Upon Joan's departure from Vaucouleurs on February 22 or 23, Baudricourt presented her with a sword and sent her on her way with the words, "Va! Va, et advienne que pourra" ("Go! Go, and come of this what may").

The 270-mile journey from Vaucouleurs through enemy-occupied territory to the dauphin's court at Chinon took 11 days. Joan's escort included Jean de Metz, Bertrand de Poulegny, their servants, an archer, and a royal herald. The party rode at night much of the time and made the trip without incident. Joan's greatest complaint was that she wasn't able to hear Mass every day. Joan was unusual in her devotion to the Eucharist. In the fifteenth century most people received Communion once a year, at Easter. Joan received it frequently; according to one account, she took Communion every day. (One of her greatest torments later, as a prisoner in Rouen, was not being permitted to attend Mass or receive Communion.) When her party finally reached the town of Sainte-Catherine-de-Fierbois in French territory on March 3, Joan satisfied her spiritual hunger by hearing three masses in a row.

JOAN'S RECEPTION BY THE DAUPHIN

Sainte-Catherine-de-Fierbois, about 19 miles from Chinon, was a center of pilgrimage for escaped prisoners and was festooned with fetters, shackles, and chains hung there as offerings. Joan dictated a letter to the king to tell him of her approach. When she reached Chinon on March 4, she was not immediately welcomed at the castle and had to obtain lodging at an inn. Representatives of the king came to her and insisted that she give them her message. She told them she had come to raise the siege of Orléans and to lead the dauphin

to his coronation at Reims. She was finally admitted into the royal presence on March 6.

A standard motif in the retelling of Joan's story is the scene in which the courtiers at Chinon try to trick her by placing another man on the king's throne. Joan turns from the impostor and finds her way miraculously to the dauphin where he is hiding in the crowd. This scene is already present in the fifteenth-century miracle play *The Siege of Orléans* (1452). It may have evolved from this eyewitness account:

> When the king knew that she was coming, he withdrew apart from the others. Joan, however, knew him at once and made him a reverence and spoke to him for some time.

As amazing as it sounds, it may have been relatively easy for someone in Joan's position to see through the dauphin's deception. Judging by his portrait and from contemporary descriptions, Charles VII was a very unattractive man. He had a bulbous red nose and squinty eyes, and he was a shabby dresser. Joan had just spent 11 days in the company of a royal herald, who could have described him to her in enough detail for her to pick him out of a crowd of well-dressed courtiers.

Whatever Joan said to Charles in private convinced him that she was no ordinary young woman. She was immediately provided with a suite of rooms and attendants to wait on her. Various noblemen made appointments to speak with her. She was permitted use of the royal grounds, where, while practicing her horsemanship, she was observed by the duke of Alençon, the king's cousin. Alençon was so impressed with her ability to handle a lance that he gave her a better horse. Charles was ready to accept her help, but Joan's claims had to be officially investigated. Like Baudricourt, the king and his advisers knew that supernatural voices didn't always come from heaven. Joan was escorted to Poitiers, which had become a center for theologians and professors who had taught at the University of Paris before being driven out by the Anglo-Burgundian faction. Joan was lodged comfortably at the home of Jean Raboteau but was kept under strict observation. During that time, investigators went to Domrémy and vicinity to check out her story. It is one of the great losses of history that the documentation collected during this time has been lost. In addition to being questioned on spiritual matters, Joan was given a physical examination by high-ranking women in order to verify that she was a woman and a virgin.

The interrogation at Poitiers went on for three weeks. Joan's masculine attire troubled her interrogators, but the argument was made that the nature of her mission justified what ordinarily would be unacceptable behavior in a woman. The conclusion at Poitiers was favorable:

> . . . in her has been found nothing evil; only good, humility, virginity, devotion, honesty, simplicity; and of her birth and of her life several marvellous things are told as true.

The king was advised to make use of her:

> The king . . . must not prevent her from going to Orléans with her men-at-arms, but must have her led there in good faith, placing hoping in God. For doubting her or dismissing her without appearance of evil, would be to repel the Holy Spirit, and render one unworthy of the aid of God.

The way had been cleared for Joan to become a knight.

JOAN BECOMES A KNIGHT

While military preparations proceeded at Tours and at Blois, the king's publicists prepared a flier intended to recruit additional soldiers for the relief of Orléans. It made use of the prophecies that Joan had already used to her advantage at Vaucouleurs. Known as "Virgo puellares" because of the two Latin words with which it begins, the publicity piece, written as a 16-line poem, describes Joan as "a virgin dressed in the clothing of a man," a "pucelle" instructed by God to help the French king put to flight the English who have besieged Orléans. To people used to online social networks, fifteenth-century modes of communication probably seem unspeakably slow, but news and rumor spread relatively rapidly back then. The defenders of Orléans heard about "the Maid" while she was en route from Vaucouleurs to the king. Between March 24, when Joan left Poitiers, and April 21, when she was completely outfitted and ready to join the army at Blois, "Virgo puellares" had time to do its work.

Another document used to promote Joan's military mission was an open letter to the English that she herself dictated before leaving Poitiers. In this "Letter to the English," Joan called upon the English leaders by name, telling them that she had been sent by God to clear them out of France. She offered them the option of making peace, warning that if they chose war, she and her troops would make them regret it.

At Tours Joan completed her transformation from peasant girl to man-at-arms. The king provided her with a captain's income and an entourage to go with it. At Chinon she had already been assigned a page, a young male servant, whose duties included providing haircuts, cleaning, and running errands. At Tours she acquired another page, two heralds, and a steward named Jean d'Aulon, whose job was to manage her finances and run her household. Along with her armor, Joan needed a banner and a sword. Banners served as rallying points in the confusion of battle and were usually painted with the owner's coat of arms. As a peasant, Joan had no coat of arms, so she designed flags with holy images. Her principal banner was white with an image of Jesus seated in glory and flanked by two angels. The white field was sprinkled with golden fleurs-de-lis, and the words "Jhesus Maria" ("Jesus Mary") were prominent in gold. Baudricourt had given Joan a sword at Vaucouleurs, but at Tours she astounded everyone by saying that her voices had told her about

a sword that lay buried near the altar in the shrine at Sainte-Catherine-de-Fierbois. An arms merchant was sent to fetch it, and Joan wore it until after Charles's coronation. The miraculous origin of the sword must have been well known, because the judges asked Joan about it at her trial. Joan told them that her voices had told her where it could be found:

> This sword was in the earth, all rusty, and there were upon it five crosses and I knew it by my voices. . . . I wrote to the prelates of the place that if they please I should have the sword and they sent it to me. It was not very deep under ground behind the altar. . . . After this sword had been found, the prelates of the place had it rubbed and at once the rust fell from it without difficulty.

Joan testified that she wore the sword until after the assault on Paris in September 1429.

From Tours Joan proceeded to Blois in the company of Regnault de Chartres and Raoul de Gaucourt, two men who would play important roles in her life. Regnault de Chartres was a priest, the archbishop of Reims, but he was also the king's chancellor and an experienced diplomat. In 1429 he was governor of Orléans. He soon befriended Joan but later turned against her. Gaucourt was a career soldier, in 1429 bailiff of Orléans. After a stormy beginning, Gaucourt became Joan's staunch companion. When Joan was wounded in the assault on Paris, it was Gaucourt who carried her from the field. Years later, in his eighties, Gaucourt traveled to Rome to arrange a review of Joan's trial.

THE LIFTING OF THE SIEGE OF ORLÉANS

At Blois a supply train for the relief of Orléans had been assembled by Queen Yolande of Aragon, the king's mother-in-law. Because of the placement of the besieging English forces, the French convoy had to approach Orléans by a roundabout route.

The English besiegers were attacking Orléans from a series of fortifications called *bastides* or *boulevards*. The strongest offensive fortifications were the Augustins, an abandoned Augustinian convent, and the Tourelles, a towered structure that had been part of the city's defenses before being taken over by the English. When the English captured it, the citizens of Orléans destroyed the section of the bridge nearest the Tourelles so that the enemy could come no closer. The most impenetrable line of English *bastides* impeded the approach to Orléans on the west and the south, so the convoy headed for a crossing across the Loire located about five miles to the east of the city, near a town called Chécy. Only one English *bastide* presented any problem from this approach, the Boulevard Saint-Loup.

The defense of Orléans was under the command of Jean d'Orléans, also known as the Bastard of Orléans, the illegitimate half-brother of Charles duke

of Orléans, who had been a prisoner of the English since the battle of Agincourt in 1415. A soldier from the age of 15, the Bastard of Orléans was one of the most successful French war leaders, but his defense of Orléans was not going well. The townspeople had become so discouraged with the situation that they had recently sent an envoy to the duke of Burgundy asking him to help them against his allies the English. Morale was at an all-time low when Joan of Arc arrived at the ford at Checy on April 29. Boats with sails were assembled to ferry the supplies across the Loire, but the wind was blowing the wrong way. Impatient to reach Orléans and attack the English, Joan lost her temper. Testifying in 1455, the Bastard of Orléans, then called the count of Dunois, described their first meeting:

> Joan spoke to me these words which follow: "Are you the Bastard of Orléans?" I answered her: "Yes, I am so and I rejoice at your coming." Then she said to me: "Did you give the counsel that I should come here, to this side of the river, and that I go not straight there where are Talbot and the English?" I answered that myself and the others wiser had given this counsel, thinking to do what was best and safest. Then Joan said to me: "In God's name, the counsel of the Lord your God is wiser and safer than yours. You thought to deceive me and it is yourself above all whom you deceive, for I bring you better succor than has reached you from any soldier or any city: it is succor from the King of Heaven. . . ." Forthwith and as in the same moment, the wind which was contrary and absolutely prevented the boats from moving upstream . . . changed and became favorable. Forthwith I had the sails hoisted, and sent in the rafts and vessels. . . . And we passed beyond the Church of Saint-Loup despite the English. From that moment I had good hope in her, more than before; and I then implored her to consent to cross the river of Loire and to enter into the town of Orléans where she was greatly wished for.

The change of wind was hailed as a miracle, but the French captains still hesitated to engage the enemy. Joan's impatience mounted when her page Louis de Coutes informed her on April 30 that no attack was planned for that day. Disappointed, angry, and wanting to do something, Joan thought of a way to confront the English on her own. Her page testified that she went to the place in Orléans where the end of the bridge from the Tourelles met the city walls, within shouting distance of the enemy. Joan spoke with the English in the other *boulevard,* saying to them that they should retreat in the name of Christ, otherwise she would expel them. The English shouted back insults and the promise that if they captured her, they would burn her.

On May 1, Dunois told Joan that he was going back to Blois to gather reinforcements. Any action against the enemy would have to wait until his return. Forced to wait some more, Joan did what she had done at Vaucouleurs: she spent her time getting acquainted with the townspeople.

Joan's ability to make friends and learn from everyone she met contributed to her success. She had left Domrémy with no experience in riding a warhorse, but by the end of the 11-day journey from Vaucouleurs to Chinon, her equestrian ability had impressed the duke of Alençon. That journey in the company of a royal herald and an archer had given Joan the opportunity to learn about court protocol and the workings of a crossbow. Among her new acquaintances at Orléans was a man from her own country of Lorraine, Master Jean the Gunner. From him she must have had her first lessons in the use of gunpowder weapons. The duke of Alençon and others would later testify to Joan's skillful use of cannon and her ability to gauge the range of an enemy emplacement. When Joan was not in the field, she was housed in homes where she made lasting friendships with women.

On May 1 Joan spent the day riding around Orléans with her companions and talking to the citizens. On May 2 she ventured outside the city walls and, staying beyond the range of the enemy's weapons, looked over the placement of the *bastides,* estimating their strength. On May 3 the people of Orléans held a procession in her honor and gave her and her companions money and other gifts. Finally, on May 4, the Bastard returned with more troops and supplies. Joan rode out to meet him but was disappointed to learn that he was still reluctant to mount the attack she desired. The Bastard had learned that an English army commanded by Sir John Fastolf was coming from the north to reinforce the besiegers. Frustrated by the continued delay, and aware that she was being excluded from important discussions, Joan again lashed out at the noble Bastard:

> Bastard, Bastard, in the name of God I command you that as soon as you hear of Fastolf's coming you will let me know. For, if he gets through without my knowing it, I swear to you that I will have your head cut off.

The Bastard replied that he had no doubt that she would, and so he would indeed let her know. Later that day, Joan was resting in her room when her voices told her that French blood was being shed. She armed quickly and rode to join the battle that had broken out between the French and the English besiegers at the *bastide* Saint-Loup. After three hours of fighting, the French captured the *bastide,* killing 140 English and taking 10 prisoner. Joan was so elated that she announced that "within five days the siege being waged before Orléans would be raised and no English would remain in front of the city."

On May 5, Joan wrote another letter to the English, asking that they return one of her heralds. According to the laws of war, heralds were protected persons, but such was the English contempt for Joan that they kept and abused several of her heralds. That same day, still feeling the elation of the victory at Saint-Loup, the French mounted an attack on the *bastide* Saint-Jean-le-Blanc. They arrived to find the *bastide* deserted; its garrison had retreated to the better-fortified Augustins.

On May 6, Joan was eager to attack the Augustins, but the French captains ruled against it. Raoul de Gaucourt was ordered to guard the gate so that no one—that is, Joan and those loyal to her—could inaugurate an offensive. Here it was that Joan's initiative forced the issue. With a crowd of burghers and soldiers at her back, Joan challenged Gaucourt, calling him "an evil man" and forcing him to let them out.

Joan's military tactics were more reckless than those of the cautious French captains, but she provided an element of religious faith that inspired men to follow her in the face of almost certain death. She told her troops that they were God's army. She forbade swearing and gambling among them and insisted that they make their confessions before battle. When she commanded a killing frontal assault, men obeyed in the confident belief that if they were killed, they would wake in Paradise.

Gaucourt was unable to prevent Joan and her followers from passing. The French captains had no choice but to accompany them:

> [The Maid] sallied out of Orléans in the company of the Bastard of Orléans, the marshals of Sainte-Severe and de Rais, the lord of Graville, Sir Florent d'Illiers, La Hire, and many other knights and squires, and around four thousand soldiers.

Joan was in the vanguard:

> The Maid and La Hire both crossed . . . in separate boats, each with a horse; they mounted their horses as soon as they had crossed, each with his lance in his hand. And when they saw the enemy had come out of [the Augustins] in order to charge their men, the Pucelle and La Hire, who were constantly in front of [their troops] to protect them, immediately couched their lances and at once began to strike the enemy.

The battle lasted all day. Many French died in the prolonged frontal attack, but at the end of the day the French troops had taken the *boulevard* of the Augustins, killing or capturing the majority of the enemy. Again the Bastard and his fellow captains wanted to withdraw and leave the Tourelles until such time as they could gain reinforcements, but Joan was adamant. She succeeded in keeping her troops in the field, remaining with them herself, and early on May 7 she led them against the Tourelles. The Bastard and the other captains had little choice but to join her.

From early morning until about eight in the evening they fought, with many casualties on both sides. Joan was wounded but went back to the battle. The Bastard wanted to sound the retreat and return to the city, but Joan asked him to wait while she prayed. After a short prayer, she rejoined him, took up her standard, and placed it where both the English and the French could see it. The French renewed the attack, and this time they took the *boulevard*. The Tourelles was theirs. One of the English casualties was Sir William Glasdale,

the commander of the Tourelles who had hurled insults at Joan across the bridge. He fell into the Loire and was drowned.

On May 8, a Sunday, the English from the other *bastides* lined up in battle array in front of the city. The defenders of Orléans came out and lined up opposite them. Joan forbade the French to make the first move, but told them to be ready to defend themselves. The two forces stood facing each other for about an hour. Then the English turned and marched away. Some of the French followed, capturing "large numbers of bombards and cannon, bows, crossbows, and other artillery."

Lifting the siege had been costly. Further actions against the English had to wait while the king raised more money and troops. A month passed before the army regrouped and Joan and the other captains could continue clearing the English out of the Loire valley. Movies about Joan of Arc often jump from the siege at Orléans to the coronation of Charles VII at Reims. In fact, several other towns in the Loire valley had to be retaken from the English before Charles could set out for his coronation.

FROM ORLÉANS TO REIMS

Joan's next victory was at Jargeau on June 12. Meung-sur-Loire followed on June 15, and Beaugency on June 16. On June 18, the French fought and won the battle of Patay, often called the French answer to Agincourt. At Patay it was the English who suffered huge losses, despite their superior numbers. By the end of June 1429, Joan was ready to lead her dauphin to Reims to be crowned.

The king traveled to Gien, the usual departure point for trips into English-held territory, but several of his advisers were against traveling to Reims. They thought it would be better to attack the English in Normandy. Joan insisted that the king's anointing come first. After several days of wrangling, the king was persuaded and the army set out for Reims.

With little opposition along the way, the royal party proceeded past towns garrisoned by English and Burgundian troops. Enemy troops were allowed to withdraw unharmed as town after town submitted to the French king. The closer the king's army got to Reims, the more crowded the roads became with people converging on Reims for the anticipated coronation.

At Châlons, about 25 miles from Reims, Joan spoke with villagers from Domrémy who were on their way to witness her moment of triumph. At Reims, fearing that they could not stop the coronation, the English occupiers stripped the cathedral of the crown and other traditional coronation regalia and took it to Paris. When the king's convoy arrived at Reims on July 16, the burghers opened the gates to receive him. The next day, with substitutions for everything except the Holy Ampulla, Joan's dauphin was crowned Charles VII of France.

By bringing the king to his coronation, Joan had completed her mission. She and her banner had a place of honor at the coronation, but Regnault de

Chartres excluded her from the state dinner he hosted for the newly crowned king. The coronation marked the high point of Joan's brief career. After that, her star was in decline.

JOAN'S MINOR MILITARY ENGAGEMENTS

Joan's most faithful friends among the nobility were the Bastard of Orléans and the duke of Alençon, both cousins of the king. Her most implacable enemy in the French camp was Georges de la Trémoïlle, the king's chamberlain. Trémoïlle had strong ties to Burgundy and wanted to make peace with Philip by means of diplomacy, not warfare. Immediately following the coronation, Trémoïlle advised Charles to arrange a truce with the duke of Burgundy. Regnault de Chartres was sent to negotiate and returned with Philip's promise to turn Paris over to the French at the end of 15 days.

Joan had written letters to Philip of Burgundy, asking him to participate in the coronation, but she wasn't so naive as to believe in his sudden willingness to give up Paris, especially as the English and not the Burgundians were in control of Paris. Joan's instincts were better than those of Charles and Regnault. Duke Philip used the 15 days to help his English allies strengthen the walls of Paris and lay in additional food and ammunition. Meanwhile, the new king and his army made a leisurely progression from Reims toward Paris. More English-held towns opened their gates to him. English troops under the command of the duke of Bedford followed at a distance but did not offer to fight until the French army reached the village of Montépilloy. There both sides drew up in battle formations, but the English refused to come out from behind their usual defensive line of stakes. The enemies stared at each other all day, until finally the English marched away toward Paris. Charles and the army went to Compiègne to accept its surrender. By then it was August, and the fraudulent 15-day truce with Philip of Burgundy had run out. Joan urged an attack on Paris. Charles permitted Joan and the other captains to take troops to Paris, but he told them to wait until he joined them before mounting any attack. As Joan, Alençon, La Hire, and the captains marched toward Paris, Regnault was on his way to make further concessions to the perfidious duke of Burgundy.

This time Philip agreed to a four-month truce. According to its terms, Charles gave back four of the towns that had just surrendered to him, including the town of Compiègne. At the same time that Philip was negotiating with the French, he was agreeing to supply the English with additional Burgundian troops for the defense of Paris.

On August 26, Joan and her troops set up headquarters at Saint-Denis, near Paris. She went out daily to test the strength of the gates. Alençon had a bridge built across the Seine to facilitate their attack. All was ready, but despite promises to come sooner, Charles did not join Joan until September 7. On September 8 Joan and the other captains led an assault on one of the gates.

They fought from early morning until after sunset, when Joan was wounded in the thigh. Gaucourt carried her forcibly from the field. The next day, as Joan and the other captains prepared to renew the assault, Charles called it off.

On September 10, the king ordered the army to return south of the Loire. Back at Gien, on September 21, Charles disbanded the army. Later, the duke of Alençon asked the king to permit Joan to assist him in Normandy, where he was fighting to recover family estates confiscated by the English. The request was refused. Joan and her "beau duc" never saw each other again.

Joan's military career did not end after Paris. Trémoïlle had been Joan's greatest adversary in the king's councils, but he must have believed at least a little in her military ability. When Joan's wounded leg had healed, Trémoïlle decided to employ her against a renegade mercenary who had once forced him to pay a huge ransom.

Perrinet Gressart controlled several small towns and a section of the Loire. He was an outlaw, independent of both the English and the Burgundians. Trémoïlle put Joan under the supervision of his half-brother Charles d'Albret and sent them with a small, undersupplied army to put a stop to Gressart's freebooting.

In late October 1429, Joan attacked one of Gressart's fortified towns called Saint-Pierre-Moutier. Because she lacked the gunpowder weapons she had relied on for her other victories, the operation was costly and drawn out, but she did succeed in taking the town. She and Albret then wrote letters to nearby French towns begging for supplies for their next operation, an attack on Gressart's headquarters, La-Charité-sur-Loire. By now it was November, and the weather was harsh. They found La Charité-sur-Loire better fortified than their first target. Joan's cold, undersupplied force besieged the town for a month but finally gave up. Leaving their weapons by the walls, they returned to Charles's territories. There Joan learned that her family had been ennobled. Her brothers embraced their new status with enthusiasm, taking the name "du Lys" and adorning their possessions with their new coat of arms. Joan herself never made use of the du Lys arms, preferring the religious symbolism of her banners.

Set on a course of diplomacy, Trémoïlle and Charles no longer saw a need for Joan, but they could not allow her to leave the court. In those days, troops of mercenaries called "free companies" abounded. Such was Joan's popularity and ability to lead, there was the danger that she might gather her own army and spoil efforts at diplomacy by resuming her efforts to push the invaders out of France. Joan was effectively under house arrest at Trémoïlle's palatial home at Sully from the time she returned from La Charité in December 1429 until the end of March 1430.

Joan must have enjoyed much of what her life among the nobility had brought her in the way of horses, attention, and fine clothing, but the forced inactivity of a lady of leisure was not something she could tolerate. Her brother Pierre was still with her, as were her steward Jean d'Aulon and her chaplain Jean Pasquerel. She passed the time praying, hearing Mass, riding,

and dictating letters. In one of her letters she considers waging war on heretics, but the only enemies she really wanted to fight were the English and their Burgundian allies. She was aware of the decisions being made by Charles and his advisers and could feel only fury as he made one concession after another to Philip of Burgundy. The last straw for Joan was the news that Compiègne, refusing to be returned to the duke of Burgundy, had been besieged. In March 1430, Philip put his vassal John of Luxembourg in charge of the siege. When the news reached Joan, she acted.

FROM HOUSE ARREST TO CAPTURE

Some confusion exists regarding the nature of Joan's departure from Sully. One version of events is that Joan took her retinue out for a ride and kept going, in the direction of Compiègne. If this is what happened, her unauthorized departure from the court was nothing less than treason. Another view is that Charles knew of her departure and was willing to let her take her chances on her own. Whatever the truth of it, Joan left the French court and renewed her efforts to drive the English out of France.

Joan made no secret of her identity as she rode. Between Sully and Lagny her retinue was augmented by the troops of a mercenary captain named Barthélemy Baretta. By the time she reached Lagny on March 29, she had a small army at her back. There she and her troops engaged with an Anglo-Burgundian force of 300 to 400 men led by a Burgundian named Franquet d'Arras. Joan herself captured Franquet. She still had his sword when she was captured several weeks later. Because Franquet had been terrorizing the town of Senlis, the town leaders asked Joan to turn him over to them. At first Joan refused. She wanted to exchange Franquet for one of her sympathizers who was a prisoner at Paris. When she learned that the man she wanted to ransom was dead, she gave Franquet to the people of Senlis. He was tried and executed as "a murderer, a thief, and a traitor." This incident would be used against her at her trial on the grounds that she had violated the Burgundian's rights as a prisoner of war.

At Easter, Joan was at the town of Melun, where her voices warned her that she would be captured "before St. John's day [June 24]." As Joan moved toward Compiègne, King Charles and Archbishop Regnault finally realized that they'd been duped in their dealings with Philip of Burgundy. A letter dated May 6 publicly acknowledged their mistake. Regnault and Louis of Bourbon traveled to Compiègne to assist in its defense. On May 14, Bourbon and Regnault were again in Joan's company, guests at a reception given by the town in Joan's honor. As yet, Compiègne was not completely besieged; Joan and the others hoped to stage an attack from Soissons on the Burgundian rear, so on May 18, Joan, Bourbon, and Regnault took about 400 men to the French town of Soissons, which had recently returned to French possession. The governor, Jean Bournel, was uncooperative. Although he did admit Joan and the

other leaders, he would not permit their troops to enter the town. Joan and her colleagues returned to Compiègne without his help. Not long afterward, Bournel sold Soissons back to the duke of Burgundy for 4,000 gold *saluts*.

After her lack of success at Soissons, Joan rode to Crépy-en-Valois to gather reinforcements. When she returned to Compiègne on the night of May 22, English and Burgundian troops surrounded the town. Somehow she managed to lead 300 to 400 men past the enemy and into the town. On the morning of May 23, having had little to no sleep, Joan armed for what would be her last military offensive:

> She mounted her horse, armed as would a man, and adorned in a doublet of rich cloth-of-gold over her armor. She rode a grey steed, very handsome and very proud, and displayed herself in the armor and manners that a captain who led a large army would. And in that state, with her standard raised high and blowing in the wind, and accompanied by many noble men, around four hours before midday, she charged out of the town.

Hearing of her capture, Regnault de Chartres remarked that she had deserved it because of her vanity in dress:

> An archer, a rough and very sour man, full of much spite because a woman, who so much had been spoken about, should have defeated so many brave men, as she had done, grabbed the edge of her cloth-of-gold doublet, and threw her from her horse flat to the ground.

Chroniclers on both sides testified to Joan's courage. Here is how French chronicler de Cagny described her capture:

> The captain of [Compiègne], seeing the great multitude of Burgundians and English about to enter the bridge, for fear that he would lose the place, had the bridge raised and the gate shut. And thus the Maid remained closed outside and a few of her men with her. When the enemy saw this all tried hard to capture her. She resisted very strongly against them, and in the end had to be taken by five or six together, the one putting his hand on her, the others on her horse, each of them saying, 'surrender yourself to me and give me your promise. . .'.

This is how Burgundian chronicler Chastellain described the event:

> Then the Maid, surpassing the nature of a woman, took on a great force, and took much pain to save her company from defeat, remaining behind as the leader and as the bravest of the troop.

When Joan's captors took her to the tent of John of Luxembourg, Duke Philip hurried to have a look at her. Although Philip's chronicler Monstrelet was present, he did not record what was said.

Joan was a fighter. She nearly escaped from her first prison, so Luxembourg took her to his own home at Beaurevoir. She was lodged in a tower but had a lot of contact with three sympathetic ladies: Luxembourg's wife, his step-daughter, and a wealthy spinster aunt from whom he hoped to inherit. The aunt was godmother to Charles VII and was much opposed to turning Joan over to the English. On one occasion she turned away the chief English emissary, Pierre Cauchon bishop of Beauvais. Unfortunately for Joan, the aunt was called away by a death in her family and she herself died on the journey. When news of her advocate's death reached Beaurevoir, Joan leapt from a tower described as from 40 to 60 feet high. Amazingly, she survived. Joan's response when she was questioned about the incident during her trial suggests that she was trying to kill herself:

> I had heard say that all they of Compiègne down to the age of seven years were to be put to fire and to blood, and I preferred to die rather than live after such destruction of good people, and that was one of the causes of my leaping. And the other was that I knew that I was sold to the English and I would rather have died than to be in the hands of the English, my adversaries.

At the first news of Joan's capture on May 23, Pierre Cauchon set to work to have her turned over to the Inquisition to be tried as a heretic, instead of permitting her to be treated as a prisoner of war. After the death of Luxembourg's aunt, events moved swiftly. Joan was sold to the English for a sum of 10,000 *livres tournais*. (Money was reckoned in various forms at the time: *livres*, *écus*, *saluts*, etc. Perhaps the best way to indicate the extraordinary amount the English were willing to pay for Joan is to compare her price with the usual ransom amounts demanded for war captives of different ranks. Yeomen and archers were occasionally ransomed, but because they were worth only a few *livres* at best, it was less trouble to kill them than to keep them alive while waiting for the money. Preposterous ransoms were often demanded for kings and princes of the blood. Joan's friend the duke of Alençon was held for a ransom of 240,000 *livres*. The duke of Orléans, held for 20 years without ransom, was finally released for a payment of 360,000 *livres*. A typical ransom for an ordinary knight, however, started at about 300 *livres*.)

Some historians suggest that Charles VII was deterred by his advisers from trying to ransom or rescue Joan from the English. The only possible indication that a rescue may have been attempted is a receipt dated March 14, 1431, for the payment of 2,000 *livres tournais* for an unspecified expedition into Normandy led by the Bastard of Orléans.

JOAN IN THE HANDS OF THE ENGLISH

Early in November 1430, Joan was taken to the English stronghold of Rouen by a roundabout route. Along the way, the prisoner was displayed to curious

crowds. She arrived at Rouen on December 23, 1430. The remaining five months of her life would be an ordeal of humiliation and abuse.

As an accused heretic, Joan was legally a prisoner of the church. As such she should have been lodged in a church prison, attended by women. The English, however, had paid an enormous sum for her and did not intend to run the risk of her escape or rescue. Cauchon maintained the fiction that Joan was a prisoner of the church by keeping a key to her cell in his possession.

Placed by his English employers in charge of the trial, Cauchon set to work at once and on January 9, 1431, began trial proceedings. Nearly two months passed as officers were sworn in and evidence was gathered. One of the preliminaries was a physical examination to determine the fact of Joan's virginity, conducted by Anne duchess of Bedford. It was rumored that her husband concealed himself behind a curtain to watch.

On February 21, Joan was presented to the court. The first sessions, open to the public, were held in the chapel of Bouvreuil Castle, the Rouen residence of the earl of Warwick. When Cauchon perceived that Joan was making a favorable impression on the spectators, he switched to closed sessions with limited attendance. Between sessions Joan was kept in a windowless dungeon. Warwick sometimes took his dinner guests to taunt Joan in her cell. Although the nine-year-old English king Henry VI took up residence at Bouvreuil in March, there is no record that he and Joan ever met.

Joan was provided with a "confessor," who passed on everything she said to Cauchon. She was also spied on through peepholes in her cell. Five Englishmen "of the lowest rank" guarded her at all times. Three spent the night in her cell, and two remained outside to guard the door. Wherever she went, to the trial sessions or to the privy, she hobbled along in leg irons. At night, she slept with two pairs of irons on her legs, attached by a chain to another chain connected to the foot of her bed, itself anchored by a large piece of wood five or six feet long. The whole contraption was fastened by lock and key. For added security, Cauchon had an iron cage made "in which she could be kept standing upright 'fastened by the neck, the hands, and the feet.'" There is no evidence that the cage was ever used, but in a 1999 television production, Joan is shown in a cage suspended in a void.

Not surprisingly, these miserable living conditions took their toll on Joan's formerly robust health. On April 16 she fell ill after eating a carp sent to her by Cauchon. She accused him of trying to poison her. More likely, a sudden dish of rich fish after her usual prison rations had led to a gastric upset. Warwick, fearing that Joan might die before she could be burned, sent his own physicians to treat her.

Although the court at Poitiers had found the wearing of men's attire acceptable, given the nature of Joan's mission, the inquisitors at Rouen decided to make it evidence of Joan's "dissolute" nature and a sin against the biblical command in Deuteronomy 22:5:

> A woman shall not be clothed with man's apparel, neither shall a man use woman's apparel; for he that doeth these things is abominable before God.

The most learned theologians and lawyers Cauchon was able to muster could not trap Joan into saying that her mission to save France for King Charles VII had been anything but divinely inspired. On April 18 a delegation of judges went to Joan's cell and exhorted her in kindly terms to admit that her voices were not from God. She insisted that they were. On May 2 she was admonished to recant. She remained firm. On May 9 Joan was shown instruments of torture and told what effect they would have on her body. Cauchon wanted to use them on her, but only 3 of the 12 judges he polled would agree to it. He had to settle for threats. Joan agreed that she would probably say anything they wanted her to if they tortured her, but said she would take it back afterward:

> Truly, if you pull my members apart and make the soul leave the body, I will not tell you anything else, and if I should tell you something, afterward I shall always say that you made me say it by force.

Cauchon decided to stage an elaborate public spectacle designed to terrorize Joan into admitting that both she and Charles VII were heretics.

JOAN'S FINAL DAYS

On May 24, 1431, for the first time since her December arrival, Joan was taken out of the castle into full daylight. Platforms had been erected in the graveyard adjacent to the church of Saint-Ouen. One held important prelates and English officials. Joan was placed where everyone could see her, and a preacher, Guillaume Erard, hurled pious abuse at her for two hours. She interrupted him once, when he accused Charles VII of being a heretic:

> By my faith, sir, with respect, I dare to tell you and swear to you on pain of my life that he is the noblest Christian of all the Christians, and who better loves the faith and the Church, and is not such as you say.

The public executioner was stationed nearby with a cart, where Joan could see him. At the end of the sermon, Joan was permitted to speak. She repeated what she had been saying from the beginning, that she was a good Christian and had done all she had done by God's commandment. The English royal secretary handed her a short written statement said to contain her promise not to carry arms, wear men's clothes, or cut her hair short. A French priest read it to her. She still hesitated, but when she was told that if she signed she would

be taken out of the English prison, she signed. Cauchon's first words when she had signed were to order the English guards to take her back to her cell.

Despite the betrayal, Joan kept her promise and changed into women's clothing. That was on May 24. No one knows exactly what happened between then and May 28 when Joan broke the terms of the abjuration by resuming men's clothing.

In the 1999 television miniseries, Pierre Cauchon is presented as a sympathetic character who wishes only to save Joan's soul. The historical Cauchon, however, wanted Joan to burn. Personal animosity may have been a part of it. Her troops had driven him out of his home in Beauvais, but he also wanted to rise higher in the church. The English could appoint him archbishop of Rouen. To obtain this goal, he had to give his English employers what they wanted.

Persuading Joan to abjure was the first step in a two-part plan. A heretic who abjured was considered to be a reformed heretic. The usual punishment for a reformed heretic was a three-year prison sentence in a church prison. A heretic who abjured and relapsed could be turned over to the civil authorities to be executed. Whatever prompted Joan to resume men's attire, it is strange that her jailers would leave it where she could put it back on. One can conclude only that Cauchon orchestrated Joan's relapse as he had manipulated everything else in the proceedings.

At the end of the expensive five-month trial at Rouen, the only aspects of Joan's behavior that could be used to condemn her were her insistence that saints had spoken to her and the fact that she dressed like a man. When Joan resumed her male clothing, and told Cauchon that her voices had spoken to her after her abjuration, her death at the stake was assured.

On the morning of May 30, 1431, Joan was taken under guard—one witness estimated her escort at 800 men "with axes and swords"—to the Old Marketplace in Rouen. She had to stand for another lengthy sermon. The usual procedure was for a clergyman to declare the verdict of heresy and then permit the secular authorities to announce the sentence of death, after which the stake would be prepared. In Joan's case, the stake was already prepared and she was led directly to it, without formality or delay. Joan requested a cross. According to witnesses, "an Englishman" made a small cross for her by joining two bits of wood. Joan kissed it and tucked it into her dress. Then she asked that a processional cross be brought so she could look at it as she was dying. The parish clerk brought one and held it where she could see it. She cried out the name "Jesus" several times. The name was her last spoken word. Before Joan's body was completely burned, the executioner raked back the fire so that spectators could see for themselves that she was dead.

JOAN'S TRIAL REOPENED

The Hundred Years' War between the English and the French would go on until 1453, but by leading Charles VII to his anointing at Reims, Joan had

changed the dynamics of public opinion. In December 1431, the English staged an elaborate coronation for Henry VI at Notre-Dame cathedral in Paris, but it was too late and in the wrong city. Charles had been crowned at Reims and anointed with oil from the Holy Ampulla, proof enough that Charles, not Henry, was the true king of France.

The next big setback for the English came in 1435 with the Treaty of Arras that reconciled Philip of Burgundy and Charles VII. French forces took Paris the next year, and in 1440, the duke of Orléans returned from English captivity. On November 10, 1449, Rouen fell to the French. One of Charles VII's first acts was to order an investigation into the 1431 proceedings that had condemned Joan of Arc to the stake.

Everyone knew that Charles VII owed his throne to the efforts of Joan of Arc, a woman who had been condemned and executed as a heretic. Although the English were in retreat, they could still claim moral superiority by pointing out that Charles had been placed on the throne by a heretic. To clear his own reputation, Charles had to clear Joan's.

The French Inquisition, an agency of the papacy, had tried Joan. Charles VII had to proceed cautiously because he was not on easy terms with Rome. In a document known as the Sanction of Bourges (1438), he had challenged the authority of the pope in French ecclesiastical matters. Reopening Joan's trial could place the king in an unwanted position of supplication, but Charles could not afford to be seen as owing his throne to a heretic. On February 15, 1450, he ordered Guillaume Bouillé canon of Noyon to inquire into Joan's trial.

Bouillé was a theologian at the University of Paris. His inquiry was hampered by the fact that the university had played a major part in Joan's condemnation. Bouillé summoned seven witnesses but did not have time to examine all the trial documents before King Charles ordered him to break off the investigation in March. The war with the English was still going on, and men who had been instrumental in Joan's death now occupied positions of power on the French side. In his report, Bouillé advised the king that the matter was one that should be pursued.

A second inquiry into Joan's trial was initiated by Guillaume d'Estouteville, a papal legate who was related to Charles VII. D'Estouteville's family had lost property as a result of the English occupation of Normandy and had been staunch supporters of Charles VII. As the representative of Pope Nicholas V, d'Estouteville had a responsibility to uphold the rights of the papacy, but as a Frenchman and a kinsman of the French king, he had reason to want to clear him of heresy by association. On May 2, 1452, d'Estouteville began an inquiry that lasted until May 22. The conclusion was that Joan's trial in Rouen by the Anglo-Burgundian sympathizers was "null and void."

The results of the second inquiry should have been enough to put to rest the concerns of Charles VII, but d'Estouteville was not finished. He returned to Rome, leaving the inquisitor Jean Bréhal to continue the investigation by collecting information and opinion regarding Joan's trial. Two years later, in the spring of 1455, Joan's mother and brothers, represented in Rome by

d'Estouteville, came forward as plaintiffs. They addressed a petition to the new pope, Calixtus III, demanding that the injustice that had condemned Joan to the stake as a heretic be redressed. The pope appointed three French prelates to cooperate with Bréhal in addressing the petition from the d'Arc family. Witnesses were called, and the third inquiry into Joan's condemnation began.

The inquiry of 1455–56 used to be called the Rehabilitation Trial, but it did nothing to "rehabilitate" Joan. The witnesses testified to her goodness and military ability, but the only conclusion reached by the judges was that the trial of 1431 had not been conducted legally. In a symbolic gesture, pages containing Cauchon's charges were burned by the public hangman in the square at Rouen and the verdict of heresy was annulled. The inquiry is now referred to as the Nullification Trial. Although 150 witnesses testified to Joan's orthodoxy and goodness, nothing in the final judgment refers to whether or not she was innocent of heresy. The people of Orléans were given permission to continue their annual procession in Joan's honor and to build a commemorative statue. Otherwise, the veneration of Joan of Arc was officially discouraged, with the express warning that "images and epitaphs" must not be set up at Rouen or elsewhere. As far as the church was concerned, Joan of Arc could be tolerated as the local heroine of Orléans, but she was no saint. Nearly 500 years would pass before the Catholic Church would change its official position, but its neglect did nothing to prevent Joan of Arc from developing into a phenomenal icon of popular culture.

EARLY TREATMENTS OF JOAN IN ART AND LITERATURE

The earliest drawing of Joan of Arc that survives is a doodle in the margin of a parliamentary council register drawn by Clément de Fauquembergue. The entry is dated May 10, 1429. Joan is shown holding a banner and a sword, but she is wearing a dress and has long hair. Fauquembergue, drawing from his imagination, may be excused for putting her in women's clothing, but long after Joan's dressing practice was well known, many artists still preferred to dress her in skirts. An illustration in *Les Vigiles de Charles VII* by Martial d'Auvergne, a rhymed chronicle of the Hundred Years' War composed after 1472, shows a long-skirted Joan conducting the attack on Paris.

The first and only official French court biography of Joan was written around 1500 during the reign of Louis XII (r. 1498–1515), son of that duke of Orléans who was the prisoner of the English when Joan raised the siege of his city. In subsequent reigns, official court historians gave Joan only a passing mention. Her good name and deeds of valor were preserved by private individuals and historians from Orléans, Reims, and Rouen who used the biography of 1500 as a basis of their works, adding local records as appropriate.

From her lifetime to our own, Joan of Arc and her story have been used to reflect contemporary concerns and biases. Shortly after Joan's success at

Orléans, the poet Christine of Pisan wrote a poem in which she compared Joan to the heroes and heroines of antiquity. Within a few years of her death, Joan was featured in a play performed at Orléans in memory of the lifting of the siege. French writers, even Burgundians, tended to treat Joan with respect and admiration, but in England she retained a reputation as a harlot and a witch. The Shakespearean play *Henry VI, Part 1* (1590) has Joan communing with demons.

In 1656, Jean Chapelain (1595–1674) wrote an epic poem about Joan, entitled *The Maid, The Deliverer of France.* Chapelain's boring epic prompted Voltaire (1694–1778) to write *The Maid of Orléans,* a satire in which he portrayed Joan as a village idiot, using her story to attack the church, the monarchy, and the French nobility. Voltaire's poem circulated in manuscript from about 1730, scandalizing a great many admirers of the Maid. In 1762 he published an edited version, but 100 years after his death, the memory of his disrespectful treatment of Joan of Arc could still spark riots.

FRENCH AND ENGLISH PERCEPTIONS OF JOAN OF ARC

English attitudes toward Joan began to change following the French Revolution. For English intellectuals whose sympathies lay with the common people, Joan of Arc became a symbol of their struggle for freedom and equality. Although many French Catholics did regard her as a saint, Joan was still predominantly a secular patriotic figure whom even Protestant foreigners could admire. English poet Robert Southey extolled her in a long poem published in 1796. In response to Voltaire's satirical treatment, German playwright Friedrich Schiller (1759–1805) wrote *Die Jungfrau von Orléans* (1801). Schiller portrayed Joan as a romantic heroine who dies in battle beside the man she loves.

Although the French Revolution inspired foreigners to equate Joan with the struggle for freedom, the revolutionaries themselves associated her with the hated monarchy. The new republican government revoked the tax exemption for Domrémy/Greux that had been in place from 1429. The annual May 8 festivities at Orléans in Joan's honor went uncelebrated from 1792 to 1803. In 1803 Napoleon I restored the May 8 celebration at Orléans and promoted Joan of Arc as a symbol of national unity and the common people. This symbolism was strengthened in 1844 when French historian Jules Michelet (1798–1874) published the volume of his *History of France* that contained the biography of Joan of Arc. In highly charged prose, Michelet presented Joan as the champion of the people and the embodiment of French nationalism. Inspired by Michelet, historian Jules Quicherat (1814–1882) assembled all the trial records and other contemporary documents relating to Joan and published them in five volumes between 1841 and 1849. This monumental publication triggered an interest in Joan that spread beyond the borders of France. Essays, biographies, poems, and dramas about the French peasant

maid poured from the pens of writers of every nationality. English writer Thomas de Quincy's rhapsodic essay about Joan of Arc appeared in 1847.

The dates of the French Revolution are usually given as 1789 to 1799, but in a sense the Revolution didn't really end until the last Napoleon was deposed in 1870 and France became a republic for the third time. As monarchists, republicans, religionists, and secularists struggled to coexist and rebuild the nation after the disastrous Franco-Prussian war, Joan of Arc became a rallying symbol for all factions. When the French province of Alsace and much of the province of Lorraine were lost to Germany in 1870, the Maid of Lorraine became an obvious focus for French patriotism. Joan's village of Domrémy remained in French territory after the partition, and her birthplace became a national shrine. The two-barred heraldic cross of Lorraine acquired importance as a national symbol that continued until the lost provinces were reclaimed at the end of World War I. During World War II, French general and resistance leader Charles de Gaulle used the cross as a symbol of the French government in exile.

In the 1870s, as new laws challenged the traditional rights of the church, Joan became a symbol for religionists and secularists alike. For each side she represented France, but a France with different ideals. For secularists she represented the rule of the people free of religious interference; for religionists she represented the old bond between church and monarchy.

JOAN OF ARC IN WORLD CULTURE

Joan's image has permeated world culture as both symbol and inspiration. She represents political freedom, female empowerment, and patriotism. The very name of Joan of Arc has become a synonym for any determined woman who clings to her convictions despite the risks.

Joan's popularity as an instrument of advertising began at the turn of the twentieth century when improved printing techniques led to the expanded use of advertising in newspapers, magazines, and posters. Early advertising images were derived from art and history, and artistic depictions of Joan became a commercial commodity. Joan of Arc–brand kidney beans came onto the market in 1879. Joan of Arc cheese was first imported to the American market from France in 1918.

Joan of Arc was an important image during World War I. French soldiers wore Joan of Arc medals into battle. Songbooks for American soldiers included a song with the title "Joan of Arc" that called on Joan to send down the dove of Peace and bring an end to the misery of war. A famous poster by Haskell Coffin from 1918 shows a glamorous Joan urging American women to buy war savings stamps. The first major film about Joan of Arc to be made in the twentieth century, Cecil B. DeMille's epic *Joan the Woman* (1916), was an effective recruitment tool in the United States. It depicted Joan of Arc as a courageous woman who sacrifices marriage and domestic happiness for the good of her country. Her story is framed by that of a young English soldier fighting in France. Joan's story inspires him to go bravely to his death.

JOAN OF ARC IN THE MOVIES

Filmmakers have been fascinated by Joan's story for more than a hundred years, beginning with the 1895 Edison Laboratories short *Joan of Arc* (aka *Burning of Joan of Arc*) and Georges Hatot's 1898 short, *Exécution de Jeanne d'Arc*.

Cecil B. DeMille's *Joan the Woman* was the first to use her story to address contemporary concerns and to shape her image to fit contemporary attitudes toward women. DeMille wanted to persuade American audiences of the need to go to the aid of French and British forces that had been bearing the brunt of the war since 1914. His Joan, played by the operatic celebrity Geraldine Farrar, is depicted as a fearless leader of men. At the stake she seems to experience little discomfort, and in the closing frames of the movie she is shown in her previous glory standing over the English soldier who has performed a heroic action in her memory. *Joan the Woman* was made at a time when few middle-class women were in the workforce and no American woman had the right to vote. DeMille's Joan of Arc was intended to inspire men to fight and women to contribute to the war effort in womanly ways.

Two things happened in 1920 to alter perceptions of Joan of Arc. First, she became a saint of the Catholic Church (feast day: May 30). Joan's official sainthood eclipsed her secular nature; now a religious heroine, she could no longer serve as a universal symbol of patriotism. Second, American women obtained the right to vote. Whereas before, the image of an assertive woman like Joan could be seen as an anomaly, as newly emancipated American women began to seek higher education and professional occupations, the image of a vigorous, independent Joan posed a threat to the traditional ideal of woman as domestic-minded homebody.

DeMille's 1916 movie, with its pageantry and battle scenes, had been inspirational for both men and women. The next major film about Joan of Arc, Theodore Dryer's *The Passion of Joan of Arc* (1928), stripped Joan of her glory. Dreyer's film begins with Joan already the prisoner of the English— helpless, confused, and wearing a dress.

DeMille's intention had been to show Joan as a reluctant leader. His Joan clearly would have preferred marriage to a military career. He didn't anticipate that some women would interpret the film as a feminist statement that taught respect for the power and hearts of womankind who can rise to the highest pinnacle of success without the aid of men—"[the film] will take the conceit out of the male mind."

The Passion of Joan of Arc permits no such interpretation. Dreyer's Joan is helpless from beginning to end. When the film premiered in Boston, "two hundred well-dressed women" walked out, repelled by the stark depiction of Joan as passive victim.

World War II propaganda also made use of Joan's story but transformed it in such a way as to minimize female assertiveness. Women in war were to be seen as enablers of men, but not in any way their leaders. The most important element of Joan's story that emerged in movies of the 1930s and 1940s was her willingness to become a sacrificial victim.

American World War I propaganda attempted to mask the horrors of war with the trappings of chivalry and idealism. World War II imagery and rhetoric stressed the peaceful American way of life. War was an evil inconvenience, to be ended as quickly as possible so that men could return to domestic scenes inhabited by nurturing women. Instead of an epic Joan of Arc movie with a historical setting, filmmakers produced movies with contemporary settings using character names and plot lines that referenced Joan of Arc and emphasized the auxiliary role of women in war. The "Joan" characters enabled the male characters to do the serious business of fighting, but they did not themselves lead or fight. Such movies ended with the Joan characters either dead or married and back in the domestic sphere.

The next major feature about the historical Joan of Arc appeared after the war, in 1948, and it too embodied these attitudes. Victor Fleming's epic *Joan of Arc,* starring Ingrid Bergman as Joan and with a screenplay by Maxwell Anderson, is filled with pageantry and historical accuracy, but it deliberately reduces the importance of Joan's military leadership with a male voiceover that interrupts and interprets her actions as the story progresses. The movie is a beautiful cinematic achievement, but its title character is, above all, gentle and deferential. In the final frame, viewers are told that Joan of Arc's greatest achievement was her death at the stake.

The last two twentieth-century feature productions about Joan of Arc, both released in 1999, present two very different Joans, neither of whom much resembles the historical personage. Of nine major Joan of Arc films produced in the twentieth century, Christian Duguay's television miniseries pays the least attention to the historical record; Leelee Sobieski's Joan is a petulant teenager motivated more by a desire to gain her father's approval than by any national or spiritual fervor. Luc Besson's *Jeanne d'Arc,* released in English-speaking markets as *The Messenger: The Story of Joan of Arc,* pays closer attention to the historical record than Duguay's effort, but it does the greater disservice to the memory of Joan of Arc. Played by Milla Jovovich, Besson's Joan is presented as a hysterical lunatic who goes to the stake stripped of even the illusion that her life had meaning.

Although the first 10 years of the twenty-first century have passed without another major feature film about her, Joan of Arc continues to be a powerful icon of popular culture, occurring as a character in literature, video games, comic books, movies, and television.

JOAN OF ARC AS A CONTINUING INFLUENCE

The heroic image of Joan of Arc is never far from such fictional warrior women as Wonder Woman, Xena the Warrior Princess, and Buffy the Vampire Slayer. A character in the *Xena* series (1995–2001), Najara, wears a helmet, hears voices, and is tied to a stake. Buffy's friend Willow dresses as Joan of Arc for Halloween. Both Buffy and Willow are tied to stakes to be burned in

one of the episodes. In another episode, Buffy and her friends have lost their memories and do not remember their names. Buffy decides to call herself "Joan" and immediately assumes leadership of the group. In the television series *Witchblade* (2001–2), based on a comic book, Joan of Arc is shown as a former owner of the titular magical weapon.

Joan's religious persona is referenced in the television series *Joan of Arcadia* (2003–5), a family drama in which God, in various guises, speaks to a girl named Joan. In an episode of the police drama *Law and Order,* a defendant claims to have received instructions from Saint Michael. The lawyers refer to her as "Joan of Arc." In another *Law and Order* episode, one of the assistant district attorneys threatens to challenge her superiors. A colleague asks her if she wants to be known as "the Joan of Arc of One Police Plaza." Joan's military status is referenced in the film *GI Jane* (1997); the secretary of the Navy mentions Joan of Arc on two separate occasions, both times to express his contempt for the idea of women in combat.

Although no full-length movies about Joan of Arc have come out of Hollywood recently, dozens of books about her, fiction and nonfiction, have been published. A new play interpreting her life for Japanese audiences went into production in December 2010.

CONCLUSION

Above all, the name of Joan of Arc calls up the idea of a woman of strong convictions willing to challenge established authority in a matter of principle. There is probably not a country in the world, or a social or political movement, that has not named some courageous woman its "Joan of Arc." For example:

Ecaterina Teodoroiu, the "Joan of Arc" of Romania (1894–1917)
Lakshmi Bai, the "Joan of Arc" of India (1827–58)
Juana Colon, the "Joan of Arc" of Comerio, Puerto Rico (1886–1967)
Teresa Magbanua y Ferraris, the "Joan of Arc" of the Visayas (Philippines) (1868–1947)
Hannah Senesh (or Szenes), the "Joan of Arc" of Israel (1921–44)
Ida Tarbell, the "Joan of Arc" of the oil regions (1857–1944)
Linda Meissner, the "Joan of Arc" of the Jesus Movement (fl. 1960s–1970s)
Sister Sarah Clarke, the "Joan of Arc" of the English prisons (1919–2002)
Yulia Tymoshenko, the "Joan of Arc" of the Orange Revolution (1960–)
Táhirih (Fátimih Baragháni), the "Joan of Arc" of the Eastern world (1814/1817–52)

For Jules Michelet and former French president Charles de Gaulle, Joan of Arc was the spirit of France. For Americans during World War I she was a

symbol of heroic sacrifice. In our day she is a lesbian for American playwright Carolyn Gage, a practitioner of the Old Religion for American novelist Ann Chamberlin, and the champion of French ultraconservatism for Jean-Marie LePen's National Front party.

The image of an autonomous woman on horseback, clothed in armor, and carrying a sword is an archetype that stirs emotions and affects us in ways of which we might not even be aware. Joan of Arc is likely to endure as a powerful cultural icon for centuries to come.

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Miniature from a copy of the Mishneh Torah, the Jewish religious code drafted in 1180 by Maimonides, about 1351. (National & University Library, Jerusalem, Israel/Giraudon/Art Resource, NY)

Maimonides (1135–1204)

Melissa Coll-Smith

INTRODUCTION

The phrase "Renaissance man" refers to someone who excels in a variety of different fields; some of our best examples of Renaissance men, however, are not at all from the historical period known as the Renaissance, but from the ranks of the icons of the Middle Ages. One such icon has been responsible for inspiring and informing everything from the philosophical musings of Thomas Aquinas and the scientific works of Isaac Newton to the mystical beliefs of some of today's Hollywood celebrities—and all of these are secondary to his primary realm of influence, which is as a venerated interpreter of the Talmud, the book of Jewish tradition and law. This man is the twelfth-century religious scholar and polymath Moses ben Maimon, called Rambam in Hebrew, but most commonly known by his Greek name, Maimonides.

MAIMONIDES'S LIFE AND WORLD

Maimonides was born in Córdoba, Spain, in late March 1135. Córdoba had an established reputation as an intellectual center with a long history as a crossroads of different forms of thought; at the beginning of the Middle Ages, it was a bustling and populous town that attracted philosophers from Europe, Northern Africa, and the Arab world. Although some legends about Maimonides tell us that he misbehaved and was disinclined to study as a youth, there is little doubt that this intellectual and cosmopolitan climate helped to shape the boy who would grow up to be such a distinguished scholar.

Maimonides was the son of an acclaimed rabbinical scholar, and his father no doubt insisted on a rigorous schooling for young Moses and his brother David. The two boys would have received tuition in all of the usual disciplines of the day—Jewish studies, rhetoric, logic, astronomy, philosophy, and mathematics. Maimonides's family was respected in the community and enjoyed a position of affluence and wealth; on the whole, Maimonides's upbringing was probably a happy one.

But when Maimonides was 13 years old, the family's security in Córdoba was threatened. In 1148 the city was invaded by a religious fanatical group called the Almohades; its citizens were given the choice of conversion to Islam, exile, or death. Maimonides and his family were thus forced to leave their home and stay temporarily in a variety of places throughout Spain until 1160, when they finally moved to Fez, in Morocco.

The position of the Jews in Morocco was little less precarious than it had been in Córdoba, however, and the family's nomadic travels did not end there. Five years after coming to Fez they were on the move once again; they finally settled in Fostat, which has now been absorbed into the city limits of modern-day Cairo. Maimonides, who had begun several treatises on religious thought during his journeys in Spain and Morocco, could now focus his all of his energy on writing, and in this period he added to his growing canon of scriptural commentary and philosophical pronouncements.

But tragedy would befall him again when his father died fewer than 10 years after the family's arrival in Egypt, and his brother David was lost at sea not long afterward. This left Maimonides in something of a predicament. Following their father's death, David had supported his brother and enabled Maimonides to pursue a career of study and public service. His death left his family in financial ruin, and profit from those things in which Maimonides excelled most—rabbinical studies and ministry to the community—was, to him, a sin. He found a way to make his own living, training as a physician and eventually rising to prominence in that profession. He secured illustrious appointments to high-level officials and even the royal family, working first in the household of Grand Vezier Alfadil and then that of Sultan Saladin. He was so well regarded that he was even invited to the court of Richard I, king of the Franks, at Ascalon—although he declined this offer in favor of remaining in Fostat, where by 1171 he had been appointed a leader, or *nagid,* of the Jewish community. Despite what was by all accounts a busy and productive career as a physician, Maimonides did not abandon his earlier vocation of philosopher and scriptural scholar, and he continued to write and produce treatises on a variety of topics relevant to the intellectual and religious climate of the early Middle Ages.

By the opening of the thirteenth century he had written over 20 works. But the demands of his job and his dedication to religious philosophy, coupled with a constitution that was already badly affected by the stresses of exile and heavy personal losses, took a toll on Maimonides's health. Even as he ministered to others, he is said to have often pronounced his diagnoses and prescriptions from a reclining position, being too tired to sit or stand. He continued working at a frantic pace until he succumbed to exhaustion in his seventieth year and died in December 1204. His death was marked by three days of public mourning in Cairo, which were observed by the Jews and Muslims alike, and a general fast was decreed in Jerusalem. Legend has it that his body was placed on a camel, which walked on its own volition to Tiberias on Lake Kinneret (the Sea of Galilee) in what is now Israel. There it was entombed at a site that people can still visit today.

His reputation as a gifted sage soon proved to survive him when Ibn Abi Usaybi, the first known biographer of Maimonides, described him thus: "[h]e was learned in the Laws of the Jews, and was counted among their learned and their sages. . . . He was unique in his time in the Art of Medicine and its practice, versed in the sciences and possessed of an excellent knowledge of philosophy."[1] Even today, the impact of Maimonides's ideas reverberates in philosophy, medicine, and Jewish law.

MAIMONIDES THE RABBINICAL SCHOLAR: HIS MAJOR EARLY WORKS

Maimonides is best remembered for his written works, which comprise a variety of philosophical, religious, and scientific treatises. His reputation as a religious commentator and writer had begun to be established during his time at Fez; in

fact, it was his growing esteem as a Jewish scholar that threatened his family's ability to stay incognito in Morocco. However, it wasn't until Maimonides arrived in Egypt that he was able to fully dedicate himself to his writings— although, as we have seen, his ability to do so was soon eclipsed by the need to provide for himself after the deaths of his father and brother. Although he often used Hebrew letters, all of his writings are in Arabic, the dominant language of twelfth-century discourse on science and philosophy; some of his treatises were translated within his lifetime, and within a hundred years after his death, his work had been translated into Hebrew, Latin, Spanish, and Italian.

Of Maimonides's works that survive, the earliest is his treatise on the art of logic, which appeared around 1151; by 1158 he had produced a complicated mathematical explanation of the Jewish calendar. These early treatises would be followed by several other pronouncements on religion, philosophy, metaphysics, medicine, and astronomy.

The Book of the Lamp

Maimonides's earliest major work, most of which was composed during his years of exile in Spain and Morocco, was the *Book of the Lamp* (1168). The *Book of the Lamp* is a commentary on the *Mishneh*, a compilation of the earliest oral and rabbinical teachings about the Talmud. Centuries of Jewish examination sought to explain the meanings and significance of the *Mishneh*'s passages, and Maimonides brings these together into a cohesive and normalized interpretation of Talmudic law. It was often the practice of his contemporaries to consider the *Mishneh* as a separate entity from the Talmud, and Maimonides makes a point of synthesizing the two aspects of Jewish study. In the *Book of the Lamp* Maimonides seeks to rectify some of the conflicting interpretations that had been left by earlier rabbis and commentators, sifting through the various ideas in order to decide which was most authoritative.

The most significant of the commentaries in the *Book of the Lamp* is Maimonides's establishment of 13 core principles and beliefs that he saw as necessary for all Jews. He pronounces that all faithful Jews must ascribe to theories confirming the existence of only one God and acknowledge His incorporeality and eternity. Furthermore, he stipulates that they must believe in the possibility of prophecy as a means of communication between God and man, accept Moses as the greatest prophet, and consider the Torah to be the greatest of the revealed prophecies and to be immutable, having been given by God. He articulates ideas about divine providence, reward, and punishment; finally, he establishes the hope for a Messiah and the resurrection of the dead as a central tenet of the Jewish faith.

These 13 principles amount to what is essentially a Jewish list of articles of faith. This sort of concept is not unknown in Christianity or Islam, which both contain codified creeds, but in Judaism such a regimented understanding and presentation of the cores of belief were new (and slightly controversial)

when Maimonides wrote the *Book of the Lamp*. Even today some Jewish scholars reject the need for and suitability of any attempt to formulate this kind of definition for their faith.

The Mishneh Torah

The *Book of the Lamp* cements a religious philosophy about the interpretation of faith and the Talmud; it was followed by the *Mishneh Torah* (ca. 1180), which conducts a similar inquiry into the workings of Jewish law. The *Mishneh Torah* took Maimonides over 10 years to compose, and he continued to revise it until his death. In it, he presents a summary and explanation of the entirety of Jewish law.

The importance of Maimonides's *Mishneh Torah* lies in its applicability to the entire contemporary Jewish community. Many of the early rabbinical interpretations of the law were no longer useful on a wide scale—they were too specific to certain communities, locales, or political circumstances. Maimonides tried to present his discussion of the law in such a way that it strengthened the foundational assertion that the law, as given to the Jewish people by Moses, is significant for Jews of all times and places.

Maimonides's own assessment of his task in writing the *Mishneh Torah* was that he was merely recording a compendium of the Talmud and its contents alongside a collated collection of commentaries and his own notes. It is ostensibly a personal notebook, but it quickly gained an authoritative status among Maimonides's followers and, eventually, in the wider Jewish diaspora.

Maimonides's own commentaries and interpretations took into account the Greek ideas that were so prevalent in contemporary gentile philosophy. He often uses Aristotelian logic and metaphysical ideas derived from philosophers like the founder of Islamic Sufism, al-Gazali, to comment on aspects of the *Mishneh*. More conservative scholars of Jewish law derided Maimonides for this synthesis of non-Jewish philosophy, taking particular aim at his incorporation of Aristotelian ideas. But the reception of the *Mishneh Torah* was largely laudatory, and it inspired Talmudic scholars from throughout the Jewish world; many letters between Maimonides and those who wanted to know more survive today.

The *Mishneh Torah* was Maimonides's greatest contribution to Jewish thought and rabbinical scholarship, but his influence was by no means limited to a Jewish *milieu*. A devoted scholar of Aristotle, Maimonides is relevant in a wider context for his ideas about the relationship between philosophy and religion; he was an early proponent of a system of thought now known as "rational religious philosophy," and it is in this guise that he endures in the broader intellectual history of the Middle Ages. Together, the *Book of the Lamp* and the *Mishneh Torah* would set the stage for the composition of the *Guide for the Perplexed* (1190), which further explores the rationality behind the principles of faith and law from a combined philosophical and religious perspective.

MAIMONIDES THE PHILOSOPHER: THE *GUIDE FOR THE PERPLEXED*

Of the Maimonidean canon, no work is as influential as the *Guide,* which displays Maimonides's full genius as an expert in Jewish law and a great thinker whose hallmark was the synthesis of traditional Talmudic ideas with the rational principles that dominated medieval philosophical discourse. In an effort to show that ultimate truths were the same whether arrived at through scripture or human reason, he draws extensive parallels between those ideas that he considered to have been "revealed" and those that had been arrived at through man's careful consideration.

The *Guide* was composed at the request of one of Maimonides's brightest students, who had reached a crossroads of his academic career and could not decide whether he should proceed with rabbinical religious study or secular philosophy. At the opening of the *Guide,* Maimonides outlines his objective, which is to promote "the true understanding of the real spirit of the Law, to guide those religious persons who, adhering to the Torah, have studied philosophy and are embarrassed by the contradictions between the teachings of philosophy and the literal sense of the Torah." Maimonides based the *Guide* on the premise that the two need not be exclusive and that some sort of synthesis can be achieved through the figurative interpretation of scripture.

The sage's reply to his student is written in epistolary form and divided into three parts, each containing separate treatises on aspects of biblical interpretation. The first of these presents an argument against any literal understanding of God, using a complex discussion of homonyms and allegorical interpretations to support this stance. Maimonides warns his student against the spiritual dangers of attempting to understand God in any literal sense. Focusing on the attributes of God, especially if those attributes are literal and computed in human terms, leads to idolatry.

Maimonides vehemently disagrees with the tendency to anthropomorphize the figure of the Creator in Talmudic commentary by assigning it human characteristics. He dedicates several chapters to the enumeration of terms used to describe God in the Bible, and he construes these as homonyms in order to show how they are indicative of qualities that are outside the realm of corporeal existence; to Maimonides, there was no way to know the "figure" of God, because that entity is immaterial and imperceptible except through allegorical reasoning. For example, he reinterprets instances in which the prophets are said to have "seen" or "heard" God as indicative of instances of intellectual, rather than sensory, sight and comprehension. This intellectual rapport with the Creator and source of truth is, to Maimonides, the goal of all philosophy, Jewish or otherwise.

Still, the renowned scholar whose religious advice had been sought by members of the community for decades by the time he wrote the *Guide* is well aware of the reasons behind the tendency toward literal interpretation of the Bible. He acknowledges that the Torah "speaks the language of man" and that although it is ultimately misleading, to some extent literal interpretation is a necessary first step in the realization of truth—for the ancient biblical writers,

the use of parables offered an effective way of expressing God's truth to the common, uneducated, and unsophisticated person.

But to Maimonides, true spiritual awareness and the correct interpretation of revelation can be arrived at only through the abandonment of this simple methodology and the adoption of a reasoned, allegorical approach. He offers many examples of how allegorical interpretations of the Bible can rectify the contradictions between rational philosophy and conclusions based on literal and anthropomorphic interpretation.

Maimonides advocates the Aristotelian quest for the complete acquisition of knowledge, but he theorizes that the import of this is ultimately that knowledge is a prerequisite for spiritual development. Furthermore, he acknowledges limits in the extent of man's ability to really comprehend the truths of the universe. Maimonides posits that this is impossible, and that the capacity for human knowledge is a limited one; we must work within the limits of our abilities and accept that there are things that only God knows. Still, he asserts that in order to truly love God, the soul must first realize all that man is capable of knowing.

However, the sage stresses that man can come closer to the divine nature of God (even if he will never fully understand it) through the application of extreme negation in his perceptions of it. The essential attributes of God—which he identifies as existence, life, power, wisdom, and will—do not carry the same meaning as they do when they are applied to aspects of creation. For example, when it is said that "God exists," the existence being referred to is essentially different from that which is applicable to the laws of nature and man. When man exists, he is born, goes through a chronology of events, and dies—but God is not born, nor is he affected by time or death. Maimonides's concept of negation holds that when man says that "God exists," what he really means is "God does not *not* exist, but his existence cannot be compared to other things."

Following Aristotelian proofs of a similar idea, Maimonides portrays God as being without time, change, or form. This negative conceptualization of God is characteristic of Maimonides's philosophy of the uselessness of applying a human paradigm to God—time, change, and form affect mankind and creation, but Maimonides does not accept that they have any bearing on the nature of the Creator itself. Maimonides thus advocates the consideration of the deity through negative, rather than positive attributes. For the same reasons that God cannot be conceived literally, a scale meant to measure human achievements cannot be applied to the divine—because the essence of God is incomparable to that of man, it cannot be perceived in the same terms.

Jewish Philosophical Tradition and Aristotelian Knowledge

For Maimonides, the disparity between Aristotelian truth and that which seemed to be represented in the Bible was a consequence of the history of the

Jewish people. The scholar maintains that knowledge about the universe—called "metaphysical knowledge"—which his contemporaries attributed to the Greeks had been a characteristic of Judaism from the beginning. In the *Guide,* he portrays Adam as the perfect embodiment of metaphysical knowledge, and he says that although this intimate knowledge of God was lost at some point in early history, it was regained by Abraham and passed down to Isaac and Jacob before being lost again during the Israelites' captivity in Egypt. According to Maimonides, this metaphysical knowledge had been obscured by centuries of a desire to make the unknowable God more palatable to the average person through anthropomorphization and literal interpretation, but remnants of it are still found through the correct understanding of scripture. This historiographical worldview meant that Maimonides believed that the philosophical truths uncovered by Aristotle and the Greeks merely constituted a reemergence of knowledge that had already been revealed to the Jewish people.

According to Maimonides, only through proper mental—and, consequently spiritual—preparation can we come to realize the greater truths of the universe. The first book of the *Guide* contains a warning to those who might be considering the frivolous pursuit of metaphysical knowledge; in no uncertain terms, Maimonides advises against the teaching of metaphysics to "the multitude"—common people unprepared to understand the real import of the secrets encoded in the Torah. By way of explanation, he offers an analogy:

> He . . . who begins with Metaphysics, will not only be confused in matters of religion, but will fall into complete infidelity. I compare such a person to an infant fed with wheaten bread, meat and wine; it will undoubtedly die, not because such food is naturally unfit for the human body, but because of the weakness of the child, who is unable to digest the food, and cannot derive benefit from it. The same is the case with the true principles of science.[2]

Citing the difficulty of the subject, the inherent limits of man's knowledge, and the need for intense preparation, Maimonides concludes that, in the words of scripture itself, metaphysical knowledge should be reserved for the "privileged few."

The Primal Cause and the Concept of Eternity

Maimonides proposes that a distinction between Greek philosophy and its Jewish counterpart was largely a semantic one; he likens the Jewish "account of the beginning"—the understanding of the genesis of the universe—to the Greek idea of physics. The second part of the *Guide* is largely concerned with this aspect of Maimonides's philosophy.

In the second part of his treatise, Maimonides offers philosophical proofs for those ideas that he advocates as truths—the existence, unity, eternity, and incorporeality of God. Of course, this articulation of truths follows the doctrine set out for Jewish articles of faith that are found in the *Book of the Light*. Maimonides begins this section of the *Guide* by listing the Aristotelian proofs for the existence of God. This is followed by a fuller discussion of the nature of God and its relation to the universe, paying particular attention to the philosophical analysis of a concept known to Aristotelians as "the Primal Cause."

Aristotle's philosophy suggests that a being or an event cannot cause itself; there must be something that precedes it. Theoretically, we could follow the "trail" of these causations all the way back into history. But the concept of the Primal Cause acknowledges that, at some point, there must have been an exception to this rule—everything in the world is dependent on causation except that thing that started the chain of causation in the first place; we might think of the Primal Cause as a pendulum that strikes a domino and sets off a reaction that is far-reaching both in time and space.

To someone like Maimonides, who believed in a single, fundamentally incomprehensible God, subscribing to the Aristotelian ideas about the Primal Cause was relatively easy because the Cause could be interpreted as the God who created the universe out of nothing; this understanding would impact the theological ideas of medieval Jews and Christians alike.

But Maimonides's examination of the Aristotelian Primal Cause leads to a condemnation of other parts of the Aristotelian theory of the creation of the universe, which presupposes the eternity of all existence. The most important argument in the Aristotelian doctrine of eternal existence, based on the observation that the universe is dictated by fixed laws, is that nature does not change—because of this, it stands to Aristotelian reason that a universe incapable of changing must have always existed in this way. But Maimonides points out that Aristotle himself had failed to provide scientific proofs for his ideas about the eternity of existence and that the astronomer Ptolemy had already proven the theorem to be false.

The Aristotelian understanding of the universe held that the universe is composed of various spheres (heavens) and Intelligences (uncorporeal, entirely spiritual presences), which are eternal and entirely governed by natural laws. However, Maimonides suggests that the observation that such laws are unchangeable is really just an observation of the current stage in universal development; the Jewish philosopher notes that there is no logical connection between the state of the universe as it is observed by humans now (in its fully evolved manifestation) and the principles that governed it at the moment of its creation. If natural law is unchangeable, then Maimonides concludes that all of the things in the universe must have been created out of nothing from a state of complete nonexistence and that the natural laws that we recognize now are a later development in the process of creation; this doctrine would come to be known as *creatio ex nihilo* by Maimonides's Latin commentators.

The philosopher identifies three dominant theories about the creation of the universe. He begins with the *creatio ex nihilo* theory in the Law of Moses, which holds that:

> everything except God has been brought by Him into existence out of non-existence. In the beginning God alone existed, and nothing else; neither angels, nor spheres, nor the things that are contained within the spheres existed. He then produced from nothing all existing things, such as they are.[3]

As we will see, with these assertions Maimonides sets himself and his Mosaic law up for an ideological collision with the ideas of Platonist and Aristotelian philosophers.

Neither the Platonist nor the Aristotelian theory of creation can accept that anything can be created out of nothing. In these philosophies, matter—and therefore the universe—is considered to be eternal, and therefore must have coexisted with the creator of the universe. Maimonides describes the Platonic theory of the relationship between the creator God and matter as one of the potter and his clay—both are in existence simultaneously, but this coexistence does not mean that they are equal.

Furthermore, Plato and his cohorts held that the universe is ultimately capable of destruction—the same matter that "became" the spheres and Intelligences in the beginning could eventually devolve from its current form into something akin to nonexistence. This follows the observable patterns of the life cycles of human beings, who are "created" from cellular structures, take corporeal human form, and then decay into dust, but still "exist" in some sense of the word. To the Platonists, the heavens were just as transient as the things that exist within them.

In contrast, the Aristotelian theory of creation and its eternity holds that nothing in the cosmological universe is transient and that everything that is in existence has always been and will always be in existence. Aristotelian thought also excludes the possibility of universal destruction; Maimonides seems to share this position in the second book of the *Guide*, when he dismisses the idea that the Torah teaches that the universe will be destroyed and lists scriptural references to eternity.

But in the end, this seems to be one of those things that Maimonides feels is unknowable to man, as he reminds his reader that, because the universe depends not on natural laws but on the will of God, "He may, according to His desire, or according to the decree of His wisdom, either destroy it, or allow it to exist, and it is therefore possible that He will preserve the Universe forever."[4] Maimonides seems to tentatively accept the possibility that Aristotle and Plato were right in their ideas about the eternity of the universe, even if he differed in his conception of its creation and remained open to its potential for destruction; indeed, on some level he seems to accept Plato as a substandard alternative to the Mosaic theory.

Cosmology and the Heavenly Intelligences

As we have seen, the Greek philosophers posited the idea that in the beginning God coexisted with other entities—the spheres and the Intelligences. Maimonides acknowledges the existence of both of these, and identifies the angels in scripture as the Intelligences—but he has different views about their agency.

Maimonides challenges the Aristotelian ideas about astronomy and cosmology. Aristotelian thinkers held that the universe consists of 10 Intelligences and 9 spheres, and in the Middle Ages most people related the manifestation of God to self-awareness. Many of Maimonides's philosophical contemporaries thus believed that the universe originated when God, who is eternal, manifested Himself in the first heavenly Intelligence. In turn, the Intelligence was capable of having awareness both of itself and of God; this awareness led to the creation of the second Intelligence and the outermost sphere of the universe. The second Intelligence attained awareness and was thus capable of generating one more Intelligence and another sphere—and so it went until the entire universe was created. The spheres themselves were thought to move continuously toward the Intelligence that created them.

So for Aristotle and his followers, although the Primal Cause was the originator of this entire chain of causation, it was not directly responsible for anything except the original manifestation as the first Intelligence. God is only indirectly responsible for anything that came after this, and the laws of nature assign the Intelligences with the power to be the more immediate causes of the subsequent creations of Intelligences.

Aristotelian thought held that most of the cosmos exists without the direct influence of God and entirely in accordance with natural laws. But for Maimonides, those laws were part of creation. He argues that there is no rational way that a single, unified God could be the cause of the complexity of the Aristotelian universe. In the second book of the *Guide* Maimonides composes a dialogue between his viewpoint and that of Aristotle, concluding that his predecessor's knowledge of the universe and astronomy is faulty and unfounded.

Much of his argument for this rests on the incompatibility of Aristotelian cosmology, with its understanding that the spheres move in a determined manner toward the Intelligence, and the fixed position of the stars, which connote an interaction with a physical plane. If the matter and form of the stars suspended in the spheres is constant, and observably follow different courses throughout the sky, then it cannot hold true that the spheres act according to the laws of nature alone; if that were the case, then all of the stars in the sky would move in exactly the same way. Maimonides notes the many scriptural instances in which the prophets rely on the position of stars and would have of course been well aware of the use of astronomy for navigation. He points out that none of this would be possible based on Aristotelian cosmology, and he concludes that only God could have created the variety found on the level of the spheres themselves:

To say that the Intelligences have determined it is of no use whatever: for the Intelligences are not corporeal, and have no local relation to the spheres. Why then should one sphere in its desire to approach the Intelligence move eastward, and another westward? . . . [O]r why does one move with great velocity, another slowly? . . . We must then say that the nature and essence of each sphere necessitated its motion in a certain direction, and in a certain manner, as the consequence of its desire to approach the Intelligence. . . . [W]e ask, Since the substance of all things is the same, what made the nature of one portion different from another? Why has this sphere a desire which produces a motion different from that which the desire of another sphere produces? This must have been done by an agent capable of determining."[5]

Because Aristotelian natural laws would dictate conformity among the spheres, which emanated consecutively from the Intelligences, Maimonides concludes that God must have been responsible for assigning each of the spheres its own nature and agenda.

Maimonides also comments on the scriptural presence of the Intelligences, which at length he shows can be understood as being one and the same with the Torah's angels. To support his proposition that angels did not coexist with the Primal Cause and his insistence that they were created, he points to the biblical description of God as "Lord of Angels." This appellation also provides evidence for his argument about the function of angels in the universe, which he defines as the carrying out of God's will.

The Jewish sage turns to scripture as he elucidates the exact meaning of what can be understood by the term "angel." In the basest sense of the word, Maimonides suggests although it is loosely translated as "messenger," it more accurately refers to anyone entrusted with a mission. Maimonides identifies a variety of manifestations that rely on a broader understanding of angelic nature, which he ultimately defines as action on behalf of God. He theorizes that the host of angels was crucial in the genesis of mankind, acting directly on divine will in order to fashion human beings—he explains that biblical phrases that refer to God in the plural are references to this role of angels in man's creation. Even more broadly, Maimonides shows how the angelic category of creation includes the physical elements and other natural principles.

These angelic functions and manifestations are outside the realm of man, but Maimonides highlights those instances in which man is entrusted with a mission from God. He gives examples of the ideals revealed by prophets and instances in which men have been endowed with superhuman powers, and he even describes how man's creative and intellectual faculties are, in fact, angels. Toward the end of his treatise on angels, Maimonides draws his student's attention to the supposition that "the term 'angel' signifies nothing but a certain action, and that every appearance of angel is part of prophetic vision, depending on the capacity of the person that perceives it."[6] Furthermore, for Maimonides, the actions themselves have no agency of their own and are precipitated

and governed by God. All of this, of course, contrasts with the Aristotelian idea that those things that existed with God in the beginning—the spheres and Intelligences/angels—act only according to natural law.

The Limits of Man

Books One and Two of the *Guide for the Perplexed* concern complex theological, rhetorical, and philosophical ideas, but the third part of the composition moves toward even more immediate and temporal matters of civil, social, and spiritual conduct. Here Maimonides identifies man as the source of his own misfortunes, as well as of all the evil in the world. He attributes man's inability to attain spiritual perfection to his essential material makeup, describing corporeality as a "partition" between man and God.[7]

The philosopher draws attention to the role of man's corporeality in relation to his spiritual imperfections. According to Maimonides, the function of the Law is to help man avoid the spiritual pitfalls of sensual indulgence:

> It is well known that it is intemperance in eating, drinking, or sexual intercourse that people mostly rave and indulge in; and these very things counteract the ulterior perfection of man, impede at the same time the development of this first perfection, and generally disturb the social order of the country and the economy of the family.[8]

Thus Maimonides warns that willful gluttony and lust hinders not only physical development, but also the spiritual growth and the advancement of community and society.

Toward the end of the *Guide* we get a glimpse of Maimonides as the Talmudic scholar whose religious consultations were so prized by members of his community. He prescribes interpretations of the Talmud's different classifications of Jewish law, addressing spiritual issues like morality, prayer, and charity; communal ones like the observations of diets and festivals; and social ones like marriage. He advocates the ability of the law to ensure well-being through the restriction of sensual indulgence and the application of its moral and social truths.

In the final chapter of the *Guide,* Maimonides once again becomes a philosopher. He pronounces the intersection of gentile and biblical wisdom:

> [T]he truths contained in the Law are taught by way of tradition, not by a philosophical method[;] the knowledge of the Law, and the acquisition of true wisdom, are treated in the books of the Prophets and in the words of our Sages as two different things; real wisdom demonstrates by proof those truths which Scripture teaches us by way of tradition.[9]

For Maimonides, true human perfection can be attained only when man has examined divine truths and come to some knowledge of God. Although there are other senses of perfection—material, corporeal, and moral—Maimonides

states that man's ultimate goal should always be the possession of knowledge and intellectual faculties.

But knowledge alone is not enough; it must concretely manifest through one's actions. Maimonides advises his student that:

> the perfection, in which man can truly glory, is attained by him when he has acquired—as far as this is possible for man—the knowledge of God, the knowledge of his Providence, and of the manner in which it influences his creatures in their production and continued existence. Having acquired this knowledge he will then be determined always to seek loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness, and thus to imitate the ways of God.[10]

For Maimonides, philosophy can be a means to an end for man's attainment of knowledge, but ultimately such knowledge is imperfect if its truths go unheeded.

The *Guide for the Perplexed* is a cornerstone text in the study of rational religious philosophy, and its influence is palpable in the writings of a number of prominent medieval theologians and scholars. Many accepted the *Guide* for its synthesis of Greek philosophy and Jewish tradition, but there were also some factions who desired to see the work suppressed, denying that Aristotelian theory should have any bearing on Jewish thought. In 1233, the Jewish community at Montpellier staged a mass burning of copies of the *Guide,* and a similar scene may also have been enacted in Paris around the same time.

The *Book of the Lamp*, *Mishneh Torah*, and *Guide for the Perplexed* allow us to consider Moses Maimonides as a meticulous, careful scholar whose engagement with thought and inquiry was inexhaustible. In the earliest of these texts, Maimonides performed a survey of all of the dominant philosophical and religious trends of his time and used them in order to compile an authority on Talmudic matters. Having completed this, Maimonides composed the *Mishneh Torah* in order to further process the material in the *Book of the Lamp,* resulting in a definitive interpretation of the *Mishneh*. The final work of his major canon, the *Guide for the Perplexed,* provides an examination of the religious suppositions of the *Mishneh Torah* from a secular philosophical perspective. The three texts are in some ways representative of a lifelong project, three facets of a particularly thorough inquiry of the true meaning of Jewish law. And even this wasn't enough for Maimonides, who never got around to providing his own Hebrew translations of these works because he continued to revise them until his death.

OTHER COMPOSITIONS

Maimonides's prolific writing career did not end with the publication of his *Guide for the Perplexed*. In 1191, he wrote his *Treatise on Resurrection,* inspired by a conflict within the Jewish community regarding the concept of the

resurrection of the dead. Mainstream Jews believed that God would literally raise the bodies of the dead to live eternally on Earth; however, some groups subscribed to a theory that the afterlife is a purely spiritual one and does not necessitate any sort of corporeal resurrection. They used the writings of Maimonides, with their indictment of material form as an impediment to the knowledge of God and its assumptions about the metaphysical universe, as proofs for a worldview that did not need to accept the idea of bodily resurrection. In turn, Maimonides was accused of heresy by members of the dominant school of thought.

As a response to this, he composed the *Treatise* as a way to set the record straight, and he aligned himself with the more traditional interpretation of resurrection. He wrote that resurrection is a fundamental reality in Judaism, citing several examples of literal resurrections in the Scriptures. He laments that the allegorical methodology he uses to describe the nature of God has been corrupted to support such a falsehood, and he vehemently rejects the idea that resurrection can be entirely spiritual. Still, the *Treatise* is not without its own scandal; Maimonides does not believe that the resurrection of the dead is necessarily eternal, and he advocates the idea that, having been resurrected, a body might continue to live normally for a period of time before meeting another natural end.

The philosopher's last major work was the *Letter on Astrology,* composed in 1195. Like the *Guide,* Maimonides's pronunciations on astrology were put together in response to a scholastic query—this time from a Jewish academic community in the French city of Marseilles. Maimonides's treatise on astrology follows the precedents that had been set in related discussions that made their way into the *Mishneh Torah* and the *Guide*. The philosopher rails against the fallacies and idiocies of astrology, which he considers to be not a real science, but a dangerously misleading cultic fascination. Maimonides warns his readers against putting trust in anything that cannot be understood through philosophical proofs, confirmed through the senses, or received from the prophets.

The writings of Maimonides demonstrate something of his character—his affinity for close scholarship and his fundamental beliefs in the Talmud and Jewish law. The regard with which the philosopher was held in his own community is indicated by his elevation to the role of *nagid,* and his far-flung reputation is evidenced by the solicitation of his advice and commentary from an array of people, from his former students to communities of scholars whom he had not even met. But the scholar-philosopher wore one other mantle: as a court physician, he had opportunity to develop theories not only on philosophy, science, and eschatology, but also on medicine.

MAIMONIDES THE PHYSICIAN

Maimonides says in the *Mishneh Torah* that a healthy body and sound mind are both requirements for the acquisition of spiritual knowledge—for him,

the implications of physical health extend to mental and spiritual well-being. Unlike that of most modern physicians, Maimonides's ultimate goal extended beyond the achievement of physical health and longevity and included the acquisition of spiritual health. References to and brief discussions of medical issues appear in Maimonides's religious and philosophical works, but in addition to these he is also responsible for a number of specialized medical treatises, most of them composed after 1180, that examine the dominant medical theories and conditions known to him and his contemporaries.

Maimonides was ever the scholar; two of his medical compositions seem to have been derived from his own study notes. His *Art of the Cure* (ca. 1180) was compiled from extracts of the writings of Galen, a prominent Roman physician and early expert in bodily functions and anatomy. He also produced a compilation of the medical aphorisms of Moses (in 1187–90) and a commentary on the work of the Greek physician Hippocrates (ca. 1191). The pharmacological practices of these Western physicians, as well as their Arab and Persian counterparts, were all collated in Maimonides's *Glossary of Drug Names,* which served as a multilingual dictionary of treatments.

Maimonides was the first to write extensively on several conditions that are well-known to us now. He recorded comprehensive descriptions of diseases like diabetes, cirrhosis, asthma, and stroke; these were complemented by guidelines for their diagnosis and the understanding of their pathology, as well as their cure or treatment.

His *Regimen of Health* (1193–98) presented a plan for living in such a way as to maximize the health of the body and mind. The *Regimen* is divided into four parts; the first two and the last are generally applicable, while the third is directed specifically to Maimonides's patron, who was seeking relief from his personal ailments. Maimonides begins his treatise by drawing his reader's attention to an idea that had been long established—and, indeed, still holds true today: "note how Hippocrates embraces the entire regiment of health into two dicta: that is, that a man should not surfeit himself, and should not neglect exercise."[11] He follows this with specific advice about healthy diets, the merits of exercise, the importance of fresh water and air, and the aiding of good digestion; the ideas presented in the *Regimen* follow those presented in his *Treatise on Hemorrhoids* (1187), which also advocates the benefits of a good diet and digestion, and the *Discourse on Asthma* (1190), which extols fresh air as an essential component for the maintenance of a healthy body.

In the last decade of his life, Maimonides the physician was also interested in the pharmacological possibilities of the world around him. At the behest of his noble patrons, he wrote two letters addressing questions about sexuality that are now known compositely as the *Treatise on Coitus*; in the treatise he discusses issues of sexual hygiene and the use of aphrodisiacs and anti-aphrodisiacs. In 1198, he produced *A Book on Poisons and Protection from Lethal Drugs,* which served as a textbook for medical programs until well into the eighteenth century.

Today, Maimonides's reputation as a religious philosopher often eclipses his repute as a physician, but his career as such is well documented and further helps establish his status as a Renaissance man in the truest sense of the phrase. His ideas about medicine and leading a healthy life resonate in the sort of advice that modern patients often receive from their doctors. Maimonides advocated what we might today call "holistic treatment"—he addressed physical symptoms through traditional and pharmacological means and by focusing on underlying causes, but he also saw a connection between these manifestations of illness and the weakness or sickness of the soul. We find among his prescriptions one for a "cheerful" disposition that might ward off negativity, and we should remember that all of his advice was given alongside the implied message that the maintenance of a healthy body is one prerequisite for the achievement of spiritual health.

MAIMONIDES'S LEGACY

Although Maimonides's primary focus was the study and illumination of Jewish law, we have seen that this is in no way his only realm of influence. His ideas and methodology live on even today in Jewish rabbinical schools (*yeshivas*), but also serve as a basis for theological studies in other religions. His works have been mined for secret codes with which to unlock the truths of the Torah and have been pored over for centuries by those who seek esoteric knowledge. Furthermore, his greatness as a physician continues to be commemorated by Jewish hospitals and doctors. But perhaps the rest of us, even if we are not studying to be rabbis, philosophers, or physicians, can take something else away from the life of Maimonides, as none of his achievements would have been possible without a firm dedication to close scholarship and an intense curiosity and desire to know and follow the truth.

Early Commentators and Followers

The reason for the somewhat lopsided modern conception of Maimonides as a philosopher above all else is no doubt the result of the subjects of commentaries about his works produced in the centuries after his death. For medieval theologians of all of the faiths of the Book, the *Guide for the Perplexed* offered a wealth of theories about the relationship between the Judeo-Christian understandings of God and the ideology of Aristotle, which dominated the philosophical curricula of medieval universities. Maimonides's rationalist religious ideas appealed to Christian philosophers, notably the quintessential medieval Christian theologian Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) and the Scottish scholar and monk Duns Scotus (1265–1308).

Like Maimonides, theologians like Aquinas and Duns Scotus saw philosophy as a means to the understanding of theology and subscribed to the posi-

tion articulated by Maimonides that reason and philosophical knowledge are stepping-stones to the correct interpretation of revealed knowledge. Aquinas also followed Maimonides in rejecting the Aristotelian idea of the eternity of the universe, concurring with the alternate proofs offered in the *Guide,* which suggest that the eternity of the universe cannot be proven one way or the other.

But Aquinas took Maimonides to task for the *Guide*'s insistence on the negative descriptions of God. For the Christian theologian, the essence of God was perfection; he theorized that, when we use language to identify an aspect of perfection in creation, we are really identifying an aspect of God that existed before that creation. For example, when we observe that a certain person is "good," what we are really singling out for comment is the essential goodness that emanates from and is perfectly embodied by God; to deny worshippers this method of understanding was, to Aquinas, to effectively remove the average person's ability to understand *anything* about God. Still, he advocated resistance to any attempt to fully anthropomorphize the Creator and was careful to maintain distinctions between the perfect attributes of God and the imperfect ones reflected in man—thus, although we might conceptualize the "goodness" of God in human terms, that goodness is not one and the same with the goodness observable in creation.

Duns Scotus was also impressed by Maimonides's rational-religious philosophy. In his commentaries on the writings of the Jewish sage, he agrees with the stated position on the relationship between revelation and reason and, unlike Aquinas, follows Maimonides in the conception of the negative attributions of God. Another notable proponent of Maimonides's philosophy was the German theologian Albertus Magnus (1193–1280), whose writings likewise rely on and incorporate many of the philosopher's proofs on the nature of eternity, creation, and existence.

Earlier we saw that Maimonides's interaction with Aristotelian ideas caused immediate consternation among certain groups of rabbinical scholars, leading to mass burnings of his books and general condemnation of his worthiness of authority. But even as his *Mishneh Torah* gained prominence in the *yeshiva* communities, the philosopher's detractors did not fade away. Perhaps his most forceful antagonist was Baruch Spinoza (1632–1677), a Talmudic scholar who lived in Amsterdam.

Spinoza was united with Maimonides against the anthropomorphization of God, but the two agreed on little else. In his *Tractatus theologico-politicus* (*Theologico-Political Treatise*; written in 1670), Spinoza rejects his predecessor's assertions about scripture and the prophets. Arguing that the Torah is the work of human minds and hands, Spinoza refuses to accept that the prophets of scripture should be likened to intellectual philosophers.

He also attacks the earlier philosopher's ideas about Jewish law. Maimonides had asserted that the law of Moses, when understood correctly, was relevant to all people and ages; Spinoza, on the other hand, takes issue with

certain commandments and argues that they have not been applicable to the Jewish community since the fall of the Temple. Spinoza adduces contemporary scientific advancements, arguing that the new understanding of natural law forces the abandonment of the theory that the Bible is anything more than a guide for righteous living or contains hidden scientific, philosophic, and esoteric meanings.

In the twelfth century, Maimonides attempted to recast Judaism as a philosophical and rational religion without changing fundamental beliefs about the Torah and the prophets. Five hundred years later, Spinoza espoused an almost reformist view of his religion by highlighting the shortfalls not of philosophy, but of the practice of Judaism itself—his disdain for Maimonides and those like him is clearly discernible in the opening to his *Treatise,* in which he identifies the task of the religio-philosophers as seeming to be the "[extortion] from Scripture [of] confirmations of Aristotelian quibbles and their own inventions, a proceeding which I regard as the acme of absurdity."[12] For Spinoza, there is no sensible overlap between rational philosophy and religion.

In the same century, however, Maimonides's religious interpretations were being considered in a somewhat surprising place: in Cambridge, England, where the astronomer, mathematician, and physicist Isaac Newton (1643–1727) had subscribed to some of Maimonides's ideas and rationales. Although he is best known for his contributions to the modern study of physics, Newton was a passionate student of the Torah and the Talmud and spent much of his life convinced that revealed truths were hidden in and coded into scripture, waiting to be discovered once man had attained sufficient knowledge. What remains of his library show that Newton was well read in Jewish matters and harbored a particular interest in the writings of Maimonides.

Newton has been described as a "Judaic monotheist of the school of Maimonides."[13] After years of the study of Hebrew and rabbinical writings, he had arrived at the philosophical conclusion that the Christian Trinity was impossible; as proof, he cites Maimonides's supposition that things that cannot be understood intellectually cannot function as objects of faith. Newton also followed Maimonides in the rejection of the possibility of miracles, as these cannot occur without circumventing natural laws, which he (and Maimonides) considered immutable. In the Christian environment of seventeenth-century Cambridge, such ideas were met with suspicion; in some circles Newton was considered afflicted with madness, and still other groups deemed him an outright heretic.

The *Guide* and Maimonides's rational religious ideals clearly resonate through the centuries as enduring points of discussion and debate; indeed, the name of the Jewish sage himself is not nearly as well-known as those of his commentators. Maimonides's legacy is shaped by the writings of those who are indebted to his ideas—Aquinas, Duns Scotus, Spinoza, and Newton—and as a result his relevance is not restricted to the fields of intensive theological scholarship and extends to a myriad of disciplines.

Maimonides Today

Although his reputation for rational religious philosophy is perhaps most enduring, we cannot overlook Maimonides's contributions to other fields of study and inquiry. If the *Guide* inspired widespread philosophical debate across time and religions, the *Mishneh Torah* was considerably inspirational in its own right. The codified presentation of Jewish law continues to be a standard text for rabbinical study; *yeshivas* across the world bear the name of Maimonides, and these dedications commemorate the rabbi's impact on Jewish scholasticism and the reverence with which his ideas and methodologies are regarded.

Maimonides has also been associated with *kabbalah,* a mystical form of Judaism that has recently enjoyed something of a resurgence in the unlikely location of Hollywood. Scholars are at odds over whether or not Maimonides was, in fact, a proponent of the tradition. Certainly there is evidence that the *Mishneh Torah* was influenced by kabbalistic texts, but Maimonides's status as a rationalist philosopher seems in opposition to an entirely mystical form of philosophy and worldview; in fact, we have already seen that Maimonides was wary of metaphysical knowledge falling into the hands of people who were not properly prepared.

Nevertheless, the *Guide to the Perplexed* has been adopted by some kabbalists as a text that contains esoteric truths. They point to Maimonides's theory that the Torah is a source of hidden, secret knowledge. Because of the sage's encouragement of the allegorical interpretation of scripture, his treatises are used to advocate the understanding of Jewish law as a guide for those seeking a prophetic experience. Of course, Maimonides himself was a firm believer in such things as angelic visitations and prophetic dreams and visions, and his assertions to this effect have been used to help the case of those hoping to connect Maimonides to kabbalah. It is unclear what Maimonides himself might have thought of this association; as we have seen with respect to his comments on the possibility of resurrection, even in his own lifetime there were those who sought to use the esteem and authority of his scholarship in order to advance ideas that he did not himself agree with. That Maimonides was aware of and incorporated aspects of kabbalah is not in question, but the extent of his intent with respect to it is debatable.

Outside of the realms of philosophy and religion, Maimonides continues to inspire medical excellence; an oath attributed to him is often substituted for the Hippocratic Oath by Jewish doctors. In addition to the *yeshivas,* Maimonides has lent his name to hospitals and hospices, which are guided by the twelfth-century physician's central premise that physical health goes hand-in-hand with spiritual well-being and that a physician's success relies on his or her ability to treat the mind and the body. The mission statement of Maimonides Medical Center in New York acknowledges Maimonides's insistence on humane care and cultural tolerance, and it pledges that one of the hospital's goals is to follow his example of medical philosophy and passion.

Even in hospitals that do not openly pay tribute to Maimonides, many modern medical practices still incorporate his general medical theories, including the connection between the mind and body and the emphasis on underlying causes rather than the treatment of symptoms on their own—despite the centuries of intervening medical advances, many of the treatments noted by Galen and Hippocrates and perpetuated by Maimonides are still practiced today.

Maimonides was a master of many things. But perhaps he is, above all else, an extremely conscientious scholar who left for us a record of a variety of his own courses of study. His codification of Jewish law in the *Mishneh Torah,* his enumeration of Aristotelian proofs in the *Guide for the Perplexed,* and his catalogs of drugs and diseases all evidence his penchant for exhaustive documentation, and we are left with what is largely the result of years of intense personal study and reflection, diligently recorded and often incorporated into larger and more complex works.

In addition to his influential pronouncements on subjects ranging from creation and the eternity of the universe to hemorrhoids, Maimonides left for us a record of the intellectual trends of early medieval philosophies of God, astronomy, science, and medicine. Even if sometimes his ideas and observations were not necessarily new, they nevertheless offer a glimpse into the dominant concerns of his day.

His tireless documentation and inquiry form the basis of Maimonides's most significant accomplishments. His reputation for excellence in Talmudic study is so great that he has accrued the appellation "the Second Moses," and his rational-religious ideology is still a source of debate for theologians around the globe. People as diverse as twelfth-century monks, seventeenth-century scientists, and modern-day celebrities all pay tribute to the ideas expounded by the rabbinical scholar, philosopher, community leader, physician, and astronomer Maimonides—a man who is at once medieval icon and "Renaissance man."

NOTES

1. Quoted in Ariel Bar-Sela, Hebbel Hoff, and Elias Faris, trans. and eds., "Moses Maimonides' Two Treatises on the Regimen of Health," *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 54, no. 4 (1964): 3–50 at 3.

2. *Guide,* 1.33. Quotations from the *Guide* are taken from Maimonides, *The Guide for the Perplexed: Unabridged Edition*, trans. M. Friedländer (New York: Cosimo Press, [1904] 2007) and indicate book and chapter numbers.

3. Ibid., 2.13.

4. Ibid., 2.27.

5. Ibid., 2.19.

6. Ibid., 2.6.

7. Ibid., 3.9.

8. Ibid., 3.33.

9. Ibid., 3.54.
10. Ibid.
11. Quoted in Bar-Sela, Hoff, and Faris, "Two Treatises," 16.
12. Benedict de [Baruch] Spinoza, *A Theologico-Political Treatise/A Political Treatise. Unabridged Elwes Translation* (New York: Dover, [1883] 1951), Book 2, p. 13 (chapter 1, sentence 39).
13. José Faur, "Newton, Maimonidean," *Review of Rabbinic Judaism* 6, no. 2 (2003): 215–49 at 226.

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Thomas More, a sixteenth-century British humanist and statesman, wrote *Utopia* and was executed for opposing King Henry VIII's efforts to split from the Catholic Church. Illustration after a painting by Hans Holbein the Younger, 1527. (The Print Collector/StockphotoPro)

Thomas More (1478–1535)

William G. Marx

More is a man of an angel's wit and singular learning. I know not his fellow. For where is the man of that gentleness, lowliness, and affability? And as time requireth, a man of marvelous mirth and pastimes, and sometimes of as sad gravity. A man for all seasons.

—Robert Whittinton, 1520

. . . it would be hard to find anyone who was more truly a man for all seasons and all men.

—Desiderius Erasmus, 1521

PROLOGUE: "THIS CHILD . . . WILL PROVE A MARVELLOUS MAN"

In 1490, when Thomas More was 12 years old, he was sent by his father to serve as a page in the household of Archbishop (and later Cardinal) John Morton (1420–1500) at Lambeth Palace.[1] It was common then for socially ambitious families to place their adolescent sons for a time in the households of prominent people. Not only would their children learn much from the household tutors, but they would also acquire the social skills that could serve them and their families well in the years to come. The young More must have been a very clever and lucky boy, for he was admitted to the service of an important household that saw vibrant intellectual activity. Cardinal Morton had backed Henry Tudor (afterward King Henry VII) in his successful bid to overthrow King Richard III, and he was then enjoying the favor and social position that came with it. In the cardinal's house, More could observe the interactions of clergy, nobles, scholars, office holders, and professional lay folk—people who were major players in the church, royal court, universities, or city. Some of these people, like Cardinal Morton himself (both archbishop of Canterbury and Lord Chancellor of England) were major players in several arenas.

More's service in the cardinal's household may have lasted through two Christmas seasons, which were then boisterous, sometimes raucous, festival celebrations. One can imagine the cardinal's great hall being filled with holiday guests and the dining tables laden with food and drink. There would have been much talk, laughter, music, song, and general high spirits. The cardinal's guests were entertained by plays performed by companies of traveling actors. More took to this sort of entertainment enthusiastically. William Roper, More's son-in-law, would later write:

> though [More] was young of years, yet would he at Christmas-tide suddenly sometimes step in among the players, and never studying for the matter, make a part of his own there presently among them, which made the lookers-on more sport than all the players beside. In whose wit and towardness the Cardinal much delighting, would often say of him unto the nobles that divers times dined with him, "This child here waiting at the table, whosoever shall live to see it, will prove a marvellous man."[2]

One sort of play that was performed for the cardinal and his guests was the Tudor "moral interlude." These interludes derived from religious English morality plays or from more secular, Continental models. Two such interludes, *Nature* (1495) and *Fulgens and Lucres* (1497), were written just after More's boyhood service in the Morton household by Henry Medwall, the cardinal's chaplain. Though *Nature* follows the model of the English morality play and *Fulgens and Lucres* follows Continental models, the conflicts in both plays turn on the problem of making moral choices in threatening and often confusing circumstances. As solemn as that sounds for a Christmas festival, the English dramatic tradition always allowed for comedy—downright

slapstick, at times—even in its most serious works. More's success at comic improvisation ought to have been impressive, not only for his precocity and self-assurance, but also for his skill in inventing lines to fit the verse form of the drama's poetry.

More stayed in the cardinal's house for about two years, and his experiences there encompass all of the elements that would shape his life for the rest of his days. Like Medwall's play, *Nature,* much of Thomas More's character was shaped by the English Middle Ages. He was a devout Roman Catholic and an ardent opponent of the Protestant Reformation that began in 1517. His thinking was steeped in the Bible and in the works of the church fathers and Scholastic philosophers. To some, More was the last of the great medieval figures in English literary and political history. But like *Fulgens and Lucres,* much of More's adult character was also shaped by the "New Learning" that was the foundation of English humanism. He was an early advocate of education for women, a skilled lawyer and public speaker, an able civil servant, judge, and counselor to the king, an original writer of history and political philosophy, and a learned and witty raconteur. So, to others, More was a precursor of the great writers and public figures of the English Renaissance. More lived his life always in the complex, dynamic world that lay between the ancient demands of the Roman Catholic Church and the demands of an increasingly secular state. His life was always complicated and always conflicted, and after a time it was put into extreme jeopardy. The changing nature of the times in which he lived eventually pressured him to make moral choices that he considered antithetical to his beliefs in religious authority and to his readings of English law. He could neither avoid the pressures by retiring from public service nor deflect them by improvisational wit or personal charm—not even by his silence. He and his family in the end suffered greatly.

More began his literary career when he was in his late teens or early twenties by writing some "comedies" for the stage. For one play, he chose King Solomon as his subject, most famous in Hebrew scripture for his judicial wisdom and poetry. Perhaps his choice foreshadowed his own life and career. More never let go of his experience of drama and public performance. He saw himself as being in one sort of play or another all his life, and the metaphor of actors performing on stage appears repeatedly in his writings. That plays were often performed on raised platforms called scaffolds—the same word used for the executioner's platform—made for a rich pun that More could not resist. That his own life would end on an executioner's scaffold—the result of religious and political choices that incurred the wrath of King Henry VIII—must have seemed to him like the tragicomic denouement of a very English sort of moral interlude.

EARLY LIFE: WHILE HE WAS YET "A BEARDLESS BOY" (1478–1504)

Before he arrived at the cardinal's house, More spent five or six years studying at Saint Anthony's School in London. There he had begun study of the seven

"liberal arts," which constituted formal education throughout the Middle Ages. The liberal arts were divided into two groups: the trivium (grammar, logic/dialectical reasoning, and rhetoric) and the quadrivium (arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy). At Saint Anthony's, More would have concentrated on the trivium. The study of language, and especially of Latin, which was then the international language of theology, scholarship, literature, diplomacy, and trade, was supremely important. As with many of his educated contemporaries, More's skill in Latin would become so great that it would become his second language of conversation. Well-educated people were expected to know the distinct properties of words and the exact use of terms in a well-reasoned argument, thus grammar and logic. But such knowledge was not fully realized until it could be expressed in persuasive rhetoric—that is, in closely reasoned arguments presented in writing, but better still through eloquent speech.

With the cardinal's encouragement, More left Lambeth Palace in 1492 to attend Oxford University. Already a renowned university, Oxford was an intellectual forge that shaped and tempered young minds through disciplined learning and the practice of spirited debates (disputations). The debate questions that professors put to students dealt with matters of Scholastic philosophy and the nature of language itself. For recreation, students could debate less weighty matters, such as whether the stem or the flower was more valuable to a plant, and the like. These were cloistered debates, academic exercises meant to toughen a student's intellectual mettle. It did not matter which side one took, so long as one could stand toe-to-toe with an opponent and give as well as one got. Years later, More would use the debate format in his polemical writings as one strategy to argue against the Reformation. Better known, the first book of his *Utopia* (1515–16) poses a question about what sort of state is best. The ensuing recreational debate produced one of the world's most celebrated flights of political fancy.

More did not complete a degree at Oxford, but that was not uncommon. A university education in those days usually led to a career in the academic community, the church, or both. Those who aspired to secular careers headed back to the cities, and especially to London, for further education or training. More's father, Sir John More, a lawyer, had a legal career planned for his son, and Thomas was a dutiful son. So, in 1494, at age 16, More left Oxford and returned to London to pursue the study of law.

In More's London a legal education was had at the Inns of Chancery and the Inns of Court. More began his studies at New Inn, one of the Inns of Chancery. The Inns of Chancery prepared young or insufficiently trained students for more rigorous study of law in the Inns of Court. In addition to sharpening his skills in language and reasoning, More would have also studied history, divinity, and music. England had its own long tradition of history writing, but the histories that were attracting the most attention in the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were the classical histories of ancient Rome. When More came later to write *The History of King Richard III* (ca. 1513–ca. 1518), it would be to those classical models that he

would turn for guidance. The study of theology and divinity would still have been heavily influenced by Scholastic traditions, but because More was embarking on a course of legal training, there would have also been considerations of the relations of church law to civil law and of the disputes over competing jurisdictions. In More's *History of King Richard III*, for example, there is a long scene involving a debate over the rights of the church to provide sanctuary (actual physical protection within the church). As for music, it claimed a prominent place for study because of its inclusion in the quadrivium. More esteemed music highly. In his *Utopia* it gets special notice as one of the disciplines in which the Utopians excel. In his own household, More encouraged both of his wives and all of his children to learn to play instruments and to sing. William Roper tells us that More loved to sing in his church choir (Roper 26). Desiderius Erasmus (ca. 1466–1536), the great Dutch scholar and More's good friend, notes that "though [More] is fond of music of all kinds," "he does not seem framed by nature to be a singer."[3] The two observations are not necessarily contradictory. In 1496 More was admitted to Lincoln's Inn, one of the Inns of Court, to complete his legal studies. There he would have heard lectures on the law from esteemed practitioners ("readers"), observed pleadings in the courts at Westminster, and then been questioned about what he had observed. Readers at the Inns of Court would test their students' growing knowledge of the law not only through questioning but also through the "putting of cases," which posed legal issues and points of law for them to argue. In an odd turn of events, More's life would eventually hang on what he misconstrued to be an innocent putting of cases about the extent of Parliamentary powers.

More's Date of Birth

There is some uncertainty about the date of More's birth, as there is about the birthdates of many people, famous or not, who lived in the Middle Ages. (The high rate of infant mortality discouraged making much over a child's birth; it was a child's survival that counted, and consequently death records are more prevalent and reliable.) To his credit, Thomas's father, Sir John More, attempted to record his son's birth with utmost accuracy, jotting down immediately after the event that Thomas was born between two and three in the morning on the Friday after the Feast of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin in the seventeenth year of the reign of King Edward IV. So far, so good. Then, just to make things certain, Sir John later added the phrase, "to wit, the seventh day of February." Because the seventeenth year of Edward IV's reign did not begin until March 1477, it seems that a birth year of 1477 is ruled out. But in 1478, February 7 fell on a Saturday, not a Friday, which it had done in 1477. The same Friday after the Feast of the

*Purification of the Blessed Virgin in 1478 would have fallen on Febru-
ary 6. We are left with a conundrum, and the best that we can say without
fear of contradiction is that Thomas was born on February 6 or 7 in either
1477 or 1478. If we take it that Sir John was very sure of the date as being
February 7 and that he was just as sure that his son was born during the
seventeenth year of Edward IV's reign (two very solid bits of information
strongly asserted), then we may suppose that Sir John, in the excitement
of the moment and in the wee hours of the morning, simply got his days
of the week mixed up. Richard Marius suggests that Sir John's apparent
confusion may be accounted for by the medieval custom of not counting a
new day as begun until sunrise. So, even though Thomas was born early
on Saturday morning, Sir John may still have thought of the pre-dawn time
as Friday, so Thomas was probably born on February 7, 1478.*

More completed his studies in good time and "was made and accounted a
worthy Utter Barrister" in 1501 or 1502 (that is, he was now allowed to plead
cases; Roper 4). He completed his studies, was called to the bar, and began his
career as a writer and public speaker all at the same time. While he was a stu-
dent, More also attended lectures at Saint Paul's Churchyard and elsewhere to
hear the foremost scholars of the day speak on Greek philosophy and literature,
on theology, and on ancient history. The study of ancient Greek and the revival
of classical studies in England was just beginning, and More got caught up in
the movement, befriended the best of the new scholars, and soon began to show
the fruits of his own classical studies. As More was reaching the end of his legal
studies, he joined Erasmus in translating into Latin the satirical works of Lu-
cian (ca. 125–ca. 180), a Roman author who wrote in Greek. Among the works
of Lucian that More translated was the *Menippus,* a story of a fantastical jour-
ney to Hades to find an answer to the question of what sort of life is best. The
fanciful nature of that work would influence More's composition of *Utopia.*
More also translated epigrams from the Greek anthology into Latin with his
friend, William Lily. Though the epigrams often reflect More's sense of humor,
they also reveal his hatred of tyranny. More was both terrified and outraged
at the notion of a king becoming a tyrant. There was for him a clear difference
between rule by authority and the raw exercise of power. Later in life, after he
had resigned as Lord Chancellor, More advised Thomas Cromwell, the king's
secretary, to "ever tell [the king] what he ought to do, but never what he is able
to do. . . . For if a lion knew his own strength, hard were it for any man to rule
him" (Roper 28). Some of the epigrams that More translated condemned tyr-
anny as a mad delusion and others as the cruelest form of foolishness.

In 1501 William Grocyn invited More to lecture on Saint Augustine's *The
City of God*. We are told by Nicholas Harpsfield, another of More's early
biographers, that More packed the house, drawing an even larger audience
than Grocyn when he had lectured at Saint Paul's Churchyard.[4] In 1503

Queen Elizabeth, the wife of King Henry VII, died and More wrote "A Rueful Lamentation," a poem in rhyme royal[5] to be displayed over her tomb. In the poem Elizabeth expresses her sorrow at having left behind all that she loved on Earth. In one stanza, the queen laments her separation from her daughter:

> Farewell my daughter lady Margaret,
> God wotte* full oft** it grieved hath my mind   *knows **often
> That ye should go where we should seldom meet.
> Now am I gone, and have left you behind.
> O mortal folk that we be very blind.
> That we least fear, full oft it is most nigh,
> From you depart I first, and lo now here I lie.[6]

There is some dramatic irony in this stanza, for Margaret married James IV of Scotland in 1503, and in leaving England she worried that she was leaving her mother behind, but it is the queen who has left Margaret behind. Also, the notion that the things that "we least fear" are sometimes the most dangerous will return when More describes the duplicity of Richard III. Finally, "A Rueful Lamentation" is also a reflection on the "last things" (death, judgment, heaven, and hell), a common medieval approach to contemplating the impermanence of the material world. More's later biography of Pico della Mirandola and the prayer that More wrote while he was imprisoned in the Tower of London reflect the same spirit. By 1503, More's legal career and literary life were off to a brilliant start and running at an astonishingly fast pace.

In 1504, King Henry VII called a Parliament, and More was elected to serve in the House of Commons, though we do not know which constituency he represented. Henry sought financial aid from Parliament to recover the cost of knighting his eldest son, Arthur, in 1489 and the cost of the marriage of his daughter, Margaret. The levies he sought could have easily run to £60,000 or more, a great sum of money indeed. In the end, the king had to settle for half of what he wanted. According to William Roper, it was More who argued most persuasively against Henry's demand. As he tells the story,

> At the last debating whereof [More] made such arguments and reasons there against, that the King's demands thereby were clean overthrown. So that one of the King's Privy Council named Master Tyler . . . brought word to the King out of Parliament House that a beardless boy had disappointed all his purpose. (Roper 5)

So soon a lawyer, so skilled a debater, and so quickly in trouble! The king was furious and "could not be satisfied until he had some way revenged it" (Roper 5). The new lawyer and member of Parliament had no property or fortune to lose by his arguments, but his father, Sir John, did. Roper concludes the story by telling us that "His Grace [King Henry VII] devised a causeless quarrel against [More's] father, keeping him in the Tower until he had made

pay to him an hundred pounds fine" (Roper 5). In 1504, £100 was not a trivial amount of money, either. In time, More's professional skills and rhetorical powers would dispel his father's misgivings and win him recognition far beyond Sir John's greatest hopes. Sir John died in 1530, but he lived long enough to see his son appointed Lord Chancellor of England, the highest judicial officer in the realm.

LIBRARY, MONASTERY, COURT: DECIDING ON A PROFESSION (1494–1501)

Ever since his return to London in 1494, More had pursued other interests besides law, and they, too, must have vexed his practical-minded father. More had grown increasingly interested in the New Learning, which was the foundation of English humanism. He had also become a regular visitor to the London Charterhouse of Carthusian monks. He considered becoming a priest. We may imagine that the internal struggle to decide how best to live his life was a difficult one, as More was a skilled debater who could make a compelling argument for each of his options.

The attractions of the New Learning were powerful. They not only drew More to the most stimulating intellectual movement of the era, they provided new platforms for the public display of his abilities. Few scholars ever get to participate in an intellectual movement that they know is fundamentally changing the way people look at the world. Thomas More did. The New Learning promoted the study of ancient Greek and the reconsideration of the classical Latin literature of Rome. The work of the English humanists John Colet (ca. 1467–1519), William Grocyn (ca. 1449–1519), Thomas Linacre (ca.1460–1524), and William Lily (ca. 1468–1522) helped to bring this ancient literature to new audiences. New translations of ancient works were better because scholars were also becoming better linguists. They also had access to more reliable texts in Greek and Latin, thanks to the wide circulation of new editions made possible by the recent invention of the printing press. The study of Greek also supported the reexamination of the New Testament in its original language, something that had not been undertaken since Jerome translated the Bible from Greek into Vulgate Latin over a thousand years before.[7] Erasmus's translation of the New Testament into Latin in 1516 was based on Greek texts supplied to him from the Chapter Library of Saint Paul's Cathedral by its dean, John Colet. His translation was celebrated as breakthrough scholarship all across Europe.

Over the long course of the Middle Ages, biblical study had gradually shifted from the study of biblical texts directly to the study of learned commentaries on biblical texts to the study of learned commentaries on commentaries on biblical texts. Meanings were refined to an exquisite precision, though often at a greater remove from the original source material. To the advocates of the New Learning, the works of the Scholastic philosophers often seemed

self-absorbed, musty, and increasingly less applicable to the world outside the university or monastery. In *Utopia,* More derides that sort of Scholasticism by noting sarcastically that the Utopians, while they had independently discovered all that the ancient Greeks had known about music, arithmetic, and geometry, had fallen far behind what the Scholastic philosophers had achieved in the study of logic. The implication is that the Utopians esteemed what was important, while the Scholastics had come to care only about what was complicated.

From the Greek historians Thucydides and Herodotus, and especially from the Romans Sallust, Tacitus, and Suetonius, historians writing in the sixteenth century began to sense how they could compose more than just the event-after-event chronicles of their times. They learned that there were developmental patterns to be discerned in the study of past events, that there were discoverable causes for human action, and that figures from the past could be seen as complex human personalities. The better the history, the more it portrayed the world in which people actually lived. These lessons were not lost on More, for he would in time apply them to creating his own vivid portrait of King Richard III. E. E. Reynolds wrote that More's *History of King Richard III* is "the first attempt in our language to compose a historical biography or biographical history in which personality and motive are taken into account" (Reynolds 81). As such, it is the first "modern" history to be written in England.

Along with More's participation in the humanist revolution was his testing of himself as a candidate for a cloistered religious life. Erasmus wrote that More "applied his whole mind to the pursuit of piety, with vigils and fasts and prayer and similar exercises preparing himself for the priesthood" (Erasmus, p. 21/172–74). The monastery offered a disciplined and productive life of worship, order, prayer, obedience, and good works. Part of the day's work for an educated monk could be taken up with study and scholarship, and it is not hard to imagine More happily giving himself wholly to the study of sacred texts. More's esteem for the monastic ideal remained high all his life. When Margaret (Meg) Roper—William's wife and More's favorite child—appeared to be miraculously healed from what was almost certainly the plague, More confided to his son-in-law that, if Meg had died, "he would never have meddled with worldly matters after" (Roper 16). As a child of the Middle Ages, More had inherited an acute sense of the impermanence of material things and of the inevitable coming of "the last things." For him, the Last Judgment would be an unbearable reckoning, if he had failed to live the pious life of which he was capable. To the end of his life, there was a religious severity to More's character that undercut all of his worldly advancement, economic prosperity, and material comfort. No matter how imposing his chain of office, how rich his robes, how sumptuous his table, or how happy his family, next to his skin he always wore a coarse shirt made of goat's hair. He wore the shirt to mortify his flesh and to serve as a constant, painful reminder that the world belonged to Satan and that all of its pleasures were the soul's enemies.[8]

More's interests in the New Learning and a religious life did not need to conflict with each other; Colet, Grocyn, and Linacre were all in holy orders themselves. Erasmus, too, had entered an Augustinian monastery and was ordained a priest in 1492. (He later received a papal dispensation from his vows.) To More's father, however, classical studies and ascetic religious practice may not have seemed compatible with the day-to-day life of a lawyer. Sir John must have felt his patience sorely tested as he waited for his son to make up his brilliant, complicated mind and settle down to a proper career in law. He decided to put some parental pressure on him. Erasmus tells us that Sir John "deprived [More] of all outside help and he was treated almost as if disinherited because he was thought to be deserting his father's profession" (Erasmus, p. 19/153–55). In the end, More chose to follow a legal career and thereby secure his family's social position and economic well-being. Still, he must have put his scholarship and monastic practice two steps behind the law with great reluctance and regret.

FROM WORTHY UTTER BARRISTER TO SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS (1504–23)

The last Parliament of Henry VII's reign ran from January 20 to the end of March 1504. More turned 26 about halfway through the session and could hardly have been a "beardless boy," as the story goes. In fact, More had grown into adulthood, completed his formal education, been called to the bar, and begun his legal career. He was doing so well that he married Jane Colt in late 1504 or early 1505. Erasmus tells us that More gave up pursuing a monastic life because "he could not shake off the desire to get married" and that he "chose to be a god-fearing husband rather than an immoral priest" (Erasmus 21/177–79). Roper adds the intriguing detail that More was first attracted to Jane's younger sister but married Jane instead to keep her from being shamed by being passed over (Roper 4). Jane was 17 when they married; More was 26. Over the next five years they had four children, Margaret (b. 1505), Elizabeth (b. 1506), Cecily (b. 1507), and John (b.1509). When Jane died at the age of 23 in 1511, More married Alice Middleton within a month. Alice was older than More by six years and a widow with a grown daughter. Those who knew her have not been flattering in their descriptions. She was not very attractive, not well educated, and not always agreeable. More married her to make sure that his children would have a mother and that his household would have a mistress. Having a respectable marriage and an accomplished family were essential for an ambitious young lawyer to win the sort of professional recognition he coveted.

Henry VIII's coronation on June 24, 1509, was the cause of celebration throughout England, especially among those who favored the New Learning. At 18, Henry was a golden-haired, boyishly handsome scholar-athlete-poet and the hope of all England for a new era of prosperity, tolerance,

learning, and peace. In contrast to his father, Henry VIII seemed a generous and benevolent monarch. More wrote verses in Latin for Henry's coronation that celebrate the occasion in fulsome terms as

> the [end] of our slavery, the beginning of our freedom, the end of sadness, the source of joy, for this day consecrates a young man who is the everlasting glory of our time and makes him your King—the only King who is worthy to rule not merely a single people but the whole earth—such a King as will wipe the tears from every eye and put joy in the place of our long distress. (Sylvester 130–31)

And then, remembering Henry VII's stinginess and many attempts to overtax his people, More launched into a not-so-subtle critique of the previous reign. He wrote that

> Laws, heretofore powerless—yes, even laws put to unjust ends—now happily have regained their proper authority. . . . Now each man happily does not hesitate to show the possessions which in the past his fear kept hidden in dark seclusion. . . . No longer does fear whisper, whisper secrets in one's ear, for no one has secrets either to keep or secretly to tell. Now it is a delight to ignore informers. Only ex-informers fear informers now. (Sylvester 131)

More's *History of King Richard III* describes a similar time during Richard's reign when "the state of things and the dispositions of men were then such that a man could not well tell whom he might trust or whom he might fear" (Sylvester 43). Sadly, it would not be all that long before the same words could be applied to the reign of Henry VIII.

The next 14 years of More's life were his happiest. His career advanced from one height to the next, each new position higher than the one before. His family prospered, his friends visited often, and he produced an impressive array of writings—literary and educational correspondence, biography, poetry, history, epigrams translated from the Greek, political fantasy, and spiritual meditations. He was a man on the rise and enjoyed nearly unfettered liberty to exercise his many talents. During this period More produced most of the literary works for which he is still esteemed—*The Life of Pico della Mirandola, The History of King Richard III,* and his masterpiece of political satire, *Utopia.* And yet, when he was at the pinnacle of this amazingly productive period, More's vision turned inward and he wrote his sobering treatise on *The Last Things.* These several steps in his progress now deserve some additional attention.

The advancement of More's professional career during this period was rapid and steep. On September 3, 1510, More won appointment as under-sheriff for the City of London and was also named justice of the peace for Hampshire. As R. W. Chambers explains, the "office of Under-Sheriff was

important. The Mayor and Sheriffs had not, as a rule, any legal experience, and the Under-Sheriff was the official who advised the Sheriff in 'those numerous cases which came under his jurisdiction'" and acted as judge of the Sheriff's Court.[9] More made himself popular in the role of judge because he usually reduced or canceled the fees due to him from contesting parties, thus making both the plaintiffs and defendants happy (Erasmus 22/228–33). More did, after all, possess great legal knowledge, practical wit, good humor, and enormous personal charm, which could have dispelled the anger or anxiety of many a litigant. In 1511, he was named reader at Lincoln's Inn for its autumn term. In 1515 More was again appointed reader for Lincoln's Inn, this time for its Lenten term. Such was his growing reputation as a lawyer, judge, and teacher.

In May 1515, More's career took on national and international significance. In that year he participated in an embassy to Flanders to help resolve issues affecting the wool trade. More's responsibility, it seems, was restricted to the issues that related to commerce and most likely only those issues that affected the merchants of London. The negotiations took months, and More was able to spend his leisure time in the company of old and new friends, including Cuthbert Tunstall (cleric, student of Greek and Hebrew, diplomat, administrator, royal adviser, and later bishop of Durham), John Clement (a former pupil in Saint Paul's School), and Peter Giles (humanist scholar and printer of Antwerp). More's fictionalized account of his conversation with Giles and a certain Raphael Hythloday is the basis for Book I of *Utopia*. More dedicated *Utopia* to Peter Giles.

In 1517, More was chosen by the king to serve on the Privy Council. The Privy Councillors were the personal advisers to the king. The council had broad powers and at times could enact laws simply by royal proclamation. The councillors could also sit as a court to hear legal disputes. In 1518, More was appointed a judge and Master of the Court of Requests. To make time to meet his new responsibilities, he resigned his position as undersheriff for the City of London. In 1520, he was a member of the royal entourage when Henry traveled to Calais for a formal state visit with the king of France. The meeting is now known as "the Field of Cloth of Gold" because of its lavish display of wealth and spectacular pageantry, which for the English part was staged by John Rastell, More's brother-in-law. Rastell was a lawyer and printer with theatrical connections who had married More's sister, Elizabeth. It was Rastell, in fact, who first printed Medwall's play *Fulgens and Lucres,* around 1515. On May 21, 1521, More was appointed undertreasurer of England and knighted by the king. A year later, More was called upon to speak for the City of London to welcome the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V, who was visiting London in the company of the king. His reputation as an eloquent speaker was by then well established.

In 1523, More returned to Parliament and this time to serve by election of its members as Speaker of the House of Commons. As Speaker, he represented all the members of the House. His audience was the king or the

king's deputies. On his first day, More petitioned the king to allow complete freedom of debate within the House chamber. He appealed to the king to be tolerant of their debates, for some members, though they were well educated and well spoken, could still be wrong on some issues, and other members, though they were rough hewn and plain spoken, could be right on some issues, too. No one would know who was right on any given issue unless all could speak freely. Having made his argument, More then asked Henry,

> to give all your Commons here assembled your most gracious license and pardon, freely, without doubt of your dreadful displeasure, every man to discharge his conscience, and boldly in anything incident among us to declare his advice; and whatsoever happen any man to say, that it may [please] your noble Majesty . . . to take all in good part. (Roper 70)

It took a man of parts to make such a request, and the House of Commons knew that their new Speaker was just such a man. The right of every man to "discharge his conscience" as he saw fit was a moral principle that More would continue to advocate to his very last breath.

Thanks to Erasmus, we have a rather complete verbal portrait of More at this time. In 1519, Erasmus wrote to respond to his friend Ulrich von Hutten, one of the German humanists, who had requested a description of More and some news about his life. After the publication of his *Epigrams, Life of Pico,* and *Utopia,* More's fame had spread throughout Europe, and his admirers on the Continent wanted to know about him. Erasmus's portrait of More is a flattering one and does not reveal many warts. Nonetheless, it is invaluable because it was drawn on the spot and directly from life. Here is a brief overview of his portrait:

> More is neither tall nor short, his body is symmetrical, his skin rosy, his hair darkish blond, his beard scanty, and his eyes are flecked blue and gray, which Erasmus believes denotes a happy character. More's expression is friendly and he smiles often; he is well suited to merriment. When walking, he lists a bit to the left, carrying his right shoulder higher. He is not at all fussy about his clothes or what he eats, though he loves eggs. He is healthy, but not athletic, and does not often get sick. He does not drink much alcohol, only a little wine, which he usually dilutes with water. His voice is not loud, but rather clear and distinct; he speaks in measured tones and without hesitation. More does not like to wear his chain of office and does not much like public ceremonies or parties. (Erasmus 16/1–18/97)

Beyond the physical description, Erasmus tells von Hutten that More "seems born and created for friendship" and cannot have enough friends. He is open for friendship with anyone, regardless of rank, so long as they remain open to learning and self-improvement. He does not much like frivolous pastimes—ball

games, cards and gambling, and other such diversions "with which the common run of grandees beguile their tedious hours." He is courteous and has such charm that he can cheer up anybody. He loves merriment and a good joke, but he "never goes as far as buffoonery." He delights in wit, even when he is the butt of the joke. More's own witty manner and sense of fun inspired Erasmus to write his *Praise of Folly*[10] (see Erasmus 8/98–19/125).

As for More's household, Erasmus says that More has an insatiable curiosity and that his house is full of all kinds of unusual plants and animals, including apes, foxes, ferrets, and weasels. He loves to collect things from all over the world and delights in the pleasure that his guests take in viewing these objects. He has been a lifelong student of the Greek and Latin classics and a devoted student of the church fathers. Erasmus thought that More's home was happy and harmonious; in 1519 it also included More's father and his father's fourth wife (Erasmus 19/126–22/215).

As for More's professional career, Erasmus tells von Hutten that he is an extraordinarily capable lawyer and judge, that he is admired by the citizens of London, and that one "could hardly find a better *ex tempore* speaker." "His mind is always ready, ever passing nimbly to the next point; his memory always at his elbow. . . . In disputations nothing more acute can be imagined, so that he has often taken on even the most eminent theologians in their own field and been almost too much for them." Erasmus notes that "John Colet . . . used to say that . . . there was only one able man in the whole of England," by which he meant More. More cultivates a "true piety" and sets regular times for prayer, during which "he says his prayers, and they are not conventional but come from the heart." Erasmus is amazed that a man of such piety can live such a worldly successful life. He asks von Hutten, "What becomes then of those people who think that Christians are not to be found except in monasteries?" (Erasmus, 22/216–24/302).

Erasmus does not mention More's school, but he should have, because it was More's remarkable attempt to realize the Utopian ideal of universal education. In addition to that of his own children, More supervised the education of his stepdaughter, Alice Alington, and his wards, Margaret Giggs and Anne Cresacre. Later on, he welcomed other children to his home and school, just as Cardinal Morton had welcomed him. They included Giles Heron, another ward, and More's nieces and nephews. The children of family friends attended his school, too. More hired several tutors, including John Clement, who was with him in Antwerp when the idea for *Utopia* was hatched. The curriculum emphasized Latin, the trivium, music, and moral philosophy. More knew that some would criticize his education of women, but he held that their education was more important for them than "the riches of Croesus or the beauty of Helen."[11] His daughter Margaret especially excelled in her studies and was widely recognized as a learned woman, much to the shock and surprise of many a learned man. Her achievements and those of her classmates, male and female, were a constant source of delight for More.

More's long-standing esteem for the monastic life was well known to Erasmus. He knew, too, that More had found a model for living a Christian life outside of a monastery in the life of Pico della Mirandola. Thomas Stapleton, an early biographer, says that when More gave up the idea of a monastic life for himself he "determined . . . to put before his eyes the example of some prominent layman, on which he might model his life . . . and finally fixed upon John Pico, [earl of Mirandola], who was renowned . . . for his encyclopedic knowledge, and no less esteemed for his sanctity of life."[12] Pico was a noted Florentine humanist who had lived a pious life devoted to scholarship and philosophy until his untimely death in 1494 at the age of 31.

As it happened, More was presented with an occasion for which he could share his thoughts about Pico with a childhood friend who was also drawn to the cloistered life. When Joyeuce Leigh chose to become a "Poor Clare"— that is, a member of the convent Order of Saint Clare—More thought to present her with a gift of his own making that would betoken his esteem for her and celebrate their spiritual friendship. His gift was a copy of his recently completed *Life of Pico della Mirandola*, dedicated to her and published about 1510 by his brother-in-law, John Rastell. *The Life of Pico* includes More's English translation of excerpts from a Latin biography of Pico, translations of three of Pico's letters, his commentary on Psalm 15 (Vulgate), and three duodecalogues (sets of 12 sayings) that More turned into rhyme royal stanzas: "Twelve Rules of Spiritual Battle," "Twelve Weapons of Spiritual Battle," and "Twelve Properties of a Lover." The contemplative theme running throughout the whole of *The Life of Pico* is the renunciation of the temptations of the world, the devil, and the flesh for a life of service to God, a spiritual theme throughout much of medieval literature.

One is tempted to think that Erasmus had a copy of *The Life of Pico* before him as he wrote his portrait letter of More to Ulrich von Hutten. There are striking parallels between More and his subject: their good looks; their precocity as children; the shaping influence of one dominant parent (Pico's mother and More's father); their wide-ranging knowledge, facility with languages, and mental acuity; their discontent with traditional forms of education; their skill in Scholastic disputation; their decisions to live secular lives; the mortification of their bodies (Pico by scourging, More by hair shirt); their preference for devotion over knowledge; and their cheerfulness and equanimity of temperament. There are also striking differences. Once More chose to live in the world (i.e., not as a cleric), he also chose to succeed in the world. Pico came from an aristocratic family of means; More did not. Pico could afford to give away the better part of his property and fortune and live a retiring life. More, however, was a man with responsibilities. He had a wife, children, other dependents, professional obligations, and a living to earn. Pico could live a kind of secular cloistered life that More could only dream of. It would not be until circumstances brought More to imprisonment in the Tower of London that he could think of himself as having

finally entered a kind of cloistered world, though not the one he would have preferred.

More is not without a sense of adventure in *The Life of Pico*. He freely renders Pico's prose duodecalogues into rhyme royal stanzas, presumably because he enjoyed the poetic challenge. More also invents over 80 new words for the English language or gives new meanings to already existing English words. Here is a sampling: *alacrity* (noun meaning "eagerness"), *bedlam* (adjective meaning "deranged," alluding to the Hospital of Saint Mary of Bethlehem for the insane in London), *culture* (noun meaning "the development of the mind"), *laboriously* (adverb meaning "with great effort"), *mediocrity* (noun meaning "the golden mean, the ideal moderate position between extremes"), *skittish* (adjective meaning "nervous, jumpy"), *persuasion* (noun meaning "a belief or set of beliefs"), and *stomach* (noun meaning "internal strength"). More concludes *The Life of Pico* with a prayer by Pico:

> Grant I thee pray such heart into mine heart
> That to this love of thine may be equal
> Grant me from Satan's service to astart*   *break free
> With whom me rueth* so long to have been in thrall**.   *regret
>   **captivity
>
> Grant me good Lord, creator of all
> The flame to quench of all sinful desire
> And in thy love set all mine heart afire.[13]

Pico's prayer is a tidy summation of his book and a way to turn to More's next literary effort. If Pico had lived to ask More what sort of mischief a satanic figure could visit upon a state, he would have found some answers in *The History of King Richard III*.

MORE'S LITERARY WORKS

The History of King Richard III *(ca. 1513–ca. 1518)*

More was seven years old when Henry Tudor defeated Richard III at the battle of Bosworth Field on August 22, 1483. When he served as a page in Cardinal Morton's household, More surely heard eyewitness accounts of Richard's rise to power, reign, defeat, and death. Morton himself had been a major player during Richard's reign and an early supporter of Henry. His stories were likely as thrilling to hear as they were biased against Richard. Henry Tudor did not have as great a claim to the throne as Richard did, so any account that would undermine Richard's legitimacy and bolster Henry's would serve the new Tudor dynasty well. Making Richard out to be a deformed, murderous, usurping tyrant would be best of all. Around 1513 More began to meld his accumulating information about Richard, his hatred of tyranny, his interest in

the classical historians, and his flair for drama to produce his *History of King Richard III.*

More's principal literary models for the *History* were the Roman historians Sallust, Suetonius, and Tacitus. R. S. Sylvester says that More "must have had [Sallust] by heart."[14] In reading Sallust, More found a way to treat the theme of the usurpation of political power both as a study of history and as political theatre through set speeches and character dialogue. Suetonius's *Lives of the Twelve Caesars* gave More license to spice up historical narrative with gossip and a sprinkling of scandalous details. From Tacitus's *Annals,* More learned how to construct a driving narrative through the codependent nature of character and event. Both the *Annals* and More's *History* begin in a world at peace and under the rule of an idealized monarch, Caesar Augustus for Tacitus and Edward IV for More. From those starting points, each introduces a cast of characters that will reduce what had been idyllic states into brutal regimes ruled by tyrants, Tiberius for Sallust and Richard III for More. Protagonists and antagonists are both given psychological motives that push them forward into action. In both histories, the tyrants pursue their goals through dissimulation, the art of concealing true motives behind an outward show of benevolent piety. The dissonance between outward show and concealed motive contributes significantly to the dramatic irony in both works.

Sylvester's favorite adjective to describe More's *History* is not "historical" but "dramatic," and with good reason, as More was influenced by drama all his life. More acted in plays, wrote plays, and had friends and relatives who were involved in the composition, production, performance, and publication of plays.[15] More must have also known Medwall's morality play, *Nature,* which has as its chief dramatic device the ploy of the Seven Deadly Sins masquerading as Virtues in order to deceive mankind. More's Richard is well practiced in the same strategy. In the *History,* Queen Elizabeth, arguing to keep her son safely with her in sanctuary, vents her anger to Richard's henchmen, saying, "troweth [Richard] that I perceive not whereunto his painted process draweth"?[16] Her bitter crack at Richard's expense suggests that she sees through his outward show of virtue to his true demonic self behind the mask.

More's *History* is an extraordinary work in progress. In fact, it is two works in progress, because More wrote separate versions of the *History* in English and Latin, one version for his native audience and another for an international readership. They are not simply translations of each other, because the international readership needed background information on English law and customs. Neither version was ever finished. More began working on the *History* around 1513. He worked on his drafts for about three years before he left them off to complete *Utopia*. After the publication of *Utopia* he worked on the *History* for another two years or so, before finally abandoning it.

The *History* begins with More's depiction of an England at peace, ruled by the wise and benevolent King Edward IV. Into this realm of peace and love, like a serpent come into Eden, enters Richard duke of York, Edward's

youngest brother. Richard is everything that Edward is not. More tells us that he was "little of stature, ill-featured of limbs, crook-backed, his left shoulder much higher than his right, hard favored of visage [ugly], and such as in states called warly [warlike], in other men otherwise" (Sylvester 8). About his character, More says that Richard "was close and secret, a deep dissimuler [dissembler, deceiver], lowly of countenance, arrogant of heart, outwardly coumpinable [friendly] where he inwardly hated, not letting [hesitating] to kiss whom he thought to kill" (Sylvester 8–9). Soon after Edward's death, Richard has himself named protector of Edward's young sons, the uncrowned Edward V and his younger brother Richard duke of York. The designation of Richard as the protector of the boy princes, when in fact he is their worst enemy, is one example of the dramatic irony that pervades the *History*. The words "protect" and "protector" occur over a hundred times in the *History* and contribute to its ambience of danger lurking close by. One thinks back to More's poem "A Rueful Lamentation" and its caution that "That we least fear, full oft it is most nigh." The sentiment is repeated in the *History* as a reflection on the death of Lord Hastings, the Lord Chamberlain. Hastings had been an early supporter of Richard but had fallen out of favor. Richard calls for a meeting of his councillors at the Tower of London on Friday June 13, 1483, an unlucky day for Hastings. Richard begins the meeting cordially, even asking John Morton, then bishop of Ely, to have some of his famous strawberries served to the company. In the time that it takes to fetch the strawberries, Richard's mood turns lethal and he accuses Hastings of treason. Hastings protests, but to no avail, and he is taken from the room to his immediate execution. Hastings's fall causes More to comment, "O good God, the blindness of our mortal nature! When he most feared, he was in good surety; when he reckoned himself surest, he lost his life" (Sylvester 53). This "strawberry" scene is famous not only for More's narrative in the *History,* but also for Shakespeare's dramatization of it in his *Tragedy of King Richard III* (3.2 and 3.4). In the *History* the scene already has the makings of a successful drama: a cast of remarkable characters, personality conflicts, sharp dialogue, eerie premonitions of danger and calamity, rising tensions, a sudden turn of fortune, and a disastrous climax.

Not surprisingly, the most famous figurative expression in the *History* is More's stage analogy for court politics, which comes as a comment on Richard's pretense of not wanting the crown. The duke of Buckingham brings "the mayor [of London] with all his aldermen and chief commoners" to ask Richard to take "upon [himself] the crown and governance of [the] realm" (Sylvester 80). Richard refuses their first two requests. They ask a third time, and Richard, "much moved," finally accepts. The scene has been a sham performance. Success in theatre depends on the willingness of actors and audiences to believe in the reality of a shared imaginative experience. If anyone breaks faith with the shared experience, whether maliciously or stupidly, the truth of the play is destroyed for all. More explains these codependent relationships this way:

And in a stage play all the people know right well that he that plays the sowdaine [sultan] is percase [perchance] a sowter [shoemaker]. Yet if one should can so little good [be so foolish as] to show out of season what acquaintance he hath with him and call by his own name while he standeth in his majesty, one of the tormentors might hap to break his head, and worthy [deservedly] for marring of the play. And so they said that these matters be kings' games, as it were stage plays, and for the more part played upon scaffolds, in which poor men be but the lookers-on. And they that wise be will meddle no farther. For they that sometime step up and play with them, when they cannot play their parts, they disorder the play and do themselves no good. (Sylvester 83)

The problem for the dumbfounded crowd witnessing Richard's staged refusal-refusal-acceptance of the crown is that Richard has abandoned the part for which he was cast and usurped the lead role. Richard had been cast to be the protector of Edward IV's sons. Instead, he has imprisoned both princes in the Tower and will soon have them murdered. The play is unraveling from the inside out, and the audience can do nothing to save it.

For a dramatic history or a historical drama to be compelling, its action must come to a moment of moral decision that will be difficult to make and important in its consequences. Tacitus knew this, and so did the playwrights of medieval drama. And so did More. For nearly all of his *History* More tells the story of Richard's rise to power and the disastrous effects of his murderous ambitions. But More left the *History* unfinished, so we do not know where he was going to take it. We can speculate, though. If the *History* were going to offer any moral instruction about what good people can do in the face of tyranny, then it would lie in the moral decision to oppose Richard. The *History* breaks off as Bishop Morton is drawing the duke of Buckingham into seeing that the wrong man was made (or made himself) king. In the last line of the *History* Morton suggests that the better man for England would be the duke himself. Their talk is exceedingly dangerous. In October 1483, Buckingham did lead a rebellion against Richard, was captured, and subsequently was executed on November 2. Morton, however, was fortunate, for he was able to flee the country to join Henry Tudor on the continent. He returned to England as a member of the victorious party. For his troubles, Henry VII made Morton his Lord Chancellor. We might guess that More would portray his old mentor as a wise and wily man of God who, at great danger to himself, chose to oppose tyranny and help set a just king on England's throne.

As history, More's *Richard III* is not altogether reliable, but as a work of literature it has proved an enduring success. Some of the reasons for the *History*'s vitality are well known. It can be read as a sensational bit of Tudor propaganda. Its conclusions about the character of Richard and his guilt in the murder of the boy princes please some readers and antagonize others. It serves as an example *par excellence* of how the English humanists sought to apply

classical models to the writing of their own history. Finally, it is very dramatic storytelling and the source of Shakespeare's play. As R. W. Chambers remarks, "Shakespeare's Richard is More's Richard. . . . A comparison of Shakespeare's *Richard III* and More's leaves one astonished at the debt" (Chambers 117).

More finally abandoned the *History* around 1518. His last scene, depicting a Morton–Buckingham conspiracy, must have seemed a tender subject. The Tudors were not that well established on the throne and not at all secure in the continuance of their lineage. There were also some at court, such as Edward Stafford, third duke of Buckingham, who were direct descendants of people who had rebelled against Richard. The *History* ran the risk of being misconstrued by Henry VIII as a treasonous protest against his own reign. In fact, Edward Stafford was convicted of high treason and executed on May 17, 1521. More may have thought that it was better to let sleeping dogs lie. Whatever the reason, More gave up one sort of political tale set in familiar surroundings for a new and different sort set in a safely remote never-never land called Utopia.

Utopia *(1515–16)*

More began writing *Utopia* in 1515 while he was on a diplomatic mission to Flanders. It is a slender volume divided into two parts called "books." He finished it in late August or early September 1516, and with the help of Erasmus had it published in December in Louvain. More wrote it in Latin, but in an informal style so that it might better catch the tone of the summer conversations that inspired the book. His inventive stitching together of an account of his own activities with a fictitious meeting of Raphael Hythloday, an intriguing travel tale, a critique of European social norms, a vision of the best of societies, and a dollop of sly humor found a wide and appreciative audience. *Utopia* was reprinted in 1517 in Paris and then twice again in 1518 in Basel. By the middle of the sixteenth century it had been translated into German (1525), Italian (1548), French (1550), and English (1551). By the end of the sixteenth century *Utopia* was an international bestseller. It still is. More's invention of the word "utopia" is another of his gifts to the English lexicon. It is a word found in many languages now and used to describe any sort of imagined ideal community.

More drew on some actual and some fictional travel tales for his real-life "framing" and account of *Utopia*. In that Age of Discovery travelers' accounts of voyages to the New World, especially those of Amerigo Vespucci published in 1507, were popular reading. More makes the most of the reports of the New World to add a dash of concrete reality to Hythloday's tale. He also drew upon the fantastic travel tales of Lucian (ca. 125–ca. 180), particularly his *Menippus,* already mentioned above, and *A True History,* which could be called the world's first science fiction novel, as it includes a voyage to the moon, among other adventures. Lucian's deadpan narrative lampoons those

who believed in the literal truth of the fabulous incidents described in such works as Homer's *Odyssey*. If More hoped his own deadpan seriousness would coax an unwitting reader into believing in the actual existence of Utopia, he may have succeeded. In his prefatory letter to *Utopia*, More wrote that "there are various people here [in England], and one in particular, a devout man and a professor of theology, who very much wants to go to Utopia . . . to foster and further the growth of our religion, which has made such a happy start there."[17]

Utopia is a two-part traveler's tale inside a traveler's tale. Book One begins with More sharing an account of his diplomatic mission to Flanders. When he finds that he has some free time, More and his secretary, John Clement, head off to Antwerp. While there they meet Peter Giles, a young scholar and a native of the city. More thus begins his tale by grounding it in the Europe that his readers already know. But then his story takes a turn into fantasy. He tells us that he happened to come across Giles one morning talking to an impressive-looking stranger. The stranger is Raphael Hythloday, a sailor-adventurer who has just returned from a voyage to the New World as a member of Amerigo Vespucci's crew. More learns that Hythloday has an astounding story to tell about his discovery of Utopia, the best society in the world. Book Two is taken up almost wholly by his afternoon monologue about Utopian society. Hythloday and his story are the inventions of More's imagination, though some of Utopia's social structure is similar to that described in Plato's *Republic.* Hythloday's observations on the ills of European society and how Utopia provides a model for their remedy are matters that are debated by the characters inside the book. They are matters that were debated by More's contemporary readers. They are matters that are still debated.

Book One records the morning conversation of More, Hythloday, and Giles. It begins pleasantly, because Hythloday knows Cardinal Morton and has visited him in England, much to More's surprise and delight. By the end of Book One Hythloday has More in an awkward position, because he has questioned how anyone in good conscience (including More) could choose to serve any of Europe's monarchs, when their collective record of social justice is universally abysmal. Hythloday cites a debate that he participated in at Morton's house. The question raised there was whether the execution of thieves had positive or negative impacts on society. Hythloday took the negative side and pressed his listeners to examine the root causes of the crime. Capital punishment for theft, he argued, is no solution to the crime at all, when poverty and hopelessness drive people to steal. Capital punishment is in fact worse than no solution, because it is not a deterrent and may tempt a thief to commit murder, as the penalties for both crimes are the same. Further, landowners are buying up farmland and turning it into pastures for sheep, which displaces a whole class of able-bodied farm workers, making for more poverty and more crime. Thieves should not be executed but put to work, as they are in Utopia, so they can make restitution to their victims, earn keep for themselves, and put a little money into the state's treasury. His arguments, Hythloday says, were

well received by the cardinal but were tolerated by the others only because of Morton's approval.

After hearing this story, More urges Hythloday to become an advisor to a prince, but Hythloday rejects the notion, saying that princes are not interested in his sort of counsel. He contends that they are more interested in gathering power and money to themselves than in taking care of their people. He concludes that "there is no place for philosophy in the councils of kings" (*Utopia* 25). Then More has to explain himself, because he is a learned man in the service of a king. More's argument that there is a kind of "philosophy that is better suited for political action" takes the form of a stage analogy (*Utopia* 25). This sort of philosophy, he says, "takes its cue, adapts itself to the drama in hand, and acts its part neatly and well" (*Utopia* 25). If the play that you are in, he says, is a comedy, it will do no good for you to deliver a speech from some tragedy that you like better. More argues that

> You pervert and ruin a play, when you add irrelevant speeches, even if they are better than the original. So go through with the drama in hand as best you can, and don't spoil it all simply because you happen to think another one would be better. (*Utopia* 26)

It is hard to tell in *Utopia* when More is speaking in his own voice or as a kind of "straight man" to feed lines to Hythloday so that Hythloday can speak for him. Much of what Hythloday says would sound radical to any European prince. If More, the character, can sound utterly conventional but provoke Hythloday into saying the things that More, the author, advocates, then anything that displeases a powerful prince or two can be blamed on the ramblings of a fictional character. More adds another layer of authorial protection, too: "Hythloday," derived from Greek, means "dispenser of nonsense." The consensus among readers nowadays is that in this stage analogy More is speaking in his own voice. He seems to be arguing that, yes, we live in an imperfect world, but it is the only world we have, so we need to find a way to make the best of it, or at least make it as good as possible. (In context, though, this reads humorously, because More, as author, ignores his own counsel and proceeds to give us a detailed picture of a world that Hythloday happens to think is better!) It was a philosophy that served More well until there came a time when, by analogy, Henry VIII rewrote the whole play from top to bottom, abandoning all the known principles of good dramaturgy.

In Book Two, Hythloday gives More and Giles a description of the land and people of Utopia, including its geography, urban planning, labor practices, social and business relations, travel and trade, monetary policy, moral philosophy, education, use of slaves, marriage customs, codes of criminal justice, foreign relations, conduct of war, and religious diversity. Two of these aspects may serve to illustrate *Utopia*'s narrative method: the communal organization of Utopian society and the principles of Utopian moral philosophy and religious tolerance. Utopia's geography and social design make it an enclosed

state. It is an island nation protected on three sides by mountains and on the fourth side by a fortified harbor. Its towns are laid out in identical grid-like patterns and are heavily fortified. They, too, are enclosed communities. The people all wear the same drab clothes, and all goods and resources are held in common. There is no private property and little personal privacy. There is no money. Gold and precious gems are considered worthless, because they have no practical utility. The cities are governed by elected officials who serve one-year terms, with the exception of the elected prince of each city, who serves for life, "unless he is suspected of aiming at tyranny" (*Utopia* 35). There is no king or ruling official who governs the whole country. All citizens are required to spend time working in agriculture, in addition to practicing their own trades. No one is idle, unless illness or old age prevents work. Of the 24 hours of the day, 6 are devoted to work; the rest are given to meals, recreation, intellectual and personal improvement, and sleep. Except for the time when mothers nurse their infants, all children are raised in common. People work diligently, produce food and goods in abundance, and never lack for what they need nor desire what they do not need. A few Utopians who demonstrate exceptional intellectual ability are exempt from manual labor and are admitted to the "class of learned men," from whom all ambassadors, priests, city governors, and the prince himself are chosen (*Utopia* 39). This selective ruling class is reminiscent of the philosopher-kings of Plato's *Republic*.

Some readers have objected to what they see as More's desire to impose a communistic model on sixteenth-century society. They see not an idyllic "utopia" but an oppressive "dystopia," where the human spirit is stifled under the weight of a collective mind-set, something like the Big-Brother-is-watching sociology of George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949). Other readers, perhaps those with Marxist sympathies, support More's social model. More's first model was, in fact, the communal life of the early church, as described in Acts 4:32–37. Also underlying his description of the Utopian social order is More's cherished memory of living in the London Charterhouse of the Carthusian monks.

According to the principles of their moral philosophy, Utopians conform to a life "where everything has been established according to plan, and the commonwealth is carefully regulated," not by fear of external pressures but by an inner experience of happiness based on pleasure. This "pleasure principle" joins their "philosophic rationalism" to the essential tenets of their religions. They profess that when "a man obeys the dictates of reason in choosing one thing and avoiding another, he is following nature." The first rule of reason is "to love and venerate the Divine majesty to whom men owe their own existence and every happiness of which they are capable" (*Utopia* 51). The second rule "is to lead a life as free of anxiety and as full of joy as possible, and to help all one's fellow men toward that end" (*Utopia* 51). Some have read the Utopians' esteem for pleasure as simply a high gloss on hedonism. Hythloday, however, takes care to qualify what sort of pleasure a Utopian ought to pursue, which is "following his senses and his right reason [to] dis-

cover what is pleasant by nature—it is a delight that does not injure others, that does not preclude a greater pleasure, and that is not followed by pain" (*Utopia* 52). The greatest pleasures for the Utopians are the pleasures of intellectual challenge and meaningful discovery. Among their prayers is the petition that "if they are wrong in [their idea of the best commonwealth], and if there is some sort of society or religion more acceptable to God than the present one, they pray that he will, in his goodness, reveal it to them, for they are ready to follow wherever he leads them" (*Utopia* 81). Hythloday is presenting Utopia not as the *ideal* commonwealth, over and done with, but as the *best* commonwealth. Being best does not have to mean being perfect, it only has to mean being better by comparison with all others. Being a perfect commonwealth would make Utopia a static society, but the Utopians are eager to learn from others, to acquire books and knowledge, and to improve themselves and their society. They choose to be a dynamic society; in fact Hythloday says he brought them books of history, philosophy, drama, and poetry from ancient Greece and Rome, which the Utopians received gladly and read avidly.

Many aspects of Utopia resonate with More's esteem for the monastic life: the enclosed geography of the island state; the walled, fortified, enclosed design of the cities; the communal life free of money and possessions; the complete obedience to wise and benign leaders; the uniform dress code and carefully ordered daily schedule; and the happiness found in lives that integrate contemplation and meaningful action. But Utopia cannot simply be the superimposing of a monastic order on a secular society, as society is full of the evil, violence, and temptations of the devil, the world, and the flesh that monasteries built walls against. If More did, however, look to monastic communities for a model of the best society, then his challenge in writing *Utopia* was to imagine a way in which monastic ideals could plausibly be made to work in the secular world. Looked at the other way around, the question is: to what extent can a secular state be brought into line with monastic ideals and still be able to function successfully in the actual world? Perhaps *Utopia* is More's attempt to answer those questions. Could such a place actually exist, even thrive? More's tongue-in-cheek answer to those questions was, yes, of course, in Utopia it can. But "utopia," derived from Greek, means "no place"—that is, nowhere. Not even the monasteries of More's own times lived up to their own ideals.

Utopia may also be a veiled criticism of the church, which ought to have been providing a better model for the social organization of secular states. If so, there was a painful coincidence in it, because at the same time as More was writing *Utopia* a monk in Wittenberg, Germany, was also itemizing his criticisms of the church. Instead of writing a witty political satire comparable to *Utopia,* however, Martin Luther chose to pursue matters according to traditional Scholastic practice. On October 31, 1517, he posted 95 theses (questions) on the door of his church. He sought thereby to initiate a scholarly disputation on matters of church doctrine and institutional reform. It was a call to debate like thousands of others during the Middle Ages, but the questions that Luther posted would fly far outside the walls of his monastery and

into the world at large. More would soon have to pay attention to Luther's criticisms and to their effects on the church and European society. When he did take up the debate, it changed the course of his life. From then on, his days were increasingly troubled by the theological and political shocks of the Protestant Reformation.

The Last Things *(ca. 1522)*

In his 1557 edition of More's *English Works,* William Rastell's title page for *The Last Things* tells us that More wrote this treatise "about the year of our Lord 1522."[18] He did not finish it. The title page also declares that in 1522 More was a knight, a member of King Henry VIII's Privy Council, and under-treasurer of England. In 1522 More's star was shining brightly and still in its ascendancy. At that moment, though, when it seemed that his family, intellectual, creative, and professional lives were all at their greatest strength, More chose to turn his vision inward and to remind himself to be unassuming about his successes. The wheel of fortune, he may have thought, continues to turn, and each triumph in the world is but a moment's reprieve from the inevitability of the coming of the four last things: death, judgment, pain (hell), and joy (heaven). The theme of *The Last Things* is this verse from scripture, "Remember the last things, and you shall never sin" (*Last Things* 127; see Ecclesiasticus 7:40). More had intended to write meditations on all four last things, but he only worked on his treatment of death, which he nearly completed.

The "Remembrance of Death" is in two sections. The first section is a meditation on the pain and horror of dying. It is an attention-grabbing way to begin a treatise. More begins by asking his readers to recall the "Dance of Death" images in Saint Paul's Cathedral, whose depictions of flesh torn from bones, heads in charnel houses, and ghostly apparitions are gruesome. They are there, he says, to cause us to imagine our own deaths, lying in bed, our heads throbbing, backs aching, veins beating, hearts racing, throats rattling, flesh trembling, mouths gaping, noses sharpening, legs coiling, fingers fumbling, breath shortening, strength failing, life vanishing, and death drawing on (*Last Things* 139–40). This is a very medieval exercise of the penitential imagination. It is a reminder of the frailty of life and the need to put spiritual things first and to leave the devil, the world, and the flesh behind. Whether we live many years or few, in the grand scheme of things our lives are short. No one knows when death will come, but come it will. It is always better to anticipate death than to be caught unawares and unprepared.

The second section of the Remembrance of Death is a survey of the Seven Deadly Sins, with suggestions about how the contemplation of death will help to combat them. Traditionally pride was the chief sin and the wellspring of all the others: envy, wrath, covetousness, gluttony, sloth, and lechery (lust). The contemplation of death for prideful sinners, More says, can be "a right effectual ointment . . . to wear away the web that covers the eyes of their souls"

(*Last Things* 155, with my modernized spellings). More explains this through a stage analogy:

> If you should perceive that one were earnestly proud of the wearing of a gay golden gown, while the rogue plays a lord in a stage play, would you not laugh at his folly, considering that you are very sure, that when the play is done, he shall go walk a knave in his old coat? Now you think yourself wise enough while you are proud in your player's garment, and forget that when your play is done, you shall go forth as poor as he. Nor do you remember that your pageant may happen to be done as soon as his. (*Last Things* 156, with my modernized spellings)

The idea is that while we may ridicule a poor actor who fools himself into "earnestly" believing that he is a king when he is not, we can easily forget that while we are on Earth we, too, are poor actors in a kind of stage play. Both the rich man and the rogue wear the same corruptible "gown" of flesh. If we fool ourselves into believing the pretense that our wealth, social status, and professional accomplishments are real, then we will not be prepared to face the true reality of God's judgment after death. More concludes his meditation on pride with another analogy, one more serious than that of a stage play. He compares our lives on Earth to the plight of condemned prisoners in a jail. We may have different estimates of our status, wealth, or personal security among our fellow prisoners, but so long as we believe in those things, we are living in an illusion. We are all condemned to death, and if we would do ourselves or anybody else any good we must first realize this truth about our own existence.[19]

In *The Last Things* More is no longer writing as a self-assured humanist. By 1522, times had begun to change for the worse. The intellectual and political moods in England and on the Continent were turning less hospitable to speculative thought and witty flights of fancy. The Reformation was putting a strain on relations between church and state everywhere. On the Continent, Catholics were burning the books of Protestant heretics. In England, Catholics would soon be burning books, too, including copies of Tyndale's English translation of the New Testament. Henry VIII was growing restive and more willful. Charges of treason and public executions were on the rise. As the times began to grow uncertain and as passions rose, More began to draw back to those things that were most deeply set into his psyche, about which he felt in the marrow of his bones to be most sure. He was born into the Catholic Middle Ages, and to the Catholic Middle Ages he began gradually to withdraw.

MORE AS THE KING'S SERVANT: COUNCILLOR AND CHANCELLOR (1523–32)

By 1523, More had been a member of the king's Privy Council for six years and undertreasurer of England since 1521 and had proved himself to be a

talented advisor and administrator. He was also good company. Both Henry and his queen, Catherine of Aragon, enjoyed his sophisticated conversation and wit, and More was their frequent guest. Henry's esteem for More, as fortune would have it, involved him in a tangle of religious and political issues that led to his elevation to the office of Lord Chancellor and then to his fall from favor, imprisonment, and eventual execution.

Given his education, abilities, and experience, More was perhaps the inevitable choice of the king to provide editorial assistance in the composition of his book against Luther. In 1520, Luther had published a pamphlet, *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church,* in which he argued that only three sacraments were instituted by Christ himself and were essential to salvation: baptism, penance, and the Eucharist. He also argued that confirmation, marriage, ordination, and extreme unction (last rites) were not sacraments, regardless of what the church said, and were not essential to salvation. Luther's attack was two-pronged, first claiming that only those acts that were instituted by Christ himself could be considered sacraments and, second, that the only authority to speak on the matter was scripture, and not any of the councils of the church. Luther's attacks were taken by faithful Catholics to be a rejection of the one true church, consecrated by Christ and sustained for 1,500 years by a succession of apostolic leaders beginning with Saint Peter himself. Catholics such as More were horrified, frightened, and enraged all at the same time. It is difficult to imagine a corresponding modern phenomenon, though the works of Charles Darwin, Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud, B. F. Skinner, and Albert Einstein had comparable effects on some populations when they were first published. King Henry decided to respond to Luther's attacks in a theological book of his own, the *Assertion of the Seven Sacraments.* It was a straightforward reaffirmation of Catholic theology and doctrine, for which More was, by his own description, "a sorter out and placer of the principal matters" (Reynolds 149). Henry had the book printed in 1521. One copy was richly bound, autographed by him, and sent to Pope Leo X. For his efforts, a papal council conferred upon Henry the title of defender of the faith. It is a title that every English monarch since has claimed.

The range of Luther's criticisms of the church was wide. In addition to the number of sacraments and the shared authority of scripture and church, Luther opposed the supreme authority of the pope and the church's teachings on transubstantiation, free will, monasticism, the intercession of the saints, celibacy of the clergy, the sale of indulgences, the efficacy of pilgrimages, and the veneration of relics. Luther could be caustic and personally abusive in defending his positions, and he was not intimidated by the ecclesiastical or secular authority of any of his opponents. In 1522 he responded to Henry's *Assertion* with a nasty little volume of vulgar insults entitled *Against Henry, King of England.* It would have been unseemly for Henry himself to respond, but he did need to respond, and More became his champion. In 1523 More wrote his *Response against Luther* under the pseudonym of "William Ross." In his *Response* More attacked Luther's arguments point-by-point and Luther himself with equal vehemence and obscenity. By writing under a pseudonym,

More could vent his hatred of Luther and all that constituted the Protestant defiance of the church without compromising his position in Henry's court or inviting others to question the extent of his contribution to Henry's *Assertion*. More's *Response against Luther* was really a defense of the three institutions that More valued most: the church, the English legal system, and the monarchy, all of which derived authority in part from their long traditions.

In 1525, William Tyndale published his English translation of the New Testament in Germany. It was smuggled into England, and by 1526 it had already inspired many to join the Protestant movement. Much of Tyndale's English translation still survives, as many of its passages were incorporated into the King James Bible. In October 1526, Cuthbert Tunstall (then bishop of London) and others bought up all the copies of Tyndale's Bible they could find and staged a public burning of them and other Protestant books at Saint Paul's Cross in London. The book burning, however, called attention to Tyndale's translation, financed the printing of more copies, and increased the number of his Bibles smuggled into the country. This is just what More had feared would happen. In March 1528, Tunstall gave More permission to read heretical works so that he could respond to them, and in June 1529, More published *A Dialogue Concerning Heresies*. The book is in the form of a witty and genial debate: More charitably depicts the Protestant advocate as an intelligent inquirer, rather than as a committed heretic. This would be More's last friendly attempt to argue Protestants back to the Catholic Church. In 1530 Tyndale responded to More's book with his *An Answer unto Sir Thomas More's Dialogue*. More's massive *Confutation of Tyndale's Answer* (1532–33) is 10 times the size of Tyndale's book and is an exhaustive picking apart of his arguments.

In addition to his charge to write against the Protestants, More was the designated leader of the royal court's offensive against them. More discharged his responsibilities with some vigor. He led raids on the Steelyard shipping docks in London, where many Protestant books were smuggled into England, and a number of Protestants were burned at the stake as heretics during his administration. More has been much criticized for the harshness and, in some cases, the brutality of his attacks on the Protestants. Some scholars find it hard to excuse or forgive him. Other scholars note that More was a man of his own times, and the times then could be grotesquely brutal. Traitors, for example, were routinely executed by being dragged through the streets on hurdles (like ladders), hanged until they were almost dead, then emasculated, then disemboweled while they were still alive, and finally beheaded. After death, their heads were stuck on long poles called "pikes" and displayed on London Bridge. Their bodies were cut into quarters and hung in four different parts of the City as a warning to would-be traitors. Women convicted of treason were either beheaded or burned at the stake. More's persecution of heretics reflects his horror at what he feared to be the end effects of the Reformation—the disintegration of the one true church and the collapse of the whole of English and Continental social order. It must have seemed to him that the world was headed for apocalyptic ruin at the hands of Martin Luther and William Tyndale.

   In recognition of More's services as editor, judge, and Court administrator, Henry elevated him to the office of Lord Chancellor on October 25, 1529. The primary duty of the Lord Chancellor was to preside over the Court of Chancery, the highest judicial body in England. More was the first layman in English history to hold that office. His predecessor had been Thomas Wolsey, a cardinal of the church and archbishop of York. Wolsey had long sought to advance Henry's claims to territory on the Continent, to manipulate the princes of Europe into advantageous alliances with Henry, and to position himself to be elected pope. His strategies were convoluted, subtle (frequently secret), and often frustrated by the weight of their own intrigue and the clever maneuvering of others. His alliances for Henry never seemed to come to fruition, his advancement of Henry's claims on territory did not yield much, and his own campaign to become pope failed miserably. In what would become known as the king's "great matter"—Henry's desire to divorce his wife, Catherine of Aragon—Wolsey had been ineffectual.

   Catherine had come to England in 1501 to marry Henry's older brother, Prince Arthur, but Arthur died six months after their marriage. Henry VII was reluctant to return Catherine's dowry, and her parents, Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabella of Castile, sought to keep their alliance with England alive by having Catherine marry Prince Henry. But there were problems. Church law forbade a man from marrying his brother's widow, and canon lawyers pointed out that Leviticus 20:21 specifically says, "He that marrieth his brother's wife, doth an unlawful thing: he hath uncovered his brother's nakedness; they shall be without children." For Henry and Catherine to marry, Ferdinand and Henry VII petitioned Pope Alexander VI for a dispensation of the prohibition, which he granted. By 1527, however, a biblical curse seemed to have befallen Henry (king since 1509) and Catherine. True, they did have a daughter, Mary (born 1516, later Queen Mary), but Henry wanted a son to guarantee the survival of the Tudor line and dynasty. Since the birth of Mary, however, there had been a succession of miscarriages, stillbirths, and infant deaths. Catherine was getting older, and Henry was getting desperate. Henry wanted out of his marriage and the freedom to marry Anne Boleyn, who was young, vivacious, and irresistibly attractive.

   In 1529, Henry turned out Wolsey and turned to More to provide a fresh start. More's brief tenure as Lord Chancellor (1529–32) was dominated by the king's great matter, just as the latter part of Wolsey's term had been. Though he made significant contributions to improving the administration of the law courts, More never influenced policy the way Wolsey had. Henry hoped that More's support in his effort to divorce Catherine would influence others, but More wanted to avoid the dangerous issue. Later on, he reminded the king's secretary, Thomas Cromwell, of Henry's promise to leave him out of the matter if he could not see his way clear to support the divorce. More wrote to Cromwell on March 5, 1534, that Henry had advised him to

   consider his great matter, and well and indifferently [without prejudice] to ponder such things as I should find therein. And if it so were that

thereupon it should hap me to see such things as should persuade me to [the king's] part, he would gladly use me among other of his councillors in that matter, and nevertheless he graciously declared unto me that he would in no wise that I should other thing do or say therein, than upon that that I should perceive mine own conscience should serve me, and that I should first look unto God and after God unto him, which most gracious words was the first lesson also that ever his Grace [i.e., the king] gave me at my first coming into his noble service. (Rogers 209)

At the time that Henry gave this assurance to More he likely believed what he said. More surely did. But Henry's conscience was unsteady, and what once had seemed a generous pledge for him to make became increasingly trouble-some for him to honor. After a time it was forgotten altogether.

On the face of it, all Henry had to do was approach the pope once more to request an annulment of the marriage, but time had passed and a new pope, Clement VII, sat on the Chair of Saint Peter. Clement favored Queen Catherine and her parents and was not sympathetic to Henry's cause. Neither canon law nor papal politics could be bent to serve Henry's purposes. Henry looked for a way out of his problem. He began to bully his clerics into finding theological arguments to support the divorce. As time passed, he increased pressure on them by accusing them of having given the pope undue honor and authority over the church in England. To this Henry added charges that the courts of the church violated the supremacy of English law. Both charges were shams, because earlier in his reign Henry had supported the deferential hon-ors given to the pope and the integrity of the ecclesiastical courts. To appease the king, the bishops offered to pay a fine of £40,000, but Henry increased it to £100,000 and required them to acknowledge him as "Supreme Head of the Church of England." In February 1531, the clergy accepted the terms, but added the phrase "as far as the law of Christ allows" to qualify the extent to which "supreme" could be construed. Henry's claim to supreme ecclesiastical authority was the root cause of England's atypical turn to Protestantism. The issues were first political and dynastic, and only afterward theological.

More was distressed by these events, but he kept quiet, trusting that the king would keep his pledge and leave him out of the conflict. When Henry turned to Parliament to confirm his new status and title, More had to get in-volved. When Parliament was in session, the Lord Chancellor was the voice of the king to the Lords and Commons. More tried every way he could to avoid making any personal statement about the king's marriage. His reluc-tance to speak displeased the king. Still, Henry was unwilling to grant More's wish to resign from office, perhaps because he thought that the accumulating weight of the testimony of others would sway More's opinion in his favor. As long as More was Lord Chancellor and the matter not finally resolved, his reputation would give the proceedings an air of respectability. In March 1532, the House of Commons passed a "Supplication against the Ordinaries

[i.e., bishops]" that summarized all of the complaints, large and small, new and old, against the clergy. This supplication was presented to a convocation of bishops at Canterbury. The bishops prepared a vigorous defense. At the same time, though, the House of Lords was preparing a bill to abolish the payment of a bishop's first-year income to the pope. This was power politics directed against the authority and the wealth of the church. The bishops were overwhelmed by these charges and especially by an ominous one that accused them of swearing allegiance to the pope over the king. On May 15, 1532, the convocation submitted to the demands of the king and Parliament. The next day, presumably as soon as news reached him from Canterbury, Thomas More resigned from the office of Lord Chancellor.

MORE AS GOD'S SERVANT: OUT OF FAVOR WITH THE KING (1532–35)

For a time, More was able to retreat to his home in Chelsea, where he lived simply and continued to write against the Protestants. He wanted to be left out of the king's great matter not only to protect himself but also to protect his family. As it was, however, both he and his family began to suffer. After he resigned his office, More was left with an income of "little above an hundred pounds a year," a modest sum with which to maintain a household (Roper 27). It was, in fact, too little, and he had to discharge his household staff. Perhaps sensing that his retirement would be short lived, More published several works in rapid succession. In addition to completing his *Confutation of Tyndale's Answer,* More also wrote *The Apology of Sir Thomas More, Knight* (1533), *The Answer to a Poisonous Book* (1533), and *The Debellation* [Conquest] *of Salem and Bizance* (1533). *The Apology* was More's response to critics of his earlier works, while *The Answer* and *The Debellation* continued his attacks on Tyndale and other Protestants and offered defenses of church practice and doctrine, especially its doctrine on the Eucharist. In *The Apology* More responded to the charge that he had defended the church solely for his own personal gain by demonstrating that he had never accepted any compensation whatsoever, despite repeated offers from prominent clerics. *The Debellation* is More's response to a Protestant attack on the church that was written as a dialogue between two speakers, "Salem" and "Bizance." If he could have remained secluded in Chelsea, More might have made for himself a kind of monastic life of quiet, productive work that he had always longed for. His life, however, was not destined to be quiet or secluded or free from the concerns of the world.

In January 1533, Henry married Anne Boleyn. More did not attend the ceremony, nor did he later attend Anne's coronation. The wedding was timed awkwardly, for it was not until May 23 that Thomas Cranmer archbishop of Canterbury called a court at Dunstable to nullify Henry's marriage to Catherine of Aragon. More hoped, perhaps desperately, that the king's desire

for popular support in "these matters within a while be not confirmed with oaths" (Roper 28). As it turned out, that is just what Henry would demand. On July 11, 1533, the pope excommunicated Henry and declared his marriage to Anne invalid. Henry was growing more isolated and less secure. All of his former advisors were gone, and his new advisors, Thomas Cranmer and Thomas Cromwell, had yet to prove their loyalty. Henry began to demand from his court their complete agreement with all of his decisions. The person who did have influence over him—for a brief while, anyway—was his new queen. Anne took a great dislike to More and used her influence to put forward ways to disturb his peace at Chelsea. Henry resented More's attitude toward Anne, his deliberate absence from court, and his studied silence.

More had to fend off first small charges, then greater ones, as his reluctance to speak on the king's divorce and marriage drew wider attention. There were inquiries about whether he had written some of his works to oppose arguments in books that the king had written. A quick check of the printing histories made it clear that More did not write in response to anything the king had said or published. Next, there were accusations by Anne's father that More had taken bribes while he was Lord Chancellor, all of which were shown to be untrue. A charge of greater significance was that More had heard treason spoken by Elizabeth Barton, a prophetic nun popularly known as "the Maid of Kent," and did not inform the king. Elizabeth had predicted that if Henry divorced Catherine, he "should no longer be King of this realm" (Reynolds 286). More had not heard words of this sort from Elizabeth herself, nor did he speak of the king's matter with her. He did warn her not to meddle in affairs of state. More had kept records of all of his meetings with Elizabeth, along with copies of his correspondence. He felt compelled to send letters to Cromwell and to the king with detailed accounts of all of his dealings with her. His letter to the king also reminded Henry of his promise to be More's "good and gracious lord" after his resignation (Rogers 202). Nonetheless, More's name was included in a Parliamentary Act of Attainder with that of Elizabeth and others. If it stayed in the Act, he could suffer execution as a traitor without even a trial.[20] To examine More about the Maid of Kent the king appointed a four-person commission, which included Thomas Cranmer archbishop of Canterbury, Lord Chancellor Thomas Audley, Thomas Howard duke of Norfolk, and Thomas Cromwell secretary to the king. It soon became clear to More that this high-powered commission meant to intimidate him into accepting the king's divorce and new marriage. They threatened him with the king's great displeasure, because he had, they said, persuaded the king to support the pope in his *Assertion of the Seven Sacraments*. More responded with "My lords . . . these terrors be arguments for children, and not for me," which brought the examination to an abrupt end (Roper 33). The king relented. More's name was removed from the Act, though the king cancelled his income as a councillor. The Maid of Kent was not so fortunate, for she, along with her close colleagues, was executed on April 21, 1534.

More had not been healthy before these shockwaves came at him, and he was even less so after he had suffered through them. He began to take legal action to secure his estate for his family after his death. Though he did not know what form it would take, he knew another attack by Henry would come. He did not have to wait long. Early in 1534, Parliament passed an Act of Succession, which declared that after Henry's death the crown would pass to his eldest son, but if there were no son then it would go to Princess Elizabeth, his daughter by Anne Boleyn. Princess Mary, Catherine's daughter, was excluded from the line of succession. There were severe penalties for those who denied the Act, ranging from execution and forfeiture of property for high treason to imprisonment and forfeiture of property for misprision (hiding) of treason. The Act required every subject to swear a corporal oath[21] in support of all the provisions of the Act, which included not only the matter of succession but also the annulment of Henry's marriage to Catherine, the validity of his marriage to Anne, and the rejection of the authority of the pope in the matters of marriage. Those who refused to take the oath and were obstinate in their refusal would be guilty of misprision of treason.

More was summoned to appear at Lambeth Palace on April 13, 1534, to take the Oath of Succession. Lambeth Palace was the official London residence of the archbishop of Canterbury, and it was where over 40 years earlier More had served as a page and invented parts for himself in Christmas plays. One wonders if those memories came back to him, when he was about to assume a role that he did not look for or want to accept. When he was asked to take the oath, More first asked to read it. He also asked to read the Act of Succession itself. When he had done these things, he said that he would swear to the succession itself, but he could not swear to the oath as presented to him "without the iubarding [jeopardizing] of my soul to perpetual damnation" (Rogers 217). The commissioners sent him to the palace gardens to reconsider his decision while he watched the free comings and goings of prominent people who had sworn to the oath. We are led to believe that the moment had been staged to move him to change his mind. About this "painted process" More later wrote to his daughter Margaret, "When they had played their pageant, and were gone out of the place, then was I called in again" (Rogers 219). The commissioners tried to impress him with the names of many well-known people who had already sworn to the oath. When that did not work, they wanted to know to what parts of the oath he objected. More remained silent. The commissioners tried other arguments, to no avail. Not being sure of what to do next, they put More for a few days under the charge of the abbot of Westminster. More stayed in the monastery and waited. On April 17, 1534, he was called back to give answer to the commissioners. Once again, he refused to take the oath and refused to say why he would not take it. He was then arrested and removed to the Tower of London.

More was a prisoner in the Tower for 15 months. For about 12 of those months he had books and writing materials, and after a time he was allowed to have some visitors, including his wife, his daughter Margaret, and her

husband, William Roper. Perhaps the king thought that, given enough time in the Tower, More would eventually come around to his point of view. He was mistaken. More used his year of relative leniency to read and write. He wrote personal and touching letters to his family and especially to Margaret. He also wrote devotional works, including these four: *A Dialogue of Comfort against Tribulation, A Treatise on the Passion, The Sadness of Christ,* and *A Treatise to Receive the Blessed Body of Our Lord.* More was turning his mind back to those things that had always given him comfort: contemplating the suffering of Christ for the salvation of souls, the mystery of the holy Eucharist, and the consolations of philosophy. He had with him a Book of Hours, which guided his daily prayers and meditations. In the margins of that book, he composed his own prayer, which reiterates themes that had permeated his earlier works such as *The Life of Pico della Mirandola* and *The Last Things*. They continued to permeate his life. The prayer begins:

> Give me thy grace, good Lord
> To set the world at naught;
> To set my mind fast upon Thee,
> And not to hang upon the blast
> Of men's mouths;
> To be content to be solitary,
> Not to long for worldly company;
> Little and little utterly to cast off the world,
> And rid my mind of all the business thereof. (Reynolds 355; I have mod-
>   ernized spellings and supplied punctuation.)

Elsewhere in the prayer, More counsels himself to be "joyful of tribulations" and "To have ever the last thing in remembrance; / To have ever before my eyes my death that is ever at hand" (Reynolds 355, with my modern spellings and punctuation). Little over a month after he was imprisoned, Margaret came to visit him. She must have been distressed to see him in his cell, because More attempted to comfort her by saying,

> I believe, Meg, that they that put me here, ween [believe] they have done me a high displeasure. But I assure thee, on my faith, my own good daughter, if it had not been for my wife and you that be my children, whom I account the chief part of my charge, I would not have failed long ere this to have closed myself in as strait a room and straiter too. (Roper 37)

He added, "For me thinketh God maketh me a wanton, and setteth me on his lap and dandleth me" (Roper 37–38). The picture that More conjures here of being bounced on the lap of God like a playful toddler is an astonishingly intimate and happy one. It suggests that More felt that he had finally come to the place that he had always longed for, odd as it may have appeared to Margaret and the rest of his family. Thanks to the king, he was set free from

the cares of the world. He had always longed for a monastic cell, and now he had a kind of one. He was living an austere, monk-like life of prayer, contemplation, and good works. He anticipated death and rejoiced that he had been faithful to his conscience and his obligations to the church. The only questions that remained to him were how and when the king would bring about his end.

Henry's fifth Parliament opened its seventh session on November 3, 1534. Its actions would determine More's fate. The first Act that the Parliament took up was the Act of Supremacy, which gave statutory authority to the king's complete takeover of the church. The qualifying phrase, "so far as the law of Christ allows," which had been added by the bishops in their submission to the king three years before, was pointedly cut out of the Act. The Act of Supremacy was followed by a second Act of Succession that formalized the wording of the oath required by first Act and restated the explicit requirement that "every of the King's subjects . . . shall be obliged to accept and take the said oath" (Reynolds 327). Next, Parliament passed an Act of Treasons that made simply writing or speaking against the king or denying any of his titles treasonable offenses. Near the end of its session, Parliament passed Acts of Attainder against More and some others, including his old friend John Fisher, Bishop of Rochester. The charge against More was that "he had 'obstinately, frowardly [perversely] and contemptuously' refused to take the oath" (Reynolds 329). This charge amounted to misprision of treason, the penalty for which was imprisonment and loss of property and goods. More was already in prison, but his property was then confiscated and given away to others. His family's income was severely reduced. According to the world's measure, More had lost everything but his life. He would lose that presently.

More's continued refusal to take the oath to the Act of Succession or to say why he would not take it troubled the king. Henry had not expected More to be so steadfast in his resistance nor so constant a reminder of the uncertain validity of his claim to supremacy over the English Church. As long as More lived, it seemed, the matter could be questioned, but if he could be heard to deny the king's title, then his crime would escalate to high treason and his life would be forfeit. Several interrogations of More to catch him out were held over the next few months. The first interrogation came a day or so after three Carthusian monks were found guilty of high treason. One of them, John Houghton, was from the London Charterhouse that More had visited in his youth, and another, Richard Reynolds, was a personal friend. They were hanged, drawn, and quartered. More's grief must have been profound, and so must have been his respect for their courage. The first interrogation failed to prod More into speaking, and so did those that followed. When it was suggested to him that his refusal was mean-spirited and a cause for others to resist the king, More replied, "I do nobody harm, I say none harm, I think none harm, but wish everybody good. And if this be not enough to keep a man alive in good faith I long not to live" (Rogers 247–48).

In early June, the Privy Council ordered that More's living conditions in the Tower be made less comfortable, and on June 12 Sir Richard Rich, the king's solicitor general, came to take away his books and writing materials. While Rich's men were collecting the books, he engaged More in conversation. Under the guise of one lawyer talking to another, Rich began putting cases about Parliamentary authority. Rich first put the case of Parliament making him king. Would not then More accept him as king? More's answer was yes, because Parliament had the authority to decide on kingship. Rich went a step further and put the case of Parliament enacting a law that would make him the pope. Would not More take Rich for the pope? This was getting too close to the central issue of More's refusal to take the oath to the Act of Succession, so More did not answer directly and countered with a different case to demonstrate that there were limits to Parliamentary authority. More put the case of Parliament enacting a law that God should not be God. He asked Rich if he would then accept that God was not God. Rich said that he would not, "since no Parliament may make any such law" (Roper 42). Here was the true sticking point. Just what were the limits of Parliamentary power? We know that More did not believe that Parliament had the power to make Henry (or anybody else) the Supreme Head of the Church. The king, the Privy Council, and Sir Richard Rich likely suspected More's true opinion, too, but they did not have any legal case to make against him so long as he remained silent. At this point in the conversation More might have made the slightest of mistakes, because according to Rich, More responded, "No more . . . could the Parliament make the King Supreme Head of the Church" (Roper 42). These, however, are words that Rich attributed to More when he submitted his report at More's indictment. We do not know, apart from Rich's notes, what More actually said, if anything. In his notes of the conversation jotted down immediately after he left More's cell, Rich records that he ended his conversation with More by saying,

> Well, Sir, God comfort you, for I see your mind will not change which I fear will be very dangerous to you for I suppose your concealment to the question that hath been asked you is as high offence as other that hath denied. (Reynolds 344)

This note suggests several interpretations: More may have never said the words that Rich attributed to him; or, if he had said some such thing, Rich may not have believed that More had actually denied the king's title; or Rich may not have immediately grasped the full implications of what More had said; or Rich did not realize at the time how his conversation with More could be recast to sound as if More had denied the king's title. It is unlikely that More would have been tricked by a lesser legal mind, unless his physical strength and mental state had badly deteriorated. The commissioners interrogated More once again after his conversation with Rich, so they must not have believed that More had denied the king's title. What does count is that

when More was brought to trial on July 1, Sir Richard Rich testified that he had explicitly denied the title.

Those who had not seen More for over a year were shocked at his physical appearance when he was brought to trial. He looked ill and frail, "sustaining his weak and feeble body with a staff" (Harpsfield 156). He had let his beard grow long. More faced four charges, all of which had to do with his alleged denial of the king's title of Supreme Head of the Church. If found guilty, he would be liable to the same punishment that the Carthusians had suffered. The first three charges were that More had remained obstinately and maliciously silent when he was asked about the king's title, that he had sent incriminating letters to Bishop John Fisher, his friend and fellow prisoner in the Tower, and that he had collaborated with Fisher in preparing their testimonies. More's response to the first charge was that silence could not be construed as malicious; only words and deeds could be so construed. Further, he pointed out that common law held that "he that holdeth his peace seemeth to consent," or, in other words, "Silence gives consent" (Reynolds 363). It was a legal point. In law, his silence had to be interpreted that he *had* consented to the title, and not that he denied it. The record of the trial does not indicate how More dealt with the second and third charges, but the letters between More and Fisher had been destroyed. More denied collaborating on testimony with Bishop Fisher, and no one could prove any different. The fourth and last charge, supported only by Rich's testimony, was that More had explicitly denied the king's title. More prefaced his response by addressing Rich directly, saying, "In good faith, Master Rich, I am sorrier for your perjury than for my own peril" (Roper 43). More then spoke against Rich's credibility and his testimony with vehemence. Rich, he said, was not a man to be believed, for he was generally esteemed "very light of . . . tongue, a common liar, a great dicer, and of no commendable fame" (Roper 43); it was not likely, he continued, that he would have opened his mind to Rich when he had not done so to the king's councillors; and lastly, that whatever he said to Rich was in the harmless context of the putting of hypothetical cases. More's argument was forceful, but it did not prevail.

It took just a quarter of an hour for the jury to convict More of high treason. The Lord Chancellor then, "incontinent upon their verdict," moved to pronounce sentence, but More interrupted to remind him that "the manner in such case was to ask the prisoner before judgment, why judgment should not be given against him" (Roper 45). The Lord Chancellor yielded the floor. Free then to discharge his conscience, More finally spoke his mind about the king's title. His words, resounding in classical cadences, must have reminded everyone that he was not only a man of principle but also one who could still command a powerful rhetoric:

Forasmuch as [because], my lord, . . . this indictment is grounded upon an Act of Parliament directly repugnant to the laws of God and his Holy Church, the supreme government of which or of any part whereof, may no temporal Prince presume by any law to take upon him, as rightfully

belonging to the See of Rome, a spiritual pre-eminence by the mouth of Our Saviour himself, personally present upon the earth, only to St Peter and his successors, Bishops of the same See, by special prerogative granted, it is therefore in law amongst Christian men insufficient to charge any Christian man. (Roper 45)

More went on to point out that Henry's claim to supremacy over the church violated the protection of the church guaranteed in the Magna Carta (signed by King John on June 15, 1215) and in the king's own coronation oath.[22] After he had discharged his mind and conscience, More heard the sentence of death pronounced against him. He was led back to the Tower to await execution.

On the morning of Tuesday July 6, 1535, More was informed that he would "the same day suffer death and that therefore forthwith he should prepare himself thereto" (Roper 49). The day before, he had sent his hair shirt home to Margaret with a short note saying that he hoped to be executed on July 6 because that was Saint Thomas's Eve, before the feast day of Saint Thomas the Apostle, his namesake. More was also informed that the king had been merciful to him and that his execution would be by beheading. Word of his speech at the trial must have been communicated to Henry, for More was told that the king's pleasure was that at his execution he "shall not use many words" (Roper 49). More dressed himself in a coarse, plain gown that had once belonged to his servant, and he set aside one gold coin to give to his executioner. He was led just outside the walls to Tower Hill, where a raised scaffold had been erected to provide a better view of his execution. Though he was physically weak, More had not lost his wit nor his sense of moment and place. This last public event of his life was not without a theatrical dimension, and More was careful to play his role well. When he had trouble climbing the steps of the scaffold, "which was so weak that it was ready to fall," he said "merrily" to the officer who assisted him, "I pray you, Master Lieutenant, see me safe up, and for my coming down let me shift for myself" (Roper 50). It was just the sort of tragicomic line often found in the morality plays and Tudor interludes that More loved. Like many of those lines, More's comment was disarming on purpose, as it relieved a moment's tension only to heighten the dramatic effect of his final statement to come, which R. W. Chambers claims to be the "most weighty and most haughty ever spoken on the scaffold" (Chambers 350). The *Paris Newsletter*'s published report of More's death says that:

He spoke little before his execution. Only he asked the bystanders to pray for him in this world, and he would pray for them elsewhere. He then begged them earnestly to pray for the King, that it might please God to give him good counsel, protesting that he died the King's good servant but God's first. (Chambers 349)

More's headless body was taken back into the Tower and buried in the Chapel Royal of Saint Peter *ad Vincula* (Saint Peter in Chains). There it remains. His head was parboiled, stuck on a long wooden pike, and displayed on London

Bridge. Before it could be destroyed, Margaret bribed the executioner to take it down and give it to her. She kept it safe with her for the rest of her life, after which it was deposited in the Roper family vault in Saint Dunstan's, Canterbury.

EPILOGUE: A MAN FOR ALL SEASONS

Early biographers of More speak of him as if he had already been canonized as a Catholic martyr and saint. Sainthood, however, would come much later. More was beatified by Pope Leo XIII in 1886 and canonized by Pope Pius XI in 1935. Modern biographers have in varying degrees tried to broaden our understanding of his complex character. Richard Marius, especially, probes the darker sides of More's personality, writing at length about his melancholy and his treatment of heretics. Whatever their takes on More, all of his biographers, as Marius writes, "end by liking him" (Marius xxiv). If so, then More has been not only "a man for all seasons," but also a man for all ages. Each of his biographers, it seems, finds a More who can speak to a new critical intelligence, time, and place. His religious life, professional career, and body of literary works are so varied and so rich that they repay repeated examination.

More's greatest literary achievement is *Utopia*. Though Plato established the literary form with his *Republic,* More coined the word that has ever since been used to describe imagined ideal states, often in ways laced with satire. His lead was followed in Sir Francis Bacon's *New Atlantis* (1624), Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), Samuel Butler's *Erewhon* (1872), and James Hilton's *Lost Horizon* (1933). More's idealized state has also inspired others to imagine its opposite, the controlled state gone wrong, not a utopia but a dystopia. The most famous of these dystopias are George Orwell's *Animal Farm* (1945) and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) and Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932). There have been countless other contributions to the utopian and dystopian genres. The idea of a utopian community has not been restricted to philosophy and literary forms, however. There have been numerous attempts to establish utopian communities in the world, and especially in America. The Pilgrim voyagers of 1620 who signed the Mayflower Compact may have had in mind the establishment of a Puritan utopia in the New World. The framers of the U.S. Constitution had no less ambition when they committed themselves and their posterity to creating a "more perfect union."

For popular audiences, More has been portrayed as a model of personal integrity and moral courage from his own times to the present day. He appears as a character in two of Shakespeare's plays, *The Famous History of the Life of King Henry VIII* (1613) and (with others, including Anthony Munday and Henry Chettle) *The Book of Sir Thomas More* (1595). In *Henry VIII,* Shakespeare gives Cardinal Wolsey some benevolent lines to speak when he learns that More will be the next Lord Chancellor. About More, Wolsey says:

> But he is a learned man. May he continue
> Long in His Highness' favor and do justice

> For truth's sake and his conscience, that his bones,
> When he has run his course and sleeps in blessings,
> May have a tomb of orphans' tears wept on 'em. (*Henry VIII*,
>   3.2.395–99)

As Lord Chancellor, More would have been the realm's designated guardian of orphans. In Act V, More presides over the interrogation of Thomas Cranmer, who is suspected of heresy. Shakespeare depicts More as the moderating influence in the interrogation (*Henry VIII,* 5.3). In *The Book of Sir Thomas More,* Shakespeare and his collaborators describe More as "the best friend that the poor e'er had" (Chambers 47). The play is significant in another way, because three of its manuscript pages are written in what may be the only surviving example of Shakespeare's handwriting, apart from a few of his signatures on legal documents. The pages have lines meant for More to speak in a scene in which he confronts rioting peasants during the "Evil May Day" uprising of 1517. As the story goes, More's eloquence nearly won them over, until local residents, who had not heard More's plea for calm, rushed out of their homes to attack the crowd with stones and bricks. It is noteworthy that the task of writing this scene fell to the best writer among the collaborators, so much did they respect More's civic character and reputation for rhetorical brilliance.

In 1962, Thomas More again appeared as a character on the stage, this time in Robert Bolt's play *A Man for All Seasons*. The play starred Paul Scofield as Thomas More and had a long and successful run, first in London and then in New York. It has since been staged all over the world. In 1966, Fred Zinnemann directed a film version of the play in which Paul Scofield reprised his role as More. The film won six Academy Awards, including Best Picture, Best Actor (Paul Scofield), and Best Director. It also won four Golden Globe Awards from the Hollywood Foreign Press Association. During the Watergate scandal in American politics, the film was broadcast on national television twice in one week, presumably to reinforce the moral of More's admonition to Wolsey that "when statesmen forsake their own private conscience for the sake of their public duties . . . they lead their country by a short route to chaos."[23]

Several novels have also featured Thomas More as a principal character or as a foil for other characters. Among these are Jean Plaidy's *Saint Thomas's Eve* (1966), a historical novel based on the life of Thomas More, and Vanora Bennett's *Portrait of an Unknown Woman* (2007), a historical novel based on the life of Margaret Giggs, More's adopted daughter. The most popular novel in which Thomas More figures is still Josephine Tey's modern mystery *The Daughter of Time* (1951). The novel recounts the efforts of Inspector Alan Grant, a hospitalized Scotland Yard detective, to solve the mystery of who murdered the sons of Edward IV. Grant discovers that More's *History of King Richard III* so prejudiced the case against Richard that a fair and impartial assessment of the evidence had never been made. The novel then becomes

the story of Grant's investigation and point-by-point rebuttal of the "sainted Thomas More," as he grows fond of referring to him. The debate about the murder of the boy princes goes on, and Thomas More can always be found somewhere near the center of it.

These and other scholar-biographers, essayists, playwrights, and novelists have broadened Robert Whittinton's and Erasmus's famous descriptions of More as a "man for all seasons." Whittinton celebrated More's outgoing personality as one that had a wide and flexible range, but More also struggled with inner conflicts that were reflected in the times in which he lived. He was a great man, but his greatness came with difficulty, some conflict, and not a little pain. His conflicts and achievements, while they were played out on a large and public stage, are different from ours only in degree. He, too, questioned what would be his life's work, what duties would take precedence in his life, how best he could raise his children and protect his family, what God required of him, and whether he could forsake his conscience to meet the demands of a terrifyingly powerful secular state. He may seem all the greater for having succeeded despite his conflicts and pain. In this regard, he may also be thought of as "a man for all seasons" because his conflicts and achievements, joys and sorrows, successes and failures find their analogues in the various bumps and triumphs of all who endeavor to live reflective and moral lives. If so, then More's life is not a monument to be admired from afar, but a close model for all those who would seek to follow his counsel to "go through with the drama in hand as best you can . . . and what you cannot turn to good, you may at least—to the extent of your powers—make less bad" (*Utopia* 26).

NOTES

1. See Richard Marius, *Thomas More: A Biography* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984), 7; hereafter cited as Marius. See also "Appendix I: Date of Birth" in E. E. Reynolds, *The Field is Won: The Life and Death of St. Thomas More* (London: Burns & Oates, 1968), 383–84; hereafter cited as Reynolds.

2. William Roper, *Life of Sir Thomas More, Knight,* in *Lives of Saint Thomas More: Roper and Harpsfield*, ed. E. E. Reynolds (London: Dent, 1963), 3; hereafter cited as Roper.

3. Desiderius Erasmus, "Letter to Ulrich von Hutten" (Letter No. 999, 23 July, 1519), *The Correspondence of Erasmus*, vol. 7: Letters 993–1121 [1519 to 1520], trans. R.A.B. Mynors and annot. Peter G. Bietenholz (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), 18/77–78; hereafter cited as Erasmus. Note: This edition of Erasmus's correspondence also includes line numbers, so citations will follow a "page number/ line number(s)" format.

4. Nicholas Harpsfield, *Life of Sir Thomas More, Knight*, in *Lives of Saint Thomas More: Roper and Harpsfield,* ed. E. E. Reynolds (London: Dent, 1963), 60; hereafter cited as Harpsfield.

5. A rhyme royal stanza form comprises seven lines of iambic pentameter, rhyming ababbcc. The form was first used in English by Geoffrey Chaucer (ca.

1340–1400) in his poems *Troilus and Criseyde* and *The Parlement of Foules* and in some of the tales in *The Canterbury Tales*. By tradition, the form gets its noble name from its use by King James I of Scotland for his poem, *The Kingis Quair* (*The King's Book*).

6. Thomas More, *The History of King Richard III and Selections from the English and Latin Poems,* ed. Richard S. Sylvester (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976), 121; hereafter cited as Sylvester. I have modernized most of the spellings in this passage.

7. Jerome translated the Bible over a period of 23 years, from 382 to 405. The first New Testament to be translated into English from Greek was that of William Tyndale, which was printed in Germany in 1525.

8. The wearing of hair shirts was also a practice of the Carthusians, and their practice may have inspired—or at least, supported—More's lifelong practice. From time to time More would also scourge himself with a whip made of knotted cords.

9. R. W. Chambers, *Thomas More* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1935), 103, and quoting Edward Foss, *The Judges of England,* vol. 5 (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1857), 209; hereafter cited as Chambers. See also Marius, 53–54.

10. Erasmus, who knew no English, wrote his *Praise of Folly* in Latin. Its Latin title, *Moriae encomium,* puns on More's name.

11. Elizabeth Frances Rogers, ed., *Thomas More: Selected Letters* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961), p. 104; hereafter cited as Rogers.

12. Thomas Stapleton, *The Life of Sir Thomas More*, trans. Philip E. Hallett, ed. E. E. Reynolds (New York: Fordham University Press, 1966), 9; hereafter cited as Stapleton.

13. Thomas More, *Complete Works,* vol. 1: *English Poems, Life of Pico, The Last Things* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 122–23; hereafter cited as *Life of Pico*. I have modernized the spellings.

14. See Thomas More, *Complete Works,* vol. 2: *The History of King Richard III,* ed. R. S. Sylvester (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963), p. lxxxvii; hereafter cited as *Richard III*. More was also familiar with the Greek philosophers and playwrights.

15. See, for example, two early and now standard works on More's association with drama and dramatists: A. W. Reed, *Early Tudor Drama: Medwall, the Rastells, Heywood, and the More Circle* (London: Methuen, 1926, rpt. New York: Octagon Press, 1969) and Pearl Hogrefe, *The Sir Thomas More Circle: A Program of Ideas and Their Impact on Secular Drama* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1959).

16. Sylvester, 38. In more modern language, "Does Richard think that I don't know where his charade is going?"

17. The hapless cleric is reputed to have been Dr. Rowland Philips (died ca. 1538), vicar of Croydon.

18. Thomas More, *Complete Works*, Vol. 1: *English Poems, Life of Pico, The Last Things* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 127; hereafter cited as *Last Things*.

19. This analogy is likely one that More adapted from Plato's "allegory of the cave" in Book Seven of the *Republic*. There prisoners are kept chained to the floor of a cave. They see the world only as a passage of flickering shadows cast by firelight on

the walls before them. They believe in the reality of what they see because they have never been out of the cave or seen anything for what it truly was by the revealing light of the sun.

20. "An Act of Attainder was just like any other [legislative] statute; it had to go through the usual process of a Bill through Parliament. There was no trial; there was no necessity for legal proof of guilt. It avoided awkward testimony by witnesses for the defence" (Reynolds, 287 n. 20).

21. A corporal oath required one to place a hand on the Gospels or some other sacred object while swearing.

22. More quoted the Latin of the first clause of the Magna Carta from memory: "Quod Anglicana ecclesia libera sit, et habeat jura sua integra et libertates suas illaesas" ("That the English Church shall be free, and shall have its rights undiminished and its liberties unimpaired"). See Roper, 45 and n. 1. The first of four provisions of Henry's coronation oath reads: "Sire, will you grant and keep by your oath confirm to the people of England the laws and customs given to them by the previous just and god-fearing kings, your ancestors, and especially the laws, customs, and liberties granted to the clergy and people by the glorious king, the sainted Edward, your predecessor?" [The king replies:] "I grant and promise them." See C. Stephenson and F. G. Marcham, *Sources of English Constitutional History,* vol. 1 (New York: Harper Brothers, 1937), 192.

23. Robert Bolt, *A Man for All Seasons* (New York: Random House, 1962), 22.

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By deposing and then perhaps murdering his nephew Edward V and his younger brother, Richard III revived the Wars of the Roses, thereby destroying himself and his dynasty and making possible the rule of the House of Tudor under King Henry VII. (Corel)

Richard III (1452–1485)

Joel T. Rosenthal

INTRODUCTION

King Richard III has exercised a fascination in the public imagination from the time he made his bid for the throne of England in the spring and early summer of 1483 through the present day. His reign lasted, in an official or constitutional sense, only from his coronation on July 6, 1483, through his death in battle at Bosworth field in Leicestershire on August 22, 1485, though we can add a few weeks to this if we choose to start the dating from his real seizure of power on June 26, 1483. However counted, this brief span represents the third-shortest reign in English history since the Norman Conquest. Richard also has the dubious honor of being the only English king to die in battle since Harold Godwinson, the loser to William the Conqueror at Hastings in 1066.

Richard's near-record for brevity on the throne was surpassed only by Edward VIII (r. January–December 1936), who abdicated the throne for the sake of the woman he loved, as the story goes, and by Richard's own nephew, Edward V (r. April–June 1483), whom Richard himself deposed and probably had put to death. This last assertion is extremely contentious, and the evidence, or the arguments, about this insoluble mystery will be treated below. Whether Richard was the monster that King Henry VII and the Tudors were eager to make him out to be after his death, or whether he was just unlucky to fall at Bosworth, whereas a long reign and a legitimate successor might have washed away the stains of his usurpation and of his nephew's deposition as the years passed, are matters of opinion over which we still argue.

POLITICAL AND DYNASTIC BACKGROUNDS

Richard's career before his accession, his short reign, and the creation of his subsequent reputation—most of this being very nasty, with Shakespeare's great melodrama *Richard III* as the major single contributor to the torrent of vilification—can be understood only in the context of an English history that springs directly from the deposition of Richard II in 1399 by his first cousin, Henry Bolingbroke, who became king as Henry IV (r. 1399–1413), and the subsequent problems that beset the realm and the person of the monarch. The deposition of 1399 was the first wrench in the ordered line of succession to the throne for several centuries, and Henry IV, who may have thought he could bring unity and harmony to a deeply troubled and divided realm, had to weather both aristocratic rebellion and general (and parliamentary) disaffection during his relatively short reign (in addition to a major uprising in Wales). His son and heir, Henry V (r. 1413–22), was a glamorous warrior-king who had the good fortune to win a great victory in France (at Agincourt in 1415), to conquer huge sections of France as he reopened the Hundred Years' War, and then to die early—still a great hero—before the domestic problems and those of his new empire had come home to roost. Henry V married Katherine

of Valois, daughter of Charles VI of France, in 1420. Henry's death in 1422 brought his infant son Henry VI to the thrones of both England and France, the "dual monarchy," as it had been created on paper (though hardly in reality) by the Treaty of Troyes in 1421.

At the death of Henry V, the Lancastrian dynasty, regardless of how it had come to the throne, seemed to be firmly ensconced. However, an incompetent king, a losing effort in France, and a corrupt and expensive court cut into its prestige and popularity. Opinion was divided as to whether this was simple political misfortune or a form of divine vengeance, now visited upon the realm as punishment for the coup of 1399. But regardless of how the many and various woes were interpreted and what implications about the dynasty and monarchy were drawn, there was little disputing that as the young Henry VI came of age in the late 1430s he gave every indication of being a serious failure as a ruler. He displayed little interest in, and perhaps was incapable of, waging war with vigor and resolve. Rather than assuming the martial and chivalric mantle expected of a medieval king, and as the son of a war hero of mythic proportions, he soon proved to be a feeble successor to his charismatic father. Nor was Henry VI much inclined, in the domestic sphere, to rule his realm with a firm hand, or to keep his nobles in order, or to maintain domestic tranquility and promote economic prosperity, even on the dubious assumption that he could have done so had he wished. From early on, he proved to be unduly under the influence of a few favorites from among the circles of aristocratic courtiers. His own interests focused largely on pursuing a pious lifestyle, on making protracted visits to monasteries and pilgrim shrines, and on the foundation of such worthy if costly institutions as Eton College and King's College at Cambridge. Thus the seeds of discord, sown by the usurpation (sometimes labeled a revolution) of 1399, now seemed likely to bear bitter fruit, a long generation after the fact.

By the 1450s, as in 1399, dissatisfaction was coming to a head. In 1399, the man who emerged to speak for the realm against a king who was moving toward tyranny, and then to take the crown for himself, was Henry Bolingbroke, Richard II's first cousin. In the 1450s, the growing opposition to a general record of incompetence and failure came from another branch of the royal genealogical tree.

When Richard was born in 1452—the youngest of the eight children of his parents who survived infancy—his father, Richard, third duke of York, had already emerged as what we might call leader of the opposition. York came to this role armed with a powerful and legitimist claim to the throne, atop honorable credentials earned in the war in France. In addition, his clout was greatly enhanced by his personal position as perhaps the richest nobleman in the land and, through marriage and kinship, a key link with some of the great aristocratic networks that controlled much territory and that could summon up hosts of both officials and soldiers (especially thanks to his ties with the Nevilles and their vast northern affinity). By the 1450s Richard of York was seen by many as representing a return to the true line of royal descent, broken

in 1399 to England's sorrow and suffering, and as offering—by birth and also in terms of experience and ability—a distinct improvement on Henry VI's feeble grasp of the royal scepter.

Richard duke of York was the father of Edward IV and, then, of Richard III; he would also be the grandfather of Henry VII's queen (Edward IV's daughter Elizabeth) and therefore the great-grandfather of Henry VIII. His own claim to the throne, like that of Henry VI, was that they were both direct descendents of Edward III (r. 1327–77). But York's claim came via Edward III's second son, rather than by way of his third, as was the case with Henry VI (and his father and grandfather before him). Neither the fact that the claim of the House of York to the throne was transmitted from Edward III to Richard of York through two women, nor that York's father, the earl of Cambridge, had been tried and executed for treason in 1415 (in what may have been a trumped-up case), was a serious problem, at least not for the many who thought York held the promise of a brighter day for the realm.

Though Henry VI did have a son (Edward prince of Wales, born in 1453 while his hapless father was in the throes of some sort of nervous breakdown), the mere presence of a Lancastrian heir to the throne into the next generation was not, or was no longer, sufficient by itself to quiet voices of dissent or to end speculation about the future. The hostility of baronial factions, exacerbated by Henry VI's inability to impose himself upon the realm and then by a series of nervous and physical breakdowns, led to the outbreak of open hostilities between the aristocratic factions. What we dramatically refer to as the Wars of the Roses (the term actually not being used until some centuries later) began in earnest on May 22, 1455, with the First Battle of Saint Albans, a victory for the Yorkists. This was followed in September 1459 by a lesser skirmish at Bloore Heath, in Cheshire, and then on July 10, 1460, by a major confrontation of the baronial factions (summarized as those of York and those of Lancaster—the white rose and the red, respectively) and their forces at Northampton.

These battles were in effect battles of private armies led by aristocratic warlords, rather than a case of the king's army (or a national army, had there been such a thing) taking the field against rebellious forces. Thus Yorkist victories tilted the balance of power at court and in the royal council. This turn of fortune's wheel argued for some sort of political settlement that would reflect the new reality in terms of the distribution, or redistribution, of power and office. The arrangement that was hammered out was that Richard of York would succeed Henry VI when the king died, despite the presence of Henry's son, Edward prince of Wales. Given that Henry VI was not yet 40, there was an element of demographic as well as political fantasy in this peculiar arrangement. It hardly seems likely that such a deal would ever have been implemented, unacceptable as it must have been to Henry VI's partisans, including his queen, Margaret of Anjou. The mere fact that this odd compromise was even contemplated indicates how fractured loyalties had become, how fragile the Lancastrian grip on the throne was, and how the demand for the rule of

law was sweeping the realm. The crown itself seems to have gone from being a fixed star in the firmament to being just another bargaining chip in the struggle for power, albeit the ultimate as well as the most coveted bargaining chip of all.

The situation in the autumn of 1460, which we can think of as a state of uneasy and armed stalemate, seemed to change drastically when Richard of York was killed in a skirmish or small-scale battle at Wakefield in Yorkshire (December 30, 1460). However, this proved not to be the case. There was no decisive follow-up by the Lancastrians to give them the upper hand after the death of their leading enemy (along with one of York's sons and his brother-in-law). In fact, York's eldest son Edward (who was Richard of Gloucester's eldest brother) was able to claim the throne as Edward IV as early as March 4, 1461—a mere three months after his father's death. The deposition of Henry VI and the accession of Edward IV came on the heels of impressive Yorkist victories over Lancastrian forces at Mortimer's Cross on February 2, 1461; at Saint Albans once more, on February 17, 1461; and then in a really bloody and crushing battle at Towton in Yorkshire on March 29, 1461 (fought in a snowstorm on Palm Sunday, and with little quarter or mercy held out to the losers on the field or to those taken in flight). Edward IV would have to fight more battles over the years, deal with some sustained opposition, and even overcome a mini-coup or a short-termed deposition that drove him into exile and restored Henry VI for a short while in 1470–71 (termed "the readeption" of Henry VI). But after the uncertainty and chaos of the 1450s and early 1460s he seemed a strong hand, building a considerable amount of personal and dynastic loyalty and being able to hang on to a crown he had claimed after his father's death through a combination of royal descent and victory on the field of battle. Though domestic enemies had to be watched and on occasion overcome in arms or by execution, Edward IV was a powerful and attractive figure. He was even able to turn some of his attention to reclaiming what he saw as England's rightful role in Continental affairs: an alliance with Burgundy, and perhaps with Brittany, against France, better terms for English trade and merchants in the Baltic and elsewhere, and more. Maybe the Wars of the Roses really were over; the House of York seemed firmly positioned on the throne, with a royal heir (Edward V) born in 1470.

THE HOUSE OF YORK TRIUMPHANT

This was the world in which Richard of Gloucester, born in Fotheringhay on October 2, 1452, grew up, serving his apprenticeship in arms and in government under Richard Neville earl of Warwick and, then, by the mid- or late 1460s, with his brother Edward IV at court or wherever he was posted (often to the Welsh or Scottish border). Richard's life, until he moved to make himself King Richard III in 1483, was largely tied up with family and dynastic politics, baronial factions and aristocratic networks (and marriages), battles

of Englishman against Englishman (or York versus Lancaster), and the search for Continental allies. We can think of Richard's years of service under his brother in the later 1460s as a high-level apprenticeship, much of it under fire of one sort or another.

The record indicates that for much of Edward's reign Richard had supported him with few doubts or misgivings, as best we can judge; he was clearly a loyal lieutenant and pretty much the king's alter ego in the north. Though Edward's close-knit and pushy in-laws, the Woodville family, were Richard's main rivals in the endless quest for royal affection and the distribution of prizes, Richard seemed able to hold his own. As long as Edward was there to dictate relationships and to control how the prizes were doled out, Richard and the Woodvilles had coexisted in reasonable harmony. This was in contrast to Richard's fierce quarrel with his own brother George duke of Clarence, a quarrel arising from their different views of what they were entitled to as their shares of the Neville inheritance (their wives being sisters and the co-heiresses to the extensive Neville holdings after their father's death in 1471). It is not clear to what extent this quarrel between royal brothers was a factor in Clarence's execution in 1478; his turncoat policies by themselves would have given his brother Edward sufficient cause. One reason Richard did not clash with the Woodvilles was that many of his duties and offices were on the borders of the realm, where a strong royal presence as his brother's stand-in was of inestimable value. His own prestige and the resources at his command took a great leap forward when, in 1472, he married Anne Neville, Warwick's (other) daughter and formerly the fiancée (or perhaps actually the widow) of Henry VI's son, Prince Edward, who had died fighting the Yorkists (or who may have been murdered after the battle) at Tewkesbury in May 1471. Warwick, known as "the kingmaker," had been the foremost English nobleman of the day until he eventually turned against Edward IV and was killed fighting for Henry VI's queen, Margaret, and the Lancastrians at the battle of Barnet April 14, 1471.

These many turnabouts and reversals seem to have been less confusing to hard-nosed men and women at the time than they appear to us, and for every diehard loyalist there were many highborn pragmatists. Richard of Gloucester and his wife Anne Neville were popular figures in the north, where they held many estates and castles and where Richard used his offices and abundant energy to build a following, one whose loyalty seems out of joint with the image of Richard painted by his enemies after his death. He brought many families from the vast Neville network into his own affinity, giving him regional sway and a body of experienced followers. There is no way to judge how much of Richard's apprenticeship was in dutiful service to his brother and how much may have been a hedge against the day when he might have to strike to protect his own interests. But we can say that when Edward IV died, his only surviving brother was an experienced, wealthy, and capable figure, one who could count on strong regional as well as partisan backing. How he would use his very appreciable resources, as well as his exalted personal position, remained an unknown and untested issue in the early spring of 1483.

RICHARD'S ROAD TO THE THRONE

Edward IV died suddenly on April 9, 1483, and though his son and heir was never crowned and never to exercise any power, we date Edward V's accession (and his very short reign) from the day of his father's death; Edward V does make the official list of English monarchs. Edward IV had been a large, strapping, handsome man, only 40 at his death, just shy of his 41st birthday. Neither the king himself nor those around him seem to have anticipated his demise. He had made none of those deathbed provisions regarding the future of the realm that some of his predecessors had made, or at least had tried to impose upon their successors when death was imminent and the heir to the crown still a minor.

At his death Edward IV left behind two young sons, a queen, Elizabeth Woodville (who came with the baggage of a large and well-entrenched family), five daughters, and a surviving brother, Richard duke of Gloucester. He also left a mother and some sisters; his sisters played little role in the events that followed, though we cannot be certain whether Cecily Neville, his mother, supported Richard's moves, or found them deeply offensive, or was content to remain in the background.

The constitutional as well as the political situation during a royal minority was not firmly established. When alive, the crown and the realm were the king's—being as he was something between the lord of a vast personal domain and God's steward or vicegerent who would be called upon to answer how well he had carried out his responsibilities. This view of late-medieval kingship was largely as it was accepted by the law and by the estates of the realm, though there was some sort of bottom-line if unspoken idea of a social contract, of limits beyond which a king did not wisely go. But whatever his position while alive, once the king was dead it was now apt to be a case of some unspecified and fluid mix of the power of his nearest kin, of the nobles, of the value or clout of any provisions he had made, and of the age and potential or promise of his heir.

In April 1483, the most obvious need, in terms of stabilizing the new government, was for a single person who could assume the acting headship—a regent, or a protector of the realm—and who could be accepted as the proper person for this office. Monarchy was a system that worked from the idea of a single head of state, and a single person standing in for the underage king was probably accepted as the best alternative, if the factions at court could agree on a choice. Historical precedents and the situation in 1483 underlined that this "if" extended to constitutional uncertainties as well as to personal jealousies and ambitions. Furthermore, the protector would largely set the composition of the Privy Council, the English monarch's advisory council. Some people were members of this council because they held offices of state, like the chancellor; others were just too important to omit, whatever the value of their advice and their level of loyal service. The role and power of Parliament was harder to gauge. Its approval would be needed; its degree of

independence varied depending on personal relationships and on the public confidence about the government's control of the realm and its sympathy for the sort of economic matters so dear to parliamentary hearts. If the peers and bishops (the House of Lords) largely dabbled in the question of the rule of the realm, the interests of the Commons ran more to such mundane matters as taxes, customs duties, control and oppression of the labor market, and treaties designed to foster trade. As such, the Commons were hard to predict, though their favor was well worth courting.

If these were the stakes of power, who were the major contenders for the exercise of that power on the day that Edward IV died? By virtually any criterion we accept, Gloucester would seem to stand head and shoulders above his rivals. As Edward IV's only living brother (and third in line for the crown in his own right) he had a claim of blood as well as experience. After him, and with a position resting more on proximity and power than on any accepted or time-honored constitutional claim, or even on any useful precedents, came the Woodvilles: Queen Elizabeth, her four brothers, her two (grown-up) sons by her first marriage, and their partisans. There were also a number of great nobles, not contenders for royal power on their own but of such weight that their support would help tip the balance. These men were more likely to lean toward Richard, or at least to the House of York, than they were toward the Woodvilles, who had been Lancastrians before Elizabeth married Edward IV. However, much of this aristocratic loyalty had to be won over, rather than taken for granted; rewards would be expected. The heavies in the aristocratic ranks were William Lord Hastings, Edward IV's closest friend; Henry Stafford duke of Buckingham; and a royal cousin, John Howard, whom Richard would elevate to duke of Norfolk, along with his son, soon to be earl of Surrey; plus John de la Pole duke of Suffolk and Thomas Lord Stanley. But the entire parliamentary peerage usually ran to three or four dozen men, and there were also the two archbishops and 15 bishops among the lords of the realm. Moreover, since royal coronations were held at Westminster, the nearby presence of the City of London, with its great economic clout and its proud mayors and aldermen and guilds, all had to be factored in. The support, or at least the nonopposition of London, would be critical if bold moves were contemplated on its doorstep.

This was the situation that confronted Richard of Gloucester when news of his brother's death reached him in the north of England. As we pick up his trail and follow him from north to south on his way to the throne, we can think of him as poised on the brink of a steep (and dangerous) incline. We know, by hindsight, the path he would follow—to the throne, an early death, and centuries of infamy as the deformed usurper who had two helpless princes put to death after he ruthlessly pushed them aside. Excepting the death of the boys—about which more below—most of the events in this story are tolerably clear (though various details are elusive). The uncertainties center, for the most part, on motives and intentions, and the chroniclers and historians of the day were as problematic and unreliable from the very beginning as they are

for us. When did Richard decide to go for broke? Did he feel he was driven to this drastic step for want of safe and acceptable alternatives? Did he simply decide he was the best man, entitled to the throne his family had fought and died for, regardless of the presence of a 12-year-old nephew in front of him? Was there an element of altruism in his actions, or was it just personal ambition? Was there any sincerity in the moral issues he raised and encouraged to be played out regarding Edward IV's marriage and the princes' legitimacy? Did he believe that any alternative to his own rule would mean opening the door to the Woodvilles and then, given their unpopularity, to the reopening of civil war? These are the key questions to ponder as we follow Richard in the spring and early summer of 1483.

We can turn the coin over. What choices did Richard have? Could the young Edward V be detached from his mother and her family—with or without bloodshed? And if Richard did not secure the young king and consolidate his own position, what fate might await him? The precedents in English history—and all the parties seem to have taken pains to learn about such matters—indicated that royal uncles and brothers were hardly invulnerable just because of their high birth. Had not one of Edward III's sons, Thomas of Woodstock, and one of Henry V's brothers, Humphrey of Gloucester, both died in suspicious circumstances after they had been politically marginalized? Contemporaries believed that these men had been murdered; the weight of scholarly evidence supports this. Nor are some earlier examples particularly reassuring. Edmund of Kent, Edward II's brother, executed for treason in 1330, and Thomas of Lancaster, Edward II's cousin, executed in 1322 (after defeat in battle), both come to mind. Power, rather than constitutional precedents or legalistic determinations, was likely to determine the outcome of the confusion that followed Edward IV's unexpected death. Moreover, while Lancastrian opposition to the House of York had been scattered and driven out of sight, it was still out there—eager to recruit followers and offer a challenge if divisions at court allowed it to do so. Henry VI and his son might be long dead, but in Margaret of Anjou, Henry's queen, the cause had a powerful figurehead, and in the person of young Henry Tudor earl of Richmond, it had a claimant to the throne.

How Richard weighted these alternatives is something we can never know. The chroniclers of the day—the sort of authorities whom we would generally go to for firsthand information—mostly are hostile to Richard, a partisan and biased view compounded by the fact that many of them wrote or edited their accounts of 1483 well afterward. They are shaky reeds at best. Was Richard a master strategist of villainy? Or was he an extremely lucky gambler who played long odds, perhaps driven by the lack of acceptable alternatives? One view of his actions is that they were an improvised response to challenging circumstances and hard choices, rather than the implementation of a master plan or a prearranged scenario. This view seems a reasonable one.

When attempting to explain historical events, we dislike the idea of starting with a conspiratorial view of motives, let alone of actions. By the light of this

guideline we should open by taking Richard at his word that he really just moved one step at a time and that he did not aim at the throne. We do know that when he learned of his brother's death he immediately offered the proper and traditional oath of fealty to his nephew, and he had the northern gentry and the York city fathers follow his lead. Were these early words spoken in all sincerity? Were his moves against the Woodvilles and then against Edward V actions that he did not anticipate at first, taken only according to a policy of self-preservation that, once begun, had to be carried to a logical conclusion? Or rather did Richard quickly decide, upon hearing the unexpected news of Edward IV's death, that there was little space left for him were he not atop the mountain? In some ways it seems naive to accept the early declarations of loyalty and limited ambition at their face value, since we know that whatever was said, within a bit over two months Richard was king of England. Furthermore, he moved with impressive determination and, almost from the start, with a casual regard for law and due process. If he feared a backlash in the loss of popular support, or in the resurrection of a Lancastrian faction, or in the unwillingness of the nobles to go along with him, none of these factors sufficed to turn him aside. Once he decided to go for broke, speed would be of the essence. When Henry Bolingbroke (later Henry IV) had returned from exile in 1399 to challenge Richard II, there was an interval of about 12 weeks between his landing and his installation as king. Richard of Gloucester, closer to the throne and with a minor rather than a crowned king to contend with, needed even less time.

Whenever and however planned, Richard's assault on the throne, on the line of hereditary descent, on the person of Edward V, was a two-pronged attack. One line was political; remove the Woodvilles and others who stood in the way, replace them with allies, get control of the princes, seize the throne, and be crowned. But it is the other line of attack, launched and conducted simultaneously with the first, that reveals a Richard we can consider to be a man ahead of his time. We refer here to the skillful orchestration of a propaganda campaign that succeeded, in about a month, in selling Richard of Gloucester, not his older brother's son, as the king-worthy Yorkist and heir of Duke Richard. It was him the people and Parliament would actually ask to take the crown! Because modern political life rests so heavily on spin and misinformation, it is easy to think of these as recent tricks of the media and disingenuous government. Hardly the case. Whether the ideological campaign was a fig leaf to cover a naked grab for power, or whether Richard himself believed what was being said, or whether an important truth about Edward IV and Edward V actually was "outed" in the course of the propaganda campaign is another matter for debate.

Evaluating why Richard acted, and how he planned his moves, is made more difficult because much of what we know comes from his enemies—the dynasty that displaced him after Bosworth and with every reason to darken his memory after his fall. He was easily marked down as the ultimate villain. The story, shaped so as to proclaim Henry Tudor's battlefield accession as

God's judgment, magnified Richard's faults, whether real or fabricated. We now look back and recognize that Henry VII's accession did not end internal dissent in one fell swoop. Bosworth was not the end of armed conflict, let alone of baronial conspiracies, and support for the House of York was a powerful current in sections of the realm throughout the century. However, Henry's victory at Bosworth and his clement policy toward most of Richard's followers did restore the whip hand to the king, and though he had to overcome subsequent crises and threats, and sometimes (as at the battle of Stoke in 1487) only with difficulty, he did pass his crown on to his son (Henry VIII) in a peaceful transition in 1513. The king was back on top. No English monarch would fall again until Charles I in the 1640s, whereas between 1399 and 1485 four of them had failed to live out their natural lifespan.

Let us return to Richard of Gloucester from the time he learned of his brother's death to his own coronation in early July. His first steps were the proper ones; the oath of allegiance and then the move toward London. Though the purpose of his journey south was to attend or preside over the council and to help arrange the coronation of Edward V, he did happen to be accompanied on his march by 600 armed men, and when he made a rendezvous at Northampton with the duke of Buckingham another 300 were added to their joint force. There, on April 29, the two dukes met the entourage of the young king as he moved from Ludlow in the west toward London. Edward V was being escorted by some of his mother's family; his uncle, Anthony Woodville, who was earl Rivers, his half-brother Richard Grey, and two highly placed retainers, Thomas Vaughan and Sir Richard Haute. The two dukes and the Woodvilles had what seemed to be a friendly dinner.

The next morning, claiming that there was a plot on his life, Richard ordered the arrest of these four men, though Edward V supposedly told his uncle that he "had seen nothing evil in them." Unless the allegations of a plot are credible—and this does seem hard to accept, though it cannot be ruled out—this move on Richard's part was in effect a unilateral declaration of war against the Woodvilles. It came without warning and without judicial procedure. While Buckingham's prior dealings with the Woodvilles had been adversarial (though his wife was of that family), and this was so for Edward IV's friend Hastings, Richard himself had been on reasonable terms with his brother's in-laws. But now he was serving notice that the rules of the game had changed.

As the young king's paternal uncle, Richard proceeded to take him in charge as they continued toward London. News of the arrests at Northampton had run ahead of them, and when she heard the grim news, Queen Elizabeth, Edward IV's widow, along with her younger son and her daughters, sought sanctuary in Westminster Abbey. Richard reached London on May 4, the date originally proposed for the new king's coronation, and he installed Edward V in the bishop of London's palace by Saint Paul's Cathedral. Various dignitaries came there to do homage to their young ruler, so there still must have been some semblance of normality, though we can

imagine that rumors were beginning to fly. Richard's arrival marked a period in which the Privy Council was in more or less continual session, serving as the executive arm of government, and his appointment as protector was made official. By May 13, he was acting in this capacity; writs were issued for a Parliament to assemble on June 25, its primary purpose being to accept Edward V as king. Richard was loading the council with loyal supporters, as well as appointing them to offices throughout the kingdom. Then, in a decisive stroke, he raised the level of self-assertion. On May 19, still claiming that the queen and her family were scheming against him, he brought armed levies down from the north and he had Edward V moved from Saint Paul's to the Tower of London, ostensibly to facilitate preparations for the prince's coronation (now slated for late June).

The Woodville threat, insofar as it had existed, was now thoroughly overcome. But Richard came to realize that while his ally, Lord Hastings, would stand with him against their common opponents, his loyalty to the dead king meant that he would never countenance moves that would displace Edward IV's son. To deal with this Richard chose a preemptive strike, and at a council meeting of June 13 he struck—once again—without warning. Richard now claimed a witchcraft plot against him (and that it had withered his arm) and, by some odd leap of logic and political probability, said that it was a plot hatched by Hastings, Queen Elizabeth, and Jane Shore (a Londoner widely held to have been mistress of both Hastings and Edward IV). Leaving the council chamber for a minute, Richard called in soldiers he had posted in advance and ordered the arrest of Hastings and two bishops considered to be in the Woodville camp. Hastings was taken right out and executed on Tower Green. Richard's power was now such that these orders were obeyed, despite the virtual absence of any due process. Then, "on a roll," he persuaded the queen and the archbishop of Canterbury, who had reassured her about the inviolable nature of sanctuary, to allow him to take the younger prince from the abbey to the Tower to join his older brother. Whether he got his way because a resort to violence seemed likely or because they still believed his word is unclear, though the latter alternative strains credibility.

Clearly, whatever his original intentions, Richard now had his eye on something beyond being protector of the realm during the royal minority. If there still were doubts, they would have been dispelled as the wheels of his propaganda mill began to turn. The goal was to sell Richard of Gloucester, and the method chosen was to stigmatize the children of Edward IV and Elizabeth Woodville as illegitimate. This, by extension, would push Edward V out of his place in the queue and bring Richard to the front, the genuine and legitimate crown-worthy Yorkist, the man to rule the realm and preserve the legacy of his father (who had been reburied with great pomp at Fotheringhay in July 1476). It was openly put about that before Edward IV had married Elizabeth Woodville in 1464 he had entered into a contract, or a pre-contract, or perhaps even a marriage with one Eleanor Butler (a daughter of the earl of Shrewsbury?). If so, this would have made the subsequent marriage of

Edward IV and Elizabeth null and void, the children of that marriage bastards. When Dr. Ralph Shaw (or Shaa), a Cambridge theologian and brother of the mayor of London, preached to this effect to a large audience on Sunday, June 22, his text was drawn from the Old Testament injunction "Spuria vitulamina non agent radices altas" (Wisdom 4:3: "Bastard slips shall not take deep root").

Edward IV had been famous for his womanizing, before and after his marriage to Elizabeth Woodville Grey, a Lancastrian widow whom he married in a clandestine ceremony in 1464. That he had previously made some sort of contract with one as Eleanor Butler does not seem hard to accept, though what was passed off as proof of this seems suspect (or worse). But that no steps had been taken during the 19 years of Edward's marriage with Elizabeth to have an earlier tie undone seems a bit strange. Everyone knew that the heir to the throne had to be legitimate, born within wedlock—whatever the public tolerance of Edward's mistresses and his whoring with his buddy Hastings. The church was usually amenable to straightening out the entanglements of royal marriages, and Parliament had the peculiar power to legitimize children (and had done so with the Beauforts, from whom Henry Tudor—Henry VII as he was to be—traced his own claim).

Further fuel was added to the fire as two other lines of doubt were cast upon these waters, though we wonder at Richard's involvement with the second. Questions were openly aired about the validity of Edward IV's clandestine marriage to Elizabeth Woodville, apart from whether he had been free to enter into it. Being a secret affair—announced to the court only sometime afterward—there were questions as to whether the banns had been properly read, whether the ceremony had been held in a sanctified place, and so on. Its clandestine nature, plus the fact that the marriage was a peculiar and extremely foolish political move for Edward, fed rumors about witchcraft and women's wiles that had circulated over the years about the queen and even more so about her mother. Beyond this line of insinuation, other rumors (also circulating for some years and now revived) held that Edward IV himself had not been the son of Richard of York, but that his mother, Cecily Neville, had had an affair and conceived Edward before she conceived her first child by the duke. Thus, if Edward IV himself had been illegitimate, Richard would be the next in line by the true blood of York. Since Richard's mother was still on the spot (and would be until 1495) and she stood as the revered and tragic matriarch of the House of York, these allegations of infidelity in the 1440s seem astounding. Nevertheless, such rumors did help becloud a case that, a few months before, had seemed to argue with no foreseeable qualifications in favor of Edward V's right to ascend the throne upon his father's death.

Shaw's sermon about sex and the royal family had been preached on June 22, with both Richard and Buckingham in attendance as part of a large crowd. On June 24, Buckingham, now acting pretty openly as Richard's stage manager, suggested to an assemblage of important Londoners that the way out of the dilemma was to offer the crown to Richard. This indicates that the

doubts cast on Edward V's legitimacy had struck a responsive chord, though we cannot gauge how deeply, nor do we know how freely people may have felt about speaking out against Buckingham's suggestion. On this same day, or the next, the four men whom Richard had had arrested at Northampton in April were put to death; charged with treason but to die without a proper trial. The Parliament that had been called to validate Edward V's accession now petitioned his uncle to become king! On June 26, Richard assumed the royal dignity: he was the "verray enheritour" (true inheritor) of the House of York and should accede "according to this election of us the thre Estates of this lande, as by youre true Enheritaunce."

Who could resist such a call to do his duty? Richard's coronation, held on July 6, was a traditional, full-fledged affair, every bit as elaborate as though he had been the designated heir for decades. His wife, Anne Neville, was crowned queen beside him, and the usual feasts and processions and oaths of allegiance and acclamation covered the bold fact that a quick and nasty usurpation had been pulled off. That the coronation was such a large affair sounds like an instance of compensation, though Richard presented himself on the idea that he was now bringing continuity and normalcy to the throne. His brother's reign, he said, had been marked by "sensuality and concupiscence, [and] followed the counsail of personnes insolent, vicious, and of inordinate avarice," which shameful state of affairs had now been brought to an end. This strange touch of Puritanism may have caught some public sympathy, as Edward IV's court was both lavish and costly in style and was pretty casual about conventional morality.

The one remaining aspect of this rapid and tough-minded climb to the throne concerns the fate of Edward V and his younger brother. The political importance of their disappearance may not really have been all that we make it out to be; Richard was king, neither nephew was. However, this pragmatic and unsentimental view has always paled when set against the "human interest" side of the story. All that seems certain is that the two princes were seen at play in the precincts of the Tower of London in mid- or late July but that by some point later in the summer they had disappeared from view, never to be seen again. The inevitable conclusion, whether correct and fair or not, was that their uncle had them done away with in some fashion; we will look below at arguments that have been offered to condemn Richard or exonerate him. It was said at the time, whether based on hard knowledge or just gossip and evil-speak, that "he also put to deth the ii children of Kyng Edward for whiche cawse he lost the hertes of the people." We do know that in 1674 some bones were discovered when a walled-up chamber of the Tower was opened for structural work. A scientific examination of the bones in 1933, before DNA analysis, established that they probably were, or at least might have been, those of two boys who would have been about the age of the princes in the mid-1480s. From this, one draws the conclusion one wishes, though the bones, which remain in their urn in Westminster Abbey, have never been offered for reexamination.

In summarizing this dramatic story of political ambition and reversal, we can take note of how swiftly fortune's wheel had turned. At the beginning of April 1483, Edward IV was king. In mid-April there was no reason to doubt but that his elder son would accede to the throne; from Edward IV to Edward V, as night follows day. By mid-May Edward V was little more than a pawn, his mother's family in eclipse, his paternal uncle with a virtual monopoly of power. By mid-June the young king's legitimacy had been questioned, and he and his brother were prisoners in the Tower. By late June people were talking of Richard as the man who should be king while he was already de facto monarch. By early July he had been crowned and anointed as Richard III. As is said in Shakespeare's *Macbeth,* talking of the murder of a king, "if it were done when 'tis done, then 'twere well it were done quickly." What would have been the critical factors at the time (and in which order of magnitude)? The realm needed a king, and a royal adult with a good deal of experience may have seemed a better bet than a minor, especially a minor under the control of his mother's family. Had Richard been able to quiet misgivings about his accession and to impose strong rule upon the realm, it is possible that the fate of those little boys who had gone missing might never have loomed so large. Older folk could look back on Henry VI—king at nine months old and a long-term failure, easy prey to faction, bad advice, and unpopular policies.

RICHARD THE KING

After his coronation, the rest of Richard's brief reign seems anticlimactic. He made a serious effort to govern, and to govern well, though we can see that the legacy of his irregular accession meant that more than the usual load of problems would have to be met. In the autumn of 1483 his close ally (and cousin) the duke of Buckingham rebelled—a mysterious affair, and one that ended without a battle but with Buckingham's execution. After this Richard always seemed to be playing defense; the ripples of discontent spread, and men of importance fled the realm to join the growing band of supporters of Henry Tudor in Brittany. Others just held still, waiting to see if the new king could assert himself. Richard worked to do so, but he succeeded only in part by placing too much reliance on trusted retainers he brought down from the north. The north seemed an alien world to many in London and the south, and these men were outsiders, lacking ties to the local community and with strange accents and distant family networks.

Richard III did work hard in the time he had. He traveled extensively—a traditional method of making the monarch known to his people, of building local alliances, and of over-awing dissidents and would-be rebels. The Parliament that met in January 1484 confirmed his title to the crown by issuing "Titulus Regius," in which his virtues and legitimacy were heralded. Parliament also proscribed and attainted those who had fallen during his rise to power and during Buckingham's rebellion, and its members worked with

him to address serious questions of finance and law that Edward IV had been inclined to avoid. He was voted the usual customs duties; his need for money was extremely pressing, coming as he did on the heels of an extravagant court and possibly of some Woodville looting of royal resources. Richard emphasized his desire to see that justice was evenhanded, lecturing to the judges and local officials on this matter and talking against the excesses of "bastard feudalism." He worked to maintain the truce with Scotland, making life along the northern borders both safer and, from his view, less expensive. He was of two minds about how to deal with Brittany, where Henry Tudor was building the force that would support his invasion. Should he treat Brittany as an ally and thereby convince its duke to isolate his "guest," or should he use the naval and economic clout of a hostile power to warn the duke of England's wrath, were Henry Tudor to continue to be well received and protected? Henry's landing on the Welsh coast on August 7, 1485, ended this dilemma (as it would Richard's reign).

In various ways the fortune that had favored Richard when he took the throne now deserted him. His young son, made prince of Wales and thereby proclaimed as the "official" heir to the crown, died in April 1484. Richard's queen, Anne, long in failing health, followed their son in March 1485: "Anne my wife has bid the world good night," as Shakespeare has him say. Rumors held that he had poisoned her, though tuberculosis was a good deal more likely the cause, as Anne and Richard seem to have had a harmonious relationship. Further rumors held that Richard was now contemplating marriage with Edward IV's eldest daughter, Elizabeth, legitimate or not but clearly his blood-niece. Supposedly there was such public outcry against the idea of an incestuous royal marriage that he had to indicate that no such scheme was planned (whether it had been or not). Richard was still only 32, and he needed an heir to his throne (as well as a queen). Various important nobles whose support was crucial were proving less than trustworthy. He needed money very badly. We do not know how he would have dealt with the problems, because his end came quickly, and—given that the odds favored Richard against Henry Tudor when battle was engaged—rather unexpectedly.

It came at the battle of Bosworth, fought there or in some nearby location (Ambion Hill) on August 22, 1485. As with many medieval (and modern) battles, details of the decisive day are unclear. Richard came to the field with the larger force, but he knew that Lord Stanley was unreliable (because he was married to Henry Tudor's mother). To balance this uncertainty, Richard took Stanley's son as hostage, hoping thereby to ensure the father's support (though it never was forthcoming). The earl of Northumberland arrived with impressive northern forces but proved reluctant to enter the battle on his king's behalf, whereas the aged duke of Norfolk died fighting for Richard on what turned out to be the losing side. Richard, a soldier of some experience, was given full credit by all commentators, even the most hostile, for having fought bravely. When he was finally struck down, the crown he lost, literally, was retrieved from a thorn bush and placed on Henry Tudor's head. Little honor for

losers; Richard's naked body was slung across a horse and taken to Leicester for an ignominious burial in the abbey there. When the monasteries were suppressed in the 1530s, his remains were dug up and scattered, his monument demolished. Defeat and public ignominy combined to deny him the royal burial site that even other failed kings ultimately received: John, at Worcester Cathedral; Edward II, at Saint Peter's Abbey in Gloucester; Richard II, at Chertsey Abbey and then reburied with his first queen in Westminster Abbey; and Henry VI, at Chertsey and then at Windsor, where he continues his long rest.

The cliché that the death of Richard and the accession of the Tudors (who lasted until Elizabeth I died in 1603) mark the end of an era seems to hold true. In textbooks, in the classroom, and in popular writing and even movies and TV docudramas, the year of Henry VII's accession is still venerated as the dividing line between the (later) Middle Ages and the beginning of (early) modern English history. The year 1485 stands as a major historical watershed. We bury Richard, his dynasty and family, and his era, leaving the rest to legend, to historical controversy, and to the various tastes and partisan positions of a large public that continues to probe the many questions about the man and his doings, all in search of answers that we can say with confidence are never going to be found.

THE REPUTATION AND LEGEND OF RICHARD III

So much for the historical Richard. To what extent is this picture that of "the real Richard"? Is there really such a creature? Maybe we have a multiplicity of Richards from which to pick and choose. We will explore some of the possibilities. In many ways, the reign of Richard III conforms to what Thomas Hobbes, the great political philosopher of the seventeenth century, said about life in primitive society: it was nasty, brutal, and short. What in this short if bloody tale helps explain the fascination, tinged with a good measure of horror and repulsion, that surrounds Richard III and that has done so almost from the start? How and why has he become the archvillain of all English history? In a world of men (and women) of blood, he hardly stood out among his contemporaries; even a historian not inclined to argue in his favor has spoken well of his policy "of shedding no unnecessary blood." If we look at those who suffered directly from his ambition, we find that they were few in number and they come mostly from those upper ranks of society in which the risks of life and death were part and parcel of status and privilege.

To sum up the reasons for the dark legend that continues to surround Richard, we can mark some major way-stations along the road. The first is that it was very much in the interest of the Tudors to make Richard into the total villain, the evil man from whose grasp they had rescued the realm. Now, and only now, could the ghost, or the curse, of the deposition of 1399 be laid to rest. After this we can point to the mystery of the princes. Though the evidence

against Richard as their murderer is only circumstantial, the tale of the two boys is both tragic and mysterious, two themes well crafted to catch and hold public interest. Lastly, and probably doing more to preserve the legend than anything else, there is Shakespeare. Whatever his intentions or motives, he gave canonical status and bold coloring to the Tudor myth when, in 1597, he offered *Richard III* to the London stage. This powerful melodrama has always been a great favorite of actors and audiences: it contains murder, violence and death, sex, long speeches of denunciation and malediction, ghosts, double-crosses, shrieking hags, and then a cathartic ending. Its depiction of Richard as the English Machiavelli does much to belie the old adage that bad publicity is better than no publicity.

By what strands was the Tudor myth woven? After Henry VII's accession, two of the major texts that laid the groundwork were Thomas More's *The History of King Richard the Third* and Polydore Vergil's *Anglica Historia*. More was a great humanist (who ironically would fall martyr to Henry VIII's despotism and his break with Rome—see his chapter), though he got his information on Richard from Cardinal Morton, his patron and a strong opponent of Richard from early on. Though More does talk of Richard's good points, the overall picture is so one-sided that it has been labeled a satirical drama. Vergil was an Italian humanist, brought to England by Henry VII to encourage the "new learning." His goal was not so much to smear Richard as an individual as to construct the sin-and-retribution view of English history—which meant boosting Henry VII as the full and final expiation of 1399. Given the weakness of the Tudor dynastic claim and the lingering support for the House of York, any tactic that made 1485 a moral as well as a political milestone was to be encouraged (and subsidized).

This interpretation of fifteenth-century English history—admittedly a pretty messy affair in any case—was conveyed to a wider English public through such popular works as Edward Hall's *Union of the Two Noble Families of Lancaster and York* (1548). Hall's history, along with others like the *Continuation of Hardyng's Chronicle* (1543) and Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicles* (1578) offered the kind of material that Shakespeare drew upon for his English history plays, that series of plays that runs from Richard II in the 1390s through Henry VII's promise of peace and concord as he is crowned on Bosworth field. From Richard Rouse, a fifteenth-century antiquarian who went from an admirer to a detractor of Richard, came the tales of physical deformity: hunchbacked with a withered arm, two years in his mother's womb, born with teeth and hair. Richard's moral depravity was indicated by his physical deformity, and vice versa, and the contrast with the tall and handsome (if immoral) Edward IV sharpened the edge of these calumnies. There is no reliable evidence about physical deformity or disability; Richard's military experience indicated that he was at least not seriously handicapped, and some early portraits that hint at deformity look to have been doctored to show a twisted upper body and awkward arm.

Shakespeare wrote for an audience whose knowledge of the dark legend, as well as the ins and outs of the aristocracy, could be assumed. This let him cut right to the chase, and the play opens with a soliloquy in which Richard spells out his agenda, virtually all without historical foundation:

> I, that am curtailed of this fair proportion,
> Cheated of feature by dissembling Nature,
> Deformed, unfinished, sent before my time
> Into this breathing world, scarce half made up . . .
> I am determined to prove a villain
> And hate the idle pleasures of these days.
> Plots have I laid, inductions dangerous,
> By drunken prophecies, libels, and dreams,
> To set my brother Clarence and the King
> In deadly hate the one against the other.

Having thus established character and malevolent motivation (with its potential for murder, soon to be realized), we move on to sex. Richard intercepts the cortege bearing Henry VI's body on its way to burial and he accosts Anne Neville, now mourning her late father-in-law. He courts her and, in a scene of chilling insight into the fascination and sex appeal of evil, she accepts his wooing. Some ladylike resistance—she first spits on him, then contemplates running him through with the sword he offers her—but she concludes by agreeing to become his bride. After she has left the stage Richard reassures us that he has not been turned into an old softie by matters of the heart:

> Was ever woman in this humour wooed?
> Was ever woman in this humour won?
> I'll have her, but I will not keep her long.
> What? I that killed her husband and his father. . . .
> Hath she forgot already that brave prince,
> Edward, her lord, whom I, some three months since,
> Stabbed in my angry mood at Tewkesbury?

By the time we finally get to the death of the princes in the Tower, the die is firmly cast. While their actual murder is not enacted on stage, it is at their uncle's command that they are dispatched. Richard's dialogue with the assassin runs as follows:

> RICHARD: Dar'st thou resolve to kill a friend of mine?
> TYRREL: Please you;
> But I had rather kill two enemies.
> RICHARD: Why, there thou hast it! Two deep enemies,
> Foes to my rest and my sweet sleep's disturbers,

> Are they that I would have thee deal upon.
> Tyrrel, I mean those bastards in the Tower.
> TYRREL: Let me have open means to come to them,
> And soon I'll rid you from the fear of them.
> RICHARD: Thou sing'st sweet music.

Cold-blooded indeed, and no remorse is ever expressed (or even felt). But while Richard is not supposed to repent—nor does he—at least his many victims get their say. The night before Bosworth their ghosts parade by to disturb his sleep and to curse his prospects on the morrow. In a scene made famous by a painting of David Garrick writhing on the stage, Richard has to suffer the curses of many whom he dispatched (according to the play): Henry VI and his son Prince Edward, his brother Clarence, those Woodvilles and their associates whom he had executed at Northampton, Buckingham, Hastings, his wife Anne, and the two princes (who act in unison to deepen the pathos). They heap their curses upon him:

> Let us be lead within thy bosom, Richard,
> And weigh thee down to ruin, shame, and death!
> Thy nephews' souls bid thee despair, and die!

To this we can add Anne's "Tomorrow in the battle think on me, And fall thy edgeless sword; despair, and die!" while Buckingham adds that Richard should "die in terror of thy guiltiness!" Richmond's star is clearly in the ascendant: "Awake, and win the day!" and "Live, and flourish!" and—again from Buckingham, once second only to Richard in evil—"God and good angels fight on Richmond's side." As seems appropriate in a play about kings and kingship, Richmond—rather irregularly crowned on the spot as Henry VII—has the final word: "Now civil wounds are stopped, peace lives again;/That she may long live here, God say amen!"

Shakespeare was a hard act to follow, let alone to contradict. Most who wrote on Richard III and related topics were, for many years, content to follow this interpretation regarding the evil deeds and deformed presence of Richard duke of Gloucester. Villainy sells books and theater tickets, and eventually movie tickets, and the play's tremendous popularity has guaranteed that the Shakespearean image was well known and eagerly accepted. The play, the longest in the Shakespearean repertoire after *Hamlet,* is filled with melodramatic speeches and lots of action, its leading role a very long one. No wonder so many actors have been eager to have their turn. Even in parody, as in the movie *The Goodbye Girl,* the Ricardian image is one to juggle with.

It was not really until the mid-twentieth century that the pro-Ricardians began to have something approaching a fair slice of the historiographical and literary pie. Authoritative historians like James Gairdner, writing in 1878 from a vast knowledge of the fifteenth century, still found Richard an unattractive figure, weighed down by the crimes and sins that followed from an unnatural and inordinate craving for power, unchecked by moral restraint. Gairdner

said that the more he examined the sources, the more he endorsed the views of Thomas More and Shakespeare. While we wonder if Gairdner came to his inquiries with an open mind, he was his era's leading authority on the period and he brought an extensive knowledge of its literature.

There have always been some dissenting voices, arguing that the case against Richard (for the princes' murder) was not proved, and that others were probably (or surely) responsible for many of the fell deeds so casually laid at his door. Furthermore, his many good points and private virtues, acknowledged by foes as well as friends, should be added to the balance of a serious historical assessment. Though such voices never carried the day, they were heard from time to time and, collectively, they can be strung together as a sort of historical fan club, never able to alter the accepted view but with sufficient volume and knowledge to keep alive a reminder that the case against Richard was both circumstantial and based on a great deal of unreliable reporting. Francis Bacon's *History of the Reign of King Henry the Seventh* (1622) can be considered as an early (if cautious) work along these lines, and we can add such vindications of Richard as those offered by George Buck in *The History of the Life and Reigne of Richard the Third* (1646) or by Horace Walpole, whose *Doubts on the Life and Reign of King Richard the Third* (1768) makes fun of Thomas More's presentation of Richard. J. H. Jesse's *Memoirs of King Richard the Third* (1862) and Sir Clements Markham's *Richard III: His Life and Character* (1906) did their best, though they were still swimming against the current.

Recent works that offer a cleansed and attractive Richard really begin with Paul Murray Kendall's *Richard III* (1955). The basic scholarly biography of recent years, that of Charles Ross (1981, following his *Edward IV* of 1974) is sympathetic but mixed in its bottom-line assessment of Richard, regarding both his supposed crimes and his success as a political figure and a king. More recent work seems to be reasonably divided, though an examination of Richard's government, as well as his earlier career, at least strengthen the case for him as a normal political figure who might have been driven by the peculiar circumstances of 1483 to take the extreme measures for which he has been stigmatized over the centuries.

THE MURDER OF THE PRINCES IN THE TOWER?

But sooner or later it always seems to come back to the question of those princes, those two boys who went into the Tower but who, to the best of any certain knowledge, never came out. They are a historical version of the other shoe, waiting to drop. We cannot move on until they have had their day. In this discussion it is important to keep in mind that the case—whether one holds that Richard was their murderer or that he was not (and that therefore someone else must have been, unless they lived out their lives in some secret retreat)—rests on unreliable sources, circumstantial evidence, and inferences based on what we offer as the political logic of the day. There is no "smoking gun" (or "dripping sword") to clinch either side of the case.

Two lines of argument tell against Richard. One is the contemporary acceptance that the boys were dead; we quoted such a voice above. Their disappearance does seem to argue for their removal. That they might have been spirited away to some remote site such as Fotheringhay Castle, and with no later rumors about their whereabouts, smacks more of fantasy or perhaps a modern police state rather than the leaky world of fifteenth-century retainers and officials. The other heavy count against Richard is simply what we offer as the logic of medieval politics. His deadliest blow at the body politic was the deposition of his nephew—the long-accepted heir to the throne and his older brother's firstborn son. Once Richard seized the throne, what he then did with or had done to the deposed prince and his brother was more a matter of cleaning up afterward, of dealing with unfinished business, than it was a matter of state. Losers in the game of thrones and scepters had a bleak and a limited future. Neither Edward II nor Richard II had lasted long after they had been deposed; if you were down, you were soon to be out. Such men (and boys) were too attractive as focal points of resistance and rebellion. The difference here is that the bodies of mature kings—unlike those of the princes—had been displayed in public to quell rumors about survival. Once he had been crowned king in early July 1483, it was a little late for Richard to be squeamish. And whether it helps clarify in either direction, when Edward IV's daughter Elizabeth married Henry VII, we wonder if she would have done so had she thought (or known) that her brothers still lived—one of whom should by rights be king in lieu of her husband.

None of this adds up to more than a likelihood; as Charles Ross said, Richard certainly had motive and opportunity, though those alone do not convict. All in all, does this side of the story give us material for a conviction of Richard beyond reasonable doubt? The defense hardly thinks so. Though the lack of concrete evidence against Richard has always been admitted, even by many on the dark-legend team, the recent case for Richard really begins with *The Daughter of Time,* a historical detective or mystery novel published in 1951 by Josephine Tey, whom we can think of as the high priestess of the defense team.

The team for the defense mostly concentrates on negative inferences; no bodies were ever offered, no details ever leaked of how/when/where Richard and his minions carried out the deed of shame. In the act of attainder against Richard that was entered into the record after Henry VII's accession, there was no reference among the list of his crimes to the murder of the princes. In fact, it was the Tudors who seemed determined to eliminate any and all who carried the blood royal, such as Clarence's children (whom Richard had not harmed). It is hard to know what conclusion to draw from the fact that Edward IV's widow, Elizabeth, had accepted Richard's invitation to leave sanctuary in June 1483, which came with an offer to arrange marriages for her daughters; would she have done this if she thought he had murdered her sons? But Queen Elizabeth Woodville seems to have been a leaf in the wind. And though James Tyrell was often considered to be the man who actually did or supervised the fell deed, his supposed confession only came in 1502—after years of service to the Tudors and when he was facing a capital charge on a different matter.

It seems that no matter how we weigh the arguments, they pretty much balance out. Some of Henry VII's actions can be read to indicate that he had no idea of the boys' fate, which argues that they were gone when he took over. In other ways, it was even more in his interest, perhaps, than it had been in Richard's to see that they vanished without trace, since the claim to the throne by a living Edward V would have trumped whatever Henry could have offered. This was especially the case because Henry VII had no choice but to accept Edward IV's children as legitimate, since his queen was one of Edward's daughters and her legitimacy, as well as her status as a princess of the House of York, had to be beyond any dispute to assure the legitimacy of their children and to win over support for the new dynasty.

In most of the debates, the ultimate fate of the princes seems more interesting than the question of their legitimacy, though that is a serious issue if we choose to focus on it. If the charges of their father's pre-contract with Eleanor Butler, and/ or of his questionable marriage with their mother have validity, did this justify the deposition of Edward V? Would a young king of questionable royal blood (and with a dominating mother and her family) have evoked strong support? Most discussions ignore these questions and begin with a tacit acceptance of the boy's claim as the proper one. But Edward IV's sex life is a serious issue, beyond its prurient and rather scandalous appeal. The realm, as best we can judge, really did seem to care about the ruler's blood line and the legitimacy of royal children, born by royal (queenly) mothers from their mating with royal fathers. So perhaps Richard III's propaganda campaign was not wholly disingenuous.

THE LIVING RICHARD III

Richard III still lives, at least in the form of being the catalyst or centerpiece of a thriving historical industry. History and legend and uncertainty combine to keep him before us, and the interest he continues to generate—largely as a consequence of the mystery of the princes and the dark legend—draws a wide public to his tale. Beyond doubt and beyond any of his peers or counterparts on the throne, he is the most intriguing of all the medieval English kings, the one who commands the most attention, the king about whom the laity as well as professional academics are still inclined to argue. History buffs of all sorts follow his life and times in great detail, whereas more important (and longer-lived) kings are relegated to the obscure setting of the classroom or the scholarly monograph. Harsh words are still exchanged at meetings, during and after lectures, and on field trips to the various Ricardian shrines as people continue to take sides in the great debate.

As a gauge of Richard III's popularity and the fascination that surrounds him we can call him up on the electronic catalog of the New York Public Library. Under the subject heading of "Richard III king of England" the library lists 306 items (as of March 13, 2011; the number increases steadily). Though this number contains duplications, and some of the books listed are more general in their focus (as is true for most subject searches), and many of the entries

relate to Shakespeare's play, 306 entries is still a vast number for a man who reigned for only 27 months and who was killed more than 520 years ago. If we compare the catalog entries for Richard III with those for kings with a much greater impact on medieval England, we get an idea of Richard's towering presence. For William the Conqueror, with whose invasion in 1066 medieval English history can be said to begin, we find 116 items. Nor does anyone else rival Richard, with or without benefit of Shakespeare. Henry II has 107 entries; for the great warrior-hero Henry V there are 188 (and he too is a Shakespearian hero of formidable proportions); for Richard I the Lionhearted of undying crusading and martial fame 129; and for Richard II, victim of deposition in 1399 and also the centerpiece of a play by Shakespeare, 169 entries. The 306 entries under Richard III are a mix of those works that support the monstrous and perfidious image, those that labor to refute it, and those concerned to follow routes of scholarly inquiry with limited commitment to partisan colors.

Much of the Ricardian partisanship has been organized and published under the aegis of the Richard III Society. The society was founded in 1924, and "in the belief that many features of the traditional accounts of the character and career of Richard III are neither supported by sufficient evidence nor reasonably tenable, the society aims to promote research into the life and times of Richard III and to secure a re-assessment of the Material." Whatever the society's existence has done to balance the partisanship of the centuries—and the answer is a good deal—it has also encouraged scholarly inquiry into virtually any and all aspects of late medieval life that can be, even in a remote fashion, connected to Richard of Gloucester. The society issues a regular publication for serious scholarly contributions (*The Ricardian*), holds conferences, brings out collected volumes of papers reprinted from *The Ricardian* (such as *Richard III: Crown and People* in 1985 and *Tant D'Emprises—So Many Undertakings* in 2003), and in general and divers ways tries to draw public interest in its topic and its hero. Aspects of Richard that have little to do with his usurpation or the princes in the Tower also generate interest: his books, his religious convictions and devotions, his role as a benefactor of ecclesiastical and educational institutions, the lives and careers of many who served him, and more along these and other lines. Serious investigations of Jane Shore's genealogy, as well as that of Eleanor Butler's family and their dealings with Edward IV, show that gossip about the bedrooms of the royals is not confined to current tabloids and talk shows.

The nonacademic aspects of the Richard III industry also testify to the sustained life of his myth and the dark legend. The Richard III Society, with close to 4,000 members in 26 countries (as counted around 1990) organizes trips and expeditions to various Ricardian sites and shrines, as well as marketing the usual collection of memorabilia: mugs, ties, commemorative plates, and other souvenirs that rival medieval pilgrim badges. Sites that resonate in the life and career of Richard and others around him are scattered across the English landscape, though they tend to cluster in the north, and dutiful expeditions are regularly made. Informed by academics and others versed in

the life and times, people from many parts of the world—not all of them An-glophonic—assemble and travel to Ricardian remembrances at Middleham in Yorkshire (where Richard and Anne lived), at Sheriff Hutton (where their son may be buried in the parish church), at Berwick (which Richard captured from the Scots in 1482), at Barnard Castle and at Raby (associated with his mother Cecily), at Fotheringhay (where he was born and his father reburied), at the towers he added to Warwick Castle, and at many other places. The battlefields of the Wars of the Roses, such as Saint Albans and Barnet, are of interest, as is the fatal but confused site at Bosworth (Ambion Hill, where Richard's pennant of a white boar now waves). In 1960 a plaque was dedicated in Westminster Abbey to mark the burial, though perhaps not the actual burial site, of Anne Neville, his queen, and a statue in the Castle Gardens at Leicester tries to remedy the callous treatment Richard's body received after he fell in battle.

What else do we know about him? We have numerous portraits of Richard, some going back to the early years of the sixteenth century; a panel painting of about 1516 shows no sign of deformity, though later pictures either began with this idea or were altered to emphasize misaligned shoulders and so on. The "Beauchamp Pageant" (a British Library manuscript of the 1480s) shows Anne Neville with both her husbands and the son she bore Richard (who also had three illegitimate children, all openly acknowledged and all conceived before his marriage to Anne).

We have various artifacts and material possessions that relate directly to Richard; a plaque with the initials "A & R" for Anne and Richard, a badge of the boar that was his sign, and books that he signed and annotated and over which he clearly spent some time. Richard seems to have been a man of medium size, smaller than his brother Edward, and probably fitting under our generalization of dark and wiry, perhaps much like his father (whom we know from a few stained-glass windows). Like others of his family, he had some intellectual as well as philanthropic and spiritual interests, though he did not reign long enough to indicate whether his court would be a center of chivalric culture comparable to that of his brother or of his sister, Margaret of Burgundy. But he could hold his own among men of culture and letters.

In the book-review section of *The Ricardian* are listings of historical fiction with a Ricardian theme, and in those 306 entries in the New York Public Library's catalog there are 42 tagged as fiction, 16 as literature, and 1 as juvenile literature. Touching the Ricardian world there are even a few "classics," with a liberal definition of what it takes to be a classic. There is the early-Victorian *Last of the Barons* (1843) by Edward Bulwer-Lytton, dealing with Richard's father-in-law, or Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Black Arrow,* an engaging boy's view of the Wars of the Roses. But the list of fiction runs from history-mysteries (with Tey's book in a class by itself as an intriguing blend of genres) to bodice-rippers of interest but limited literary merit. Neither the princes nor Richard's mother (*The Rose of Raby*) has cause to complain about authorial neglect.

Beyond the printed page, there is the world of film, and here too Richard III has left his mark. The major Ricardian film is Laurence Olivier's 1955

production of Shakespeare's play, with some scenes necessarily left out and with the coronation of Edward IV lifted from the previous play in the sequence, *Henry VI, Part III,* as is often the case in stage productions as well. Olivier's movie refueled the dark legend at a time when scholarly currents might have begun to run against its cruder stretches, and it still enjoys considerable popularity, if only as a period piece of movie-making. But much earlier in the history of cinema there were short silent films devoted to Richard, the first perhaps being *Les enfants d'Edouard* (French, runtime: a few minutes) from 1910. A 1913 version of the play ran to 50 minutes, and Richard himself—inspired by but without Shakespeare—achieved full-length status with *Tower of London* in 1939. This thriller, starring Basil Rathbone as the duke of Gloucester, shows him hacking and plotting his way to the throne, removing a doll from a row of such each time he brings someone down. The 1962 remake with Vincent Price was much less chilling. While no one has duplicated Olivier's lavish production, a number of BBC versions, and at least one film of a live production at Stratford, have been made. Al Pacino's (semi-)documentary *Looking for Richard* (1996) and Neil Simon's *The Goodbye Girl* (1977), in which Richard Dreyfuss played "a homosexual cripple in lavender" in order to hang on to his part in an off-off-Broadway production, have caught their share of public interest. *The Goodbye Girl* was remade for television, and it also enjoyed some success as a Broadway musical. No hit song about Richard—whether rhythm and blues or punk rock—has yet made the charts, but since interest seems perennial there is always hope. To add a different dimension, Richard Loncraine's *Richard III* (1995, starring Ian McKellen as Richard) transforms the court of Edward IV and Elizabeth into a 1930s hotbed of fascism (with an eye to Edward VIII and Wallis Simpson), and Bosworth becomes a battle in which the Battersea Power Station in London is destroyed in the final shoot-out as Richard looks for a motorcycle on which he can escape.

CONCLUSIONS

How much of this exposition of the man and his legend explains the ongoing fascination he continues to exert? The mystery surrounding the fate of the princes must rank as the major single factor (beyond Shakespeare) in keeping Richard before the public. The boys' fate is one of those "who shot JFK?" or "were Sacco and Vanzetti guilty?" dilemmas that will generate debate indefinitely. When the likely villain is the uncle, and when the uncle also happens to be king of England, and when he also happens (in the dark legend's version) to be misshapen and generally evil, melodrama lives and flourishes.

   Some considerations get lost amid the drama about the princes. Richard can be compared with some other medieval kings in a fashion that shows to his advantage. None of the kings who acted on the medieval version of a unilateral declaration of war has ever been excoriated in a comparable fashion. Edward III launched the Hundred Years' War in the 1330s because of a

claim to the throne of France; the senseless slaughter of thousands and the destruction and ruin of the French countryside do not keep us from hailing him for bringing chivalry into the court with the Round Table and the Order of the Garter. Henry V, who burned heretics and reopened the war with France, gets an immortal line from Shakespeare ("a little touch of Harry in the night") and the accolade from a major fifteenth-century historian as the greatest man to ever rule England. On this scale Richard's crimes—even if he is guilty as alleged in the darkest of dark legends—seem a fairly small matter.

On the other hand, why he draws such fervent support is not easy to explain. Even if he is innocent of most of the charges that have been levied against him over the years—the deaths of Prince Edward and Henry VI and his own queen and his brother Clarence, plus lesser horrors—why does it seem so important to clear his name? Whatever answer we offer to this leads us to reflect on how some events, and some people, and some causes, seem to take on a life of their own—one that may bear little relationship to what really happened at the time. That so many authors, over three or four centuries, were content to calumniate Richard on tainted evidence has become a challenge to those who have labored to clear his name and to expose the conspiratorial nature of the dark legend. That historians have not found Henry VII to be a particularly attractive character has perhaps strengthened the resolve to revisit and vindicate Richard.

When all the factors are taken into account, the fascination of the man, the legend of his evil deeds, and his death on the battlefield seem to assure him a role in our historical imagination that few others of his age and even of his exalted status can claim. Though she had no deep historical insights, we might close this assessment with the sage words of the young Jane Austen's *History of England,* written by a "partial, prejudiced, and ignorant historian":

> The character of this Prince (Richard) has in general been very severely handled by Historians. But as he was a York, I am rather inclined to suppose him a very respectable Man. It has been confidently asserted that he killed his two nephews, but it has also been asserted that he did not kill his two nephews, which I am inclined to believe true. Whether innocent or guilty, he did not reign long in peace, for Henry Tudor, earl of Richmond, as great a villain as ever lived, made a great fuss about getting the Crown.

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Vlad III Dracula ruled Wallachia during the fifteenth century. His unusual brutality contributed toward the development and rise of the Dracula legends. (Getty Images)

Vlad III Dracula (1431–1476)

Lissette Lopez Szwydky

Vlad III Dracula the man lived in the fifteenth century; Count Dracula the vampire has become immortal. This chapter will consider the vampire as a modern icon and sketch the transformation of the medieval prince into the modern monster.

VAMPIRES

What is a vampire? The answer is not as simple as one might expect. Vampires have appeared in news reports, scholarly studies, and local legends, and popular culture for at least 300 years. Each new incarnation of the vampire brings with it new characteristics, new rules, and new definitions that are always birthed by the old myths.

A quick survey of the most famous bloodsuckers of today quickly reveals that no two vampire stories are the same. While most vampires appear only at night, the idea that sunlight will kill them varies. For example, the vampires in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*'s world burst into flames in direct sunlight, but Blade and other vampires are day-walkers. Many of the vampires found in nineteenth-century literature, including Bram Stoker's Count Dracula, could conduct their business during the day, although they preferred night activities. Other storylines allow vampires to participate in daytime activities with the help of enchanted gems, industrial-strength sunscreen, or (in the case of a recent adolescent series) the cloudy skies over the town of Forks.

Susceptibility to sunlight is just one example of the variations. Many classic vampires are shape-shifters who can turn into bats, rats, serpents, large cats, or wolves. Some vampires are weakened by religious objects, while others scoff at them. In some stories, vampires can be warded off by garlic, wolfsbane, and other natural repellants. Other legends claim that vampires cannot cross running water, come into contact with silver, or sleep without dirt from their native land. However, for every story that limits the vampire's ability to exist in the world without hindrances, there are just as many tales that give vampires almost total reign over the human world, including endowing them with superhuman strength, the power to mesmerize, and even the ability to fly.

Despite the differences among the tales produced over several hundred years, there are a couple of traits that follow vampires from story to story. No matter the myth, the author, or the filmmaker, all vampires share a thirst for blood and the gift—or curse—of immortality. These two basic, defining characteristics are inextricably linked in vampire lore. Vampires are not subject to aging, disease, and death via the simple passage of time; however, their survival is wholly dependent on drinking blood as their only source of nourishment. Without blood, the vampire withers away. Therein lies the thematic juxtaposition that defines the vampire's earthly existence: life depends on death. Well, sort of.

The vampire tradition in literature and film certainly suggests that life and death go hand in hand. The most popular nineteenth-century vampire stories

always described the vampire's kiss as simultaneously deadly and irresistible. Twentieth-century vampire films followed this logic, and it remains the dominant understanding to this day. In most of these narratives, the need to consume human blood implies a need to kill humans. However, over the last 30 years this condition has become less standard in vampire lore. The last three decades have seen a marked increase in the popularity of "vegetarian" vampires who feed off of animals because they are ethically opposed to killing humans. These are vampires that shun their instinctual desire to kill humans and find ways to negotiate the needs of the animal, demon, and human within. Sure, all of these vampires exist alongside other vampires who do not share their philosophical concerns, and they are often shunned by their undead peers. Nevertheless, these new incarnations of the modern vampire are some of the most well-known and well-liked characters of today.[1] Their popularity points to the need to understand today's vampire alongside more classic examples.

Today's vegetarian vampires are popular because readers and audiences see them as "human." They are loved not because they are different from us, but because they remind us of ourselves. This simple premise guides scholar Nina Auerbach's understanding of the vampire's popularity in *Our Vampires, Ourselves* (1997), a must-read for anyone who seeks to understand the vampire as cultural icon. Auerbach's argument rests on the observation that vampires, unlike other popular monsters, are mutable creatures who are as adaptable as they are fascinating.

> Ghosts, werewolves, and manufactured monsters are relatively change-less, more with eternity than with time; vampires blend into the changing cultures they inhabit. They inhere in our most intimate relationships; they are also hideous invaders of the normal. . . . [T]hey can be everything we are, while at the same time, they are fearful reminders of the infinite things we are not. (Auerbach 6)

Unlike other monsters, vampires live among humans. Their existence depends wholly on their ability to blend into society. They must mirror the period they inhabit, blend into the places they stay, and superficially mimic the people they meet. The vampire's existence depends almost entirely on his or her ability to adapt. Their adaptability is perhaps the main reason for their ubiquitous presence in popular culture. Their stories can be set against almost any backdrop or situation whether historical, political, or social. They are monsters with human faces. Although they are rumored to cast no reflection, they reflect the ugliest aspects of human nature by holding up a (metaphoric) mirror to society and force humans to confront the monster within.

How can vampires act as mirrors to society when most of them do not cast a reflection? Let's look at an example of how this works. A common modern cliché that is often invoked when hearing news of a horrible murder, mass bombing, or similar tragedy is that "times have become more violent." However, anyone who makes this statement in earnest clearly does not know

history. Murder, massacres, war, torture—these have all been part of the world's history for as long as there has been a record of human acts. The modern world was built on bloodshed. And while it is true that modern technology has increased people's ability to kill each other in massive numbers at alarming speeds, today's weapons and wars are merely new and improved versions of old methods and modes of governance.

Count Dracula, the most famous of all vampires, embodies humankind's history of bloodshed. He kills almost indiscriminately; he quenches his thirst for blood by any means necessary. His most effective weapon against his prey is his ability to remain cool, calm, and collected while his victims find themselves incapacitated. The historical Dracula, the medieval ruler whose name Bram Stoker borrowed for his villain, also exemplifies the violence that humans are capable of enacting in order to control their world. His reign resulted in thousands of deaths—both on and off the battlefield. In creating the fictional villain for his vampire novel, Stoker stitched together two stories of terror and torture. Scholar Stephen Arata summarizes the convergence of these dual narratives in *Dracula* as follows: "The Count's 'lust for blood' points in both directions: to the vampire's need for its special food, and also to the warrior's desire for conquest" (Arata 630). In other words, Count Dracula—both through his folkloric roots and through his historical name—has managed to teach us at least one thing over the last hundred or so years. The vampire's blood thirst is the history of the world.

THE HISTORY OF DRACULA

The following chapter traces the history of Dracula—the man, the monster, and the myth. The sections have been organized chronologically in order to first give the reader a historical portrait of Vlad III Dracula, the now-infamous Wallachian prince who reigned with an iron fist during the Middle Ages. The second section traces the history of the vampire in literature and culture prior to the publication of Bram Stoker's famous novel *Dracula* in 1897. The third section traces the major themes of Stoker's novel, and the fourth section provides an overview of the novel's history of adaptation beginning with early-twentieth-century film. Throughout these sections, a clear chronology of the Dracula legend emerges. However, what should also become apparent is that the Dracula legend is not as chronologically sound as many might think. Contrary to popular belief, the historical Vlad Dracula was not the primary source of inspiration for Stoker's novel. Moreover, most of the twentieth-century adaptations of the Dracula legend pay no attention to the historical Dracula, despite the fact that the medieval ruler achieved a worldwide fame during the twentieth century that would have been impossible during the Middle Ages.

The overview of the Dracula legend provided here asks readers to consider the role of adaptation and historical storytelling in solidifying cultural narratives. In short, the following chapter poses the following question: to

what extent does adaptation imbue a person, an event, or a story with immortality? Although Vlad Dracula was a notable historical figure, he would have never been included in this current volume of *Icons of the Middle Ages* had Stoker not borrowed his name in the late nineteenth century for his sensational vampire novel. Moreover, Stoker's novel would not be famous today if twentieth-century films, comics, and novels had not popularized his story and kept it relevant to modern audiences. Each retelling has imbued the legend of Dracula with immortality. We can understand Dracula's cultural power and immortality only by looking at each of these aspects of the Dracula legend in relation to one another.

VLAD III DRACULA (1431–1476)

Although Bram Stoker is the man responsible for introducing Count Dracula to the world in 1897, his fictional novel contains some very real historical elements that have become important to understanding Dracula's legend today. The myth is a modern production with medieval roots. The novel is set in the late nineteenth century, but its title character was born in the fifteenth century.

Vlad III Dracula ruled as *voivode* (prince) of Wallachia (a neighboring principality of what is present-day Romania) during three separate reigns in the fifteenth century. He briefly held the title separately in 1448 and 1476, but it was during his significant reign from 1456 to 1462 that he made a name for himself by ruling with an iron fist and being responsible for the death of tens of thousands.

Vlad III was born in 1431 in Transylvania to Vlad II Dracul and his second wife, Princess Cneajna of Moldavia. He was the third of Vlad II's four legitimate sons and the first son born to Princess Cneajna. Vlad III was born to a ruling family with a long history of power in Wallachia. His great-grandfather Radu I ruled Wallachia from 1377 to 1383. His grandfather Mircea I (also known as Mircea the Elder or Mircea the Great) was *voivode* from 1386 until his death in 1418. His uncle Alexandru I Aldea ruled from 1431 until his death in 1436. His father ruled from 1436 until 1442, and then again from 1443 until he was murdered in 1447. Vlad II's four sons would each rule Wallachia during their lives; however, it was his third son, Vlad III, who would reign the longest and would eventually become the most famous medieval ruler of Wallachia.

His father's reign is important to note because details of the two men's lives are often confused. Vlad II was a proud nationalist and staunch supporter of the Catholic Church and, like his son years later, spent most of his reign defending his country from the Ottoman Turks, who spent centuries expanding their empire across southeastern Europe, North Africa, and western Asia. In 1431, he was inducted into the Order of the Dragon, a selective organization founded in the early fifteenth century by the Holy Roman Emperor Sigismund

in order to defend the church from the Ottoman Empire. Vlad II was proud of his membership in the order; he immediately took the name Vlad Dracul, "dracul" meaning "dragon" in Romanian. Once he became a member of the Order of the Dragon, Vlad II was forever known as "Vlad the Dragon."

Although he did not know it at the time, Vlad II's name change would become an important part of his family's legacy. Vlad III was very proud of his father and honored to have his name. He called himself Vlad Dracula, which translates simply as "son of Dracul" or "son of the Dragon." The name change did not raise eyebrows during either man's lifetime, even though "dracul" also translates as "devil" in Romanian. This fact fascinated Bram Stoker more than 500 years later and is perhaps the main reason that most of the world is familiar with the Dracula name nearly seven centuries after the lives and deaths of these two fifteenth-century rulers.

The Draculs were a family of great honor, power, and respect, which of course earned them many enemies. Because of his nationalism and commitment to his religious beliefs, Vlad II naturally had a strained relationship with the leader of the Ottoman Empire, Sultan Murad II. However, political necessity often leads to pragmatic, sometimes cynical, measures. From 1442 to 1448, Vlad and his younger brother Radu were hostages to Sultan Murad II; they were left by their father, who had sworn loyalty to the sultan and support of Turkish interests in exchange for support of his rule. According to the historical Dracula's biographers, the two brothers received very different treatment under the sultan's supervision. Most biographers agree that Radu, the more handsome and charismatic of the two brothers, was treated kindly, while Vlad Dracula was regularly disciplined for being rude, disrespectful, and defiant, and thus forced to spend time alone. Rumor has it that Vlad Dracula developed a penchant for capturing, torturing, and killing insects and small rodents during long periods of solitary confinement in an underground dungeon in the sultan's palace. (Some scholars have even suggested that Stoker modeled his madman Renfield on this detail from the historical Vlad Dracula's childhood; however, such claims are unsubstantiated and the similarity is likely just coincidental.) In 1447, after his sons had been prisoners for five years, Vlad Dracul was murdered by Hungarian forces hoping to take control of Wallachia. The sultan appointed Vlad Dracula to the throne in 1448 in hopes that the young Vlad would show the same allegiance that his father did. However, Vlad Dracula was not prepared to lead and quickly lost power. Instead of returning to the sultan, though, he fled to Moldavia, where he spent most of the next three years in exile. During these years, Vlad Dracula prepared himself for a successful military career that eventually led to his ascendancy to power in 1456.

Vlad Dracula's second reign, from 1456 to 1462, solidified his place in Eastern European history. Although contemporary sources usually depict him as a cruel and unjust leader and a vicious murderer, some historical sources paint a different picture. That is not to say that Vlad Dracula was not responsible for many deaths during his periods of leadership; this fact is well documented.

However, not everyone agrees with the black-and-white portrayal of Vlad Dracula as an evil man. His resistance against the Ottoman Turks and the expansion of their empire made him a hero in the eyes of his people. To date, he remains a national hero of Romania, and a bust in his image is displayed at the Romanian National Military Museum. Ironically, although most of the world associates him with an evil, demonic character, in his homeland he is known as a religious hero for his (as well as his family's) well-documented support of monasteries throughout the medieval period and his courageous battles to defend Christianity from the influence of the Ottoman Turks (although historically, the Ottomans were tolerant toward Christians and Jews). Negative portraits and stories of the atrocities that he committed were circulated by his enemies and popularized by pamphlets published in Germany that received heavy circulation in the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

During his second reign, Vlad Dracula was especially revered by Romanian peasants because of his strained relationship with the boyars, or members of the aristocratic class. Although his civilian victims came from all walks of life, most were boyars and rich merchants who, according to Vlad Dracula, used their wealth to undermine his authority and act in self-interest instead of doing what he believed best for the people of Wallachia. Moreover, his father and eldest brother were killed by boyars, and one of his main priorities during his second reign as *voivode* was to avenge their murders. The most famous example of Vlad Dracula's class war against the boyars is the massacre that he led in 1459, which may have occurred on Saint Bartholomew's Day.[2] In a plan to avenge the deaths of his father and brother, he deceptively invited all of the region's boyars to a feast at his home. There he killed all of the older boyars. He forced the young and healthy ones into slavery, forcing them to rebuild the ruins of Poenari Castle, a thirteenth-century structure that Vlad Dracula wished to use as a military fortress because of its strategic location on a cliff in the Argeş River Valley. According to all official sources, he treated the boyars that he enslaved forcefully. When their clothes became so tattered that they fell off of their bodies, he forced them to work naked. Although there is no official body count associated with this event and its aftermath, it is estimated that thousands of people died as a result of this raid on the aristocracy, which also included wealthy merchants. By some contemporary accounts, Vlad may have executed as many as 100,000 people during the years that he ruled Wallachia, though modern scholars believe that these estimates are significantly exaggerated.

The most famous image associated with his reign blends the Saint Bartholomew's Day incident with his most well-known military tactic in a wood engraving of Vlad Dracula looking out on "The Forest of the Impaled" while feasting. To show his enemies that he was a force to be reckoned with, Vlad Dracula ordered his troops to impale all of the Turkish prisoners of war on large wooden stakes. It is estimated that approximately 20,000 stakes—each with at least one victim attached—were erected in a gruesome display of his power. Impalement quickly became Vlad Dracula's preferred method of

torture and execution for its ability to strike fear in his opponents. Some reports are more forgiving of these gruesome acts, explaining that this was one of the only ways that Vlad Dracula could win battles against the much larger and stronger Ottoman army. However, according to most reports and biographies, Vlad Dracula regularly engaged in this type of brutal display of power both on and off the battlefield. Regardless of why he began impaling his enemies, his continuous use of this very visceral and visual method of execution eventually earned him the nickname Vlad the Impaler (although there is no evidence that Vlad Dracula ever used the nickname himself or if he would even have approved of the moniker). His penchant for impalement posthumously earned him the name Vlad Ţepeş (Romanian for "Impaler"). In 1476, when he was killed fighting against Basarab Laiota, a political rival, and his Turkish allies, his victorious enemies decapitated him and sent his head to Constantinople, where it was displayed on a stake as proof of his death.[3]

THE LATER REPUTATION OF VLAD DRACULA

Although Vlad Dracula was well known by his people and his enemies during his lifetime, his presence in the early historical record is spotty. As previously stated, stories of Vlad Dracula's displays of power were published in Germany and Russia in the late fifteenth century, and there is evidence that approximately a dozen different pamphlets circulated through the mid-sixteenth century. These publications were negative in tone, as both the Germans and the Russians would have been politically invested in highlighting the *voivode*'s most despicable actions. These pamphlets were highly sensational, as suggested by the most famous title, "The Frightening and Truly Extraordinary Story of a Wicked Blood-Drinking Tyrant Called Prince Dracula." Although some of the facts included were true, Vlad Dracula was never known to drink the blood of his victims. The details in these pamphlets were highly exaggerated and painted a heavily biased picture against Vlad Dracula that one would expect from his enemies. By contrast, Romanian oral narratives circulating in the vicinity of Vlad Dracula's homeland were mostly positive in their descriptions of the *voivode*, but these narratives received less circulation because they were not available in print. As a result, the negative narratives dominated Vlad Dracula's depiction throughout Europe following his death.

   Although Vlad Dracula garnered significant attention during the hundred years that immediately followed his death, the sensational narratives that circulated throughout Europe eventually stopped being produced. Throughout the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries, virtually no one knew about Vlad Dracula. Of course, the published material was available to anyone who wished to research the history of the area and the Wallachian campaign against the Ottoman Turks, but this information was not available to the public at large. Vlad Dracula's most notable appearance in print prior to Stoker's novel is an entry in William Wilkinson's *An Account of the Principalities of*

Wallachia and Moldavia (published in 1820), which Stoker would later use in his own research. Nevertheless, Dracula would not become a household name throughout Europe (much less the world) until the publication of Stoker's novel in 1897, and, even then, information about the historical Vlad Dracula would not become readily available until the twentieth century, when he was resurrected by literary scholars and historians in search of source material for Stoker's novel.

It is safe to say that the historical Vlad Dracula was resurrected in print during the twentieth century because of the long-lived popularity of Stoker's novel. However, Vlad Dracula's newfound fame after Stoker's *Dracula* has come at a hefty price. Because Stoker's novel and its film adaptations have reintroduced Vlad Dracula to the world, his history has become almost inextricable from vampire lore in the modern imagination. This pairing has unfortunately led to the popularization of erroneous information that is repeated over and over in Dracula studies, regardless of whether they are produced by scholars or fans. These errors are so pervasive in contemporary scholarship that they should receive attention in all work published on Dracula—the man or the myth—until the record is permanently corrected.

The first misconception of many vampire aficionados is that impalement, staking, and beheading in vampire mythology is a direct result of Vlad the Impaler's preferred method of executing his enemies as well as his death at the hands of the Ottoman Turks. In actuality, this part of what has now become standard vampire lore originated with vampire scares that took place in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, in which the coffins of rumored vampires were exhumed for staking or beheading. The earliest vampire stories do not put forth a standard method for killing the creatures of the night. It just so happens that a wooden stake through the heart and beheading are very efficient methods of dispatching of any being, whether living, dead, or undead. In the same vein, individuals accused of witchcraft were usually burned alive, and this is the most likely source for the introduction of this execution method in vampire lore.

The most important error that is consistently repeated in discussions of Dracula is that the medieval *voivode* was the main source of inspiration behind Stoker's novel. Since the 1970s, almost any guide to the popular history of Dracula suggests that Vlad the Impaler's gruesome executions and high body count were so extraordinary that they prompted Stoker to write a novel that would immortalize the medieval prince. However, although Vlad Dracula was certainly responsible for many deaths, he was not the only ruler during the Middle Ages known for violent executions. As Constantin Rezachevici explains, "Cruel punishment was a characteristic of the Middle Ages and, partially, of the Modern Epoch in central and western Europe, meant not so much as a punitive measure, but as intimidation" (12). More importantly, because pre-twentieth-century accounts of these executions are limited to the pamphlets published during the Middle Ages, it is unlikely that Stoker even knew of the historical Vlad Dracula's exploits, although his notes for *Dracula*

do in fact prove that he came across the historical figure while researching Eastern Europe for the sensational novel that he began planning in 1890.

Stoker's *Dracula* contains only two explicit references to the historical Vlad Dracula and one implied reference. The first reference comes from Harker's perspective, who notices Count Dracula's regal tone. He describes his Transylvanian host's peculiar rhetorical style:

> In his speaking of things and people, and especially of battles, he spoke as if he had been present at them all. . . . Whenever he spoke of his house he always said "we," and spoke almost in the plural, like a king speaking. I wish I could put down all he said exactly as he said it, for to me it was most fascinating. It seemed to have in it a whole history of the country. (*Dracula,* ch. 3, 33)[4]

Harker knows nothing about the historical Vlad Dracula. As such, Stoker uses the first reference as a way to foreshadow the few historical details that he includes in his novel.

The novel's second reference to the historical Dracula comes in a lengthy, prideful speech delivered by the count himself, abridged as follows:

> "Who was it but one of my own race who as Voivode crossed the Danube and beat the Turk on his own ground? This was a Dracula indeed! Woe was it that his own unworthy brother, when he had fallen, sold his people to the Turk and brought the shame of slavery on them! Was it not this Dracula, indeed, who inspired that other of his race who in a later age again and again brought his forces over the great river into Turkeyland; who, when he was beaten back, came again, and again, and again, though he had to come alone from the bloody field where his troops were being slaughtered, since he knew that he alone could ultimately triumph?" (*Dracula,* ch. 3, 34–35)

Here, the count proudly relates the history of his family, which is an embellished overview of Vlad Dracula's history. Throughout his speech, he never names a particular member of the Dracul family. Instead he speaks about all of them as if they were one and the same. The nineteenth-century reader might infer that Harker's host is all of the Draculas mentioned above; this would certainly fit with the immortal mystique Stoker strives for in the narrative. Today's reader who is familiar with the history of the Dracul family knows that this passage coincides with the life of Vlad III Dracula. Note that the count describes himself in heroic terms; he even scoffs at the idea that Dracula was a selfish leader.

The novel's final reference to the historical Dracula comes from Abraham Van Helsing, who finally figures out the mystery of Dracula's identity:

> "I have asked my friend Arminius, of Buda-Pesth University, to make his record; and, from all the means that are, he tell me of what he has been.

He must, indeed, have been that Voivode Dracula who won his name against the Turk, over the great river on the very frontier of Turkeyland. If it be so, then was he no common man; for in that time, and for centuries after, he was spoken of as the cleverest and the most cunning, as well as the bravest of the sons of the 'land beyond the forest.'" (*Dracula,* ch. 18, 212)

Note that there is no reference to the violent execution method that Vlad Dracula is best known for today. This lack of information corroborates scholar Elizabeth Miller's insistence that Stoker likely knew very little about Vlad Dracula's exploits.

While it is obvious that Stoker borrowed both Vlad Dracula's name and some details of his life for the novel, claims that the history of Vlad the Impaler inspired Stoker to write his now-classic vampire novel are known to be widely exaggerated. In fact, as Elizabeth Miller and Robert Eighteen-Bisang have demonstrated in their edition of Stoker's notes for *Dracula,* the villain was originally named Count Wampyr. Stoker changed the name to Count Dracula after he came across the name in supplementary research that he conducted after he had already completed significant work on the novel. The inspiration for the novel came from the popularity of the vampire in nineteenth-century sensation fiction and plays (discussed in the next section of this chapter); the historical Dracula merely provided details that would make the sensational story more believable to Stoker's turn-of-the-twentieth-century readers.

Miller, who is arguably the world's most knowledgeable Dracula scholar, has made debunking this false information a priority in her academic career. She has published several books and dozens of articles that prove beyond a doubt that theories of Stoker's reliance on the history of Vlad Dracula are based on conjecture, not facts. The source of the confusion apparently comes from research conducted and published by Radu Florescu and Raymond Mc-Nally beginning in the 1970s and subsequently published in a series of four major works that are frequently cited in all Dracula studies, bibliographies, and fan guides: *In Search of Dracula* (1972), *Dracula: A Biography of Vlad the Impaler, 1431–1476* (1973), *The Essential "Dracula": A Completely Illustrated and Annotated Edition of Bram Stoker's Classic Novel* (1979), and *Dracula, Prince of Many Faces: His Life and Times* (1989). Although these works have perpetuated the false idea that Stoker's fictional vampire was mostly inspired by the historical Vlad Dracula, they are nonetheless extremely important works of scholarship that have made strong contributions to understandings of the novel and historical research about the medieval Wallachian *voivode*. The conflation of the two figures may be an unfortunate side effect, but there is no doubt that we would not know as much about the historical Vlad Dracula without Florescu's and McNally's contributions to the field.

Fortunately, not all scholarly attempts to provide a comprehensive and accurate history of Vlad Dracula have failed to separate the fictional vampire from the historical ruler. The best work to date has been published by Kurt

Treptow, the following book-length projects: *Dracula: Essays on the Life and Times of Vlad Tepes* (1991) and *Vlad III Dracula: The Life and Times of the Historical Dracula* (2000). A historian by training, Treptow is uninterested in the myth of Dracula introduced by Stoker and perpetuated by popular culture. His biography of the medieval prince includes no references to the nineteenth-century novels or the later films. As such, he is one of the few scholars who, along with Miller, do not fall into the historical vampire trap of Dracula studies.[5]

VAMPIRES IN LITERATURE AND CULTURE BEFORE BRAM STOKER'S *DRACULA*

Rather than the only source of inspiration for Stoker's Count Dracula, Vlad Dracula was merely one of many behind the most well-known vampire in popular culture. Stoker had several models to draw from while writing *Dracula,* ranging from historical persons to fictional characters. The most direct inspiration for the 1897 novel was likely Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu's 1871 novella *Carmilla*. Le Fanu, an Irish author of gothic tales, set his vampire story in the province of Styria in Austria, a region in Eastern Europe west of Transylvania. Styria was also the original setting of Stoker's *Dracula,* leading most scholars to believe that Le Fanu's novella was the primary source for Stoker as he drafted his first and most famous novel. However, like the historical Vlad Dracula, Le Fanu's fictional *Carmilla* is just another piece of a massive puzzle if one is determined to put together a comprehensive history of *Dracula* in particular and vampires in general.

Tales of vampires or vampire-like creatures are a global phenomenon dating to ancient times. Nearly every culture in the world has its own vampires. Mesopotamian mythology tells the story of Lilitu, who lived off the blood of babies. She would later become Lilith in Hebrew demonology, who, along with her daughters, took men, women, and children as their victims. The ancient Greeks included the legend of Lamia in their extensive mythology. There were also *lamiae,* demons that appeared to suitors as lovely ladies only to devour young men after seducing them.[6] In India, the fanged goddess Kali is a blood-drinker who symbolizes death and destruction. Lesser deities in Hindu mythology include the *vetala,* hostile spirits stuck between death and the afterlife who take possession of corpses and attack the living. The Jiang Shi is a Chinese mythical creature that sucks the life force from its victims; they are forced to hop around because their bodies are stiff from rigor mortis. Japanese myths tell of vampire cats that have the ability to appear as their human victims. Other vampire legends from around the world are the Bruxsa of Portugal, Cihuateteo of Mexico, the Aswang in the Philippines, and the Asanbosam and Sasabonsam of Ghana and Togo in Western Africa, to name a few. This list is not exhaustive. A comprehensive history would require a book unto itself, and several have been written to date with this exact aim.[7]

Despite the existence of vampire legends around the globe, no region of the world can boast a higher concentration of early vampire folklore than Eastern Europe. Romania, Moravia, Croatia, and Serbia are not only the regional homelands of the historical Vlad Dracula and the fictional Count Dracula; they also make up the region that gave birth to Western vampire lore from the medieval period to the modern day. Thus, their ubiquitous presence in classic vampire stories of the Western world is not coincidental.

Before becoming a pop-culture icon, the vampire gained notoriety as a folk-story villain. Naturally, these stories first circulated via oral traditions that were limited to local populations. However, it did not take long for those oral folk histories to find their way into print, the medium that would make mass dissemination of these legends possible. It is interesting to note that although vampire legends can be found in ancient texts, it was actually the spread of the printing press following the medieval period that gave birth to the modern vampire.

The first documented book-length study on vampires was written by the Greek scholar, theologian, and physician Leo Allatius in 1645. *De Graecorum hodie quirundam opinationibus* (*On Certain Modern Opinions among the Greeks*) focused almost exclusively on the *vrykolakas,* Greek vampires that shared many characteristics with the vampires of Eastern European regional folklore. Another early study is Phillip Rohr's *De Masticatione Mortuorum* (*On the Chewing of the Dead*), published in 1679 in Germany. Both seventeenth-century studies are notable for their scholarly take on folklore and for their role in promoting the belief that vampires were in fact real manstations of evil. They also laid the groundwork for similar works that followed in the eighteenth century, namely Cardinal Giuseppe Davanzati's *Dissertazione sopre I Vampiri* (*A Dissertation on Vampires*), published in 1744 in Italy, and French Benedictine monk Agustin Calmet's *Dissertations sur les Apparitions des Angel, des Démons, et des Esprits, et sur les revenants, et Vampires de Hundrie, de Boheme, de Moravia, et de Silesie* (*A Dissertation on Apparitions, Angels, Demons, Spirits, Revenants, and Vampires from Hungary, Bohemia, Moravia, and Silesia*), published in 1746.

Vampires were not only gracing the pages of scholarly works during this time; they were also allegedly making themselves visible to government officials and rural peasants. There were several vampire scares in Eastern Europe during the early eighteenth century, and reports of these occurrences can be credited with the vampire's rise to fame in the Western world shortly thereafter. Two purported outbreaks of vampire activity in Medwegya, Serbia—in 1727 and then again in 1731—are of particular importance, especially since the same man was believed responsible for both episodes. The first series of sightings came shortly after the death of Arnold Paole, a local soldier who once boasted of being bitten by a vampire during his military service. Several villagers died shortly after Paole's death, and locals settled the disturbance by driving a wooden stake through the dead soldier's corpse. The problem was dispatched rather quickly and did not cause any stir outside of the village

until 1731 when a new crop of reports sprouted in the same neighborhood. These new vampire attacks were blamed on recently deceased villagers who had allegedly been bitten by Paole in 1727. This time, the residents of Medwegya went to greater extents to quell the disturbances. Austrian officials were called upon, and a full commission led by military surgeon Johann Flückinger was appointed to investigate the occurrence. A quick, three-week investigation ended with a report published in late January 1732. The *Visum et Repertum* (*Seen and Reported*) quickly became a bestseller in Germany and was translated and reprinted throughout Europe. The same publication can also be credited for the first appearance of the term "vampire" in England and France as the Flückinger report was reprinted or quoted later that year by several well-known and respectable periodicals in Western Europe such as England's *London Journal,* France's *Mercure de France,* and Holland's *Le Glaneur historique.*

Mass printing allowed regional folk stories and reports of "real" vampire sightings to spread like a virus throughout eighteenth-century Europe. Scholar Erik Butler succinctly describes European vampire mania in *Metamorphoses of the Vampire in Literature in Film: Cultural Transformations in Europe, 1732–1933*: "For about twenty years in the early half of the eighteenth century, parts of Europe caught vampire fever" (28). Within one year of the publication of the Flückinger commission's *Visum et Repertum,* at least 20 publications about vampires appeared in Germany alone. "Vampire" soon became a household word in England and France. The Eastern vampire made his official Western debut in 1732, and his seduction of audiences in Germany, France, and Britain would only continue to grow over the next few centuries. Although the vampire was said to prolong its existence by consuming the blood of its victims, it was actually print culture that imbued the vampire with immortality.

Oral folkloric traditions served the purpose of perpetuating regional vampire myths in Eastern Europe during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. However, the vampire did not reach a mass audience until accounts found their way into Western European publications. The report produced by the Flückinger commission epitomizes how this worked. The Paole case was picked up and translated by several Western European periodicals. Those publications, in turn, begat additional written pieces that appeared in even more publications.

For example, the May 20, 1732, issue of the *Country Journal: or, The Craftsman* (a weekly newspaper published in London from 1726 to 1752) opens with a lengthy piece that includes not only a short overview of the Paole (here presented with the Anglicized spelling "Paul") case, but also an extensive discussion regarding the possibility of such an extraordinary event that "at first sight seems to be impossible and even ridiculous." The piece, written by Caleb D'Anvers (the pseudonym of the newspaper's founding editor, Nicholas Amhurst), demonstrates the ways that vampires could appeal to a mass audience with different sensibilities. The article opens with a fictionalized letter from

Vienna, in which is enclosed an excerpt from the Flückinger commission's report. These items are followed by a "transcription" of a dispute between a "Doctor of Physick" and a beautiful young lady described as "a great Admirer of *strange* and *wonderful Occurrences*." The gist of the dispute is predictable: the doctor presents a logical, scientific refutation denying the possibility that vampires exist, while the lady sides with superstition. Their heated debate is quelled by the following rational explanation offered by the author, who is also in attendance at the gathering:

> I must agree with the *learned Doctor* that an *inanimated Corpse* cannot possibly perform any *vital Functions*; and yet I am firmly persuaded, with the *young Lady*, that there are *Vampyres*, or *dead Bodies*, which afflict and torment the *Living*. . . . I must desire you to reflect the Account, now before us, comes from the Eastern Part of the World, which hath been always remarkable for writing in the *allegorical Style*. Besides, it deserves our Consideration that the States of *Hungary* are, at present, under the Subjection of the *Turks*, or the *Germans*, and governed by Them with a pretty hard Rein; which obliges Them to couch all their Complaints under *Types, Figures* and *Parables*. I believe you will make no Doubt that this Relation of the *Vampyres* is a Piece of that Kind and contains a secret Satire upon the Administration of *those Countries*. . . . (*Country Journal: or, The Craftsman*, May 20, 1732, p. 1; reprinted in the *Dictionary of Literary Biography* 42–43)

What follows is a lengthy justification of the author's interpretation of the vampire as an allegorical critique of government corruption, in which both specific and general examples are cited to support his argument. The author's interpretation is predictable given the forum; the *Craftsman* was a political publication noted for being one of the leading anti-Walpole periodicals of the time.[8]

The piece in the *Craftsman* is important to the history of the vampire in literature and culture and provides a bridge between the historical and fictional roots of Dracula for several reasons. First, it is one of the first vampire appearances in a well-known English periodical. Second, although Vlad Dracula is never mentioned in this piece (why would he be?), the eighteenth-century writer is correct to note that the region in question is one that has a long history of political strife (one that dates back to the medieval period and thus to the historical reigns of the Dracul family). Third, this piece demonstrates how the vampire quickly became a popular topic of discussion in literary and political circles, regardless of whether or not people believed in them. The article presents several different points of view that span the range of opinions and approaches to vampirism—superstitious, scientific, and political. In fact, it is important to note that although the vampires noted in early accounts came from all walks of life, nineteenth-century vampires are almost always depicted as aristocrats. Throughout the nineteenth century, vampires

frequently became a symbol of a corrupt aristocracy. Karl Marx famously invokes the vampire metaphor three times in the first volume of his classic work *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy* (1867), writing that "capital is dead labour which, vampire-like, lives only by sucking living labour, and lives the more, the more labour it sucks." Friedrich Engels, Marx's contemporary and coauthor on *The Communist Manifesto* (1848), also found the metaphor useful when describing the "vampire property-holding class" in *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (1845).[9] These examples prove that D'Anvers was not the only writer who thought that political vampires were the scariest and most threatening monsters of his day.

The fourth and final point in this series is that the D'Anvers article answers a question that crosses the minds of many readers when considering the broader historical context that defines the eighteenth century: how did the vampire, a supernatural creature, manage to rise to fame during the Age of Enlightenment? The D'Anvers piece explains how the vampire found a welcoming invitation into the homes and hearts of eighteenth-century citizens, whose increasing participation in political debates found the bloodsucker a fitting allegorical figure through which to criticize government corruption and abuses of power. Here it is important to keep in mind that the major political event of the latter half of the eighteenth century was the French Revolution—one of the bloodiest events of modern history—at a time when it was common to see hundreds of people tortured and executed in public. In this way, the sight of hundreds of heads severed by the guillotine during the Reign of Terror in late-eighteenth-century Paris has something in common with the forest of impaled bodies during the reign of Vlad Dracula in medieval Wallachia.

The reasons cited above all explain how the vampire found legitimacy during a historical time that is noted for eschewing superstition in favor of reason. However, the rise of the vampire is tied not only to the scientific and political movements of the eighteenth century, but also to the period's aesthetic movements. Eighteenth-century sightings, reports, and discussions could not have come at a better time. By the middle of the century, the novel was coming into its own as a literary genre. By the end of the century, the gothic novel was one of the most popular forms of entertainment, and its themes found their way into poems and dramas as well. The popularity of the gothic, combined with the public's fascination with reports of supernatural occurrences, set the stage for the vampire's ascendancy from folkloric bogeyman to cultural icon.

Although not always the focus of the work, the vampire motif can be found in several nineteenth-century literary productions. Limiting oneself to just a brief survey list will provide countless hours of entertainment for today's fan of vampire stories. For example, those interested in poetry of the Romantic and Victorian periods will enjoy Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's "The Bride of Corinth" (1797), Robert Southey's *Thalaba, the Destroyer* (1801), John Stagg's "The Vampyre" (1810), Lord Byron's *The Giaour: A Fragment of a Turkish Tale* (1813) and *Manfred* (1816), Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *Christabel* (1816), John Keats's *Lamia* (1820), Christina Rossetti's *Goblin Market*

(1862), Vasile Alecsandri's "The Vampyre" (1886), Arthur Symons's "The Vampire," written in 1894 and included in his collection *Lesbia and Other Poems* (1920), and Rudyard Kipling's "The Vampire," written in 1897 and published in his collection *Poems and Ballads* (1899). While some purists may frown at the inclusion of some of these poems in the list because the works do not deal exclusively with vampires, all of the aforementioned poems include at least a vampiric subtext that should be counted in the history of the vampire in literary culture.

Nineteenth-century vampire or vampire-inspired prose examples abound as well: Edgar Allan Poe's "Ligeia" (1838), William Gilbert's "The Last Lords of Gardonal" (1867), Eliza Lynn Linton's "The Fate of Madame Cabanel" (1880), Phil Robinson's "The Man-Eating Tree" (1881) and "The Last of the Vampires" (1893), Count Stanislaus Eric Stenbock's "The True Story of a Vampire" (1894), Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's "The Parasite" (1894), H. G. Wells's "The Flowering of the Strange Orchid" (1894), Augustus Hare's "The Vampire of Croglin Grange" (1896), and Mary Elizabeth Braddon's "Good Lady Duncayne" (1896).[10] Readers who are dedicated to reading the complete vampire canon will no doubt be interested in James Malcolm Ryner's *Varney the Vampire; or, The Feast of Blood*, a serialized penny dreadful published over the course of two years (1845–47). Rymer's lengthy text—totaling 220 chapters and more than 600,000 words—was one of the most well-known vampire texts in the second half of the nineteenth century. The list above is not complete; there were many more stories and poems (many more that are now lost to modern audiences). Nevertheless, the sheer number of texts demonstrates the wide reach that vampires possessed in the century following their introduction to Western Europe. Together, all of these texts paved the way for Bram Stoker's *Dracula,* its subsequent popularity in the twentieth century, and the popularity of the vampire today. However, in the sea of vampire stories listed here, none inspired Stoker's *Dracula* as much as John Polidori's *The Vampyre* (1819) and Le Fanu's *Carmilla* (1871).

Polidori's short novella (it clocks in at approximately 30 pages in modern printings) is credited as being the first English-language vampire story. Until its publication in 1819, English-speaking audiences knew vampires only through stories in periodicals and passing references in poems. Polidori's *The Vampyre* effectively launched the vampire's literary prominence. No longer relegated to haunt from the shadows, the undead was now the centerpiece in fictional prose. The story follows Aubrey, a young English aristocrat, as he embarks on a tour of the Continent, a customary rite of passage for young men of means in the nineteenth century. Aubrey is fascinated by his traveling companion Lord Ruthven (renamed Lord Strongmore in later editions), whose liberal lifestyle, irresistible personality, and seductive powers prove disastrous to all who find themselves lured by his charms. Aubrey and Ruthven spend considerable time in Athens, where Aubrey falls in love with Ianthe and first encounters tales of vampires through local legends. Unfortunately, Aubrey's lesson comes through too many losses. He is unable to figure out that Ruthven

is responsible for the death of Ianthe. He finally figures it out when he returns to England, only to learn that his sister has fallen victim to the same vampire, now using "the earl of Marsden" as his pseudonym.

Polidori's plot is a simple one that might leave today's readers unimpressed. However, the story had significant success during the Romantic period, and it went through several editions and translations. Polidori's tale was also staged several times over the next 30 years, as dramatic adaptation was a common practice for sensational hits throughout the nineteenth century. The dramatist James Robinson Planché's adaptation *The Vampyre; or, The Bride of the Greek Isles* made a successful stage debut in 1820 and continued to be produced into the 1850s. The famous melodramatic actor Thomas Potter Cooke played the vampire approximately 300 times over the course of his career, making Lord Ruthven the most famous vampire in England until he lost that title to Count Dracula at the end of the century. Not limiting himself to the genre of romantic melodrama, Planché reworked the story for another stage production as *Giovanni the Vampire!!! or, How Shall We Get Rid of Him?* a burletta that premiered at the Adelphi Theatre in 1821. Dramatic adaptations of Polidori's story soon traveled to France through Charles Nodier's melodrama *Le Vampire* (1820) and to Germany a few years later in Heinrich Marschner's opera *Der Vampyr* (1828).

Although *The Vampyre* entertained audiences for decades, Polidori did not personally enjoy the popularity of his production for long. He committed suicide in 1821, at the age of 25. Although he managed to publish a few more texts (the longest being the short novel *Ernestus Berchtold; or, The Modern Oedipus,* also published in 1819), *The Vampyre* remains his most significant literary production. His diary is his next greatest contribution to the literary world, specifically because the focus of the work is his experience as Lord Byron's personal physician during the Romantic poet's time in Switzerland during the summer of 1816, where he famously spent the majority of his time with Percy Bysshe Shelley and Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin (who would later marry Shelley). The trio's time at the rented Villa Diodati has become the most famous (or, more accurately, infamous) house party in literary history, because it was during a ghost-story competition among these writers that Mary began her famous novel *Frankenstein* and Byron briefly outlined and then abandoned the plot of a vampire story. Polidori picked up the fragment where Byron left off, developing it into his own tale of terror. However, although the finished product was definitely Polidori's, *The Vampyre* never shook its beginnings as Byron's bogeyman. Today, it is largely understood that Polidori modeled Lord Ruthven on Lord Byron, infusing his literary vampire with the charisma and mystery that made Byron a celebrity in his day. Lord Ruthven's characterization as a sexual predator is also modeled after Byron and his many sexual liaisons, which not only caused trouble for his lovers, but also forced the poet into a self-imposed exile from England once rumors of an incestuous relationship with his half-sister caused his marriage to fall apart. Polidori infused his vampire story with sexual undertones that mirrored Byron's reputation. These

sexual themes continued to be developed throughout the nineteenth century and remain a staple of vampire novels and films today.

The other major influence on Stoker's *Dracula* emerged 50 years after Polidori introduced English audiences to his sexy vampire. Seduction carries the reader of Le Fanu's *Carmilla* through the novella. In fact, it is largely considered to be the first lesbian vampire tale (although it is unclear whether Le Fanu intended same-sex eroticism to be the centerpiece of his tale). Set in a solitary forest castle in Styria, the story is a coming-of-age narrative told from the perspective of Laura, a lonely teenager who longs for a friend. One day, a young woman of Laura's age is suddenly left in the family's care. The two young women immediately hit it off; however, it soon becomes clear that Carmilla is no ordinary girl. Before long, Laura begins to have disturbing dreams of being bitten. The reader eventually learns that Carmilla is the newest name taken by the vampire Mircalla, the Countess Karnstein, who takes the form of a large cat in order to stalk her prey. She is eventually found out and defeated once the group is joined by Baron Vordenburg, a vampire expert and obvious literary model for Stoker's Professor Abraham Van Helsing. The vampire countess is defeated but is never forgotten by those who survive. The story ends with Laura remembering Carmilla, first as the beautiful girl whom she met in the forest, then as the monstrous fiend whose hideous face she saw as the vampire was vanquished. Laura admits to the reader that she sometimes thinks of the possibility that Carmilla might still be alive, an ending that suggests that she would welcome the vampire's return. *Carmilla* is notable for its similarities to Stoker's novel. From the setting to the characters to the seductive allure of its shape-shifting, aristocratic villain, *Carmilla* doubtless directly influenced *Dracula* more than did any other text.

Stoker inherited all of the historical, political, and fictional incarnations of the vampire from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The influence of each can be seen throughout his famous novel. It is important to keep these vampire predecessors in mind whenever studying Stoker's *Dracula* and the incarnations of the same text that followed into the next century, as no vampire—not even Count Dracula himself—exists independently of the specters that came before.

BRAM STOKER'S *DRACULA* (1897)

Although vampires populated the pages and stages of the nineteenth-century, the most important literary contribution to the vampire myth in contemporary culture is Bram Stoker's 1897 novel, *Dracula*. Despite being the most famous vampire novel, *Dracula* is not *only* a vampire novel. Published at the turn of the twentieth century, *Dracula* addresses typical *fin de siècle* (end-of-century) cultural anxieties about science, religion, modern technology, politics, socioeconomic class, and sexuality. The colorful cast of characters voice concerns about all of these issues throughout the novel.

Today's reader may find the novel's epistolary structure fragmented. However, the letters, diary entries, ship's logs, and other documents that make up the narrative allow the story to be told from multiple perspectives and bring into relief the novel's many themes and layers. The epistolary structure, coupled with the historical details that Stoker includes, also lend credibility to an otherwise implausible tale. The story of a centuries-old vampire hardly seems believable unless several people attest to its authenticity, and this is precisely why Stoker reveals his fantastic story through the combined voices of Mina Murray, Jonathan Harker, and John Seward, among others. This technique is not unique to *Dracula*; many nineteenth-century gothic thrillers were written in the same way. Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley's *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* (1818) and Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886) are two classic examples of epistolary gothic narratives that gave birth to some of the most famous monsters ever introduced to modern audiences. The structure of *Dracula* follows not only these, but many eighteenth- and nineteenth-century gothic thrillers.

The structural similarities between *Dracula, Frankenstein,* and other gothic novels of this time are one of many ways that Stoker's undead villain had much in common with not only the vampires that came before him, but also the monsters that haunted nineteenth-century readers before the novel's publication. Like Frankenstein's monster and the one-man duo of Jekyll and Hyde, Dracula's monstrous body is a site for the present struggle between the past and the future. This thematic struggle is also a generic convention of the gothic, in which present-day concerns are espoused and examined through a narrative set in the past and thus providing a safe critical distance from the anxieties that the work is trying to address. What exactly does this mean? To put it more simply, gothic novels that either are set in or heavily engage with the past often rely on a form of escapism. In order to address an issue that the author deems critical to his or her time, the author writes a similar struggle into a historical setting that, on the surface, appears to be very different from the present. The reader is asked to consider the implications of this struggle without directly criticizing his or her opinions about a similar issue in the present day. For example, among the many dangers that heroines of many early gothic novels faced, sexual threats were common. According to several twentieth-century scholars, the inclusion of a sexual threat in a gothic novel was one way that an eighteenth- or nineteenth-century author might criticize the cultural oppression of women in their day. (Another genre that often engages in this practice is science fiction, although in that case the present-day struggle typically plays out in the future. In this instance, one might consider how apocalyptic settings critique the massive use of weaponry in war or the misuse of technology.)

While it is tempting to read such narratives as classic tales of good versus evil, most texts or movies are multilayered, multithematic narratives that resist such a simple binary. *Dracula* is no exception. If a single binary could be identified as the power behind the narrative, then old versus new would

more accurately describe the novel's thematic catalyst. The clash between the old world and the new is evident in the novel's premise. Count Dracula, an aging aristocrat, employs a young lawyer to help him move from a crumbling castle in the countryside to the modern city. Despite the safety of his old digs, Dracula is dying (figuratively speaking). His only chance of survival—of ensuring a continued lineage—depends on his ability to move into and adapt to the modern world.

Strangely, the premise of the most famous vampire novel of all opens with a real-estate transaction. Jonathan Harker travels by train to meet his client and seal the deal. The reason for Harker's trip to Transylvania is banal at best; however, this mundane business deal perfectly sets the stage for the novel's supernatural thematic struggles. In the old world, power was acquired through military conquests. In the modern world, power is defined by way of the acquisition of wealth through business transactions. Harker, the young English attorney, is acutely aware of the importance of this sale. His professional ambition and his desire to provide for his future wife are what put him on the train to Transylvania in the first place. These motivations keep him traveling despite the warnings of locals in Bistritz, who obviously know more about Harker's strange client than they dare to say. Despite their vague yet energetic warnings, Harker reminds the reader of the trip's importance: "there was business to be done, and I could allow nothing to interfere with it" (*Dracula,* ch. 1, 13). Financial interest before self-preservation—such are the demands of the modern world.

Almost all of the novel's themes can be traced back to a struggle between the old world and the new, antiquity versus modernity. Dracula is old, as is the castle he lives in and the traditions that he holds on to. Despite his wealth, the count has no modern luxuries. Even his business sense is antiquated. When Harker explores the count's castle, he is stricken by its barrenness and the following discovery:

> The only thing I found was a great heap of gold in one corner—gold of all kinds, Roman, and British, and Austrian, and Hungarian, and Greek and Turkish money, covered with a film of dust, as though it had lain long in the ground. None of it that I noticed was less than three hundred years old. There were also chains and ornaments, some jewelled, but all of them old and stained. (*Dracula,* ch. 4, 50)

Count Dracula reeks of antiquity, especially when seen through the eyes of the modern narrator. The old world–new world dichotomy does not end there, though. This thematic tension is so crucial to the narrative that it distinctly and inextricably plays out through several cultural arenas—geographically, historically, politically, and socially—in Stoker's novel.

The first way that old world meets new in *Dracula* is through geography. The novel opens with an entry from Jonathan Harker's diary, cataloging the onset of his trip to meet the terrible count. Like many nineteenth-century

novels, *Dracula* is preoccupied with the picturesque, even more so since the sensational story presented begins with a trip. Harker is traveling by train from England to Transylvania to meet his newest client. He is hyper-aware of leaving his homeland for a dangerous new terrain, and everything about his journey strikes him as strange and alien. Of course, the changes he describes (new terrain, new dress, new customs, new language) are wholly expected of travel to a new country. However, Harker notes that the changes are greater than those one would expect when crossing a national boundary. "The impression I had was that we were leaving the West and entering the East," he writes in his diary (*Dracula,* ch. 1, 9). Thus, the novel opens with an awareness of difference that is defined regionally. There is a visible difference between Western Europe and Eastern Europe, and the first character that the reader encounters in the novel drives this point home. He is a stranger in a strange land who immediately realizes that the cultural norms of his homeland will do him no good in what is described as a wild, untamed region.

Harker's descriptions of the obvious differences between England and Eastern Europe serve two purposes. First, setting a story in a foreign land immediately suggests to readers that the tale they are encountering contains elements that cannot be explained by conventional knowledge. This narrative technique has a long tradition in English literature, especially when the story involved the suspension of disbelief in order to make room for the supernatural. In this way, *Dracula* follows the conventions of fairy tales set in a land far, far away. However, the distant setting of the novel also serves another purpose—one that scholars rightly read as part of a troublesome tradition almost as sinister as the monster at the heart of the novel.

To some extent, the eastern setting of Dracula's homeland is both expected and fair. As discussed in the previous sections of this essay, Eastern Europe was the regional birthplace of contemporary vampire legends and sightings, as well as the homeland of the historical Vlad Dracula. However, as many scholars have pointed out, the Eastern European setting is also problematic when approached from more comprehensive historical and cultural contexts. While the exotic setting that transports the reader to a faraway land may be read as an innocent convention to some readers, the novel relies heavily on Western traditions that sensationalize the Eastern cultures in order to perpetuate ideas about the superiority of Western cultures. This claim is a fundamental tenet of postcolonial studies, as provided by its foundational theorist Edward Said, whose books *Orientalism* (first published in 1979) and *Culture and Imperialism* (1993) argue that Western literature—specifically the British, French, and American traditions—cannot be properly read without acknowledgment and serious consideration of its imperial contexts. Moreover, he argues that nineteenth-century British writers were especially ingrained in an ongoing dialogue with imperial ideology, regardless of their personal politics. He argues, "nearly every nineteenth-century writer . . . was extraordinarily well aware of the fact of empire . . . John Stuart Mill, Arnold, Carlyle, Newman, Macaulay, Ruskin, George Eliot, and even Dickens had definite views

on race and imperialism, which are quite easily to be found at work in their writing" (*Orientalism* 14). The nineteenth century is well known as the height of the British Empire; thus, any reading of its most popular works—especially one that explicitly engages in Eastern folklore and travel—cannot be divorced from an imperial context.

Although Stoker does not make it into this list of nineteenth-century writers or into Said's broader analysis, it is fairly easy to see how *Dracula* fits into the same imperialist cultural tradition. The opening chapters of the novel are all set outside of England, and Harker spends the first four chapters repeatedly pointing out the cultural differences that he encounters both on his journey to Dracula's castle and during his stay at what almost literally becomes his final destination. The battle between Harker and Dracula eventually moves to England, where the count wreaks havoc in the west. Eventually, the clever count forces his foes to battle in his home territory, where he erroneously believes he will have a clear advantage over his human enemies. The shifting setting of the novel is clearly a moving war that is fought in two different regions. The battle for Mina's soul forces the moral vampire-hunters to invade a foreign land; their invasion is justified much like imperial invasions were rationalized by invading armies.

The imperial subtext of *Dracula* operates more than just geographically. When Stoker borrowed the name of a historical ruler to imbue his vampire story with an air of authenticity, he simultaneously situated his novel within the history of empire, whether intentionally or not. The historical Vlad Dracula's reign is a quintessential example of the violence and thirst for power that underlies imperial ideology. The fact that the historical Vlad Dracula was on the defending side of this struggle for power is irrelevant to the novel. Despite the considerable research that Stoker completed in order to describe the scenery of the opening chapter accurately, he does not extend this accuracy to the history of the novel's title character. Even when the count attempts to relate and defend the history of the Dracula brood to Harker, he sounds like a narcissist and a warlord:

> "They said that he thought only of himself. Bah! What good are peasants without a leader? Where ends the war without a brain and heart to conduct it? Again, when, after the battle of Mohacs, we threw off the Hungarian yoke, we of the Dracula blood were amongst their leaders, for our spirit would not brook that we were not free. . . . . The warlike days are over. Blood is too precious a thing in these days of dishonourable peace, and the glories of the great races are as a tale that is told." (*Dracula,* ch. 3, 35)

The count claims that the Draculas were motivated by more altruistic aims; however, this defense is hard to believe given the tone of this passage. The history that he relates to Harker is not one of family pride, but instead a boastful monologue, considering that he is speaking about himself (unbeknownst to his

naive English guest). His tone implies hostility toward the peasantry that is not wholly consistent with the historical Vlad Dracula's relationship to his people.

The historical references in *Dracula* serve two purposes. First, they lend credibility to the narrative. The fact that Stoker borrows the name of a real person and includes a few historical details about his life sets his novel apart from earlier vampire literature. More importantly, however, the historical references bring the imperial backdrop of the novel to the narrative's foreground. Stoker's vampire is not scary just because he is a bloodsucker—that fact alone would not make him any different from the dozens of vampires that came before him. Instead, Count Dracula is terrifying because he is a blood-thirsty fiend who is intelligent and conniving and can potentially outsmart and outfight the English characters. Take for example one of the most-quoted passages of the novel:

> "And so you, like the others, would play your brains against mine. . . . . They should have kept their energies for use closer to home. Whilst they played wits against me—against me who commanded nations, and intrigued for them, and fought for them, hundreds of years before they were born—I was countermining them." (*Dracula,* ch. 21, 251–52)

The novel's vampire-hunters have their work cut out for them. Not only must they eliminate the threat and make sure that Mina does not meet the same fate as Lucy, but they must also do so while battling an enemy whose experience trumps their own. Sure, Harker, Seward, Morris, and Van Helsing are both brave and determined to defeat the count, but determination alone seems to be unlikely to win a war.

The fact that the count has also penetrated their home territory without their knowledge is incredibly disconcerting. His move to England thus becomes a tactical move reminiscent of a military conquest. This is a frightening prospect both for the novel's characters as well as for anyone cognizant of Britain's declining status as the world's premier military power at the turn of the twentieth century. This historical context lies at the heart of Arata's reading of the novel:

> Stoker thus transforms the materials of the vampire myth, making them bear the weight of the culture's fears over its declining status. The appearance of vampires becomes the sign of profound trouble. With vampirism marking the intersection of racial strife, political upheaval, and the fall of empire, Dracula's move to London indicates that Great Britain, rather than the Carpathians, is now the scene of these connected struggles. The Count has penetrated to the heart of modern Europe's largest empire, and his very presence seems to presage its doom. . . . (Arata 629)

Butler agrees with Arata's reading: "[Count Dracula's] wily command of international affairs rivals the collective intelligence of those in the land he

invades. *Dracula,* written on the eve of the twentieth century, augurs the sunset of British power over the globe" (Butler 103). Out with the old and in with the new. Modernity's displacement of tradition is the biggest threat voiced in the novel. However, the new is not wholly a source of negativity. *Dracula* suggests that modernity is necessary and even healthy. After all, Count Dracula is the epitome of antiquity in the novel, and he is purely evil. The goal of the narrative, then, is to find a happy medium between the two—a way to preserve the most important aspects of the old while accepting the fact that times must change and that we must all accept and adapt to the modern world.

Another arena where the old world–new world dichotomy plays out in *Dracula* is technology. *Dracula* is obsessed with technology. The count himself may prefer to travel and communicate via traditional methods such as cargo ships and handwritten letters; however, every other character in the novel uses modern technology to move around the world and record what they see. Harker uses a Kodak camera (introduced to the commercial market in 1888) to aid him in his legal career. Mina makes use of the typewriter for letter-writing and journal-keeping; she also has thorough knowledge of train schedules, which enable Van Helsing to travel from Amsterdam to England very quickly. Dr. Seward keeps an audio journal through his phonograph.

The contrast that Stoker depicts between old and new technology may be unnoticed by today's reader; however, it was striking for the novel's first readers. Consider the following comments from an early reviewer, which appeared in the July 31, 1897, issue of the *Spectator*:

> Mr. Stoker has shown considerable ability in the use that he has made in all the available traditions of vampirology, but we think his story would have been all the more effective if he had chosen an earlier period. The up-to-dateness of the book—the phonograph diaries, typewriters, and so on—hardly fits in with the medieval methods which ultimately secure the victory for Count Dracula's foes. (quoted in *Dracula* 365)

The reviewer's observation is an important one. For all of their modern tools, the group of vampire-hunters must learn to negotiate the old and the new in order to defeat Dracula. Van Helsing and his group use trains, steamboats, and guns to help them reach Count Dracula in the novel's final showdown; however, they are able to defeat the vampire only through traditional hand-to-hand combat as Dracula is killed by the deadly combination of Harker's kukri to the throat and Morris's bowie knife to the heart.

The novel's incorporation of technological advances also highlights the shifting ideological wars of the late nineteenth century. Scientific reasoning clashes with superstition, and the presence of the ancient vampire forces the modern characters to rethink their relationship to traditional modes of thinking. Again, the novel does not pick out a single winner in this ideological war. In this case, Van Helsing, the learned professor who both understands

the latest scientific advancements in medicine and is well versed in history, religion, and regional folklore, holds the key to defeating the evil threat. Overall, Van Helsing represents salvation by simultaneously showing the reader that one can embrace the modern world while still retaining respect for the wisdom that comes with age and all that tradition has taught us to value.

Van Helsing's successful negotiation of tradition in the modern world brings us to the final arena of *Dracula*'s thematic struggle between the old and the new—sexuality. Dracula's conquest of England not only plays out via the geographic landscape of the novel, but also takes place through the bodies of several of the main characters including Harker, Lucy, and Mina. The novel repeatedly sexualizes the vampire threat, be it male or female. Harker almost falls victim to the hypersexualized weird sisters that live in Castle Dracula. Disoriented and searching for his host, Harker stumbles upon three vampire women whose grasp he cannot (or does not want to) resist:

> I was afraid to raise my eyelids, but looked out and saw perfectly under the lashes. The girl went on her knees, and bent over me, simply gloating. There was a deliberate voluptuousness which was both thrilling and repulsive, and as she arched her neck she actually licked her lips like an animal. . . . I closed my eyes in languorous ecstasy and waited, waited with beating heart. (*Dracula,* ch. 3, 42–43)

We could have lost our protagonist in the novel's first 50 pages were it not for the count's interruption. Although there is nothing sexy about the count when he appears as an old man, his home is the setting for the novel's sexiest scene and foreshadows his own sexual conquests once he travels to England and assumes a more youthful appearance.

News of Harker's near-fatal encounter with the vampire women in Dracula's castle does not reach England in time to ensure the safety of the novel's two human women. Lucy—the novel's most overtly sexual character—is slowly seduced by the count. His nightly visitations gradually drain her of her humanity, eventually transforming her into a vampire—the "bloofer lady" who feeds primarily on children and infants, reminiscent of the stories of Lilith and Lamia from ancient mythology. Lucy's demise has been the target of many feminist readings of the novel, and rightly so. Her tragic fate is troublesome because throughout the novel she is depicted as a sexually aggressive, improper woman who enjoys being pursued by potential suitors. In this regard, Lucy's demise is a consequence of her adoption of modern ideas about women's sexuality, especially when she is compared to her best childhood friend, Mina, the angelic female protagonist.

Lucy is not the count's only sexual conquest in the novel; she is just the most obvious. Dracula's climactic transgression is his seduction of Mina. Throughout the novel, Mina is the epitome of female virtue. Like Van Helsing,

Mina embodies the ideal negotiation of past and present. Specifically, she exemplifies the modern woman who has not let herself bow fully to new, loose sexual standards. Mina is characterized as a rational person, in stark contrast to Lucy, who is seen as an overly emotional and physical being. Mina takes an active role in assisting her husband with his business, knows how to use modern technology in order to aid the band of vampire-hunters, serves as a voice of reason throughout the novel, and preserves the narrative through her detailed journal entries and recordkeeping.

Dracula's seduction of Mina in chapter 21 (in front of her husband, no less!) is the climactic moment because it symbolizes not only the susceptibility of modern English womanhood, but also the susceptibility of England's future. The scene is often discussed in *Dracula* scholarship because of its inversion of gender roles. Instead of acting as heroic husband, Harker lies motionless near his wife as they both fall under Dracula's spell. Dracula also plays a passive role in the scene by feeding Mina instead of feeding himself. Despite being in Dracula's thrall, Mina actively feeds from him, making her the aggressor, if only momentarily. If the novel's plot has felt disjointed until now, this scene is the turning point. For the remainder of the novel, the plot revolves exclusively around saving Mina from Dracula's thrall. The last quarter of the novel focuses on righting the wrongs done to the Harkers by eliminating the unnatural threat and reestablishing the natural order of things, symbolized by the restoration of gender roles that Dracula has subverted.[11]

By saving Mina, the vampire-hunters restore not only female chastity, but also English respectability. The novel closes with the restoration of order via the preservation of the English family. The final words of the novel are Van Helsing's address to Mina's and Harker's infant son: "This boy will some day know what a brave and gallant woman his mother is. Already he knows her sweetness and loving care; later on he will understand how some men so loved her, that they did dare much for her sake" (*Dracula,* ch. 27, 327).

In summary, Stoker's novel sensationalizes the vampire by downplaying the supernatural threat and making the invasion of foreign power and the inversion of traditional gender norms the major source of terror. Through this setup, Stoker engages past and present. As a result of this endeavor, he ensured a fascination with vampires that would last for generations. With regard to both of these themes, one can easily see how Stoker's *Dracula* paid homage to all of the vampires that preceded his late-nineteenth-century contribution to the vampire's immortality in popular culture, while anticipating the major themes that would characterize most vampire narratives well into the twenty-first century. Stoker's Dracula simultaneously embodied the past, the present, and the future. By tying his novel's villain to a historical figure, Stoker tied the past to the present nineteenth-century fascination with vampire narratives. He likely did not know what relationship his novel would have to future audiences, but his professional occupation as a theater manager may have given him some idea about where popular culture was heading. As it turns out, Stoker was right on all accounts.

DRACULA'S AFTERLIFE

It is unlikely that Stoker knew that he was creating one of the most famous monsters of all time when he was penning his vampire novel. However, the themes that he chose to drive his sensational narrative were the most popular themes of his day. Gothic novels, military enactments, and domestic melodramas dominated Victorian popular culture. Despite his ancient origins, Count Dracula was definitely a vampire of his time. Stoker knew what made a narrative a bestseller in print and a breakout hit on the stage. He wrote his novel with this in mind. The source of Dracula's cultural staying power can be summed in two simple, three-letter words—war and sex. The source of Dracula's immortality is also easy to identify. He lives on not through supernatural means, but through countless retellings.

Unlike most sensational bestselling novels published in the nineteenth century, *Dracula* did not have immediate success on the popular stage. Changes in copyright laws at the end of the century were both a blessing and a curse in this regard. On the one hand, Stoker was able to protect his work from dramatic plagiarism by quickly piecing together a dramatic reading staged at the Lyceum (where he worked as theater manager) in order to preserve the rights to dramatic adaptations of the novel. However, much to Stoker's chagrin, no notable adaptations of his novel were produced during his lifetime. The result was that Count Dracula did not become an immediate pop-culture phenomenon in the same way that Frankenstein and Jekyll/Hyde found popular success.

This initial roadblock did not prove to be a major obstacle. A basic search on the Internet Movie Database (www.imdb.com) will show that Count Dracula has made a credited appearance in more than two hundred films to date.[12] These appearances began less than 10 years after Stoker's death in 1912, when two unauthorized film adaptations were produced. Dracula's first dramatic appearance came in 1921 in the Hungarian horror movie *Death of Drakula* (aka *Dracula's Death*), written and directed by Károly Lajthay. The plot and character names were significantly changed from Stoker's novel, with the exception of the lead villain. The second film based on Stoker's novel was the German film *Nosferatu* (1922), written and directed by F. W. Murnau, and starring Max Schreck as the vampire Count Orlok. Like *Death of Drakula,* the names of all the characters in this film were changed in order to avoid plagiarism claims; however, the plot is easily recognizable as Stoker's. Although this silent film is not always associated with the Dracula legend today, it is widely considered to be one of the most important horror movies ever made.

The Dracula legend in visual culture as we know it today began with *Dracula* (1930), directed by Tod Browning and starring Bela Lugosi as Count Dracula. The film script was based on a play adapted by Hamilton Deane and John Balderston in 1924 with the approval of Stoker's widow, Florence. Although the play had been staged on Broadway in 1927, it was the 1930 film that allowed Count Dracula to really take center stage. The 1930 *Dracula* was the first in a series of notable adaptations produced by Universal Studios.[13]

Universal also capitalized on the success of the 1930 film with five *Dracula* sequels and spinoffs: *Dracula's Daughter* (1936), *Son of Dracula* (1943), *House of Frankenstein* (1944), *House of Dracula* (1945), and *Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein* (1948), a comedy that, like the 1944 film listed here, features many of the classic monsters in Universal's horror sequence. Of course, only the first film in the series is based on Stoker's novel; however, the vampire that appears in all is no doubt the one that he let loose on the world in 1897.

The next series of notable film adaptations began in 1958 with *Dracula*, directed by Terence Fisher and starring Christopher Lee as Count Dracula. The 1958 film was the first in a series produced by the British studio Hammer Film Productions. Collectively known as "the Hammer films," there are a total of nine: *Dracula* (1958), *The Brides of Dracula* (1960), *Dracula: Prince of Darkness* (1966), *Dracula Has Risen from the Grave* (1968), *Taste the Blood of Dracula* (1969), *Scars of Dracula* (1970), *Dracula AD 1972* (1972), *The Satanic Rites of Dracula* (1973), and *The Legend of the 7 Golden Vampires* (1974).[14]

The most important film adaptation of the last 30 years is without a doubt *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (1992), directed by Francis Ford Coppola. The film's all-star cast includes Keanu Reeves as Harker, Winona Ryder as Mina, Anthony Hopkins as Professor Van Helsing, and Gary Oldman as Count Dracula. Of all the notable Dracula films to date, this film pays the most attention to the historical Dracula, although the story is heavily romanticized and extremely liberal in its engagement with history. Vlad Dracula appears momentarily in a basic frame narrative that does little justice to the actual history of the medieval *voivode*. Nevertheless, it is the most screen time that the Wallachian icon of the Middle Ages has received in, well, ages.

Although film is the primary vehicle for Dracula's continued fame, he has also made a name for himself in other media. According to comic-book expert Perry Lake, Dracula has appeared in hundreds of comics and graphic novels since the 1960s, with titles published under all of the best-known comic-book publishers, including DC Comics, Marvel, and Dark Horse. The most successful of all of his comic-book incarnations is the 70-issue *Tomb of Dracula*, published by Marvel between 1972 and 1979 (collected along with some other Dracula comics from the Marvel universe as *Tomb of Dracula, Books 1–4* between 2003 and 2005). In the illustrated format, Dracula has battled Frankenstein's monster in *The Frankenstein Dracula War* (1995), Zorro in *Dracula Versus Zorro* (1993), and even Batman in *Batman & Dracula: Red Rain* (1991). Other notable opponents that have come up against the count in comic books include Blade, the Wolf Man, and the X-Men. In this list of foes, let us not forget Spike from the *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Angel* television series. A special five-issue dedicated to the 100-year rivalry between Spike and Dracula appeared in 2006 under the *Spike* series of comics.

Dracula continues to live on in print culture as well, the medium that first brought him immortality. Dracula has been featured in at least a hundred novels published since 1960. Some contemporary writers have even built literary

careers by writing novels derived from the Dracula legend. For example, pulp-fiction writer Robert Lory published the following nine novels between 1973 and 1975: *Dracula Returns* (1973), *Hand of Dracula* (1973), *Dracula's Brothers* (1973), *Dracula's Gold* (1973), *The Witching of Dracula* (1974), *Drums of Dracula* (1974), *Dracula's Lost World* (1975), *Dracula's Disciple* (1975), and *The Challenge of Dracula* (1975). Lory is not alone. Between 1975 and 1992, the prolific American science fiction and fantasy author Fred Saberhagen published 11 Dracula novels: *The Dracula Tape* (1975), *The Holmes-Dracula File* (1978), *Old Friend of the Family* (1979), *Thorn* (1980), *Dominion* (1982), *A Matter of Taste* (1990), *A Question of Time* (1992), *Séance for a Vampire* (1994), *A Sharpness on the Neck* (1996), *A Coldness in the Blood* (2002), and (with James V. Hart) *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (1992), a novelization of Coppola's film of the same name. Another contemporary who should be added to this cohort is the historian and novelist Peter Ellis, who published three Dracula novels under the pseudonym Peter Tremayne: *Dracula Unborn* (1977), *The Revenge of Dracula* (1978), and *Dracula My Love* (1980). Tremayne's trilogy has since been collected and published as one volume, titled *Dracula Lives!* (1993).

The 1990s also had its fair share of writers inspired by the legend of Dracula, although this time the literary market was dominated by women authors. Jeanne Kalogridis has 30 book titles to her name; however, she is best known for the *Diaries of the Family Dracul* trilogy: *Covenant with the Vampire* (1994), *Children of the Vampire* (1995), and *Lord of the Vampires* (1996). Kim Newman also had a successful run with the following titles: *Anno Dracula* (1992), *The Bloody Red Baron* (1995), and *Judgment of Tears: Anno Dracula 1959* (aka *Dracula Cha Cha Cha*; 1998), as well as eight short stories, including "Andy Warhol's Dracula," "The Other Side of Midnight," and "The Dead Travel Fast." A fourth book in the *Anno Dracula* series, titled *Johnny Alucard,* is planned for publication in 2012. Another notable contributor to Count Dracula's recent presence in fiction is Chelsea Quinn Yarbro, best known for her 25-book Count Saint-Germain series. Despite her widespread success with this vampire series, Yarbro could not resist dipping into the Dracula legend with the *Sisters of the Night* (aka *Brides of Dracula*) trilogy, comprising *Kelene: The Angry Angel* (1998), *Fenice: Soul of an Angel* (1999), and *Zhameni: Angel of Death* (written, but currently unavailable due to a disagreement with the publisher). Dracula is also the inspiration behind Elizabeth Kostova's recent bestselling novel *The Historian* (2005). A film adaptation (see http://the-historian.net/movie.html) is rumored to be in the works, ensuring that the famous vampire will live on in popular media.

CONCLUSIONS

Using the name of a fifteenth-century Wallachian prince with a reputed thirst for blood (figuratively speaking), Bram Stoker created the most famous vampire of all time. We have only touched upon some of Dracula's thousands

of appearances in popular culture over the last century. There are films, novels, and comics; he has turned up in video games and on television. On September 26, 2000, he even made a very special guest television appearance in the fictional town of Sunnydale. In the season 5 premiere of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer,* the learned Rupert Giles explains to the band of vampire-hunting teenagers, "There's a great deal of myth about Dracula. I imagine the trick to defeating him lies in separating the fact from the fiction." This chapter has been an attempt to do just that. Although the Dracula legend is a complicated one with many components, it is a legend that is definitely worth knowing. The vast information available can be overwhelming for those newly interested in learning about the undead Transylvanian count, his birth at the turn of the twentieth century, his eighteenth- and nineteenth-century predecessors, and his historical roots in the Middle Ages—even if those historical roots are not as strong as other sources of information may suggest.

NOTES

1.   Louis de Pointe du Lac, introduced in Anne Rice's *Interview with the Vampire,* Nick Knight from the 1990s television series *Forever Knight,* Angel from Joss Whedon's *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and its spinoff series *Angel,* Stefan Salvatore from *The Vampire Diaries,* and the Cullen family of vampires from the *Twilight* series are just a few examples of the contemporary vampire who possesses a conscience.

2.   Accounts vary from source to source. Some biographers insist that the massacre of the boyars occurred on a different day and that the Saint Bartholomew's Day incident had more to do with a general eradication of people that Vlad Dracula considered dishonest. Either way, this event is not to be confused with the Saint Bartholomew's Day massacre that occurred in France more than 100 years later, in 1572.

3.   Displaying the head of a notable enemy as proof of his death was a customary practice in Europe and throughout the European colonies that continued through the nineteenth century. Tradition claims that Vlad's body was buried in the church of the island monastery of Snagov, once part of a fortified community.

4.   All references to the text of Stoker's novel are from the Norton Critical Edition of *Dracula,* edited by Nina Auerbach and David J. Skal (1997).

5.   Historically, the vampire trap refers to a theatrical device introduced in the nineteenth century that allowed ghosts and other supernatural creatures to quickly "disappear" through the use of a trapdoor installed on the stage floor. Although it was used prior to 1820, the trapdoor became known as the "vampire trap" because it was used repeatedly during productions of James Robinson Planché's *The Vampyre,* an adaptation of John Polidori's popular novella.

6.   Lamia was a beautiful queen who became a child-eating demon. The lower half of her body is usually depicted as snake-like. These Greek myths inspired several English retellings and artwork, including the famous poem "Lamia" published in 1819 by John Keats, two early-twentieth-century paintings by John William Waterhouse, and other literary iterations and artistic impressions.

7. For example, Konstantinos, *Vampires: The Occult Truth* (St. Paul, MN: Llewellyn, 1996); Leonard Ashley, *The Complete Book of Vampires* (New York: Barricade, 1998); Montague Summers, *The Vampire in Lore and Legend* (New York:

Dover, 2001); J. Gordon Melton, *The Vampire Book: An Encyclopedia of the Undead*, 3rd ed. (Canton, MI: Visible Ink Press, 2010).

8. Sir Robert Walpole (1676–1745) is generally considered to be the first prime minister of Great Britain. Although the position did not have the same legal authority during the eighteenth century as it holds today, Walpole was well respected by the monarchs he served under (George I and George II) and had strongly influenced their respective reigns.

9. For an in-depth discussion of the use of vampire metaphors in Marx and Engels, see Mark Neocleous's excellent essay, "The Political Economy of the Dead: Marx's Vampires," *History of Political Thought* 24.4 (Winter 2003): 668–84. Available online at http://ricardo.ecn.wfu.edu/~cottrell/ope/archive/0604/att-0138/01-PoliticalEconOfTheDead.pdf.

10. Many of these poems and short stories are in the public domain and can be accessed easily on the Internet. Those interested in reading a wide range of vampire and vampire-inspired stories from both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries should begin with the following anthologies: Richard Dalby, ed., *Dracula's Brood: Neglected Vampire Classics by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Algernon Blackwood, M. R. James, and Others* (New York: Barnes and Noble Books, 1987); Martin Greenberg, ed., *A Taste for Blood: Fifteen Great Vampire Novellas* (New York: Barnes and Noble Books, 1993); and Stephen Jones, ed., *The Book of Vampires* (New York: Barnes and Noble Books, 1997).

11. Feminist and queer readings of *Dracula* are extensive. I have omitted a full discussion of these readings, partly because there are too many to name here and partly because they do not fit as well with the overall aims of this collection. Mostly, the extended discussion has been omitted because so many scholars before me, such as Christopher Craft and Judith Halberstam, have already done an excellent and convincing job of explaining why it is important to understand how gender and sexuality drive *Dracula*'s narrative. For a list of the most provocative scholarship pertaining to *Dracula* and its representation of gender roles and sexuality, see the list of suggested reading at the end of this chapter.

12. Obviously, I cannot provide a comprehensive history of Dracula in twentieth-century film and other media, as it would be a book-length project on its own.

13. Universal Studios adapted several nineteenth-century novels into films, including *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (1922), *The Phantom of the Opera* (1925), *Frankenstein* (1931), and *The Invisible Man* (1933). Along with *Dracula,* these blockbuster films gave the studio the financial foothold necessary to become one of the most successful movie studios of all time. The success of these film adaptations was so great that many received several sequels.

14. Hammer Film Productions took its moviemaking cue from Universal's great run in the 1930s and 1940s. The studio also simultaneously produced adaptations and sequels of *Frankenstein* and *The Mummy* during the same period. *Dracula* was the most successful franchise of the three for this studio.

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The keep of Rochester Castle in Kent, England, was built by the Normans in 1127. (Light & Magic Photography/Dreams time.com)

Castles: Medieval Icons of Power, Wealth, and Authority

Marilyn Stokstad

There are few more iconic symbols of the European Middle Ages than castles. Once a castle was defined simply as the fortified and self-sufficient dwelling of an individual feudal lord. Today we know that castles had many functions, both practical and symbolic. The castle was a new architectural form—part fortress, part residence, part statehouse, part theatrical stage. Furthermore, every castle was different, depending on the wealth of the builder, the reason for the castle (control of territory, border, coastlines), the local geography (availability of naturally defensible sites), the knowledge of the master builder or patron, the available materials, the degree of urgency (speed), and finally the building traditions of the region (the techniques the workmen knew and used). In short, there is no such thing as a typical castle; a castle was a very special building whose form and function answered the needs of people living in Europe from the eleventh through the fifteenth centuries.

Where does the word *castle* come from? Strangely enough, medieval writers never made up a new word to describe this new building type. They continued to use Latin words like *castrum* (pl. *castra*) and *castellum* (*castella*), meaning a town, a walled enclosure, a stronghold, or sometimes simply a tower. Ancient Romans called any stronghold or walled place a *castrum* and used the diminutive form, *castellum,* for everything from a fortress to a dwelling on a hill. Ancient Roman military camps with ditches and palisades (walls of upright timbers), for example, were also called *castra*. In the early Middle Ages, authors used these words for any inhabited place. But meanings changed, and from a rather vague designation for any walled enclosure, "castle" came to mean a specific kind of building. By the eleventh century *castellum* had entered the vernacular languages of Europe as castle (English), castillo (Spanish), castello (Italian), and château (French), although burh, burg, borg, berg, or burgh remained the preferred form in Germanic languages.

As we use the word today, a castle is not a palace, which is unfortified, although a castle and a palace are both imposing residences. Nor is it a fort, as that word implies a purely military function and a garrison. Neither is a castle a walled city, although a royal castle may house as many people as a town, because a castle—even with all its buildings and inhabitants—has a single owner. In short, a castle combines a variety of building types in a new way, often using the same kind of sophisticated decoration and fine masonry found in religious architecture. A castle was a secure place to live and to administer the surrounding estate, and as a headquarters and court of justice, it became the visible symbol of its owner's authority.

THE GREAT TOWER

Norman and Early Plantagenet Castles

When William the Conqueror and his Norman warriors swept though England after defeating Harold and his Anglo-Saxon army at Hastings, October 14,

1066, no castles impeded their progress, according to the Anglo-Norman monk Ordericus Vitalis. The Normans came not to plunder but to conquer England. William as king parceled out the Anglo-Saxon lands to his major supporters, instituting in England a political and economic system known today as feudalism.

William's progress through the Anglo-Saxon kingdom was swift and dramatic. He landed at Pevensey, where he used the surviving walls of an ancient Roman fortress to shelter his troops. Then he seized Hastings and built a castle—a hastily erected earthwork topped with palisades—to protect his men and ships. William might have brought prefabricated timber buildings with him from Normandy, because the Normans were known to have used such forts; however, no clear evidence exists for such buildings during the first years of the conquest. After defeating the Anglo-Saxons at Hastings, William immediately moved on to Dover. Dover Castle, then as now, commanded the English Channel, the waterway between England and the continent of Europe. In Dover, William would have found the remains of an Iron Age hill fort, a Roman camp and lighthouse, and an Anglo-Saxon church. William ordered the site to be reinforced with ditches and palisades. Turning inland, William arrived at Canterbury, where he rested his troops, who were by then tired and sick. Then he marched on London. In London he built his castle, an earthwork beside the southeast corner of the Roman city wall. This fortification would become the Tower of London.

William had left his wife Matilda in charge of Normandy, so he made a quick trip home to make sure all was well, but he returned to England at once to put down a rebellion by the still-powerful Anglo-Saxon earls in the west and north. Suddenly the Danes invaded and burned the castle at York. William drove them out and not only rebuilt York's castle but also added a second. Within six years, between 1066 and 1072, William took control of the country from the English Channel to the border with Scotland and from the fens of East Anglia to the Welsh mountains.

Early Timber Castles

William had learned the value, as well as the technique, of building and using castles at home in Normandy, where castles and siege warfare had been developed in the ninth and tenth centuries. The strong rule of Charlemagne had given the people of Europe some sense of security, so that Charlemagne's grandson, Charles the Bald, even issued a prohibition in 864 against the building of private fortifications. But intensified Viking raids along the coast of France in the later years of the ninth century forced the people to insist on permission to defend themselves and to fortify their homes. By 869, Charles the Bald rescinded his edict, and the landholders began building walls around their homesteads again. Relative peace returned in 911 when the Viking chieftain Hrolf accepted Christianity and became a vassal of King Charles the

Simple. In return Hrolf received the lands known today as Normandy, and as Rollo duke of Normandy, he and his Vikings became settlers and builders instead of invaders and raiders.

Ninth-century castles were relatively small and simple affairs designed to safeguard a relatively small number of people and intended as a refuge during times of trouble. A timber tower on its hill or motte, natural or artificial, could serve as a dwelling like the elaborate tower described by Lambert of Ardre. The hall and farm buildings stood near the tower. A moat or ditch, earthen ramparts, and stockades surrounded the site that formed the bailey. The owner built the tallest possible tower and the highest walls; he depended on height for observation and defense. Because he expected his enemies to try to enter in the same place he did, he also fortified the gateway to the compound.

The Motte and Bailey Castle

A motte and bailey castle consists of a man-made hill (the motte) supporting a tower and a walled yard (the bailey). The word *motte* is also the source of the word *moat*, or ditch. Early castle builders looked for a natural hill on which to erect a timber tower, but since a hill might not be available where fortifications were needed, they raised a flat-topped, conical earthen mound by digging a circular trench or ditch the desired diameter and heaping up the dirt in the center. This ditch not only provided the earth for the motte but also by its depth added to the motte's overall height. Mottes varied in size from about 100 to 300 feet in diameter and may have once stood as high as 100 feet. Thetford, the largest surviving motte in England, has a diameter at the base of about 360 feet and a height of about 80 feet.

As soon as the earth settled, the builders erected a wooden tower on the top of the mound. This tower served as a home for the lord or his castellan (constable, the governor of the castle) and his family and favored retainers, as a lookout post, and as a secure and defensible stronghold in wartime. Some mottes had only a circular wall, not a tower. The tower on the motte was called the "great tower." *Donjon,* a fourteenth-century French term (Old French: "property, lordship") and the sixteenth-century English word *keep* (of unknown origin) are terms commonly used today.

The top of the motte was a rather constricted space, and the timber tower could not house all the people who needed protection, so a second trench and embankment were dug around or beside the motte to enclose a yard called the bailey (also called a "ward" in England). Palisades on the crest of these embankments added to their strength and effectiveness. Inside the bailey, timber and turf buildings sheltered men, animals, and supplies. By the twelfth century the number of buildings inside the walls increased and might include a great hall, a chapel, a chamber block and additional sleeping quarters, a kitchen, barns and stables, storerooms, and—since the settlement had to be self-sufficient—a well or some provision for water, a smithy for repairing

weapons, a mill to grind the grain, and an oven to bake the daily bread. Although to us the castle with its many buildings and inhabitants may seem like a village, it functions differently. City walls were built as a collective defensive system; the castle was the property and home of an individual family and the place where the lord held court and administered the surrounding territory.

The Need for Castles

Wherever they went, William and his Norman lieutenants built castles. About 170 great vassals came to England with William. When the king rewarded his followers with grants of land, they also assumed the responsibility for its defense, so each built one or more castles. William and his men had several reasons for building castles. As hostile invaders they had to fortify their dwellings and camps to hold the territory and provide security for themselves. Their castles also secured borders and coastlines against other invaders and controlled the movement of people and goods at key transportation centers such as fords, bridges, and passes and along major roads.

Alas, Wooden Castles Burn

Motte and bailey castles had serious disadvantages in a siege. Timber walls and towers were especially vulnerable to fire, and a castle that could be set on fire with torches or scorching arrows provided only a short-term solution to the need for defense. Obviously, walls had to be converted to stone as soon as possible, but years had to pass before an artificial mound had settled enough to bear heavy stone masonry. Where a natural hill was available, especially a cliff beside a river that formed a natural water barrier, stone towers and walls were being built by the end of the eleventh century.

The First Stone Castles

Stone towers appeared early in the Loire River valley. The massive ruin at Langeais, recently dated to 992, was once a broad tower with four corner turrets. Today it stands in the park of a fifteenth-century chateau. Not far off, at Loches, the tower is the earliest surviving great tower to combine within its walls a hall, the lord's chamber, and a chapel. Recent analysis of the wood used in the original building has dated this tower to between 1012 and 1035. Meanwhile, in England, as we have seen, during the first years after the Norman invasion, William and his men depended on hastily built earth and timber defenses but replaced the wooden castles with stone as soon as the earth had compacted. Masonry required good stone quarries and quarry men, powerful ox teams to transport the material, and skilled stonemasons to construct the walls and vaults. Stone castles became a heavy burden on the people.

The Castle at Loches

The huge stone tower at Loches stood 108 feet high, and its ground plan had an exterior dimension of 83 feet by 50 feet, 6 inches. The tower had four floors, each of which consisted of a single room. The ground floor must have served as storage space, because it had no windows, only open slits for air circulation. The principal floor contained the great hall, which was used for public events. This hall was an imposing place for both ceremony and government. Here the lord sat in state with members of his household and his guests. By the twelfth century the household consisted of the family and the officials who served the lord and conducted his business—the constable or castellan, who governed the castle when the lord was away; the steward and butler, who provided food and drink; the chamberlain, who looked after the clothes and other possessions; and the chancellor, who kept written records and supervised the chapel. The constable and the marshal were responsible for security, the troops, and the stables.

The hall was a splendid room with practical amenities such as fireplaces and garderobes (latrines), which were built into the thickness of the wall. The forebuilding, a fortified structure, enclosed the outside stairs and controlled access to the great hall. At Loches the forebuilding also housed the chapel. The third floor in the tower may have been a semiprivate hall, which was reached from the hall by means of stairs built into the wall. Finally the top floor provided additional living space and was reached by spiral stairs. The few windows were limited to the upper floors. Cut through the massive walls, window enclosures formed spaces that resembled small rooms.

The tower at Loches is built in an early Romanesque style with pilaster and half-column decorated exterior walls, small round-headed windows, and fine stonemasonry. Its imposing height and high-quality stonework suggest that it was built not only to withstand attacks but also to impress the people living in the surrounding countryside with the power of its owner.

The Castle at Rochester

The castle at Rochester, a vital position where the road to London crossed the Medway River, still gives an excellent idea of a Norman great tower. The ancient Romans had recognized the strategic importance of the site and had built a fort. Later, the Anglo-Saxons built their cathedral east of the Roman fort. William the Conqueror, in turn, appropriated the surviving Roman walls and placed his tower in the southwest corner of the Roman camp. Gundolf, the bishop of Rochester from 1076/77 to 1108, rebuilt the castle between 1087 and 1089, but the huge tower we see today dates from the reign of King Henry I (r. 1100–35), who gave the castle and permission to rebuild a tower to Archbishop Corbeil of Canterbury. The tower was certainly finished by 1141, although the cylindrical tower at the southeast corner dates from the restoration after a siege in 1216.

Early Norman great towers were rectangular buildings usually three or four stories high, with massive rectangular towers rising from buttresses clasping the corners. At Rochester the tower had four floors: a ground floor used for storage, a first-floor room entered from the stair in the forebuilding, a main hall of double height, and an upper floor. A wall divided each floor into two parts, and spiral stairs in the corners provided access to the floors. The principal room was on the second floor, with private rooms on the upper floors; fireplaces, garderobes, and small chambers were built in the thickness of the wall. Admission to the great hall at Rochester castle was by means of a complex and imposing stair and forebuilding. Stairs begin on the west side of the tower, rise along the wall, turn the corner, and continue into a turret to an anteroom at the side of the principal hall. A drawbridge also protected the portal. The unusual eight-foot width of the stair suggests that it had a ceremonial function. A chapel occupied the upper floor of the forebuilding. Here, paired windows lit the impressive carved portal of the chapel. In contrast to Loches, Rochester was the first Norman tower to emphasize height rather than mass. The great tower at Rochester stood about 125 feet tall, including the corner turrets, and had a square plan with an exterior measurement of 70 feet. Corner and wall buttresses strengthen the walls.

On the principal floor, wide arches rather than a wall divided the space into two halls. These halls were two stories (27 feet) high, with window embrasures in the thickness of the upper wall. Wall passages led to these window-rooms and to the chapel over the entrance. The principal hall was richly decorated. The arches are carved with chevrons, and columns with scalloped capitals flank large windows that could be closed by shutters. An upper floor provided private rooms for the lord or his castellan and the family. This floor had small chambers, as well as fireplaces and garderobes, built into the walls. In the center of each floor, superimposed openings created an open shaft for a windlass on the roof, which lifted materials such as food or rocks and other weapons from the storage and service areas in the ground-floor room to the halls and the roof. At the top of the walls, a crenellated wall-walk gave the soldiers space to watch and if necessary shoot arrows or drop missiles on the enemy. The castle garrison could build wooden platforms and walls, called hoardings, out from the top of the wall to give themselves extra protected space. The great tower stood in a walled bailey, which today forms a public park. The peaceful expanse of grass belies its original use.

Originally everyone lived—ate and slept, squabbled, and entertained themselves—in the hall. Only the castellan and his family might have a place to themselves. In the living rooms, charcoal braziers provided some warmth, and open fires or wall fireplaces created smoke-filled rooms (chimneys came later). Sanitation was an important concern to owners of castles, who insisted on having adequate garderobes easily reached from the principal rooms. People bathed in portable tubs. Because of the danger of fire, kitchens and ovens were usually separate buildings in the bailey. Shelters for the garrison, the servants, and the horses and livestock were also in the bailey. A chapel could

be an independent building in the bailey or might be placed in the tower it-self, as in the Tower of London, or—as at Rochester—in the forebuilding.

   The castle had to be self-sufficient. Wars usually consisted of sieges in which the aggressor invested (that is, cut off supplies to the castle) and tried to bat-ter down the castle walls or starve its people into submission. Battering down or tunneling under the walls was usually less effective than starvation. Since early armies were raised by feudal levies and the troops were undisciplined and forced to live off the land, time was on the side of the people in the castle. Tenants usually owed 40 days' service a year in wartime, but only 20 during peace. A feudal army might simply go home when their time had been served. The castle garrison did not need to be very large, and in a well-provisioned castle with a secure water supply it could hope to outlast the siege.

The White Tower of London

The most famous Norman great tower today is the White Tower of London. The castle was begun in the 1070s, and construction continued into the 1090s. To improve his original ditch and bank defenses in London, William the Con-queror put Bishop Gundolph of Rochester in charge of the building project. The building we see today is twelfth century and later. (A study of the wood gives a date in the early twelfth century for the upper part of the tower.) The kings lavished money on the castle in 1129–30, 1171–72, and the 1180s and recorded the annual expenses in official royal accounts (known as Pipe Rolls). In 1190 Richard the Lionhearted spent enormous sums on a new ditch, bank, and curtain wall. Today the castle has been heavily restored and is entirely surrounded by later buildings, but it still exerts a sense of grim strength.

   With plastered and whitewashed walls, the White Tower lived up to its name. Since it stood beside the river Thames, not on a hill or motte, its lower walls had to be very thick, between 14 and 15 feet thick at the base. The tower had a rectangular plan, 97 feet by 118 feet. Four pilaster buttresses (projecting masonry panels) enriched each outer wall, dividing the walls into bays (com-partments or units of space), and corner buttresses extended upward to form turrets at the corners. The windows have been enlarged, and a top story added. The forebuilding that once held the stair has been destroyed and replaced today with wooden stairs. The tower had only this one entrance, so everyone and everything—even supplies going to the basement—came through this door.

   Since there are few accommodations for a household, the White Tower may have been designed as a public and administrative building rather than as a residence. It has two levels of state rooms. A wall pierced with wide arches di-vides each floor into two halls of unequal size. Spiral stairs join the floors, and in one corner an unusually wide stair must have been used for formal proces-sional entrances. A chapel dedicated to Saint John replaces one corner turret. Its apse forms a semicircular tower. Romanesque in style and construction, the chapel's cylindrical columns divide the space into a nave and aisles and

support a barrel vault. The groin-vaulted aisles support galleries, which join a wall passage running all the way around the tower at the upper window level. On the upper floor the rooms are luxurious, with large windows, fireplaces, and garderobes.

Windsor and Arundel Castles

At Windsor Castle and Arundel in southern England the dramatic height of a motte can still be admired. These castle mounds were first topped by palisades without towers, which were rebuilt first in stone and then as towers in the twelfth century. At Arundel, the home of the dukes of Norfolk since the sixteenth century, most of the buildings within the castle walls date from the 1890s. At Windsor, Sir Jeffry Wyatville, the architect of King George IV, added a 33-foot-high stone wall to the low Norman great tower to create its present imposing height. The machicolations are also Wyatville's work. Beyond the motte, the castle buildings we admire today are the result of nineteenth-century enthusiasm for the Middle Ages and the rebuilding of medieval architecture.

The Impact of the Crusades

Beginning at the end of the eleventh century, the Crusades introduced Europeans to sophisticated Byzantine and Muslim military architecture and ushered in a new phase of castle building. As long as wars were fought with poorly trained and undisciplined troops, and when battles were short, bloody encounters between mobs going at each other in hand-to-hand combat, the great tower and its walled enclosure made an effective castle. As siege techniques and equipment changed and troops of archers and teams of siege engineers joined knights trained for single combat, the castle design had to change to meet the new challenge. Pembroke, on the south coast of Wales, was founded by Normans in 1093–94. The great round tower from the end of the twelfth century shows a marked improvement in military engineering over the square plan of earlier towers. With no corners to batter or mine and of masonry throughout, the round tower was a significant improvement over the earlier cubical buildings.

The Burden of Castle Building

All this castle building placed a heavy burden on the kingdom. The nobles raided and harassed each other. Castles changed hands regularly, often through trickery. As rivals engaged in a constant round of destruction, they forced their people to work on the castle maintenance and rebuilding. The common people, forced to do the work, hated the castle builders.

Early Plantagenet Castles

By the time Henry II Plantagenet (r. 1154–89) was crowned king of England in 1154, baronial castles outnumbered royal castles. A tough, dynamic ruler, Henry began to rectify the situation at once. In the north, King Malcolm of Scotland surrendered to him, giving Henry significant castles in Scotland and in the border territory. Many older castles like Windsor were strengthened. At Dover the masonry great tower and forebuilding were built in the 1180s, and concentric walls with half-round towers were added by Richard the Lionhearted 17 years later.

Kenilworth and Pembroke Castles

At Kenilworth, where later building would make the castle one of the most complex expressions of a courtly age, a massive tower was built about 1122 by Geoffrey de Clinton, who acquired the land for a castle and park. These tower strongholds continued to be built longer than one might expect, considering their disadvantages as dwellings.

Kenilworth became a royal castle in 1173 when King Henry II acquired it. Henry repaired the great tower and auxiliary buildings in 1184. Work continued in 1190–93 during the reign of Richard the Lionhearted. Built of sandstone in well-cut ashlar blocks, Kenilworth Castle followed the traditional Norman cubical design but had large rectangular turrets, which seem to clasp the corners. Each of these turrets had its special function. The southwest tower contained the entrance (and later a forebuilding was added to conceal the actual door); the northeast tower had a spiral staircase providing access to all floors; and the northwest tower contained the garderobes. A fighting gallery ran along the wall head.

The round towers were the answer to many problems. At Pembroke about 1189, Earl William Marshall built a splendid round tower. In that year he married a wealthy heiress who provided the resources required for building an imposing and functional castle. A round tower had fewer blind spots and needed less masonry, and furthermore needed little buttressing. The tower at Pembroke Castle is not only large but also elegantly appointed. Barrel vaults and groined vaults were both used instead of wooden floors, and the uppermost room is covered by a dome. The double-light windows with dogtooth ornament set in deep embrasures form window seats. The earl and countess resided at Pembroke until he left for Ireland in 1207.

Challenges and Architectural Solutions

Great towers looked imposing, but after a time they proved to be not very practical either for living or for fighting. During a siege, comfort and convenience

were irrelevant, but during peacetime, living in the tower could be unduly complicated. Stacked rooms in the towers made movement through the building difficult, and the narrow spiral staircases in the corner turrets weakened the masonry at its most vulnerable spot. Furthermore, with the defense concentrated in a single tower, no matter how strongly built, the garrison had little flexibility during the siege. The rectangular building had a further disadvantage: a straight wall was difficult to defend because of the blind spots, especially at the base of the wall. Defenders had to risk their lives when they leaned out over the wall to see what was happening. The crenels on the wallwalk were not sufficient, and wooden galleries (hoardings) had to be built out at the top of the wall to defend the wall. Windows were needed for light and air, but they weakened the wall and so were often reduced to slits on the exterior. Used as arrow slits, they did not permit the archers to see the ground. By the end of the twelfth century, the builders of castles at Pembroke and Kenilworth perfected arrow slits by making sloping embrasures that permitted archers to shoot down at attackers on the ground.

A very wide moat, such as the artificial lake and swamp (the "Great Mere") created at Kenilworth, or a natural water barrier, such as the river Thames in London, effectively defended walls and countered attempts at mining. A good moat or ditch had to be too wide and deep to jump, wade, fill, or bridge. To reach the entrance, drawbridges were used, although the size of available timbers limited the size of the gap that could be bridged. Since doors were vulnerable places, elaborate defenses concentrated there. A sliding portcullis was an effective deterrent, but it required space for a counterpoise or windlass. Gatehouses solved this problem. Finally, a small semisecret back door or postern was usually built into the bailey walls. Also known as a "sally port," the gate permitted the defenders to exit, engage in a brief battle, and return to the safety of their castle.

The Great Tower Becomes Obsolete

The last of the great tower castles may be Richard the Lionhearted's French castle Château-Gaillard, built after his capture and ransom in 1192–93. In spite of the terrible strain that Richard's ransom had placed on the English treasury, the castle was built rapidly. After Richard's death, the strength of the tower, the double walls and ditches, and the complex forebuildings did not save the garrison at Château-Gaillard. The castle fell to the French king in 1204.

As castle design evolved, the great tower was eventually replaced by walled enclosures, which permitted more effective use of troops and better living conditions. The future of castle design lay with the curtain wall—a wall "hung" like a curtain between towers, each of which functioned like a keep. The builders of the walls of Constantinople had seen the virtues of wall towers and curtain walls centuries earlier, and Western crusaders who passed through Constantinople had the opportunity of studying these ancient fortifications.

Halls and Chamber Blocks

The hall, not the tower, became the principal element of domestic architecture. This architectural form served as a royal residence, a hunting lodge, or simply a rural manor house. The king held court in the great halls built at palaces like Westminster and Winchester. The hall, a large, long, rectangular building of either one or two stories, was soon integrated into the total castle design. The three-aisled ground-floor hall was the usual form in early days. Later the principal room, used for banquets and official functions, was raised on a vaulted undercroft. The entrance was at one of the narrow ends, and opposite the entrance, the lord's throne-like chair and the high table stood on a dais. Halls could be built of masonry or wood or a combination of both. The most splendid halls resembled the nave of a large church. The Normans, as great church builders, had experience in erecting huge masonry buildings; for example, Winchester Cathedral had a nave and aisles that measure 265 feet, 9 inches by 85 feet, 4 inches (81×26 m). The surviving thirteenth-century royal hall at Winchester was 110 feet long. William Rufus' late eleventh-century hall at Westminster (probably the largest hall in western Europe) was 240 feet by 67 feet. No one knows how Westminster Hall was roofed, although it may have had wooden pillars and arches supporting a wooden roof. It was painted brilliant red and blue.

The Normans also built residential buildings known as chamber blocks within the castle walls. The chamber block usually had two stories; the lower floor was a public space and the upper floor was used by the family. The building had such amenities as garderobes and fireplaces and might also include a chapel. Doors and windows in the chamber block might be decorated with elegant carvings. By the end of the twelfth century, wool and linen hangings on the inner walls would have cut drafts and added to the comfort and of luxury of the room.

To summarize, the principal buildings required by a great lord and his household consisted of the great tower (later called the keep or donjon), a hall, and a chamber block—three separate or loosely joined buildings—plus all the necessary support buildings—barns, stables, and workshops. A defensive system of walls, towers, and ditches surrounded the complex, which functioned as a unit to form the twelfth-century castle.

THE CASTLE AS FORTRESS

The Castle and Siege Warfare

Warfare had become endemic in eleventh- and twelfth-century Europe. Castle building used up the resources of the land as every landholder from the king and great nobles to the small landholders fortified their dwellings. Constant skirmishing, brigandage, and open warfare at home and abroad meant

that people poured vast resources into training and equipping warriors and building castles and siege machines. The motte and bailey castle with its great tower, as the keep or donjon is called in medieval documents, was admirably suited as a defense during local skirmishes. The castle was also a symbolic expression of its owner's power and pride. During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, as kings and nobles tried to form larger estates and nations, they built massive stone castles.

Cities and towns sought to define and defend their borders by building walls and fortified gates. Even churches and monasteries had defensive walls. At the city of Avila, Spain, the cathedral apse formed one of the most powerful towers in the encircling walls, and in northwest Spain, the cathedral of Santiago de Compostela had to withstand a siege. Even monasteries like the Abbey of Saint Denis just north of Paris in France had crenellated walls. In the nineteenth century the French architect Viollet-le-Duc restored the walls and towers of Carcassonne. Today the old city gives us a romanticized idea of medieval fortifications.

The emergence of Islam as an international religion and the success of Muslim armies also energized Christian forces and drew them into wars in which tactics—and castles—became increasingly sophisticated. Jerusalem, as the holy city of three faiths—Jewish, Christian, and Muslim—remained the focus of western European thought and pilgrimage even though the city and the holiest sites in Christendom lay in Muslim hands. Muslims also controlled northern Africa and the Iberian Peninsula. In the ninth century Saint James miraculously appeared in northern Spain to turn the tide of battle, leading Christian forces to victory and so beginning the Christian reconquest of the Iberian Peninsula.

At the end of the eleventh century (1095) Pope Urban II traveled through France preaching a Crusade to liberate Jerusalem. French, Flemish, German, and English nobles joined in the enterprise. The First Crusade left in 1096, Christians captured Antioch in 1098, and by July 1099 Jerusalem again lay in Christian hands. The crusaders established Christian kingdoms in Palestine and Syria, ruled by the warriors Bohemund in Antioch and Godfrey of Bouillon and then Baldwin in Jerusalem. But Muslims captured Christian Edessa in 1144, and in 1147 the Christians mounted the Second Crusade. When the Muslim leader Saladin (r. 1174–93) recaptured Jerusalem in 1187, the kings of western Europe—Frederick Barbarossa of Germany (r. 1152–90), Philip Augustus of France (r. 1180–1223), and Richard the Lionhearted of England (r. 1189–99)—rallied the Christian forces yet again. The Third Crusade ended in a truce. Mythmakers glorified the leaders: Saladin and Richard became models for the perfect knight. Frederick, who drowned before even reaching the Holy Land, supposedly was only sleeping until called again to save the German people. Only Philip Augustus was not glorified by the troubadours, and only he profited from the Crusades. As an astute politician, Philip Augustus emerged as the leader of the ever-larger and more powerful nation of France.

The Crusades led to rapid developments in castle design as the combatants studied each other's buildings and weapons. The most sophisticated and skilled military engineers had been the Byzantines. As early as the "Golden Age" of Theodosius and Justinian in the fifth and sixth centuries, the Byzantines knew the advantages of double walls staggered in height, independent projecting wall towers, round rather than squared-off corners, masonry built up in alternating bands of stone and brick, and heavily fortified gateways. Christians and Muslims alike had the mighty walls of Constantinople before them as models. Muslim military engineers paid special attention to gateways and invented the most complex turns and traps, murder holes and arrow slots, portcullises and drawbridges. The crusaders, as invaders without a local support system, became painfully aware of the problems of supplying their forces, and they added huge water reservoirs and storage facilities within their castle walls. When these warriors returned to their homelands, they took with them their experience gained in the Holy Land. In the twelfth century, sophisticated defense systems appeared throughout Europe.

Intermittent warfare between Christians and Muslims in the Iberian Peninsula, Syria, and Palestine also led to cultural as well as military exchanges. Crusaders returning to their homes in western Europe brought back new ideas of luxurious living (spices, perfume, carpets, and pieces of richly inlaid metal), new plants (rice, lemons, melons, and apricots), and new technology (water wheels, windmills, and chimneys). The knightly order of the Templars established a rudimentary international banking operation leading to new opportunities for merchants and rulers. Finally, the experience of travel led to further exploration, and gradually European society changed.

The Castle in Action: The Defense

The siege warfare of the Middle Ages consisted of blockading the castle in hopes of destroying it or taking it over for one's own use. In peacetime castles controlled the surrounding land, but when hostilities broke out they provided passive resistance and served as a base of operations. Constant skirmishing and outright warfare continued through the thirteenth century and led to steady improvement in offensive weapons and in castle design.

In the simplest terms, a lord and landholder secured his home with walls whose height and thickness frustrated a direct assault. His enemies could surround his castle and by cutting off supplies could hope to starve him into surrender. Since armies were unreliable and men served only for a specific period, the besiegers might simply go home to look after their own affairs. In this situation, the defenders of a well-built and well-stocked castle with a secure water supply had the advantage. In short, the garrison relied on the passive strength of their castle's high, thick walls. They might make an occasional sally from a postern gate, but to win, they had to rely on the defection of besieging troops or relief by the arrival of a friendly army.

The Walls

During the course of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, walls became higher and thicker, often sloping out at the bottom to counter attacks with battering rams. The parapet on the outer side of the walk along the top of the wall was notched with crenellations—that is, crenels (low walls) alternating with merlons (higher walls), behind which men on the wall-walk could seek protection. The merlons could be pierced with arrow loops, holes through which archers could shoot while still being protected by the merlon. Such walls did not permit adequate observation or defense of the entire wall, because the men could not see the bottom of the wall without leaning over the crenels and exposing themselves to the enemy's death-dealing arrows and rocks. The addition of towers built out in front of the wall and galleries over the top of the wall solved this problem. The wall-walk could be developed into a full-scale fighting gallery. Temporary wooden galleries, known as hoardings, doubled or tripled the space available for the defenders at the top of the wall. Beams or brackets supported the hoardings and permitted holes in the floor through which the defenders could observe the wall and its base, shoot their arrows, or drop stones and other missiles. Brief forays (sallies) outside the walls helped to keep up the defenders' morale.

The Gate

Castle builders considered the entrance to be the most vulnerable part of the castle, and they lavished attention on elaborate defenses for the portal. Muslim military engineers were especially adept at building complex gatehouses, and Western crusaders learned from them and developed their own elaborate fortified gates. The portal itself had a heavy wooden door, often reinforced with metal, and one or more wood or metal grilles, called portcullises (port—gate, coulis—a sliding door), which could be dropped or slid into place from the upper chambers of the gatehouse. The passage through the gatehouse was also carefully designed—sharp turns prevented the use of a battering ram or a rush of troops, while holes in the vaults ("murder holes") permitted guards to shoot or drop missiles on people below and also to pour water on any fires the attackers might build against the wooden doors. One of the finest gatehouses in the West was planned for Caernarfon Castle in Wales where (if it had been finished) five doors and six portcullises, as well as turns and murder holes, defended the entrance. The gatehouse also had rooms for a permanent troop of guards. Since the castle was usually surrounded by some kind of ditch or moat, which could be either dry or filled with water, a bridge that could be raised or turned also defended the entrance. A raised drawbridge added its weight and thickness to the entrance portal. A small fortress called a barbican, built in front of the gatehouse, reinforced the effectiveness of the defense. Its towers and walls formed a trap for the unwanted and unwary. From the walls

and towers of the barbican, defenders could fire down on attackers, turning their rush on the entrance into a murderous slaughter.

The Castle in Action: The Attack

When an attacking force laid siege to a castle, they used techniques and weapons not unlike those developed by the ancient Romans. First they surrounded the castle to cut off all avenues of escape and resupply. They also built a camp ringed by ditches and palisades to secure their own position. Then they built siege engines—great stone-throwing devices—which they hoped would break down the castle walls. Although the knights' chivalric code gave pride of place in warfare to a charge on horseback with lance or to hand-to-hand combat with swords, military engineers skilled in the mechanics of offensive engines had to first break through the walls. To breach the walls, the army used battering rams, various kinds of projectiles, and mines. In other words they tried to go through, over, or under the walls.

Battering Rams

To be effective, the war machines needed level ground facing the castle walls. So castle builders positioned their buildings on cliffs or surrounded them with natural defenses or ditches. Many powerful castles had water-filled moats that were as wide as lakes or ponds. The attacking army had to begin its siege by filling the ditch or moat, perhaps breaking dams or diverting streams to do so. Then a causeway had to be built, over which battering rams and siege towers could be rolled into place. A battering ram—a huge metal-tipped pole hung in a sling and protected by a roof—might be so large that it required a hundred men to swing it against a wall or tower. Small rams could be operated by a dozen men and used in confined spaces such as gatehouses.

As the ram pounded the wall, the defenders tried to absorb the shock by hanging bundles of wool or straw in front of the wall. The defenders also tried to catch the ram with grappling hooks and lift it into a vertical position, rendering it useless. Less dramatic was the process of sapping, in which the attackers attempted to bore through the walls rather than batter them down. The men operating the sapping equipment were vulnerable to missiles, fire, or hot pitch thrown at them by the castle's defenders, so they worked under a moveable shed (penthouse) whose roof was covered with earth and hides. This shield was called a "turtle" because of its shell or a "cat" because of its sneaky approach.

Stone-Throwing Machines

Medieval artillery consisted of three types of stone-throwing machines (*petraria*): the *ballista,* which worked on the principles of the slingshot or catapult;

the *mangonel,* which worked by torsion; and the *trebuchet,* or beam, which consisted of a sling and counterweight. These machines hurled rocks of various sizes, making ammunition a renewable resource. Their range was 90–300 yards. The ballista shot bolts like a large crossbow. The huge mangonel could throw stones weighing over 200 pounds a distance of over 200 yards—more than twice the length of a modern football field. The most powerful and accurate weapon (far more effective than the early cannons) was the trebuchet, which had a range of about 300 yards. The trebuchet consisted of a beam on a pivot, having a bucket weighted with stones and earth at one end and a sling for the missile at the other end. Operated by a team of up to 60 men, the trebuchet fired huge boulders that shook castle walls and broke through the crenellations and machicolations. Its sling could also be filled with rubbish, garbage, and even dead men and animals, which it slung over castle walls to insult, terrify, spread disease, and infect the water and food supplies. A trebuchet required almost half an hour to load and fire. The trebuchet was invented late in the twelfth century; its earliest use in England was by barons against King John in 1215–16. In the next century Edward I of England was so proud of his trebuchet (named "War Wolf") that in 1309 he had a reviewing platform built so that the queen and her ladies could watch the machine in action during a siege in Scotland. None of these war machines survive, although modern reenactors have built and tested them. At the castle of Chinon, one can see a modern reproduction set out in the ditch between the forebuilding and the main castle. The medieval city of Les Baux in southern France has a collection of reconstructed siege weapons.

Tunnels

The least glamorous but often the most effective way of breaching the walls was by mining, that is, tunneling under the wall. Obviously, mining was used where a castle was not built on solid rock or surrounded by water. The miners propped up the tunnel with timber as they dug so that, when the timber was burned, the unsupported wall came crashing down. The miners might tie kindling to pigs, set the poor beasts alight, and drive them into the tunnel to ignite the timbers. The fat of the burning pigs increased the intensity of the fire.

To defend against mining, the castle occupants excavated their own tunnel, a technique known as countermining. They could either break through to the rival tunnel and engage in underground combat, or they could light fires and drive the smoke into their opponent's tunnel, making work impossible.

The Siege Tower

The most spectacular and prestigious siege engine was the belfry or moveable tower. Only kings and great lords could afford such an expensive piece of woodwork. These towers must have been masterpieces of carpentry, for they had to be as tall as the castle's towers and walls. After filling the ditches

and moats, the men hauled the finished tower across the causeway and into place beside the wall. In theory, the knights climbed to the upper platform, a drawbridge was dropped from the tower to the castle wall, and the attackers rushed out to engage in hand-to-hand combat. This was the kind of battle for which the knights had trained since childhood. But drawbacks of the siege tower are obvious. Although wet hides made the towers almost fireproof, they could be set on fire, turning them into ovens that roasted the men inside. They could also be toppled, crushing their users.

Scaling the Walls

The final assault on the castle usually depended on breaching the walls, but it could also be achieved by simply climbing the wall. Scaling ladders and ropes might be used beside or in place of siege towers. Attached by grappling hooks to the walls, they could be countered by men at the top of the wall who pushed the ladders off with poles, or cut the ropes, or simply chopped off the hands of those climbing when they reached the top of the walls. Ladders might be brought up to the wall in pieces, as was the plan in a sneak attack on Edinburgh Castle in the eighteenth century. This attack failed when one of the men failed to show up with his section of the ladder. The plotters tried to scale the wall anyway by using the sections they did have, but their ladder did not reach the top of the wall. Such demonstrations of human frailty and incompetence balance tales of daring and skill.

Knights

The mounted knights formed the heavy cavalry; we might think of them as armored divisions. Battles in the open field were fought in good weather if possible and lasted a single day. Tactics were simple; the knights in squadrons (usually of 10) charged with lances set, followed by hand-to-hand combat. Knights required a team of squires and servants to assist them in arming and to care for armor and weapons. They also needed a stable of horses—the huge specially trained warhorses known as destriers, but also riding horses and pack animals. The goal of a warrior was not to kill but to capture and hold his enemy for ransom and to acquire the enemy's valuable armor, horses, and other loot. Military men made their living by capturing and ransoming prisoners and looting the battlefield and countryside. Capture, not killing, paid off.

Archers

A corps of archers using the longbow (between five and six feet long) and arrows or the crossbow and bolts supported the knights. (In modern terms,

they were the infantry.) Fast and maneuverable, longbowmen were very effective in the open field. Working as a team, they could shoot thousands of arrows almost simultaneously. A skilled English archer could shoot between 12 and 15 arrows a minute with a range of over 300 yards. Men using the slow but more powerful crossbow, with its deadly armor-piercing bolts, had to fire from a shielded position. A crossbowman could shoot only a single bolt for every longbowman's five or six arrows. The crossbow had a range of 370 to 380 yards, although modern claims have been made for shots of 450 yards.

The Surrender

Very few castles were taken by direct assault. Starvation and disease reduced a garrison to the point where they had to surrender or die. Chivalric courtesy and elaborate rules surrounded the surrender of a castle—agreements that might or might not be honored by the victors. For example, the castellan might agree to surrender the castle if relief or reinforcements did not arrive within a certain period of time. Under these circumstances the defending force might be allowed to leave with their arms and honor intact. But often the victorious army failed to honor the terms of surrender and slaughtered the entire castle guard. Usually the castellan or lord of the castle left the castle for prison or execution.

After a long siege the defeated forces might be so debilitated by starvation and disease that they died shortly after the siege was lifted anyway. Treachery was always a possibility, and many castle and city gates were opened by people who expected to receive large rewards for their treachery. Ingenious tricks and disguises also played a part.

Although castles were often turned into prisons in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, medieval prisons were small. Writers of romantic fiction have made much of dungeons and torture, but medieval justice was usually direct and swift. Traitors were usually killed before they could escape to enjoy their reward. The only prisoners worth keeping were the wealthy nobles who were held for ransom. For them the great tower made an excellent and secure prison. Important captives lived in luxury. After his capture at the battle of Poitiers (1356), King John of France lived in a London palace, hunted in the royal preserves, and was not eager to return to France.

Château-Gaillard: Richard the Lionhearted's Castle and Its Horrible End

Richard the Lionhearted, who became king of England in 1189, had inherited Aquitaine (western France) from his mother Eleanor and inherited Normandy and Anjou—and England—from his father Henry. As duke of Normandy and Anjou, Richard was a vassal of the king of France, but he

controlled more land in France than did the French king. Although Richard had been an ally of Philip Augustus in the Third Crusade, in 1192 he went to war with the king over his French lands. Richard built Château-Gaillard (he called it the "cocky castle") on a cliff above the Seine north of Paris to defend his claims to Normandy. He began his castle in 1196 and boasted that he finished it in a year (in fact it may never have been completely finished). Having experienced the advantages and defects of the great crusader castles, Richard put all his expertise to work in the design of his Norman fortress.

Richard chose an excellent site, in the territory of the archbishop of Rouen, who objected strenuously until Richard paid him a handsome sum for the land. The site is a narrow plateau, about 600 feet long and at most 200 feet wide, surrounded by deep ravines leading down to the river Seine. On one side a narrow spit of land links the site to its hinterland. A walled town (Les Andelys) stood at the base of the cliff, and Richard also built a tower on a small island in the river. Dams and obstacles in the water inhibited an enemy's approach from the river, while during peacetime these river defenses enabled the castle's commander to support the garrison by levying tolls on the river traffic. Richard also raised money by selling rights of citizenship to residents of the town.

The castle consists of three separate units along the plateau. An attacking army had to approach the castle along this land route, capturing one fortification after another. First, a walled outer bailey, which was built like an independent castle, blocked the approach. Huge round towers defended its curtain wall. From this outer bailey, a bridge with a drawbridge over a very deep moat led to the gate into the middle bailey. Again a curtain wall with one rectangular and three round towers enclosed a large area where Richard built his inner bailey with its tower. This fortress-within-a-fortress became a concentric (double-walled) castle with a wall that resembled a series of round towers. Rising at one side of this "corrugated" wall and commanding the river side of the castle was the great tower. This tower had massive walls about 16 feet thick and a battered base that made mining virtually impossible. Its massive pointed keel also deflected blows, and inverted buttresses supported a fighting gallery.

As long as Richard was alive to command and reinforce it, the castle stood securely. But Richard died in 1199, and his brother John was not an effective general. Philip Augustus moved to the attack, laying siege to the castle in the summer of 1203. The constable of the castle was Roger de Lacy of Chester, who had sufficient supplies and a large garrison of about 300 men to hold the castle for King John. Roger expected to hold out for as long as a year, while the English king gathered resources to relieve the castle.

The town and the river fort soon surrendered to the French king, and the siege of the castle began in earnest in August. About 1,500 civilians from Les Andelys fled to the safety of the castle and added to the strain on the provisions. Aware that he probably could starve the castle into submission, Philip

built ditches, walls, and timber towers around the castle to prevent supplies from entering. These fortifications were beyond the defenders' arrow range, so they could not destroy or even harass the attackers. With nothing to do but stand guard, the castle garrison undoubtedly suffered from a loss of morale during the long winter.

Two months into the siege, Roger de Lacy realized he could not feed all the people who had taken refuge within the castle walls. He evicted the oldest and weakest, who could not help in the defense, and the French army permitted them to leave. But later when de Lacy had to expel the rest of the town, the French closed their lines. When the people tried to return to the castle, they found the gates locked. Trapped between the opposing forces and forced to live in the ravines around the castle walls, they slowly starved.

The final attack on Château-Gaillard began at the end of February 1204. First the French had to take the outer bailey. They used stone-throwing machines to keep up a barrage while they filled the castle ditch so that they could haul in a siege tower. But the French troops were so eager to attack that they did not wait for the tower. Instead they used scaling ladders to climb from the bottom of the ditch to the base of the main tower whose foundations they mined, causing the tower to collapse. With the outer walls breached, the garrison had no choice but to withdraw to the middle bailey.

Again a deep ditch prevented further attack. As the French studied the castle walls, one man, named Peter the Snub Nose, saw a weak point and a possible way in. The arrangement of windows high on one wall suggested there might be a chapel and well-appointed living quarters, which would have garderobes. Peter and his friends searched the base of the wall until they found the place where the drain from the garderobes emptied. In a daring sneak attack, the men climbed up the drain and emerged under a large window where they boosted each other into the castle. Once inside they made so much noise that the castle guard thought a large force had entered. The defenders started a fire, hoping to burn up the invaders, but the wind shifted, carrying the flames back through the building, and the defenders had to retreat to the inner courtyard. Peter and his men escaped the flames and opened the doors for their comrades.

The end was near. The English had about 180 men left. The attackers smelled victory. They brought in a "cat"—a mobile, roofed gallery—for protection and began to mine the gate. The English cut a counter-mine and drove the attackers back, but the double mining operation weakened the base of the wall. The French brought in their stone-throwing machines, and the volleys of rocks combined with the weakened foundations caused the wall to collapse. Still the English fought on—with only 36 knights and 120 other men. They moved into the tower, but to no avail. In March 1204, Château-Gaillard fell to the army of King Philip Augustus, and with the loss of the castle the English lost their claims to Normandy.

The Siege of Rochester

King Richard the Lionhearted's brother, King John, lost Château-Gaillard but gained Rochester Castle. The barons who opposed King John and forced him to sign a charter of rights (the Magna Carta) in 1215 had taken control of Rochester Castle. The king laid siege to it. His troops kept up a steady barrage, hurling rocks with their siege machines, but the garrison threw the missiles back from the battlements with such force and accuracy that they killed the royal troops at an alarming rate. The king's men changed tactics and began to mine the curtain wall. The mining proved successful, and the troops rushed through the breach in the wall to engage the garrison in hand-to-hand combat. The outnumbered rebels retreated to the Norman tower. The miners then went to work again and brought down the southwest corner. But the garrison continued to fight, driving back the royal forces time after time. Supplies ran out in the tower, and the starving garrison finally surrendered after a siege lasting nearly three months. The southwest turret was rebuilt as an up-to-date round tower.

New Designs: The Towered Wall

Château-Gaillard had utilized the last of the newly built, huge great towers, and Rochester had depended on its early-twelfth-century tower. During the course of the thirteenth century, defense shifted to a towered wall, the enceinte or enclosure castle. Two plans emerged: the castle could rely on a series of courtyards, which had to be taken one after another, or on a concentric defense, in which a second wall entirely surrounded the inner wall. Plans became more compact, and buildings filled the space around the wall of the inner bailey. Towers were added to the walls, developing a true curtain wall (so called because it "hung" between towers) in which every section could be seen and defended from projecting towers. The towers themselves were rounded into cylindrical or D-shapes so that no flat surface tempted a battering ram, and every surface could be surveyed. Wherever possible, stone replaced wood at the top of the wall. Stone machicolations replaced wooden hoardings.

Chinon

Two castles are associated with both the French and the English—Chinon and Angers. The castle of Chinon stands on a cliff rising above the Vienne River. A Gallo-Roman camp and then a fortress of the counts of Blois once stood on the site. Later the counts of Anjou acquired Chinon, and King Henry II of England (who was also count of Anjou) built much of the fortress we see today. Henry died at Chinon in 1189, and his son and heir Richard the Lionhearted also died at Chinon, after the battle of Chalus. John Lackland,

Henry's youngest son, became king (1199–1216). John had abducted the fiancée of the count of La Marches, Isabelle d'Angouleme, and married her at Chinon. Outraged at his conduct, John's French vassals rebelled, giving Philip Augustus an excuse to attack the English. The French took Chinon in 1205, and the treaty signed at Chinon in 1214 confirmed John's losses.

The castle of Chinon, like Château-Gaillard depended on defense in depth (that is, multiple layers of defense) and the inaccessibility of its magnificent site. Like Château-Gaillard the castle consisted of three parts separated by dry moats. Modern reenactors have constructed, and left, a medieval siege machine in the ditch. The earliest section of the castle, the stronghold on the promontory commanding the river, dates to the tenth and eleventh centuries. It had six towers and later a huge round tower—the "Donjon of Coudray"—built by Philip Augustus. Used as a prison for the Templars when Philip IV suppressed them in the fourteenth century, the tower still stands. A deep ditch separates this early castle from the middle castle, the principal residential ward. On the south side, looking out over the river valley, was the royal residence. (Chinon gained fame as the meeting place of Charles VII, who lived there from 1427 to 1450, and Joan of Arc.) Protecting against an approach from the land side was the forecastle, which has been demolished. The plan of Chinon is typical of castles where the defense consists of a series of independent fortifications and assumes that as one part fell to attackers, the defenders could retreat to the next section, all the time hoping for relief from their allies. Chinon also shows the new disposition of domestic buildings—hall, kitchens, lodgings—along the outer walls, resulting in a central courtyard.

Angers

The castle at Angers has a less imposing site but a remarkable surviving towered wall. Angers was originally a Celtic settlement on the border with Brittany and then a Roman town. The counts of Anjou made Angers their capital in the tenth century. In the thirteenth century Anjou became part of France. Blanche of Castile, the mother of King Louis IX and regent until he came of age in 1234, built much of the huge castle we see today (1228–38). The castle stood on a cliff on the left bank overlooking an island and the river Maine (a tributary of the Loire) at the northwest corner of the old town. A suburb arose across the river on the right bank, and a wall reinforced with rounded towers broken by three fortified gates surrounded the entire city. Outside the walls, a moat added to the defenses and also separated the castle from the town. The castle had 17 towers and two towered gatehouses. Inspired by crusader castles and the walls of Constantinople, the masons raised walls and towers that display dark and light banded layers, a late Roman and Byzantine technique. Only one tower, the Mill Tower on the north corner, still has its original height. The moat now combines a deer park with extensive formal gardens.

In constant use, the castle was refurbished in 1384 by Duke Louis II of Anjou and in 1450 and 1465 by Duke René of Anjou.

By the end of the fifteenth century the king's constable remodeled the castle into a fortress designed for artillery. The tall towers, which had lost their effectiveness (towers made excellent targets for gunners), were cut down to the height of the curtain walls (about 58–68 feet) and turned into platforms to support cannon. The walls facing the town were thickened to form a wide platform, and casemates (storage rooms within the walls) were added to all the walls and towers. A barbican and an additional rampart and tower suitable for artillery were also added. This new work was finished by 1592. Later used as an army headquarters and a prison, the castle today is a designated historic monument containing gardens, a chapel, and a museum for the fourteenth-century tapestry known as the Angers Apocalypse.

The Military Orders

Constant warfare, especially against the Muslims, gave rise to a new type of military man from the late eleventh century on—one who combined the character and role of both monk and warrior. These knights, organized into military orders, served officially under the pope but were essentially independent. Their grand master was both an abbot and a general. They lived under a modified Cistercian rule, and they took monastic vows of obedience, poverty, and chastity. As monks, in theory they owned nothing; for example, their horses and armor were loaned to them by the order. In practice they became a wealthy and often arrogant standing army. Having studied Byzantine and Muslim castles and warfare, they built huge castles that changed castle design in Europe.

These military orders were founded to protect the Christian holy places and to help pilgrims going to the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem or to other shrines such as the tomb of Saint James in Santiago de Compostela. Two major orders were the Hospitallers and the Templars. The Hospitallers (the Brotherhood of the Hospital of Saint John in Jerusalem) was founded about 1070 to assist pilgrims. About 1120 the Hospitallers became a military order known as the Knights of Saint John. The knights wore a distinctive black cape with a white cross. When Muslim forces finally drove the Christians from the Holy Land in 1191, they moved first to Rhodes, where they remained until 1522, and then to Malta. There they became the Order of Maltese Knights, and their cross with its split and spreading ends is now called the Maltese Cross. The German branch of the Hospitallers, approved by the pope in 1199 to care for German pilgrims, became the Teutonic Knights. The Teutonic Knights could be recognized by their white cloaks with black crosses. In 1410 the Teutonic Knights established themselves in Prussia.

The Order of the Temple of Jerusalem was founded in 1118 by Hugues de Payens. The Templars became an international order with over 9,000

commanderies and estates and 870 castles. In Palestine alone they built and manned 18 castles, and they also fought in Spain and Portugal. Eventually they used their wealth to become international bankers. Suppressed in 1312 by the pope at the instigation of the French king, Philip the Fair, their leaders were executed and their wealth confiscated. Surviving knights joined the Order of Saint John or a new order, the Order of Christ, founded by King Dinis of Portugal in 1319/20. Their emblem was an equal-armed red cross with wide terminals, which they wore on a white cape.

In 1160, the Knights of the Order of Christ had built a monastery-fortress at Tomar in Portugal, on the border between Christian and Moorish lands. A huge rotunda—a two-story octagon with encircling passageway—commemorates the Holy Sepulcher of Jerusalem. When the suppressed Templars moved to Tomar in 1356, they began to build a vast monastery. The addition of a nave in the sixteenth century turned the original Templar chapel into the sanctuary of the church. In the fifteenth century the Knights of Christ experienced a period of unprecedented influence when the king's uncle, Prince Henry the Navigator (1394–1460), was their grand master. The prince built two more cloisters at Tomar, and building continued in the sixteenth century. Prince Henry used the enormous wealth of the order to finance the expeditions into the Atlantic and along the coast of Africa that eventually led to the explorations that rounded Africa and reached the Indies. Carrying the red cross of the order on their sails, the ships reached the Cape of Good Hope in 1488, India in 1498, and Brazil in 1500. The three ships of Columbus that sailed to America had the cross of the Order of Christ on their sails.

THE CASTLE AS HEADQUARTERS

The Political and Economic Role of the Castle

Castles were more than military posts; they were the centers of political and economic power. As government headquarters they were built to impress the local population as well as visitors and rivals. While power was spread among great tenants-in-chief in a system of delegated government, castles in each territory were places where local lords collected taxes, settled disputes, and administered justice. As the thirteenth century progressed, local lords lost some of their political power to kings and their ministers. A growing bureaucracy to serve these emerging states required more and different spaces; administrators needed more halls than towers. Consequently, castles remained the headquarters buildings in their districts, but internal arrangements changed.

Greater vassals who assisted at court had to be housed in a style appropriate to their rank; consequently, a castle had to be able to accommodate these aristocrats and their retinues. At each level of society, from the king to the peers of the realm to the lesser nobility, each family had its household and retainers. The size and magnificence of a lord's retinue, decked out in colorful

livery, reinforced his importance and authority. In fact, when the lord was in residence and holding court, the castle might have more inhabitants than the surrounding villages.

Castles continued to be the focus of economic activity as the center of an agricultural domain. Wealth continued to be measured in land and its produce. The only access the lord had to his wealth was to move from one estate to another, consuming products from the harvests. Housing and feeding a household including retainers and servants required vast amounts of food and space for food preparation. For most of the year, a castle had only a skeleton staff: the castellan, his family, civil servants, and a few permanent guards. The arrival of the lord meant a massive influx of people and turned a sleepy community into a hub of activity.

A sharp contrast existed between the upper classes, who constantly moved from manor to manor, and the peasants, who were tied to the land and lived in agricultural villages outside the castle walls. Yet economic opportunities expanded for both groups. Both the nobility, who wanted more profits, and the peasants, who wanted more land, cut down the forests, drained the swamps, and turned them into productive land. As labor and produce were converted to money, nobles became landlords and moved into the emerging cities, leaving a constable in charge of the castle and tenants on the land. Farmers produced enough food to support cities as well as villages; however, large cities remained vulnerable to famine caused by wars and poor harvests.

The Black Death in the fourteenth century reduced the population and gave workers the upper hand. By the end of the Middle Ages, economic power had shifted to the cities, and rich peasants had bought their land. These people formed a new, prosperous class; however, life still had many risks, and a family's status could shift up or down from generation to generation.

Headquarters Castles

What did these headquarters castles look like? The builders of castles began to emphasize curtain walls and towers rather than a single great tower, and so the castle became an "enclosure" castle or enceinte. The garrison had more space, so the castle could assume a greater role in the offense. For example, during sieges the garrison used their own hurling machines to fire missiles back at the attackers. When the terrain permitted, rectangular ground plans replaced the irregular plans of the twelfth-century castles. Walls became higher and thicker, and the masonry spread outward at the bottom to form a sloping "talus" that prevented the effective use of battering rams or mining. At the top of the wall, stone machicolations replaced wooden hoardings, and tile roofs might even cover the wall-walks. Wall and corner towers became independent strongholds, although some were built as half-cylinders with an open back to prevent an enemy from using a captured tower against the garrison. The top of the tower might be flat and used as a firing platform, or it might be covered

with a conical roof. Sometimes, to save costly materials and the builders' time, turrets known as "pepper pots" replaced towers on the upper wall. Around the castle, doubled encircling walls created open spaces known as lists. Lists made convenient places for the garrison to exercise and train and for archers to practice. In times of peace the knights held mock battles, or tournaments, in the lists, and townspeople held markets and fairs. In wartime the garrison set up their stone-throwing machines and peasants and townspeople took refuge in the lists.

The castle had to accommodate several functions within its walls: a magnificent great hall with ample space to hold court and serve state banquets (as well as impress and intimidate visitors); huge barns to store grain; stables and shelters for animals; lodging for workers; and all manner of workshops. The heavily fortified and residential gatehouse, where the governor of the castle could live and also direct an active defense of his castle, replaced the single great tower. Nevertheless, the great tower survived as a symbol of power, as seen at the Earl Marshall's castle of Pembroke in Wales or the French royal castle of the Louvre in Paris.

The Louvre

Between 1180 and 1220 the French king Philip Augustus built the castle of the Louvre as part of a massive city wall. (Parts of the wall can still be seen in the Marais district behind the Hôtel de Sens and near the Church of Saint-Étienne-du-Mont.) The castle of the Louvre was a secure place to house the royal treasure and archives. The great tower—a round central tower—was over 100 feet high and 60 feet in diameter, with walls 12 to 13 feet thick. (Today the base of the tower forms part of the underground entrance to the Louvre Museum.) The tower stood in a rectangular court, surrounded by curtain walls with corner towers. Towered gates opened in the center of the south and east walls. In the fourteenth century Charles V added more residential accommodations, and in 1527 Francis I destroyed the medieval towers and walls to build a Renaissance royal palace and gardens.

Royal Palace on the Île de la Cité

On the Île de la Cité, the island in the Seine at the heart of Paris, the principal royal palace and the administrative center of the growing French kingdom was built west of the cathedral of Notre Dame. A residence had stood on the site since Merovingian times, giving the site an aura of antiquity and established power. The palace as it evolved was not one but several buildings, including a twelfth-century great tower (today the Tour Bonbec) and chamber block, the thirteenth-century chapel (the Sainte-Chapelle), a merchants' hall, and a hall attached to the tower overlooking the river (the Salle sur l'Eau)

built by Louis IX. In the 1290s, Philip IV added more specialized govern-
ment buildings—a royal audience hall and hall of justice (the Grand Salle).
In the great hall the king held court, received guests and petitioners, and held
state receptions and banquets. He and his advisers administered justice, so the
building also had to function as a courthouse and prison. Of course, the royal
residence and gardens were luxurious. The castle reflected a social system that
continued even as the actual forms of government—and power—changed.
The Knights' Hall at Mont Saint-Michel, even without tapestries on the walls
and benches near the fireplaces, helps us imagine the appearance of the royal
halls of Paris.

The Castle as Seat of Government

In the last decades of the thirteenth century, the great age of the feudal castle
was coming to an end. Led by the kings of France and England, rulers con-
solidated their power and created national states permitting only royal castles,
or castles in the hands of loyal followers. Furthermore, castles had become
so large and expensive to build and maintain that they required the vast re-
sources of an entire kingdom. Builder monarchs beggared their kingdoms as
they poured money into castles and churches.

As a secure residence for its owner, the castle established a natural center
for the king's or lord's exercise of power. In the case of minor lords the power
was local, but for the king and his deputies, the castle could become a true
seat of government, in effect a capital. The castle, with its massive towers, was
an appropriate and reasonable place to store valuable insignia that served as
proof of power, as well as records and documents such as charters, expense
rolls, and accounts to meet the legal and financial needs of the government in
an increasingly literate (and litigious) age.

Paris

In Paris the king's hall, rebuilt after a fire, served as the great hall for parlia-
ment, complete with guard room and a kitchen that could feed two thousand
people. The building also included the treasury and business offices for tax
and financial affairs. Philip IV remodeled the older buildings on the Île de la
Cité, beginning about 1290 by joining them with corridors and surrounding
the complex with walls and towers.

As it finally emerged in the fourteenth century, the architecture of the king's
residence imposed an orderly progression from public to increasingly secure
and isolated space. The visitor (or petitioner) moved through the main gate
into a large courtyard with the chapel at the left and great hall to the right
and climbed a magnificent stairway to the merchants' gallery, turning right
to enter the audience hall (hall of justice), which led to the council chamber.

If one turned neither left nor right but moved straight ahead, one arrived at the royal apartments and the garden, the most private space of all. The isolation of the royal person made that person seem important and sought after, but public display was an essential part of government. On special occasions, when the king met the public, the merchants would clear their hall and people could move directly through the building. The show of authority and the symbols of power could be as important as power itself.

Caernarfon

The castles of Wales are among the best examples of a medieval governmental military complex. In Wales the English kings Henry III (r. 1216–72) and Edward I (r. 1272–1307) constructed a group of castles for both military and administrative use, determined as they were to hold the rebellious territory. Edward I planned a series of castles across northern Wales—Conway (1283–87), Caernarfon (1283/5–1322/3), Harlech (1285–90), and Beaumaris (1295–1320)—all designed by James of St. George. Caernarfon had ample space for nonmilitary functions. It housed the court of law, the state records and archives, and the treasury. It was also what scholars today call an "elite residence" and a bastide; that is, it was a fortified palace and had an attached fortified town. The castle and city at Caernarfon became the de facto English capital of Wales, and even today the heir to the British throne is invested as Prince of Wales at Caernarfon.

Edward had seen the Muslim and Christian castles while on crusade in 1270, and he recognized the value of their emphasis on walls rather than a single tower. He returned home by way of Savoy. To build Caernarfon, Edward brought from Savoy a military engineer and architect, James of St. George (ca. 1235–1305), who took charge of the design and building of the king's proposed chain of castles.

For his principal castle in Wales, Edward chose a site dominating the Menai Strait, the ancient Roman settlement of Segontium, where an eleventh-century motte and bailey castle had already been built by Hugh of Avranches earl of Chester. The castle as we see it today was built between 1283 and 1323 and never finished.

Caernarfon has an exceptionally fine plan, with upper and lower wards (courtyards) forming an hourglass shape. The curtain wall stretches between 13 towers—two flanking the King's Gate, two flanking the Queen's Gate, seven huge polygonal towers, one small cistern tower, and a small watchtower. Complex battlements included a crenellated wall-walk and towers and double shooting galleries, one above the other. When hoardings were added during wartime, three rows of archers could defend the same section of wall. Rather than simple arrow loops, triple radiating embrasures with single outside arrow slits pierced the wall, allowing many archers to shoot simultaneously. All the towers are independent barriers, separating segments of the wall

from each other; consequently, if an enemy gained the top of the wall, he could not move easily to another section.

The castle had two principal entrances. The King's Gate, or main entrance from town, was an elaborate two-tower gatehouse. A drawbridge over a moat on the town side (today a modern bridge) led to a complex entry that was planned to include a series of five heavy doors and six portcullises, ending in a second drawbridge. The second story provided space for guard rooms, the operation of the portcullises and drawbridges, and even the castle's chapel. Never finished, the gatehouse was intended to extend across the castle from wall to wall, dividing the space into upper and lower wards.

Master James of St. George incorporated the Norman mound into the upper yard as the site of the Queen's Gate (the southeast gate). Consequently the Queen's Gate opens high above the town, protected by towers and machicolations. A long ramp with a turning bridge rather than a drawbridge once linked the gate to the land below. Remains of bridge works are still visible, but the ramp may never have been finished.

The governor (justiciar) of Wales lived in the powerful Eagle Tower in the lower court at the western end of the castle. From the top of this huge polygonal tower, three turrets or watchtowers overlook the Menai Strait and command the approaches to the castle. Each turret was decorated with a sculpture of an eagle, the coat of arms of the first governor, Sir Otto de Grandson. The tower had a basement and three stories, each with a large central room and chambers in the walls. The chambers housed a chapel, a kitchen, and garderobes. On the ground floor, a watergate with a portcullis opened to the Menai Strait. Distinguished visitors arriving by boat entered the castle here.

In the Well Tower next to the King's Gate, another watergate permitted easy access to deliver supplies to the kitchens. The kitchens were of timber and filled the space along the wall between the towers. The great hall also stood in the lower court, across from the kitchens and next to the Queen's Tower. Only the foundations survive to give us an idea of sizes. All the rooms were spacious and well lit and were equipped with fireplaces and garderobes. The names of the towers—the Chamberlain's or Record Tower and the Queen's Tower—recall the castle's use as both an administrative center and a residence.

In Wales the contrast between the great cylindrical tower at Pembroke and the towered walls of Caernarfon highlight the shifting political and economic expectations. Sieges such as that of Château-Gaillard had pointed out the weakness of military tactics based on a gradual retreat to an isolated tower. The future clearly lay with reinforced walls. A large open space inside the walls allowed a larger number of men to move rapidly from place to place, defending the walls and using wall towers and sally ports to mount surprise attacks.

The strength of the permanent garrison at Caernarfon is known from the accounts kept during Edward I's reign. The constable was in charge of the castle, assisted by two "serjeant horsemen." In addition there were 10 crossbowmen, a smith, a carpenter, a "mechanic," and 25 footmen at arms, for a

total of 40 men. At the beginning of the fifteenth century the castle was staffed by a hundred professional soldiers—20 men-at-arms and 80 archers. At the same time, the castle at Harlech had 10 men-at-arms and 30 archers. (This information and more can be found in *A History of Fortification* by Sidney Toy, New York: Macmillan, 1955, pp. 210–11, quoting Welsh Roll Chancery, 12 Edw. I, 1284, Memb. 5; cat. Rot. Wall., 288, and Acts of the Privy Council, Vol. II, Henry IV, pp. 64–66.)

Harlech

Caernarfon, with its asymmetrically positioned towers and irregular plan, suggests the traditional castle design, which reflects the topography. But James of St. George also developed a new concentric castle plan, which had double encircling walls and an overall symmetrical, rectangular plan. Harlech brilliantly demonstrates the geometric perfection desired by Master James. Lower outer walls and higher inner walls form a square within a square, and towers rise above towers. The castle had an open inner court with the massive defenses focused on the main gate, which became the residence of the governor of the castle. A large square building with corner towers and a pair of towers that flank the portal, the gatehouse expanded from a place for guards and portcullis machinery to a full hall with private rooms, facing both the inner court and out to the country or city.

High above the bay (which is now silted in) on a sheer cliff 200 feet high, the castle at Harlech covers a small plateau. To enter the castle, the visitor had to pass through a barbican, cross over a causeway that spanned a 40-foot-wide ditch, pass through the outer gate, and only then arrive at the gatehouse, which had strong doors and portcullises. The gatehouse at Harlech covers an area of 80 feet by 54 feet and has three stories with an inner tower, which can be cut off from the rest of the castle. Across the inner ward from the gatehouse stands the great hall, its windows looking out to the sea. Kitchens and buttery were at one side; the chapel, work rooms, storage rooms, and well on the other. Walls down the cliff link the castle to a watergate that can be reached by narrow steps and walk, which are barred by a gate and drawbridge. The defensive system proved itself during sieges in 1404, 1408–9, and 1451–68. In the last siege, the castle garrison was starved into surrender, their heroism commemorated in the Welsh anthem, "Men of Harlech."

Fourteenth-Century Changes

Change came to architecture as well as other facets of life in the fourteenth century with the spread of disease, famine, and war. The bubonic plague, called the Black Death, began in 1348 and recurred in following years. Although figures are uncertain, the plagues may have killed a third of Europe's

population in some places. Entire villages disappeared. To add to the misery of the people, France and England engaged in the futile, drawn-out Hundred Years' War from 1337 to 1453. Castles were built, destroyed, and rebuilt, but villages and peasants' fields and orchards were also destroyed. Architects and patrons turned to small projects rather than the grand designs of the thirteenth century. Often the builders reverted to the twelfth-century tower, now referred to as a "tower house" to distinguish it from the earlier "great tower." The building was usually a rectangular block with corner turrets.

Improvements continued to be made in the details of castle design; for example, in the operation of portcullises and drawbridges and in the use of barbicans. For those who could afford them, moats and stone machicolations became an even more important part of the defensive scheme. Wall-walks and towers might be expanded with a double set of machicolations. Since machicolations were very expensive, however, they might be built only above the door, like a balcony. Such a feature is called a brattice. As artillery came into general use, elaborate wall tops became less important; in fact, battlements were easily destroyed by the gunners. Cannons and guns were used in Italy in 1304 and 1315, in Rouen in 1338, and at the battle of Crécy on August 26, 1346. Crenellated and machicolated walls and towers continued to be built as decorative elements, symbols for a castle rather than functional military elements.

The castle's residential aspects also changed in the fourteenth century as people demanded more comfortable living conditions. Owners added domestic wings to halls and filled the castle's courtyard with multistoried buildings as well as service quarters. Eventually structures built along the walls reduced the bailey into an inner courtyard. In fine houses large windows filled with elegant tracery and glass replaced some of the wooden shutters and made great halls both pleasant and splendid. Sculptured coats of arms over portals and fireplaces proclaimed the family's heritage. In short, private castles became palaces.

As more emphasis was placed on domestic requirements, moats could be defensive and at the same time ponds for raising frogs and fish. The castle might have a dovecote, the birds providing meat and eggs to eat, and a roost for the trained homing pigeons that provided a rapid messenger service. Many a castle was surrounded by a hunting park since hunting was a popular noble exercise and recreation. The deer, boar, and small game could also be a source of meat and fur. A chapel in the castle provided for spiritual needs of the residents, and the castle might be associated with a parish church or monastery, formed by and dependent on the lord of the castle.

The castle and church formed the core of a village. As the center of the king's or the lord's demesne, the castle normally controlled important public facilities, such as the mill. A mill was essential for both the castle household and the people of the village. Without a mill the bakers could not produce the bread that was the mainstay of the diet—it took an enormous amount

of bread to support a household. The mill and ovens provided a handsome income for their owners.

The Manor House

Lesser landholders seldom had the resources or the need to build castles, but they often had to fortify their homes. The manor house was the local economic, residential, and administrative center and might be given the honorific title of "castle." Stokesay Castle is a well-preserved example of the fortified manor house. Today, in a reversal of the usual castle ruins where we find outer walls but an empty bailey, the inner buildings still stand at Stokesay while the defensive walls are gone and the moat is dry. An Elizabethan gatehouse has replaced the original entryway. Laurence of Ludlow inherited the manor and acquired a "license to crenellate" from Edward I in 1290. He added a curtain wall, moat, and a tower with a turret at each end of an already existing hall. The hall has large windows and a chamber at each end.

Another kind of defensible country home characterizes Scotland and other border regions. Beginning in the fourteenth century, local lords on both sides of the English-Scottish border built residential towers set in a walled yard called a barmkyn. The buildings are rectangular or Z-shaped in plan and have three or four stories joined by a spiral staircase. The top of the tower was crowned by battlements and turrets. Like the Norman tower, these tower houses used the first floor for storage and had their principal hall on the second or even the third floor. The hall was the seat of local justice. One or two projecting wings might be built to add additional space for living rooms, giving the tower a distinctive Z-shaped plan. Larger windows, fireplaces, and garderobes were added to rooms on the third and fourth levels. The top of the building could be quite elaborate and have two levels of battlements, with machicolations and turrets corbelled out over the walls. The door was protected by an iron grille called a yet. These tower houses were still being built in the seventeenth century.

The Fortified City

While not strictly castles, fortified towns gained in importance until they approached the strength—and appearance—of castles. Some towns that grew up near monasteries or castles, at trade and transportation centers, required increasingly sophisticated defenses. At first, low walls and gates distinguished a town, with its royal privileges, from the countryside, which lay under the control of the local lord. Town gates, locked at night, kept out strangers. By the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries a town like Carcassonne in southern France had walls, towers, and battlements that could rival a castle.

Ramparts of the old city at Carcassonne, France. The fortress was considered impregnable until it was conquered by the army of Simon de Montfort IV in 1209. (iStockphoto)

Within the city walls, people with the same interests and occupations lived together in small districts. Twisting streets and alleys led to a few public squares. Sanitation was minimal and depended on rain. Public services and safety were nonexistent. Tradespeople combined workshop, sales room, and living quarters in a single building that stood three or four stories high with brick or timber walls and thatched roof. Fire was a constant hazard. In short, life was hard and dangerous but stimulating. The energetic and creative people found their way to the towns and cities, leaving the more conservative to live as peasants working the land and living in feudal villages.

Carcassonne

Carcassonne was an important military and commercial center in southern France. A key stronghold since Roman times and the capital of a county by the ninth century, Carcassonne was as much a military center as any castle. Having survived many sieges, it was abandoned in 1240 but rebuilt by Louis IX in 1248. The city has double curtain walls; the outer has 20 towers and the inner has 25. Some of the towers are independent fortresses and even have their own wells. A barbican and complex outerworks guard the main city gate.

The architect Viollet-le-Duc restored the medieval city in the nineteenth century, adding conical tiled roofs inappropriate to southern French architecture. The citadel is rectangular in plan, with rooms and towers arranged around an open central courtyard. A deep moat cuts the citadel off from the city.

The Bastide of Aigues-Mortes

New towns established by royal decree in the thirteenth century for military purposes were called bastides. In France, bastides were laid out like ancient Roman cities, with a rectangular plan and two principal streets crossing at right angles, dividing the city into four sections with the market square and the church at the center. Walls with towers and fortified gates surrounded the bastide. As duke of Aquitaine, Edward I of England established over 50 bastides as administrative headquarters and commercial centers. These towns were fortified only lightly.

The city or bastide of Aigues-Mortes was established on the Mediterranean coast by Louis IX as the embarkation spot for his Crusade. Rectangular in plan with streets parallel to the walls, and a central open square, five gates on the sea side served the port. The walls were about 35 feet high, with both wall and corner towers. The Tour de Constance, finished in 1248, a round, moated independent tower, over 100 feet tall with walls nearly 20 feet thick, provided extra security for the governor. The tall turret rising above the wall-walk served as both a watchtower and a lighthouse. Inside the walls, the streets ran straight from gate to gate, crossing at right angles to form rectangular blocks of buildings. A central town square and church served the community's spiritual and social-commercial needs. Building stopped around 1300. Today the harbor is silted up, and Aigues-Mortes survives as a well-preserved relic of the past.

The Citadel

A fortress or citadel (Italian: *cittadella*, small city) might be built as part of the city defenses. Edward I's castle at Caernarfon in Wales and the palace of the counts at Carcassonne combine citadels and bastides. A citadel usually had gates leading both into the city through the city wall and out to the countryside. The citadel was designed like a castle and staffed and supplied to withstand a siege. It served as an army headquarters and supply depot, and it provided a last line of defense for the residents of the town. The citadel also played a symbolic role, since it expressed the authority of its lord—the king, duke, or bishop, or his representatives—and also established the importance of the city. As an aristocratic residence, the citadel could be a luxurious palace. As a fortress, it controlled the population through its expression of awesome might in towers and walls. Since the citadel was the governmental center, it was associated with tax collection and possibly the residence of an arrogant

garrison, which made the citadel and its residents the frequent focus of town ire. Rebellions centered on the citadel, and independent citizens tried to either tear them down or staff them with their own men.

The Castle Saint-Antoine

A new kind of castle appeared in France as part of the city defenses. The barbican of the gate became a large independent castle known as a bastille. As military architecture, the bastille was a new form, also called a "block castle," in which the eight towers and walls of a rectangular building were the same height and created a large terrace that could be used as a firing platform. The Castle Saint-Antoine at the northeast entrance to Paris, built between 1370 and 1382, became the infamous Bastille prison destroyed by the people in 1789 at the beginning of the French Revolution.

Emerging Commercial Centers

In Germany and Italy central authority was unknown, and local lords in Germany and independent cities in Italy built defensive works. By the end of the eleventh century in Italy, townspeople in Venice, Milan, and Lucca sought the king's protection from feudal lords. Italian cities were among the largest and most prosperous in Europe. The kings soon realized that using the city money to hire mercenary troops would enable them to become independent of their nobility. Thus, both central and civic powers and independence increased as the leverage of non-royal feudal lords declined.

Castles of the Rhine

Political and economic powers united in the Rhine River valley, where castles controlled river traffic and served as toll stations. Individual lords could become piratical in their collection practices. Along the Rhine and Danube, local authorities controlled travel, collecting endless tolls from castles seemingly on every hilltop. Not far from the famous Lorelei Rock (according to local legend, the home of a nymph whose songs lured boatmen to death in the rapids) are the castle of Gutenfels, the village of Kaub, and the toll fortress the Pfalz.

Gutenfels

The castle of Gutenfels is a typical German thirteenth- to fourteenth-century mountain castle with a tall tower, a fortified and crenellated dwelling, and a walled courtyard. According to legend, it was named for the Lady Guta,

the sister of the Count of Kaub who married Richard of Cornwall after he won her by fighting in a tournament in Cologne. After surviving centuries of sieges and rebuilding, the castle was nearly lost in 1805–7 when Napoleon ordered its destruction. The castle was dismantled, and everything of value was taken and sold. The castle became one of the many romantic ruins on the Rhine. Then, Gutenfels came into the possession of the Cologne architect Gustav Walter, who rebuilt it as his own home in 1889–92. He created his own romantic vision of a medieval castle complete with knights' hall and fighting galleries, but he also added bathrooms with hot and cold running water. Today, the castle is a restaurant and hotel.

The Village of Kaub and the Pfalz

At the foot of the mountain, beside the river, the village of Kaub was once the toll-collection point and a river pilot station. Today it is a picturesque wine town. The most distinctive building of this complex is the Pfalzgrafenstein (usually shortened to "the Pfalz"). In 1326–27 Ludwig of Bavaria built a small fortress on a rock in midstream to control shipping on the river and also to help break up the winter ice. At first the river castle consisted of a five-sided tower six stories high. In 1338–42 a six-sided turreted outer wall was added. (The curving roof is a Baroque addition.) The castle continued in government use into the nineteenth century and still works as a breakwater. Since it can be reached only by boat, it never became a restaurant—the fate of many German castles—and in 1967–75 it was restored to its original brilliant white plaster and red stained wood. The castles of the Rhine helped inspire the Romantic revival and the creation of a German identity in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Today they are an important part of Germany's tourist industry.

THE CASTLE AS SYMBOL AND PALACE

Whether looming over the land as a symbol of a ruler's authority or providing a setting for displays of wealth and power in spectacular feasts and tournaments, castles made a visual statement about their owners. All architecture has symbolic overtones, and the castle is a potent image.

In the eleventh and twelfth centuries, mounds, palisades, and ditches were enough to indicate a seat of power, but as stone replaced timber as the building material of choice, towers and crenellated palisades and rooflines defined the castle. The licenses to crenellate, which the king issued as official permission to fortify a place or residence, indicated a social status as much as a need for defense. In the fourteenth century, the introduction of gunpowder into warfare irrevocably changed the nature of battles and affected the design of castles. High walls and tall towers made excellent targets, so builders emphasized defense in depth—low walls and wide moats. Eventually earlier castles became an encumbrance because maintenance of a huge masonry structure

drained resources better spent on men and munitions. Nevertheless, the idea of a castle—the castle as a symbol—lived on.

As warfare changed, the king needed money to pay armies of mercenary troops, but as we have seen, the oldest and most distinguished nobles counted their wealth in land, not money. Newly rich city people who engaged in commerce had the necessary ready cash. Consequently the king and a few forward-looking nobles favored the cities. They founded new cities and gave the burghers positions at court. These retainers, who wanted to be associated with power and prestige, formed a new social hierarchy. An important way for one of these "new men" to establish himself in the eyes of his neighbors was to build a splendid castle for his family home. Meanwhile those already in the feudal hierarchy crenellated and refurbished their inherited castles. The addition of crenellated battlements to a simple domestic building gave it and the owner immediate stature and credibility. Even today, we can still see crenellations decorating college halls, government buildings, and even private houses.

Just as towers and crenellations indicated a building's status, so the crenellated wall signified a castle in the visual arts and in that distinctively medieval system of visual identification known as heraldry. The heraldic symbol of the kingdom of Castile, for example, consisted of a wall and three crenellated towers. This simple composition was easily recognized and reproduced. As the emblem of the powerful French queen Blanche of Castile (the mother of Louis IX and regent during his childhood, 1226–34) the heraldic castle appears beside the lilies of France in works of art, such as the stained-glass windows of the cathedral of Chartres and the Sainte-Chapelle in Paris.

Symbolic Architecture

Castles were designed to intimidate, or at least impress, visitors. Any castle reinforced the impression of overwhelming power and the authority of its owner or his constable (castellan or governor of the castle). In an age of personal government, the architectural design of the castle played an important role in the control of the access to the lord and so to power. The increasing complexity of the physical relationship of the hall of justice, the presence chamber, and the private rooms of the lord may have been accidental or calculated, but it certainly had an effect. The guest or petitioner moved from public to increasingly private space, through corridors, courts with views, waiting rooms, and gates—until the lord was revealed in the great hall seated in a splendid chair on a dais. The castle plan was intended to be spatially confusing, both for protection and also to enhance the position of power through the difficulty of access. In time, however, the individual halls became a continuous series of rooms built against the walls and having the appearance and effect of a single building with an inner courtyard.

Matthew Johnson imagines and describes the typical visitor's arrival at the castle in his book *Behind the Castle Gate*. At first sight the castle, whether

emerging from the woods of a hunting park or rising in the distance on a hill, created an expectation of grandeur within. Arriving at the gate at last, the visitor waiting to be admitted had time to study the symbolic heraldic imagery decorating the gatehouse or towers. Coats of arms established the lineage and family connections of the lord of the castle. Even the form of admission into the castle depended on one's place in the social hierarchy. Trumpeters on the walls might greet important visitors who then entered through wide-open doors. Lesser people entered quietly through a small door called the wicket, cut into the main door. A wicket gate sometimes even required the visitor to bend over to enter. The least important people might be sent around to the postern, which became a back door, not a hidden sally port.

The Gatehouse

A massive gatehouse provided an intricate defense with its portcullis, arrow slits, and murder holes, but it also could make the guest feel vulnerable. This intimidating tunnel-like entrance opened suddenly into a spacious bailey or courtyard. The visiting knight dismounted and left his horse in the lower court near the door, then walked the rest of the way, across the open space. Since a knight was defined by the quality of his horses and armor, and his horse was his own symbol of power, to leave his mount and proceed on foot established his peaceful intent and the superior importance of the lord of the castle. Once through the lower courtyard and into the upper, the visitor finally saw the castle's principal residential building—the center of power, the great hall.

The Great Hall

From the great hall, the lord and his family could observe everything going on in the courtyard from large windows lighting the ceremonial end of the room. The hall itself might have sculptural decoration around the entrance and windows, which through its symbolism told of the family's lineage and importance. The visitor approaching the hall knew that he was very much in view and might identify himself by wearing distinctive colors or clothing embroidered with his heraldic coat of arms. Once the visitor crossed the open space and reached the hall, he might have to climb a staircase and perhaps enter through a porch before proceeding through corridors and perhaps a small waiting chamber into the lower end of the hall. A typical great hall was a single rectangular room with a dais with high table and/or throne at one end and a wooden screen at the other, which separated the hall from the service rooms and also shielded those within from drafts. The main door opened into this screens passage. The visitor had to walk the length of the hall, facing the lord enthroned on the dais, and once arriving, he was expected to kneel or bow.

The hall was the center of life in the castle. In early times everyone lived and ate together there. The hall became the judicial and ceremonial center of the castle—the center of feudal power, homage, and exchange of gifts. As time passed, the lord, his family, and confidants withdrew from this fellowship to private chambers; nevertheless, the lord ceremonially ate with his people at regular intervals. Feasting was a social act, reinforcing the bonds of community and mutual support and trust. The arrangement of the tables in the hall is still followed at many formal dinners today. The head table, for important people, is placed at one end of the room, and the rest of the tables are perpendicular to it. In the medieval hall, large windows lit the head table. Window seats created small private rooms within the thickness of the wall. Originally a central hearth warmed the people in the hall, but wall fireplaces and chimneys came into use by the twelfth century.

Domestic Quarters

The family departed from the hall by going through doors at the upper end to the private residential part of the building. A corridor and a waiting room that might have a fireplace and even a garderobe led to the lord's chamber, where business and political discussions took place under the watchful eyes of other retainers. The chamber often looked out over a garden, and from this garden the lord's "closet" with archives and treasury could be reached. The ladies had separate suites with an enclosed garden and sometimes a private chapel, all linked by covered walks. Farther removed from the hall were lodgings for important guests.

Visitors were usually known at least by reputation to the castle residents. At no time was the elite class very large. Matthew Johnson notes in *Behind the Castle Gate* that in England in 1436 the tax returns indicate that there were only 51 peers, 183 greater knights, and 750 lesser knights. Even when one considers the wives and children of these 984 men, only a small number of people belonged to this class (Matthew Johnson, *Behind the Castle Gate*, p. 63). Not only did these people know each other, they were also often related through marriage. Royal or baronial, lord or vassal—each had his household, consisting of family, retainers, and servants. Only the scale differed. An important medieval household might have as many as 2,000 people. The castle provided the architectural setting, accommodating people and their activities in a great hall and supported by kitchens and storerooms and a strong room for archives and treasure.

The Castle Transformed

In the later years of the fourteenth century, the desire for spacious, comfortable living arrangements surpassed the need for defensive outer walls. The

hall remained the center of the residential complex. Large windows filled with elegant tracery and glass and protected by wooden shutters made great halls both pleasant and splendid. Sculpture on portals and fireplaces proclaimed the family's heritage. Used for great occasions and feasts during most of the year, the hall was simply a large enclosed space, and as such it could shelter servants and travelers. The owner lived in a suite of private rooms—a solar or smaller hall, having retiring rooms, library, and office or study. Every great house also had its chapel and rooms for the chaplain. Other support areas included the kitchen, buttery, and pantry. They were still linked to the hall and to suites of rooms in the traditional arrangement. Most rooms had fireplaces, and garderobes adjoined every suite of rooms.

When times were peaceful and land available, suites of rooms spread out around a quadrangle. Often, domestic wings were added to older buildings. Halls and multistoried houses built along the castle walls filled the inner yard until what had been a multipurpose space became the inner court of a palace. In unstable areas such as the Scottish Borders and the Italian cities, tower houses were the norm. In tower houses the rooms were stacked instead of placed side by side.

The stone walls we see today give a false idea of the castle interior. People in the Middle Ages loved brilliant colors. Aristocrats and royals spent enormous sums on tapestries, the woven wall hangings that turned the bare walls and drafty rooms into rich and colorful displays of educational and moral messages—historical and literary themes, religious subjects, and heraldry. Since a powerful lord had many manors where he had to reside to use the produce paid as tax and to administer the estate, the tapestries could be packed in trunks and carried from place to place as their owners moved. Furniture was highly functional—wooden tables, stools, beds—and was also covered with woven and embroidered textiles. Clothing was just as rich and colorful.

Bodiam Castle

Bodiam Castle in Sussex demonstrates Matthew Johnson's point that social and symbolic messages sent out by the castle architecture became more meaningful than its military function. Johnson provides a close analysis of its design. Sir Edward Dallyngrigge (or Dallingridge; spellings were not fixed in those days) built this castle after retiring from almost 30 years of military service. As a younger son, he could not inherit the family estate, but during the Hundred Years' War soldiers like Sir Edward could make a fortune from booty and ransom. When he settled down, Sir Edward married an heiress who also contributed her dowry to the building program. In October 1385 Sir Edward obtained a license to crenellate, and for the next three years he built his luxury castle. He claimed that he would protect the southern coast from pirates and the king's enemies—but no pirates ever came.

The visual impression is all-important at Bodiam. The approach to the castle requires the visitor to cross the bridge over the main river, pass the mill pond, and arrive at the moat and bridge (now destroyed) leading to the postern gate on the south. Convenient as the postern was, it was a servants' entrance, and no important person would use it. The visitors would continue around three sides of the moat, finally reaching a bridge leading to the main gate.

Bodiam Castle has a symmetrical, rectangular plan with crenellated cylindrical corner towers and a rectangular tower in the center of each side, one of which is a fortified gateway and one of which contains the postern gate. A slightly projecting chapel breaks the symmetry of the exterior. The principal domestic buildings lie directly across a square courtyard from the main gate. A passage leading to the postern also acts as a screens passage; as one enters, the hall is on the left, and doors leading to the pantry, kitchen, and buttery are on the right. The lord's residence is reached from the upper end of the hall, and beyond that are the guests' quarters and chapel. On the other side, beyond the kitchen, are quarters for servants. The military detachment was housed beside the entrance gate. The castle was beautiful, practical, and convenient. It includes 33 fireplaces and 28 garderobes (which discharged directly into the moat, turning what is today a lily pond into an open sewer). Bodiam has been called "an old soldier's dream castle."

In Bodiam Castle's design we see a perfect example of symbolic architecture. Bodiam could never have withstood a siege. For one, the castle was built in a low-lying place, where a small stream feeds the moat: an attacking enemy would only have had to cut through the earth embankment to drain the moat. Why then was the wide moat constructed? Aesthetic considerations must have played a role. The moat is like a small lake, and the building seems to rise directly out of the water. Reflected in the water, the castle seems to double in size.

Not only could the moat be drained quickly and easily, the walls were too low and too thin (between six and seven feet) to withstand bombardment. Furthermore, large windows in the hall and the chapel destroyed any military effectiveness the walls might have had. The battlements on the walls and towers are purely decorative, as the crenels are not high enough to shield the men standing behind them. Finally, the higher ground around the castle made anyone on the wall-walks vulnerable to crossbow bolts.

These military features do serve a symbolic purpose. Sir Edward Dallyngrigge built his dream castle at a time when pageantry, excessive attention to the forms of chivalry, and tales of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table entertained and inspired the aristocracy. Sir Edward had no ancient tower, no ancestral castle like Kenilworth; he had to build his castle from the start, just as he built his own career and fortune. He was an important man in his own locality (he owned the market and a mill), but he was not a landed aristocrat. Just what his own fantasy or intention was in building Bodiam we do not know, but we can imagine that Sir Edward enjoyed the symbolism associated with military architecture. Bodiam's architectural forms are dictated not by function, but by an imaginary world.

Symbolic Settings: Woods, Forests, and Water Meadows

In the fourteenth century, royal and baronial castles continued to be built, but a new group of newly rich and politically powerful people began to take on the trappings of aristocratic behavior and to build castellated residences. While many castles dominate the countryside from hills and cliffs, these newer castles might also be built in woods, forests, or water meadows.

The forest castle served as a hunting lodge for noblemen and noblewomen who engaged in the sport. At first the hunt, with horses and hounds (a type of hunting known as the chase), kept hunters and their mounts in good physical condition for battle and incidentally augmented the food supply. Later, professional hunters provided most of the deer, boar, and rabbit meat for the cooks. Eventually hunting, as an exclusively noble sport, was surrounded by elaborate rituals. Even cutting up a deer and dividing the meat became a specialized skill, a ceremony known as "breaking the stag." Nobles fenced and walled large sections of woodland near their castles for their private use in hunts and severely punished peasants who poached game. The stories of Robin Hood and his band of outlaws in Sherwood Forest reflect the importance and exclusive use of the forests. (See the chapter on Robin Hood.) Ladies could join in the hunt with falcons—that is, fowling—and the benefits of hunting with hounds versus birds could be the subject of lively discussion. As early as the eleventh century the image of a figure mounted on a horse and holding a falcon indicated noble status.

Meadows and wetlands may seem like strange places to build castles, but water was an effective barrier. Lake-bounded castles could be impregnable fortresses—unless the lake was artificial and someone cut the dam or dike. The lake castles put the walls beyond the reach of many war engines and prevented both direct assault and mining or sapping operations. Water-filled moats, ponds, and lakes not only protected castle walls, but also provided a natural sewage system, because garderobes could discharge directly into the water. Moats also provided a place to raise frogs and fish for food. Finally, we should not overlook the sheer beauty of the setting used so effectively at castles like Leeds, Bodiam, and Kenilworth. Reflections doubled the apparent size of the castle. Water also lent enchantment; then, as now, it had an almost magical appeal. The castles of Leeds southeast of London and Vincennes in the outskirts of Paris are typical of the new architecture and illustrate the forest and water meadow sites.

Leeds Castle

Contemporary with Bodiam is Leeds Castle. Built at the end of the thirteenth century on two islands on an artificial lake set in an extensive meadow and woodland, Leeds Castle, like Bodiam, seems to rise from the water. The building of a gloriette on the smaller of the islands recalls Moorish buildings in Spain, the home of Eleanor of Castile queen of England when Leeds was being

built. In Spain, water played a large part in palace and garden architecture. At Leeds the broad lake formed by a dam reflects the castle's lime-washed walls. The dam also created a mill race that powered a grain mill, which was fortified as part of the barbican.

The story of the contested ownership of Leeds Castle gives an idea of how much it was appreciated. Bartholomew de Badlesmere, one of Edward II's courtiers, in 1318 exchanged property worth three times as much for the pleasure and convenience of living at Leeds. But Edward II's French wife, Queen Isabella, wanted the castle herself. In 1321 when Badlesmere was away, Isabella arrived at Leeds with her retinue and demanded entry. Margaret Lady Badlesmere refused to admit the queen. So began a confrontation between two strong-minded women. To allow the queen to enter would jeopardize the ownership of the castle, so Lady Badlesmere barred the gate. The queen, following French precedent, expected all castles to be open to her, and she considered a closed gate an insult. A fight broke out between the castle guard and the royal party in which some of the queen's men were killed. King Edward sent in troops, and Lady Badlesmere had to surrender her home. She was imprisoned in the Tower of London and released only in 1322 after her husband's death. Left with neither home nor income, Margaret de Badlesmere and her young son Giles petitioned the queen and council to give Leeds back. Isabella, now the queen mother and regent, kept Leeds but gave Margaret another more valuable but less prestigious property.

Vincennes

In the thirteenth century King Philip Augustus built a manor house in the royal forest of Vincennes near Paris. Charles V (r. 1364–80) in turn rebuilt this hunting lodge as a castle with the great tower we see today, finishing it in 1370. Like many fourteenth-century castles, it had a rectangular plan with walls, moat, corner towers, and central gateways, but it was not designed to withstand a serious siege. A residential tower standing in the middle of the west wall and an independent defensive system of walls and moat make the chateau of Vincennes secure against treachery. A chapel resembling the Sainte-Chapelle in the royal palace in Paris stood in the courtyard. Begun in 1379, it was not finished until 1552.

The tower house at Vincennes is a masterpiece of fourteenth-century architecture. The tower with its battlements stands about 170 feet high. Each floor has a single large room with a central pier supporting a stone vault. Corner towers provide space for additional small rooms and garderobes. Spiral stairs provide access to the six floors and roof. A large ceremonial stair leads from the second-floor entry to the royal residence and to a chapel on the third floor. Lords attending the king occupied the fourth floor, and the fifth floor provided lodging for servants. The top floor and roof line are battlemented, and the space is entirely given over to military use.

Symbolic Ceremonies: Public and Private

The late Middle Ages saw an increase in desire for private spaces as well as domestic comfort. The great hall still formed the focal point of castle life and architectural design and the stage for ceremony and feasting. The lord and lady of the castle and their guests seated at the high table were served a banquet of three to five courses, each of which might have as many as 15 dishes. Those at the tables in the hall usually had a buffet with much less food. Heavy food was served first, and delicacies and sweets at the end. Wine was the usual drink; spiced wine was served at the end of the feast. Between the last courses spectacular displays of food, such as swans or peacocks that had been roasted and then returned to their skin and feathers, might be presented. At this time, live human actors might perform skits or juggling or gymnastic acts. From the minstrel's gallery over the screens passage, musicians entertained. The musicians might be in the permanent employ of the castle, or they might wander from place to place and so also bring the latest news and gossip. In the fifteenth century musicians even organized into guilds.

The Closet

After festivities in the hall, people might retire to more intimate surroundings, moving through the building and arriving at ever more exclusive spaces and controlled entries. Personal safety had something to do with the design, to be sure, but so did the dramatic ritual performance of everyday activities. Two special areas developed—the closet (the word for study) and the private garden ("secret" garden, in Italy). The closet was the lord's private space; it was in fact a small room with space for only one or two confidants. The closet might also house a small library and a treasury of rare, precious, or wonderful objects. To retire to the lord's closet allowed the most confidential conversation.

The Pleasure Garden

The castle pleasure garden was an equally private place. The symbolism of the Garden of Eden, Song of Songs, and Paradise or royal hunting park permeates its design and plantings. With increased security—and for some people, increased leisure—the pleasure garden became a necessary adjunct to a palace. Stairs often led from the ladies' apartments directly into the garden. Private, walled, with turf-covered benches, arbors and special trees for shade, flowers to delight the eye and nose, and even a fountain to cool a wine jug and refresh the senses, the pleasure garden was a wonderful place. Here one could hold confidential conversations and indulge in amorous adventures. Expenses for exotic plants like lemon trees, for majolica tiles, and for rosebushes hint at the beauty and luxury of this most ephemeral art.

Tournaments

Theatrical performances, in which the guests might join, sometimes with tragic results, became very important by the fifteenth century. Then, as now, people loved to dance. They also loved sports, hunting, and especially tournaments. Tournaments began as training for warfare. The space between castle walls known as the lists provided space for military exercises and also for jousting. Jousting was a formal fight, engaged in as a sport. In the twelfth century two teams of knights engaged in a free-for-all combat called a melee, a word we still use for a chaotic situation. Weapons were supposed to be blunt, but injuries and even deaths were common. In the thirteenth century tournaments provided entertainment that included spectacular athletic displays, colorful rituals, and banquets. William Marshall, lord of Pembroke Castle, began his career as a jouster in tournaments.

By the fourteenth century the jousts consisted of formal contests in which mounted warriors charged each other with lances in an attempt to knock each other off the horse. Heralds supervised the tournament and acted as umpires. Jousting took place in walled lists. Temporary wooden walls could be constructed to form the lists, or the area between the inner and outer walls of a castle could serve. Spectators watched from the castle walls, which might be extended with temporary wooden barriers, or "tilts." Pavilions and stands for spectators were also built.

In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries tournaments became a very expensive sport, engaged in only by wealthy men who wore splendid armor identified by heraldic colors and emblems. They rode powerful horses (destriers) that were also decked out with heraldic trappings. Kings even held international competitions in which they guaranteed safe conduct for jousters from abroad. In 1344 at a tournament at Windsor Castle, men came from Scotland, France, Burgundy, and elsewhere. The knights fought for honor and glory, and they often dedicated their skill and strength to their ladies, who judged and awarded prizes. Ceremony and spectacle replaced mock warfare.

Heraldry

Heraldry began as a system of personal identification that enabled knights to identify friends and foes in battle. Each man adopted a color and easily recognizable pattern or image to place on his shield; this became his coat of arms and made him recognizable when fully armored. Women also adopted coats of arms. We have noted the castle emblems of Queen Blanche of Castile. The complex patterns of heraldry required highly trained specialists who not only identified owners but also made sure that each design was unique. Heralds had an official organization and training program, and they kept records of coats of arms. Eventually, coats of arms decorated and identified armor, clothing, personal belongings, flags, banners, and buildings. Cities, states, guilds,

associations, churches, and colleges adopted coats of arms. Gateways were decorated with shields, and heraldic banners flew from towers.

From Fortress to Palace: The Castle of Kenilworth

The Castle of Kenilworth carries to a logical conclusion the role of the castle as a symbol and setting for the dramas of life. Geoffrey de Clinton built the original castle in the twelfth century—probably a motte and bailey, with the motte where the stone tower stands today. The town of Kenilworth and an abbey developed nearby. In the thirteenth century the king ordered the walls to be replaced with stone and an earthen dam to be made to form lakes and a marsh (the Great Mere) around the castle. The causeway leading to the castle gate also served as the tiltyard. The monastery used the water to fill its fish ponds. In the fifteenth century the marsh was transformed into a lake leading to a pleasance that could be approached by a boat. The pleasance could be a residence, a hunting lodge, or a pleasure palace.

In the thirteenth century, Simon de Montfort owned the castle. An active politician as well as a warrior, he helped set up the first parliament, led a failed rebellion, and died at the battle of Evesham in 1265. His followers escaped to Kenilworth, where the royal forces laid siege. Kenilworth, considered impregnable (like Richard's Château-Gaillard), fell to the king's forces. The operation demonstrated yet again the weakness of the great tower in siege warfare. By the end of the century, as we have seen, commanders used castles as headquarters but fought in the open field.

In the late Middle Ages Kenilworth was transformed into a fabulous palace by its new owner, the younger son of King Edward III, John of Gaunt duke of Lancaster (1340–1399). John of Gaunt (an important patron of Geoffrey Chaucer—see the chapter on Chaucer) had enormous power and wealth, which he chose to display in his architectural commissions. Through marriage to Constance, the daughter and heir of the Spanish king Peter the Cruel, John of Gaunt claimed the kingdom of Spain in 1369. He rebuilt Kenilworth as a true royal palace, with an extraordinary great hall, a private range of buildings on the south, and huge kitchens on the west side of the inner courtyard. Although severely damaged, the ruins allow us to imagine the splendor of the original buildings.

Gaunt's enormous hall stands on the site of the earlier hall. The remaining stonework shows that it is an early example of the perpendicular style, where geometric tracery spreads over walls and windows to create the effect of paneling. All of John of Gaunt's buildings were built in this simple and efficient new style, giving a unity to the different building types. From the outside, two towers flank the hall and create a symmetrical composition, although the spaces function differently. A long and impressive external stair from the courtyard up to the second-floor entrance made a dramatic approach. These stairs lead up through a sculptured gatehouse into a waiting room and then

into a huge hall. Inside the hall, tall windows open to both the courtyard on one side and the "great mere" on the other. From the seats flanking each window, the visitor or guest could admire the lake and deer park but could not see the pleasance. Views and viewing platforms (there may have been such a platform at Kenilworth) were an important part of late medieval planning.

Staircases became important architectural features in palaces other than Kenilworth. A grand staircase was built in the royal palace in Paris, and can still be seen at the bishop's palace at St. David's, Wales. After passing through an outer gate, one enters a vast open court and is confronted by not one but two enormous halls, each with a grand staircase. This magnificent palace suggests the imposing appearance of later medieval buildings.

In the sixteenth century, construction began again at Kenilworth. By the 1530s the monastery had been suppressed, and its stone was used to construct buildings in the town and castle. The timber from the buildings of the pleasance also was reused in the courtyard of the castle. New stables, visitor's quarters, and gatehouse were added; the Norman great tower was transformed with a gallery; and a formal Italianate garden was planted. Kenilworth became the site of the most spectacular pageantry of the Elizabethan age.

The Norman tower, although modernized with huge windows punched through its walls, played an important role in establishing the antiquity and importance of the family. The open gallery or loggia, on the other hand, demonstrated that they knew the latest fashions. The loggia, an amenity recently introduced from Italy, was known in England through pattern books. (The new technology of printing made the spread of ideas and images fast and easy.) From the loggia visitors could admire the formal gardens, just as they would in an Italian Renaissance palazzo. Even the stair leading down into the garden was designed so that the garden could be admired at each landing and turning. The garden had fountains, topiary work (plants clipped into shapes), arbors, alleys of green grass, and carved obelisks, spheres, and sculptures of heraldic bears. A garden pavilion provided a comfortable place to sit and chat.

The finest moment in Kenilworth's history as a palace was the extraordinary party given by Robert Dudley earl of Leicester (1533–1588) for Queen Elizabeth I. Elizabeth had given Kenilworth to him in 1563. Leicester organized an elaborate visit and entertainments for her in July 1575. When the queen arrived in the evening, she was welcomed by the "Lady of the Lake" who proclaimed that, in Elizabeth's honor, she arose from the lake for the first time since the days of King Arthur. The Lady of the Lake then recited the history of the castle. Along the causeway Leicester placed gifts for the queen.

Time stood still for the queen, or so said the earl, who stopped the hands of the giant blue and gilt clock on the Norman tower during the queen's visit. Gossips noted that Elizabeth did not emerge from her lodgings until five in the afternoon, but she was not resting. She worked so hard that 20 horses a day were needed to transport the paperwork between Kenilworth and London. Elizabeth was a conscientious ruler, although she played the role of the

unattainable lady, the object of desire in the medieval game of courtly love. Architecturally, Kenilworth also alluded to past medieval glories. The palace-castle was the perfect stage setting for Elizabeth and her court.

Only 50 years after Leicester's festivities, the royal drama came to an end. Oliver Cromwell's army blew up the great tower with gunpowder. Then his men destroyed and made the palace uninhabitable, and in 1649 the lakes were drained. But the romance of Kenilworth continued. Sir Walter Scott's novel *Kenilworth* ensured its place in the public imagination, and today the place is a much-visited park-like ruin. With Kenilworth, the era of the castle as a fortress, home, or romantic setting comes to a close.

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Illustration of a siege of a castle or fortress using a cannon, crossbows, and handguns, mid-fifteenth century. The defenders are replying with handguns and have raised the drawbridge over the moat, Burney MS 169, folio 127. (The British Library/Stock-photoPro)

The Siege: An Iconic Form of Medieval Warfare

Clifford J. Rogers

"To be besieged," wrote Otto of Freising in the late twelfth century, "is the most pitiful fate of all."[1] Indeed, the long defense of a castle or a fortified town could impose great suffering: sleepless nights on watch, agonizing labor to rebuild battered ramparts, terrible stench, thirst, unceasing bombardment, constant worry, and above all, hunger "sharper than a sword." In December 1418, the people of Rouen sent ambassadors to their king and his council, "to lay before them the pitiful condition in which they were within the town, and the evils they were suffering and had long suffered. For they said there to the king personally . . . how that many thousands of people inside were already dead from hunger; and that since the beginning of October they had been obliged to eat horses, dogs, cats, rats, and other vile things not lawful for human beings; and that they had already thrust out of the town more than sixteen thousand helpless persons, of whom the greater part had died miserably within the trenches of the town. And good people had drawn over the wall many of the new-born children of women who gave birth to them there, and they were sent up in panniers to have them baptized, and then returned to their mothers; but plenty of them died without being christened; which things were very sad, and pitiable even to hear related."

> An egg at 9 pence, an apple at 10 pence . . .
> Then to die they did begin,
> All that rich city within.
> They died so fast on every day
> That men could not all them in the earth lay
> Even if a child should otherwise be dead,
> The mother would not give it bread . . .
> Nor would a child to its mother give;
> Everyone tried himself to live
> As long as he could last
> Love and kindness both were past.[2]

Hard as the lot of the besieged was, the experience of the besiegers was often not much better and sometimes rather worse. They too had the burdens and worries of guarding against attack, whether by relief forces or in the form of sallies by the garrison; their labors were likely to be even greater than those of the defenders. They too could suffer deeply from hunger, and they were more exposed to the elements:

> The harshness of the weather, the shortage of food caused by miserable indigence and the closing in of the enemy all weighed on them. . . . There was no lack of discontented muttering; indeed it was only to be expected that human fragility should start muttering under the weight of so much suffering, Hail, snow and ice, and stormy wind made life extremely unpleasant for those who were not sheltered under any roof; it was hardly surprising that those outside the tents were almost at the end of their

tether when the tents themselves were awash. . . . An ass-load of wheat was sold for six pounds, an egg for twelve denarii and one single nut for one. . . . The result was that many died of hunger because they had nothing they could eat.[3]

Improvised shelter and sanitation systems, and their "foreign stomachs," left the besiegers even more vulnerable to disease than the defenders were:

While the lord prince was at the siege of the town of Esgleyes so great a sickness attacked his host that all the people were ill. So many nobles, knights, and honourable citizens and footsoldiers died there, and in such great numbers that it was difficult to find anyone to bury them or to stand watch, or to think of anything but of how he could go on living. This lasted as long as the siege was maintained. And the lord prince fell so gravely ill that at no time, as long as he remained in Sardinia, was he without fever. The princess was ill too. Only one remained alive of all the ladies who had come with her. . . . And as far as can be reckoned, half of the people at the siege died there, and, of those left, there were very few who were not ill and often near to death through the sickness. This happened because of a very rainy winter; the mud round the host was very great and there was great cold and stench and infection.[4]

By no means, however, were all sieges so trying. If they had been, they would not have been so common. And common they certainly were, much more common than battle, especially in the High and late Middle Ages—though the disparity was not as great as some recent writers have tended to imply.[5] Most sieges ended before any soldiers experienced starvation or epidemic disease, sometimes due to a successful assault, but far more often through a negotiated surrender. A large number of factors contributed to determining the character of a siege. The most important of these were the nature of the place under attack (its size; the quality of its fortifications) and the determination of its defenders and the attackers. There were also, as with all elements of medieval warfare, variations by region and century, but until the advent of really effective gunpowder siege artillery around 1420–30, these were less significant than one might expect. When Christine de Pizan composed a sort of manual for the attack and defense of fortifications for the duke of Burgundy around 1410, she included an important chapter focusing on the use of cannon, but the rest of her text was basically just a translation of the similar handbook Vegetius had written at a distance of a thousand years and a thousand kilometers. This did no harm to the value of the text; rather, it became one of her most popular works and was translated into English and printed by Caxton at the very end of the Middle Ages.[6] When it came down to it, whether in the fifth century or the fifteenth, sieges were about efforts to go over, under, or through the defenders' walls or to use the threat of doing so to frighten them into surrendering.

If we consider the Middle Ages as a whole, the most common type of siege was probably the siege of a town, especially when we take into account that castles were rare before the tenth century. This chapter will therefore focus on operations of that sort at first, to establish a sort of baseline, then briefly cover sieges of castles as a variation on the theme. Likewise, discussion of gunpowder artillery and its effects will be reserved for the end of the chapter.

DEFENSIVE PREPARATIONS

It might sometimes be known from spies or obvious because of the situation that an army of invasion was on its way to besiege a particular town. In that case the inhabitants, with the help of their lords, would spare no effort or expense in preparing its defense.[7] Walls would be repaired, perhaps completed or improved, if there was enough advance warning. Wooden or wood-and-earth outworks might be built to enclose unfortified suburbs or to add an additional layer to weak spots in the defenses. Cisterns might be cleaned and filled with water laboriously carried up by the mule or wagon-load.[8] To reduce the effectiveness of stones or incendiaries launched into the town, streets and roofs might be covered with earth.[9] Buildings located too close outside the walls would be stripped and then pulled down, with the useful building materials carried into the town, if time allowed, or burned, if not. This prevented the besiegers from using them for shelter from the elements or for cover while preparing an assault, or for materials for siege engines, and also forestalled them from using the threat of their destruction to impel surrender. Houses, stalls, or other impediments to free movement along the inner circuit of the walls were also likely to be demolished. In some cases, even the villages and weaker castles in the surrounding area might be destroyed, for similar reasons. The more moderate step of evacuating the rural inhabitants with their valuables, their millstones, mill irons, and anvils,[10] and their comestibles, was the norm. Individual townsfolk and the town council alike would work to ensure that sufficient stocks of food and military equipment were laid in. The militia would be mustered, equipment checked and distributed, and plans and duties reconfirmed as the townsmen steeled themselves for a stint of life-and-death soldiering. Some women, children, or old men might be sent away, to spare them the siege and to help the food stocks last longer, but in general, most or all of them stayed home.[11] Finally, elite troops, chosen for their political reliability as well as their fighting abilities, might be brought in to assist the townsfolk in conducting the defense and also to watch over them and ensure they did not surrender too readily.

More often, the precise destination of an invading army would not be known, but a large number of towns and castles would recognize that they were under threat. Their preparations would be similar in nature, but less thorough. Town

councils would communicate with their colleagues in neighboring towns, with whom they were linked by bonds of intermarriage and commercial cooperation, seeking news of the enemy's actions and their lords' responses and pledging mutual assistance.[12] Only at the near approach of the invaders might the defensive demolitions begin, and rather than any evacuations from the town, it was likely to receive a large influx of refugees from its district, along with all the food stocks (including livestock) that urgent efforts could bring in. The field force shadowing the invaders would provide reinforcements of experienced and well-equipped soldiers to stiffen the defense. One might expect a priori that these contingents would leave some or all of their warhorses behind since these animals consume copious amount of oats and grain as well as fodder, but in fact, this was almost never done, a reminder of the high value placed on the capacity for mounted combat.[13]

Even if put off until the last moment, defensive preparations of this sort could greatly increase the besiegers' difficulties, so naturally, an attacker would want to prevent them from taking place. Commonly, a strong mounted strike force would make a rapid advance, including a long night march, to block reinforcements from entering the targeted town and to secure for themselves the stores of the surrounding villages, both to supply themselves and to reduce the defenders' provisions. With great luck, such an advance party might even achieve such surprise as to seize the place by a coup de main, but this was not common—and if successful, would eliminate the need for a siege, which is our topic here. Alternately, the soldiers might try to pillage the local villages in such a way as to allow the inhabitants time to escape to the shelter of the town's walls, but, ideally, not enough time to pack their goods and food stores along with them, thus hastening the day when those inside would run short of food. A third possibility, especially if the siege was intended as part of a campaign of conquest, was to block the rural inhabitants from entering the town but then to promise them protection from the approaching army provided that they agreed to accept a new lord's authority and to cooperate with provisioning his men.

It should be noted that advance parties of this sort were sometimes on the scale of small armies themselves and could be sent weeks, or even months, ahead of the main body. They would then not normally attempt a complete siege but would set themselves up in a defended position, seized or constructed, and harass the town with raids, attacks on agricultural workers, ambushes on the roads, and so on. These actions could have a great impact, even if only a few townsmen were captured or a few merchants' wagons seized. Even a small band acting in this way could force goods to be brought into the town under escort and, through terror, prevent farmers from tending or harvesting their crops or townsfolk from working their gardens, which would in turn make supplies expensive and scarce and thereby shorten resistance. That was how James the Conqueror proceeded against Valencia in 1238: ripening it, he explained, "just as one would with a fruit that one wishes to eat."[14]

DEVASTATION OF THE SURROUNDING AREA AND ASSAULT
ON THE OUTER DEFENSES

The very fact that a town was under threat of siege usually implied that its lord was not able or ready to attack the enemy army in open battle. Nonetheless, it was by no means automatic that the defenders of a town would immediately retreat behind their principal walls. Large towns, especially if reinforced by neighbors and by a substantial detachment from, or the full strength of, a shadowing force, could field reasonably large bodies of soldiers. Especially in the late Middle Ages, they might be well armed and equipped, including with mail armor and helmets. They could sometimes be lured out into an open fight (or even immediate surrender) by the sight of their farms and properties outside the walls being put to the torch, which was a usual opening move by besieging armies when they arrived in front of a town. Sometimes a small detachment was sent in advance of the main force to drive a herd of plundered cattle, perhaps along with local peasants captured in the fields, past a town's gate, as bait to draw a sally force into an ambush.

  Wise defenders, however, usually declined such gambits. Forces composed to a large extent of townsmen would, of course, be infantry-heavy, well suited for the defense of a fixed position but at a great disadvantage in more open combat. Still, that did not mean that they refused to fight, only that they declined to do so except on their own terms. Even a simple ditch and palisade, if manned resolutely, could go a long way toward compensating for the skill differential between a burgher and a man-at-arms or hardened foot sergeant. If positioned 30 or so yards out from the walls, a line of footmen behind such a palisade could also be very effectively supported by the fire of engines and archers or crossbowmen stationed on the town's ramparts and towers. Even a suburb that did not have any sort of defenses but the buildings themselves and the enclosures of the gardens (and perhaps chains or barricades in the streets) could offer militiamen very favorable fighting conditions.[15] Should it nonetheless prove impossible to hold such a position indefinitely, the defenders might still be able to inflict significant casualties on their enemies, fighting with those advantages, and then retreat back to their principal defenses. If, on the other hand, the defense of the suburbs was successful, it would prevent the destruction of valuable properties, keep the townsfolk's gardens and their produce available to sustain the defense, and keep the enemy's engines at a distance from the walls. And, not insignificantly, the defenders would usually have in mind that the approaching army might not be committed to besieging them after all and that a show of resolution might divert it to seek easier prey. A particularly vivid description of a situation like this can be found in the *St. Omer Chronicle,* clearly written by an eyewitness:

> Around this time, the earl of Northampton and the earl of Warwick assembled [from the forces in Calais] a good thousand men-at-arms, and

took with them the Welsh and the Irish. They came before St. Omer in their divisions; they scattered through the fields, seizing booty and killing people. They overran the countryside without array and without order, like men who thought they had already conquered everything. Then throughout the town the alarm was called, and the trumpets and horns were sounded. And once milord Jacques de Bourbon [the captain of the garrison] was armed, he exited from the gate with all his [300] men[-at-arms]. Then he took stock of the situation, and saw that he did not have enough men to attack his enemies, who were approaching to charge him. So they dismounted and sent their horses back into the town, and awaited their enemies there like valiant men. And behind them, the townsmen had sent out of the gate a large division of crossbowmen. And inside the gate, in the market square, they had a very large division of footmen. And the lords had ordered that as soon as the enemy should have engaged with them, the crossbowmen should begin to shoot, and the large division should issue out of the port to join the mêlée. But the Englishmen, who well understood what the townsmen were up to, did not dare engage. Then the [French] knights and footmen split up into bands and separately went through the suburbs and the gardens, and there they found the Englishmen who were scattered everywhere [to pillage], and didn't know how to rejoin their formations. Full many of them were killed thus, and such a tremendous number of them captured that it is a wonder to speak of. And the Englishmen lost a large number of great men there, which caused them much sorrow. Immediately they departed and returned to Calais. And they lost a good five hundred of their number that day, either killed or captured.[16]

Hence when the soldiers of an invading army approached a town, they would often find a challenge of this sort waiting for them.

Given that this was in fact the town that the army's leaders had decided to besiege, the challenge would almost always be taken up. Determined fighters might be able to defend a palisade quite effectively, but it was far from guaranteed that all the townsmen would be able to withstand an attack with resolution, and if even only a few of them panicked, that would mean the collapse of the defense. That, in turn, would create at least a chance of avoiding a real siege altogether, if the defeated force could be pressed hard enough, followed tightly enough, that the attackers could enter the gates with them. Also, if the burghers were taking the risk of trying to defend their suburbs, that likely meant that the buildings had not been emptied out and that driving the townsmen back would create an opportunity for some profitable looting. Even if things did not go as well as that, seizing the outworks was a necessary precondition for assaults on the town's principal defenses, and the sooner those were begun, the better.

Palisades were often used to defend camps and sometimes used to prepare fighting positions in open battle, but the soldier was most likely to find himself

fighting at them in the situation we are dealing with here. Unfortunately, even the most detailed sources, though they often mention fighting at the barriers, rarely give much information about either the palisades themselves or about how they affected the fighting. Simone Martini's fourteenth-century fresco of the siege of Monte Massi shows something similar to a waist-high picket fence, but the 2,200 stakes purchased by Agen in 1349 for construction of a palisade were about 12 to 15 feet long, implying more of a stockade-like defense.[17] Outworks could also take the form of wooden walls, made of planks or tree trunks, sometimes revetted with earth to resist bombardment. This was the norm in the fifteenth century.[18] No further analysis can give a better picture of the soldier's experience of a combat "at the barriers" than another passage from the *St. Omer Chronicle:*

> They climbed the Mont de Cassel, but found . . . the gates and towers were defended by banners of archers and crossbowmen, and good men who knew how to defend themselves. The men of Courtrai were there guarding the place, along with plenty of men-at-arms who went around everywhere encouraging the others to do well. The aforesaid [French] noblemen dismounted and, having their shields carried in front of them, advanced towards the town. In addition, the crossbowmen formed up, and shot as thick as rain. Then the assault began, so extremely vigorous that it is a wonder to speak of: for the great lords and the noble men-at-arms advanced to the breastworks and with their bare hands tore down the planks of the palisade, striking the [defenders] they could reach with axes and swords, eager to capture the town. But those on the other side defended themselves very boldly, striking the knights down into the ditches with pikes and large stones. When those who had not yet come to the front saw this, they came forward with great boldness to take the places of the fallen. The assault was bitterly contested, both with missiles and hand-to-hand fighting. Many valiant knights could be seen doing their duty. But the defenders shot so thickly with quarrels, arrows, and bolts from springalds [giant crossbows] that they wounded very many with their shot. A very good knight named Sir Gilles de Mailly was killed in this assault. The attack lasted [from early morning] until noon, when the high lords concluded that they were wasting their time, and had the trumpet sounded for the retreat.[19]

In this example the attacking French were attempting a coup de main rather than initiating a siege and did not return to the attack later. Had they intended a determined effort to capture Cassel, they would have tried again, probably several times, if necessary. If none of those efforts succeeded, they could have begun preparing engines to demolish the palisades from a distance, but if they had driven the Flemings back from the barriers, they would doubtless have pressed them as tightly as they could, trying to enter the gate along with them or, failing that, to mount a hasty assault on the walls.

HASTY ASSAULTS

Except in cases in which a commander intended to use a besieged town as bait to lure an enemy army into battle, from the attacker's standpoint the more quickly the targeted town was captured, the better. A simple rush at the walls, with no special tools except perhaps some ladders from the army's baggage train, did not often succeed—but sometimes it did, and so it was usually attempted at the first moment possible, when it could be hoped the defenders would be ill prepared, either having just been driven back from the palisades or through the suburbs or perhaps taken by surprise and not yet having all taken up their arms and their positions.

The reasons such hasty assaults usually failed were the simple facts of physics and geometry. Town walls were normally high enough that even with a long spear, someone standing on the ground could not strike someone at the top, or vice versa. Hence to reach his goal, an attacking soldier had to climb up something, usually a ladder, though if the ramparts were unusually short, he might be able to reach their edge by standing on the shoulders of a comrade. If his ladder was a bit short, he would not only have to climb it while warding off blows from above, he would also, at some point, have to practically abandon any efforts at active defense to grasp the lip of the defenses and clamber up, at which point he would be terribly vulnerable to the weapons of the defenders. If his ladder was too long, projecting above the top of the wall, a defender could shove it back away from the wall, using the top of an axe for example,[20] without even needing to expose himself, thus sending anyone on its rungs toppling backward, quite possibly to broken bones or a broken neck as well as failure.[21] Even if his ladder happened to be just the right length— and sophisticated methods were sometimes used to try to ensure that it would be—at the top of it he would face a hand-to-hand fight with a man who had the advantages of steady footing, cover for the lower half and (assuming the wall was provided with merlons) one side of his body, and the greater power of blows driving downward rather than extending upward.[22] A little reflection will enable anyone who has cleaned gutters or painted a house to appreciate what a difficult and frightening prospect that would be. But a soldier would have to be lucky even to have the opportunity for an unequal contest of that sort because of the other two key advantages of the defender: the ability to drop things and the enfilading fire provided by projecting towers.

Defenders did sometimes employ a variety of exotic missiles to prevent assailants from closing to hand strokes in the first place: pots of blinding or hot lime; beehives; boiling or burning oil, pitch, or Greek fire; molten glass or lead; heavy bars or javelins of solid iron; great beams, perhaps tipped with red-hot plowshares; roof timbers, marble columns, or spiked tree trunks rolled over the ramparts; carts full of stones or giant dumbbells made from millstones and launched down plank tracks.[23] Even boiling water was sometimes used, though it would have been effective only at very short range, as it cools rapidly in moving through the air.[24] Dramatic as these were, however, they were

not nearly as common as simple stones, which were as cheap as they were effective in knocking someone off a ladder. More lethal, however, were arrows and bolts loosed from flanking towers. Arrow loops were positioned so that they could provide highly effective enfilading fire: in other words, so that shot would travel parallel to the walls. That meant that in a heavy assault the bowmen could hardly miss, because their targets were arrayed in a deep line for them, along the face of the wall. And as with thrown rocks or strong spear thrusts, even an impact that was blocked by a shield could cast a man down off a ladder—especially once he came within a spear length of the top of the wall and had to use his hands in fighting and not to grip the ladder.[25]

Wooden fortifications were vulnerable to hasty attacks by burning as well as by escalade. If the attackers could pile enough combustible material at the base of a stockade-type wall, they could start a fire that would drive off the defenders and, once the flames died down, give them access to the interior. But men or wagons bringing up bundles of dry sticks, hay, and so on were perhaps even more vulnerable to defensive fire than were teams running up scaling ladders. Defenders also used buckets of water to put out fires at the base of their walls or inside them. Hence this sort of attack was neither as easy nor as often successful as one might expect.[26]

To fight off a prolonged assault required vast quantities of all sorts of missiles, and often noncombatants carried these up to the men on the ramparts, at considerable risk. John Barbour, for example, describes how at the siege of Berwick in 1319, "on that day when all there were most [heavily] attacked and the shot too was thickest, women with child and small children gathered up arrows in armfuls, carrying them to those who were on the wall, and not one who was there was killed nor yet wounded; that was more a miracle of God Almighty [than man's doing, for] I can attribute it to nothing else."[27] In addition to ammunition, women, priests, and children frequently exposed themselves to danger in carrying food and drink to the fighters on the walls. Not infrequently, women took an even more active role. In Muntaner's defense of Gallipoli, for example, "our women defended the barbican, with stones and pieces of rock which I had placed on the wall, in so masterly a manner, it was marvellous."[28]

Although each individual attacking soldier attempting to scale the wall had a large chance of failing and suffering injuries or death, he also had some chance of succeeding, especially if he had skilled bowmen providing covering fire from the ground, giving him at least a chance of making it to the top of the ladder just as the man guarding that section of the ramparts took an arrow in the face or ducked to avoid doing so. And if one or two men-at-arms made it onto the inner wall-walk, there was a good chance that they would be able to expand that small hole in the defenders' line into a full breach, especially if they caused a panic. Hence even if the vast majority of individual soldiers in a hasty assault failed, and the large majority of hasty assaults failed overall, they could be successful. It was this logic that led commanders to order such assaults; soldiers were willing, often eager, to conduct them, partly because

if a man had the good luck to be the one to successfully mount the wall, he could expect great rewards and honor, but also partly because the attempt itself, even if it failed, offered a good opportunity for a man to distinguish himself and build or uphold a reputation.

SIEGE CAMPS

If the initial attempt to seize the walls failed, or if the defenses were too strong to even attempt one (e.g., because of a water-filled moat or walls too high for the army's ladders to reach the top), the besieging army could give up on the idea of taking the place by storm and instead settle in to starve it into surrender. This was rare, however. Instead, armies would usually begin to lay the groundwork for a deliberate attack, using a variety of methods and engines to reduce the defenders' advantages. Such preparations took time, at least several days to several weeks, depending on the strength of the fortifications to be attacked.

That, then, required the army to set up camp. Doing this properly was an important task, to be supervised by the commander of the army. In his old age James the Conqueror remembered having "made some thirty [siege] camps" and also commented concerning the great siege of Murcia that "in going thither with my host I was among the first, that I might at once set my camp as it ought to be set. For in battle kings should be in the rear guard, whilst in quartering their army they should be foremost, to place their men better."[29]

The need for flat, dry ground, with access to water, was made very important by the possibility of a long stay, which usually had to be taken into account, even if a more rapid success was hoped for. Hence more care than usual would be taken to ensure an organized layout; the tents might be set up in orderly rows, with the commander's headquarters in the center, perhaps with an open plaza in front of it, as had been Roman practice, to allow a convenient rallying place in the event of an attack on the camp.[30] Those who did not have tents would make shelters thatched with hay, either with a framework of wood or, if wood was unavailable or if the camp was within bombardment range of the town, dug into the ground like a foxhole.[31] These could be quite snug and dry, though they also made the host vulnerable to fire in much the same way a town was.[32] Outside the lines of the camp, pits or long trenches would be dug for various forms of waste, then re-covered with dirt once halfway full.[33] In addition to their sanitary function, these could help protect the camp. At the siege of Acre in 1291, the defenders made a sortie one night, "put the outposts to flight and reached the tents, where they became tangled up in the guy-ropes. One knight fell into the latrine trench of one of the amir's detachments and was killed."[34]

There were also particular concerns deriving from this context. A deliberate assault would usually be preceded and accompanied by the fire of various large stone-throwing engines, catapults or trebuchets, and an important

consideration in choosing the position of a siege camp would be that it include ground suitable for siting the engines (ideally, on a level patch of high ground overlooking the town, neither too close nor too far away) or at least for facilitating their defense. Sallies by the townsmen and garrison could be expected, directed both at the camp and specifically at the engines, so it was important to pick terrain that would hinder any surprise attack.[35] Even armies that did not customarily prepare field fortifications while on the march would usually, for this reason, do so for a siege camp. These would most often take the form of a palisade or a simple ditch, with the dirt thrown inward to form a rampart, or both.[36] Most towns had rivers or large streams passing through or past them, and so it was usually possible to encamp along running water, which aided sanitation and defense as well as providing water for drinking, washing, and cooking. If the besiegers planned to encircle the town and fully cut it off from support and resupply, however, this also posed the risk of defeat in detail. In such a case, separate fortified camps might be constructed in each sector and special efforts made to build or repair bridges to allow for mutual support.

PREPARING FOR A DELIBERATE ASSAULT

The advantages fortifications gave to the defenders have already been discussed. If a hasty attack failed, that demonstrated the need for the besieging army to eliminate or minimize these advantages. The most extreme example of success in this respect would be to bring down a large section of the enemy's walls entirely, either through bombardment or, more likely, at least until the mid-fifteenth century, by deep mining. The latter technique involved digging a tunnel, just as if for an ore mine, from a covered position to underneath the targeted fortification. Only rarely was the tunnel continued to inside the walls; normally, it was instead extended laterally beneath them, with wooden props emplaced to bear the weight of the stone above. Finally, the tunnel would be partly filled with inflammables and the props oiled and set afire; once they had burned away sufficiently, the tunnel would collapse, and with it the wall.[37] For "enormous oak timbers" to weaken sufficiently took some time. At Nicaea in 1097, the crusaders all, "small and great, gathered twigs, stalks and sticks and dry reeds, pieces of tow and all sorts of kindling and heaped it between the posts and beams and the splendid timbers" holding up a tower that had been undermined at its base, but by the time the edifice collapsed with a noise like thunder, it was the middle of the night, and many of them had gone to sleep.[38]

Deep mining might not be possible at all, for example if the local water table was too high or the town wall rested on bedrock. Even if conditions were ideal, and the attacking army was well provided with specialists who could undertake the task, deep mining was a relatively slow process, a matter of weeks or months.[39] It was also not guaranteed of success, because the

Trebuchets in action at a siege, Royal MS 16.G.vi, folio 388, about 1340. (The British Library/StockphotoPro)

defenders could countermine—dig a tunnel of their own until it intersected the besiegers' tunnels, break in, kill the miners, and collapse the tunnel.[40] Hence deep mining operations were likely to be begun at the start of preparations for a deliberate assault, but along with, rather than instead of, other methods.[41]

Much the same went for bombardment. Even in the early Middle Ages, some engineers were able to build Roman-style catapults and mangonels and also traction trebuchets; the twelfth century saw the counterweight trebuchet added to the arsenal, and the late Middle Ages introduced and gradually perfected cannon. The traction trebuchet was a major advance when it was introduced to Europe in the sixth century, as it was capable of firing with great rapidity and accuracy, combined with substantial hitting power.[42] It was also very simple, basically a long pole like a ship's mast[43] held off-center between two uprights or trestle frames, with a crossbar at the tip of the short end of the beam to which a number of ropes were attached, and a leather sling on the other end. A crew of pullers proportionate to the size of the engine (as few as a half-dozen or so, or as many as 100 or even 250 men or women[44]) would haul back simultaneously on the ropes to pull down the short end, which would send the long end swinging up. When it reached the top of its arc, the missile loaded into the sling (usually a stone, often rounded by a stonemason but often not, especially for the smaller versions of the machine[45]) would fly

off toward the target. An eyewitness describes what one of these engines could accomplish against mud-brick walls:

> When it was prepared, the *fenèvol* [traction trebuchet] fired five hundred stones per night, and a thousand per day. When the hour of vespers arrived, the *fenèvol* had demolished so large a part of the wall that a great breach had appeared. And the cry went up amidst the army that they should go to fight, and they armed themselves and commenced the battle.
>
> And the men of the army fought with shield and lance, alongside all the crossbowmen of the army that were there.
>
> Throughout the battle the *fenèvol* did not once cease firing, and so ferocious was the battle and so accurate the *fenèvol* that a great number of those inside the town were wounded, both squires and other men-at-arms. . . . And the *fenèvol* had made great inroads, so that because of the great amount of dust from the earth it had displaced [the castellan, defending the breach] was almost buried up to his knees.[46]

An engine that could launch a stone every 50 seconds or so, as the above text implies,[47] obviously had a tremendous appetite for ammunition. Operating the machine was hard work, so the pulling crews had to be rotated fairly frequently. At Lisbon in 1147, the sailors, knights, and the knights' followings were divided into groups of 100 to operate two engines. "On a given signal the first hundred retired and another took their places, so that within the space of ten hours five thousand stones were hurled."[48] Several traction trebuchets operating simultaneously could absorb the labor and time of many hundreds of pullers each day. Combine that with the efforts required to feed the engines with projectiles—work often undertaken by the army's footmen, sometimes in return for extra pay[49]—and it is clear that of all siege engines, the traction trebuchet was the one that had the greatest significance for the lives of soldiers in sieges where it was present.[50] In crusading situations we sometimes hear of the religious leaders offering indulgences to those participating in this work, which could lure even noblemen into manual labor:

> Even the knights did not wait for soldiers to bring things, but helped in every way they could. In front of them in their saddles they would bring by horse the stones for the *fenèvols*. And the men of their house[hold]s did the same to supply the [larger counterweight] *trebuchets,* delivering the stones on frames that they had tied with cords round their necks.[51]

Starting in the second half of the twelfth century, the largest trebuchets usually employed massive counterweights (typically, heavy timber frames filled with tons of wet earth or lead), rather than pulling crews, to launch their projectiles.[52] These engines cast bigger stones greater distances but reduced the demand for soldiers' labor since draft animals could provide the energy

to raise the counterweights, and the larger missiles had to be carted, rather than carried, to the engines. Their rate of fire was also much lower, typically a dozen to a few dozen shots per day, instead of hundreds.[53] Traction trebuchets did not, however, cease to be used when the newer form was introduced.

Counterweight trebuchets, which could fire stones of several hundred pounds, were capable of breaching even stone walls by prolonged bombardment.[54] At the siege of Acre in 1191, after weeks of bombardment, one great machine named "God's Stone-Thrower" reportedly opened a gap of around 30 feet in the town wall, though taken together, the sources suggest that this actually meant that the *top* of the wall was demolished, leaving the foundations intact to about a man's height—still a significant barrier to an assault.[55] Nonetheless, until the development of really effective siege cannon in the fifteenth century, all sorts of medieval stone-throwers were of very limited effectiveness against strongly constructed stone walls. At the siege of Dunbar in 1336, the defenders mockingly used a towel to wipe off the marks left on their walls where great stones had struck. Trebuchets and mangonels "could not damage" the monastery of Floreffe in 1189, so after seven weeks, the defenses were undermined.[56] At a pair of Portuguese sieges of 1387, "[f]ifteen days passed without any thing being done: their machines were, indeed, pointed against the walls, and cast heavy stones ten or twelve times a day, but did little damage, except to the roofs of the towers, which they ruined; but the garrisons paid no attention to this, for their lodgings were well arched: and no engine nor springald could hurt them with any stones they could throw."[57]

Even if they were not strong enough to batter down well-made walls, however, stone-throwers could quite effectively demolish wooden hoardings or breastworks, knock off machicolations or merlons, and sometimes shatter flanking towers, all of which greatly reduced the effectiveness of fortifications *as fighting platforms* for the defenders.[58] When we read in the sources, as we often do, of walls "severely damaged" by the action of artillery, this is what we should usually envision, unless a breach is specifically mentioned. Ramparts weakened in these ways were still major obstacles, but they were far more vulnerable to escalade (assault using ladders), to battering with rams, or to direct undermining with pickaxes and crowbars. Damaged walls still protected the town, in other words, but could no longer so well be defended themselves. Moreover, by keeping up a continuous fire, the stone-throwing engines could prevent the defenders from making repairs to the damaged areas. Hence the operation of trebuchets and other missile engines was a key part of preparation for a deliberate assault.

Many projectiles were also directed into the town, rather than against its hard shell. Great stones smashing houses and causing some injuries and deaths served to ensure that each additional day the siege lasted would have a cost for those inside as well as those outside the walls, which was very important in keeping the pressure on for surrender negotiations. Such high-trajectory missiles could also kill any livestock left in the open and prevent the defenders from moving easily from place to place or exercising their horses.[59] Although

there is no way to address the question systematically, the sources overall tend to suggest that far more stones were sent over the fortifications of towns than against them.

Another reasonably common feature of major sieges was the construction of wooden siege towers or *belfries*.[60] These were always built high enough to overtop the walls by a good margin (at least 15 feet)—often reaching heights of 80 or 90 feet[61]—so that crossbowmen atop them could fire down on the ramparts and sweep them of defenders, thus allowing an escalade or direct undermining to succeed. This was in fact their main purpose, a point often misunderstood.[62] Usually, they also included a drawbridge at the wall's height so that assault troops could climb up under cover to mount the defenses. They might also have a battering ram at ground level. Normally, they were designed to be mobile so that they could be drawn right up to the curtain walls on wheels, greased rollers, or barges or ships. The ones built by the Vikings at Paris in 886 had 16 giant wheels and had room for 60 men.[63]

The best way to advance the siege towers was to anchor iron rings into the ground near the base of the wall, then run thick cables through them, arranged with pulleys in such a way that teams of oxen or men could haul *away* from the walls, out of missile range, to pull the tower in the opposite direction, or alternately, so that soldiers could move the tower forward by hauling on the ropes from a protected position inside the tower.[64] These engines were, however, very vulnerable to enemy stone-throwers and often failed their intended purpose for that reason. Although they were usually wetted down and covered with raw oxhides to make them fire-resistant, they could still succumb to incendiary attacks, especially after being battered by solid missiles, which could expose broken wood. The men on the towers' roofs, especially, would then almost inevitably be burned to death; this could make manning them quite a terrifying experience.[65] On the other hand, they did sometimes lead to great successes, as in the capture of Jerusalem in 1099 or, as Froissart describes, at Ribadavia in 1386:

> A large machine of timber was built, and mounted on wheels, that could be pushed anywhere. It would contain, with ease, one hundred men-at-arms, and the same number of archers; but, for this attack, it was filled with archers only, and the ditches were leveled where it was intended to pass.
>
> When the attack commenced, this machine was wheeled up to the walls by main force; and the archers, being well provided with arrows, shot vigorously on their enemies, who returned it by throwing darts and such other missile weapons as was amazing to behold. The roof of this machine was covered with strong ox-hides to shelter the attackers from the effects of the stones and the darts. Underneath were men-at-arms well shielded, who worked hard with pick-axes, and with success against the walls; for the townsmen could not prevent them for fear of the archers, who kept them fully engaged. At length, a large breach was

made in the wall, and a considerable part thrown into the ditch. When the [townsmen] perceived this, they were so dismayed, they cried loudly, "We surrender, we surrender!" No one made any answer, but the English laughed at them, and said, "These peasants have done us much mischief, and mock us by now offering to surrender, for the town is already ours." Some of the English replied, "If you wish to say any thing to us, it must be in good French or English, for we do not understand Castilian," and kept advancing and slaying those who were flying before them. They killed them in heaps; and that day there were fifteen hundred put to death, including Jews, many of whom were resident in the town.[66]

Battering rams, which also normally had a strong framework of timber to support the weight of the ram, covered with oxhides or wood to protect the operators, were another frequently used siege engine. Like the towers, these could withstand a great deal of hammering from hand-thrown missiles. Díaz de Gamez describes being in one hit by small missiles so often that it sounded like the storm that would end the world, and "a man could not hear himself speak," yet he came to no harm.[67] As with stone-throwing engines, however, their practical effectiveness does not seem to have been very great if used against well-made stone walls, and like siege towers, they were vulnerable to destruction by the defenders' engines and by incendiary mixtures.[68] In reading the chronicles, one almost gets the impression that they were used more for the sake of trying everything, and to worry the defenders, than because they were expected to accomplish anything concrete.[69] The same goes for the similar wheeled sheds that were also often used to cover miners with pickaxes. Geoffrey de Charny's phrase is telling: "*to exert more pressure* on [the defenders] . . . mining is carried out under the cover of devices such as sows . . . cats and belfries."[70]

To have any chance of success, of course—and therefore to be effective instruments of terror—rams and towers had to be brought up directly to the enemy wall. For that to be possible, sections of the moat or ditch had first to be filled up, and filled solidly. This work was usually accomplished by soldiers bringing up bundles of sticks and vines, baskets full of dirt, and so forth, one armload at a time, under cover of some sort of mantlets (movable wooden or wicker screens). This too was hard and risky labor and sometimes earned soldiers or other workers extra pay: a penny for each three large rocks at Jerusalem in 1099, for example.[71] One woman mortally wounded by an arrow while dropping a load into the moat of Acre asked that her body be used to help finish the task.[72] Since wooden fill was flammable, if it was used or if timber balks were used to hold and strengthen the infill, alternating layers of dirt were also necessary, to prevent the wood from being burned up by the defenders. In addition to paths for the engines, sections of the ditch might be filled in so that cavalry could cross—because horsemen were of great value, more than might be expected, once they could get at a breach or an open gate. It took at least 15 days to fill the ditches outside Majorca in 1230 in this fashion.[73] The

great ramps reaching to wall tops made in similar ways that were common in ancient siege warfare seem to have fallen from use in medieval times.

THREATS

While the soldiers of the army were busy at the labor of fortifying their camp, filling the enemy's ditches, helping to erect or construct various engines, carrying stones, pulling traction trebuchets, making ladders and mantlets, and carrying out the tasks of daily camp life, their leaders would be working to persuade the defenders to surrender. From the perspective of the army commander, this was usually far and away the best option. It could be fast and would give him possession of an intact town, a very valuable asset, whereas a place taken by storm was likely to have suffered severe damage to its defenses (which its new possessor would have to pay to repair) and was almost certain to suffer a brutal sack, which would greatly reduce its value for the future. As in any political negotiation, two principal tools were threats and promises. The defenders would normally be promised (and receive) good treatment if they surrendered promptly, but they were threatened with harsh punishment if they did not. The preparations described in the last section were actually more likely to contribute to a successful siege by helping to frighten the defenders into negotiating than by paving the way for a successful assault. Even if most of the defenders were determined to hold out, these means might persuade a faction or an individual traitor within the town to help the attackers in.[74]

The mass of the army, however, often hoped that negotiations would *not* bring a surrender, because a surrender was likely to deprive them of the opportunity for looting the town, which could be tremendously profitable. This fact was, indeed, often used by the besiegers' negotiators, analogously to the nuclear deterrence concept of a "threat that leaves something to chance": The townsfolk might know that the besieging prince did not really want to see their town sacked, but they also knew that he might not be able to prevent it if things were allowed to progress too far, thus making the threat of a sack credible. Although efforts to intimidate the besieged into surrender were mainly the business of the army's leaders, the common soldiers sometimes had a part to play as well. A detailed diary of the siege of Tournai in 1340, for example, records how "the enemies came each day to yell at the gates that [the townspeople] should surrender, and that they were being betrayed by [the garrison], and often said 'Eat well tonight, for you will not eat at all tomorrow!'" Or "Surrender, knaves, lest you die of hunger, and we take your women!"[75] On the other side, at the siege of Lisbon in 1147, the defenders "taunted [the attackers] with numerous children about to be born at home in our absence, and said that on this account our wives would not be concerned about our deaths, since they would have bastard progeny enough. And they undertook that if any of us should survive, we would return to our home lands in poverty and misery; and they mocked us and gnashed their teeth against us."[76]

DEFENSIVE COUNTERPREPARATIONS AND SALLIES

Meanwhile, the townspeople and garrison would also be getting ready for the big attack, preparing engines of their own and strengthening any weak or damaged points in the fortifications. During the siege of Paris in 885–86, the Vikings managed to destroy a main tower key to the city's defense; by the following morning, however, the townsmen had replaced it with a new structure of wood, half again as tall as the old one.[77] If the besiegers' stone-throwers threatened a section of wall, it could be reinforced from behind, or a second wall could be built up some distance behind it. If siege towers were seen under construction, the defenders might build up the height of their own wall or towers opposite them with masonry or heavy beamwork. There would also be constant watches to stand, lest the besiegers gain the opportunity to seize the town with a surprise attack. The Catalan mercenary captain Ramón Muntaner describes his own preparations to defend the castle of Gallipoli, which had been left badly undermanned:

> I made all the women who were there put on armour—for of armour there was plenty—and ordered them to the walls, and over each division of the wall I ordered a merchant of those Catalan merchants who were there, to be the commander of the women. And I ordered half-casks and bowls of wine, mixed with a good amount of water, and much bread in every street, for those who liked to eat and drink, for I knew well that the forces outside were so great, they would not let us eat indoors. And I ordered that everyone should have good cuirasses on, for I knew that the Genoese were well provided with sharp arrows and would shoot off many. They have a fashion of shooting ceaselessly and they shoot more quarrels in one battle than Catalans would shoot in ten. And so I made every man put on armour and had the posterns of the barbican left open (for all the barbicans were stockaded) in order that I might hasten to where it was most necessary. And I also ordered physicians to be ready to assist when any man was wounded, so that he could return to the battle at once. And when I had ordained all this, where every one should be and what he should do, I went here and there with twenty men, where I saw it was most needed.[78]

The best defensive preparations, however, involved elements of attack. Stone-throwers, particularly small ones, were typically set up on tower tops or wherever on the ramparts there was sufficient room. Firing with this great advantage in height, they could outrange the enemy's equivalent machines by a good distance, without having much to fear in return, except from bigger engines. The besiegers would usually set their camp out of range, but if not, they could expect to be harassed by constant fire. Special targets would be the enemy stone-throwers (which often could not be kept out of the defenders' range since that would also be out of their own range) and any sappers

advancing their siegeworks too far forward. No other tool available to the defender, however, was as powerful as the sally.

It may seem counterintuitive that men who had taken refuge behind the shelter of walls, and who were normally heavily outnumbered by their enemies, would abandon the advantages of their fortifications and come out to fight in the open. But a garrison's attack on a besieging army enjoyed the classic advantages of the initiative, while the nature of a complete siege (one in which the besiegers encircled the town, to cut it off from reinforcement or supply) shared the inherent weaknesses of a "perimeter defense." The outline of most towns was split into two, three, or four segments by the river or rivers passing through or around the walls, reducing the ability of a besieging army's constituent elements to support one another. It was moreover impractical for an army to stay under arms at all times, especially in the heat of summer, when most sieges took place. The soldiers inside the town could therefore prepare and strike by surprise against just one segment of the enemy forces and, effectively, only the fraction of that segment that was then standing guard. Even if the besiegers had set up substantial defenses for their camps, or a full line of circumvallation, a sally had a good chance of doing some damage, perhaps seizing some supplies (if nothing else, the enemies' horses killed in the fighting),[79] and then escaping back through the town gates under cover of fire from the battlements, before the besiegers' greater strength could be brought to bear. Like participation in the assault, this could be an outstanding opportunity to display boldness and prowess, as the leaders of the defense would be likely to participate themselves or at least would watch from the walls—perhaps in company with the ladies of the town. A sally force would often be specifically directed to the destruction of troublesome stone-throwers or worrisome siege towers or to collapse mine entrances, and not infrequently it would succeed in these missions. If the disproportion between the overall strength of the defenders and the besiegers was not too great, a sally could even be scaled up to an all-out attempt to inflict a piecemeal defeat on the latter and break the siege entirely.

DAILY ROUTINES, SUPPLIES, AND SKIRMISHES

The danger of a major sally was greatest at the start of a siege, before an entrenched camp had been set up, so during that phase substantial forces would usually stay on guard opposite each town gate. A third or more of the army's fighting men (especially the cavalry) might be needed for this task; that, of course, would mean virtually every soldier would have to stand eight hours' watch each day, possibly in addition to work on the camp defenses and assault preparations and foraging duty, quite a grueling schedule.[80] Once the camp was fortified, and perhaps lines of circumvallation dug or blockhouses constructed to bar egress at the sally ports, the fraction of the army required to stand to arms could be reduced. Stints of guard and sentry duty would still

be necessary on a regular basis, however, to ward the camp and also to protect the siege engines. If the garrison was particularly strong, or the topography particularly difficult, the watch might have to remain at quite a high level. At Aiguillon in 1346, for example, the army was divided into four groups standing six-hour watches in turn.[81] If there was reason to expect a major attack, the normal rotation might be increased until it stretched the endurance of the army. For the last five days of December 1231, for example, James the Conqueror had 300 knights, probably fully half the number of those fit for duty in the army besieging Majorca, constantly on duty for a week, meaning 12 cold hours per day duty for these men. No wonder they had a tendency to shirk their responsibilities and had to be checked up on frequently.[82] Under more normal circumstances, a soldier might have to stand watch one night and one day out of five to nine.[83]

Provided normal precautions were taken, a surprise sortie might do some damage, but only very exceptionally would it pose a real risk to the besieging army as a whole. The same was not true of supply problems. For the first week or so it would be easy enough to live off the land, just as when on the move, but beyond that, different arrangements would be necessary. There were basically three options: wide-ranging foraging expeditions; regular supply lines; or the more-or-less willing cooperation of the local populace. The first option, though it allowed for the advantage of living at the enemy's costs, was expensive in manpower, was unreliable, and posed the risk of the detachments' defeat. It often caused prices to fluctuate severely in the camp's markets. When a raiding party had brought back a monastery's flock of a thousand sheep, mutton would be cheap; after an unsuccessful foray or two, or when the foragers' return was delayed, bread might be priced beyond the means of simple footmen. This problem would be particularly acute when the proximity of enemy garrisons or shadowing forces required powerful, large-scale foraging forces; where the threat was less, the variable fortunes of many small groups would tend to even out the incoming supplies.

Supply from home was the most reliable method, so long as a reasonably secure water route existed, which is one reason many of the greatest sieges of the Middle Ages were of ports. In other cases, supplies might be carried over water as far as possible, then unloaded and taken the last segment of the way by cart. In that circumstance, quite a substantial portion of soldiers' time might be spent on convoy duty—which normally fell particularly heavily on the cavalry, as horsemen were crucial for that mission, whereas the siege lines could be manned well enough by footmen.[84] Records that show how this sort of system worked are rare before the thirteenth century. For his campaigns in Scotland Edward I acquired supplies from all over his realm, making use of his royal right to make purchases at set prices and on credit, then had them transported to his army, where they were sold to the troops or sometimes issued to captains in partial payment of wages. Usually, the crown received more money for the supplies than it had paid, but this may reflect mainly transportation costs rather than profiteering. In any case, the sale prices, though they

might be high, were not ruinously so, even for common soldiers, and serious shortages were kept to a minimum. It is likely that variations on this system were widely used much earlier, as the other methods left too much out of the ruler's control.

Royally directed supply systems, even when they were employed, were usually supplemented by market-driven methods. Nearly every army was accompanied by a mobile market of sutlers, horse merchants and arms merchants, and so on. When the army settled down, if it could be reached at all safely, merchants would naturally be motivated to bring in additional supplies, which they could sell at the high prices typically obtained at a siege camp, either directly or using the camp followers as middlemen, and then depart with cheaply bought plundered cloth, chalices, jewelry, slaves, and so on. The more foodstuffs that came into camp in this way, the better for soldiers and rulers alike. Abundant supply kept prices under control, which kept soldiers fed, which was good for them and for their leaders, and market transactions did not generate resentment against the state in the way that compulsory purveyance did. Hence strict orders were often proclaimed to prevent soldiers from robbing or otherwise seizing the goods of merchants on their way to the host.

More than might be expected, this sort of system, perhaps with a mailed fist backing up market incentives, was also used to extract goods from the local areas, even while in hostile territory. Whether out of greed for profit or desire to curry favor, or under threat of punishment, the enemy population of adjacent regions often contributed to a besieging army's supplies, either bringing in goods for sale or handing them over as a sort of ransom to save their own fields and homes from devastation. Thus, soldiers out on foraging expeditions might find that their intended targets had been placed under the protection of the army's leaders and were off limits. On the other hand, soldiers also might be given the potentially profitable duty of executing punishment on (i.e., sacking) ill-defended localities that had failed to cooperate.

Between assault preparations, the work of encampment, foraging, and convoy and watch duty, soldiers during the early part of a siege did not typically have a great deal of free time. When they did, in addition to the usual camp entertainments, they might have the option of skirmishing. Small combats might break out, for example, when one side or another tried to take advantage of the grass growing in No Man's Land to pasture horses or cattle and the other side tried to capture them.[85] The chronicles make it clear, however, that often fights took place by mutual consent, not so much to further or hinder the progress of the siege operations, but mainly for the sake of the fight itself (including the hope of winning distinction and prisoners). The most formal version of such combats was the so-called joust of war, a sort of mounted duel usually occurring when a man-at-arms of the garrison rode out to fulfill an open challenge issued by one of the besieging soldiers, or vice versa.[86] More often, these engagements would begin when a small group of soldiers, usually young men eager to establish their reputations, issued from the town

and advanced to neutral ground and met another group of young men who came out from the siege camp with the same purpose: "Those companions who were desirous of advancing themselves frequently came to the barriers to skirmish," writes Jean Froissart of the siege of Bergerac.[87] This is rather foreign to the modern mind, and the evident element of sport involved, the clear similarity to tournament combat, seems to us to be in conflict with the deadly serious business of real fighting.[88] Yet this must not mislead us into thinking that the participants were anything but serious or that the blows exchanged, even for heavily armored men-at-arms, could not be deadly. The description of Pero Niño's combat before Pontevedra in 1397, written by his standard-bearer, is worth quoting at substantial length, both as an illustration of the point at hand and as an exceptionally detailed and evocative depiction of the medieval soldier's experience of combat in general:

> A camp was pitched before the city, and on the next day a fine troop of men-at-arms, crossbowmen and shield-bearers came against the camp. Then there was a very close and perilous skirmish. Battle was given on a ground well chosen for those who wished to distinguish themselves in arms for love of their ladies; for all the ladies and damsels of Pontevedra were there to look on from the height of the city ramparts. Pero Niño came there on horseback. He was armored with a coat of mail, a bascinet with camail, according to the fashion of that time, leg pieces, and a great jousting shield. . . . The mêlée was so close, and so thick the blows that were given on one side and the other, that it was fearsome to behold. Right at the beginning of the battle Pero Niño had his horse wounded. He dismounted, set himself at the head of his men and advanced. . . . Each of his blows was noteworthy: from some he sheared away a part of their shields, others he struck upon the head with his sword; those best armed he laid low upon the ground, or at least made them touch it with their hands, and by reason of their hurt leave their place empty as they withdrew to the rear. There was, among those of the city, a famous footsoldier named Gomez Domao, a very strong man; he pressed Pero Niño hard, and struck heavy blows. Well would Pero Niño have repaid them, but Gomez made such good use of his shield that he could not be touched. At length they came to grips one with the other and gave each other such sword blows upon the head, that Pero Niño averred that sparks flew from his eyes. But Pero Niño struck Gomez so hard above the shield, that he split it for a hands-breadth and his head down to the eyes; and that was the end of Gomez Domao.
>
> While Pero Niño was doing among the enemies of his lord the King as a wolf does among sheep . . . it happened that an arrow struck him in the neck. He received this wound at the beginning of the battle. The arrow knit together his camail and his neck; but such was his will to bring to a finish the enterprise that he had undertaken that he felt not his wound, or hardly at all; only it hindered him much in the movement of the upper

part of his body. And this pricked him on to fight even harder, so that in a few hours he had swept a path clean before him and had forced the enemy to withdraw over the bridge close by the city. What bothered him the most was that they often threw many lances at him, which remained stuck in his shield.

When he had got that far, the people of the city, seeing the havoc that he wrought, fired many crossbows at him, just as folk worry a bull that rushes out into the middle of the ring. He went forward with his face uncovered and a large bolt there found its mark, piercing his nostrils through most painfully, which stunned him, but . . . soon he recovered himself, and the pain only made him press on more fiercely than ever. At the gate of the bridge there were steps; and Pero Niño found himself sorely beset when he had to climb them. There did he receive many sword blows on head and shoulders. At the last, he climbed them, cut himself a path and found himself so pressed against his enemies that sometimes they bit the bolt embedded in his nose, which made him suffer great pain. It happened even that one of them, seeking to cover himself, hit a great blow on the bolt with his shield and drove it further into his head.

Weariness brought the battle to an end on both sides. When Pero Niño went back, his good shield was tattered and all in pieces; his sword had its gilded hilt almost broken and wrenched away and the blade was toothed like a saw and dyed with blood . . . the fight lasted for two whole hours, and . . . his armor was broken in several places by lance-heads, of which some had entered the flesh and drawn blood, although the coat of mail was of great strength.[89]

DELIBERATE ASSAULTS

While the battlements were being softened up by bombardment, towers were being constructed, ditches were being filled, and the army leaders were working to secure the defenders' surrender, night escalades were often attempted. This was unlikely to succeed against a town with a well-organized system of watches, but it forced the defenders to keep their guard up, contributing to their exhaustion. Escalade attempts moreover added significantly to the worries of the townsmen. Even a relatively small chance that such a coup could succeed was frightening because the consequences would be so dire if it did: a town taken by storm was normally treated very harshly. Thus each assault, whether it was the initial attempt at storming the ramparts, or an attempt to sneak up the walls, or an all-out prepared assault, worked to push the defenders toward negotiating a surrender. Very often such talks were opened after a near-miss attack brought home to the townsmen the peril of their situation.[90]

It was partly for related reasons that the immediate preparations for major assaults were often conducted in open, even ostentatious, ways, with ceremonies of muster and review, proclamations, religious services, dubbings of

new knights, and so on. These steps eliminated any chance that the defenders would be taken unready, but there was little likelihood of that anyway. More importantly, the visible and audible measures setting up for an attack made for a powerful threat, like a crossbow bolt loaded or a fist cocked back, and on the day before the planned assault the defenders would normally be offered a new opportunity to surrender before the blow was delivered.[91]

From the perspective of the individual soldier, however, the purpose of a grand assault was to succeed in taking a town, not to contribute to a negotiating strategy. For him this was a major life event, comparable (though not quite equal) to taking part in an open battle.[92] Along with his comrades, he was putting his life and limbs in real jeopardy and his courage to a hard test. He knew the greatest men of the host would be participating themselves, both as fighters and as witnesses of honor or shame. As the banners formed up and took their positions, there was plenty of time for worry, for boasting, for mutual encouragement, and for leaders' harangues. It was not like skirmishing at the barriers, which could be left to the most eager warriors, or like fighting with the watch against a sally party, where the current of events could catch one up and carry one along without a pause.

Siege towers moved slowly, so if they had been prepared they would be brought forward first, while the mass of the army held back, out of arrow range. The defenders' engines would work all-out to halt or smash them. All eyes would trace the great stones as they flew toward the towers; an impact might be met with a groan from the defenders and a cheer from the attackers, vice versa for a miss. James the Conqueror described how he had to listen to the demolition of one of his great belfries at the siege of Borriana. It had gotten stuck halfway on its journey to the wall and was being pounded by the enemy's traction trebuchets. Even after it had been evacuated by its crew, said James, each stone that struck it "pained us as much as if somebody had struck us in the side with their fists. In fact, even that would not have hurt us as much as the blows that we heard given to the wooden castle."[93] For an assembled army watching the movement of a construction they hoped would support them in their own upcoming assault, and knowing that the structure was packed with dozens or even hundreds of their comrades, it must have felt much the same. For those actually manning the tower, the experience must have had all the paralyzing intensity of a modern artillery bombardment. At the siege of Acre in 1190, the soldiers manning the top of a siege tower did little dances of joy when enemy projectiles seemed to smash against their belfry without doing any damage. Their happiness was short-lived, however, because it soon turned out that the first projectiles had been pots full of flammable liquid, which subsequent shots set afire, burning the crew to death.[94]

When trumpets and drums sounded the advance and banners tilted forward, a great roar of war cries would go up, and the troops would surge forward like the surf against a cliff. Often, soldiers would carry or push before them screens of wood or wicker and leather, to provide themselves with some protection from the defenders' missiles. The Vikings attacking Paris in 886,

for example, made a thousand such mantlets, each capable of sheltering three or four men.[95] In combat, even when scaling a ladder, agility was less important than protection, and the armored men would normally lead the assault, their helms tightly laced, shield straps looped around their necks so that they could be shifted from arm to back if necessary.[96] Small groups would carry forward the heavy and awkward ladders—a 30-foot siege ladder would weigh over 200 pounds—while others tried to cover the bearers and themselves with their shields.[97] From behind them, protected by large shields or mantlets of wood or wicker, archers, crossbowmen, men with staff-slings, and various shooting engines would keep up a steady stream of fire. Each opening in the battlements might be assigned as a target to several archers.[98] High-trajectory shots could be sent over the wall to impede movement along the streets and open spaces behind it, an early version of interdicting or barrage fire.[99] If the first wave failed to make a lodgment, new lines of attackers might be sent forward in relays, until the defenders were low on ammunition and numb with exhaustion.[100]

Although it is rather difficult to envision how they managed to be effective against strongly built fortifications, there is no doubt that men with pickaxes were often set to work during an assault to undermine the walls; they are often mentioned in chronicles and shown in illuminations. We sometimes read of their working so quickly as to carve out alcoves from the wall, in which they could shelter and keep working even if the rest of the assault forces were driven back. Presumably, these instances refer to walls of adobe, brick, masonry-faced earth, or concrete and rubble, rather than large blocks of solid stone.[101] Like deep miners, these men sometimes worked at digging down below the foundations and setting up props for later burning. In any case, the chronicles indicate that sappers working directly at the base sometimes succeeded in opening breaches in town walls or cracking or shattering towers.[102]

It is crucial to understand that even a breached wall was very difficult to attack. The rubble of a collapsed rampart could itself greatly hinder an assault. At the siege of Acre in 1291, for example, it was "impossible to pass" the stones where the King's Tower had been brought down, until the besiegers spent a night throwing sacks of sand over the debris, which made it smooth "like a roadway."[103] A century earlier, in the same place, King Richard first offered two gold bezants (about a week's pay for a skilled physician) for every stone block carried away from the spot where his miners and stone-throwers had shattered the Cursed Tower, but the work was so dangerous that he had to go up to four bezants. Eventually, enough was done that "many could enter," and a significant assault was begun, but still the "nimble" attackers had to "climb up" to do so and "leap down" when they failed.[104] A passage from the *Alexiad* helps illuminate the matter from a different angle as well as providing a superior description of a common element of siege warfare:

> [Bohemund of Taranto] made a small shed, fashioning it in the shape of a parallelogram, put wheels under it, and covered its sides, both above and

laterally, with ox-hides sewn together . . . and then hung the battering-rams inside. When the machine was ready, he drove it up to the wall by means of a large number of men pushing it along from inside with poles and bringing it close to the walls of Dyrrachium. When it seemed near enough and at an appropriate distance, they took off the wheels, and fixed the machine firmly on all sides with wooden pegs, so that the roof might not be shaken to pieces by the blows. Afterwards some very strong men on either side of the ram pushed it violently against the wall with regular co-ordinated movement. The men would push forward the ram violently with a single movement and the ram thus brought up against the wall shattered it, then it rebounded, and returning made a second shattering. And this it did several times as it was swung several times in either direction, and did not cease making holes in the wall. . . . But the inhabitants laughed at this futile battering of the wall by the barbarians and at the men working the ram, and at their ineffective siege, and they threw the gates open and bade them come in, for they utterly despised the blows made by the ram. "For," said they, "the ram will never make such a large opening by its battering, as the one this gate presents." Consequently this work was shown to be futile owing to the bravery of the inhabitants and the confidence of the governor Alexius, the Emperor's nephew; and the enemy themselves relaxed and abandoned the siege as far as this part was concerned. . . . So the work round the battering-ram stood still. None the less, fire was thrown down from above on to this engine which now stood idle and immovable for the aforesaid reasons, and converted it into ashes.[105]

Several other examples of portals left open to dare an assault could be adduced.[106] An attack on a breach, like one on a gate demolished or purposely left standing open, could only be a frontal assault against the best of the defenders, a daunting prospect in itself. Unless the adjacent towers and walls had been well demolished, moreover, the attackers would suffer heavily from various missiles shot or hurled from above, whereas the defenders would have little to fear from the attackers' bowmen once they came to grips with the assault party. Even if the adjacent firing positions had been demolished and the besiegers had plenty of covering fire to keep the townsmen off the walls, success in such an operation was by no means guaranteed, and casualties were likely to be high.[107] It could take dramatic leadership to get the troops to make the attempt, as Shakespeare recognized and as James the Conqueror memorably learned after months of mining work opened a breach in the walls of Majorca. James drew up his veteran soldiers in preparation for an assault, with the footmen in front and the knights behind. There had already been four days of intense preparations, during which James hardly slept. He had borrowed a large sum of money and distributed it so that all the men could be fully ready and equipped. They had been required to swear oaths that once the assault began, no one would turn back for any wound, as it was recognized that if

this attack failed, the army would hold itself defeated and break up. Orders had also been given for everyone to hear Mass and take Communion:

> And we said to them: "Go, worthy men, begin to march in the name of Our Lord God."
>
> However, even with these words, nobody moved, though they had all easily heard them, the knights and the others. And when we saw that they did not move, we were filled with anguish, because they did not obey our order. And we called upon the mother of God, and we said: "Oh, mother of our Lord God, we come here that the sacrifice of your Son might be celebrated: entreat Him that we should not receive this dishonour, neither I nor those who serve me in your name and that of your Beloved Son."
>
> And we shouted to them another time: "Go, worthy men, in the name of God! Do you fear them?"
>
> And we said it three times. And after that, our men gradually began to march.
>
> When all had begun to march, the knights and the foot-sergeants, they approached the moat where the breach was, and all the army began to shout: "Santa Maria! Santa Maria!" . . .
>
> [The Christian footmen entered the breach and met a phalanx of Moslem spearmen] but they did not dare attack each other. Yet when the knights entered with their armoured horses, they went to attack them. And so great was the multitude of the Saracens, that they stopped them with their lances; and the horses reared up, unable to pass because of the density of the lances, which was so great that they were forced to turn round. And as they turned round the others pushed back, and the knights were able to continue to enter, until there were some forty or fifty of them there. And the knights and the foot soldiers carrying shields were so near the Saracens that they could attack them with their swords, so close in fact that nobody dared to put out his arm, for fear that some sword of the other side would wound him on the hand. And, a little after, when there were already some forty or fifty knights there, they turned to face the Saracens, with their armoured horses, and they all cried with one voice: "Help us, Mary, mother of Our Lord!"
>
> And we shouted "For shame, knights!"

Finally, the horsemen managed to break through the defenders, and the city fell. But it had clearly been a near-run thing. No wonder, then, that even many years later King James could remember, in order, the names of the first four knights to enter the breach.[108]

LONG SIEGES

If it became clear that a town would not fall easily to assault, the host would finish settling in for a long siege. Camp defenses and shelters might

be improved, logistic arrangements regularized, and so on. Efforts might be made to interfere with the defenders' water supplies, for example by locating and breaking underground conduits.[109] If not already done, and provided manpower was sufficient, steps would now likely be taken to encircle the full perimeter of the town with a ditch or rampart. In some cases, such as Villeneuve-le-Hardi ("Bold New Town") outside Calais, Vittoria outside Palma, or Santa Fe outside Granada, the siege camp would itself become almost indistinguishable from a town, with gates and towers, a plaza and marketplace, wooden houses, bakeries, butchers' stalls, bordellos, and even apothecaries' shops:

> In the host which King Ferdinand [III of Castile-Léon] had at Seville [in 1248], there was a strong similarity to a great, noble, and very rich city. The camp was full of all the fine attributes which could pertain to such a complete and well-provided city. There were streets and squares allotted there to every craft, each one keeping to itself: there was one street of tailors and money-changers; another for the spice-merchants, and for the druggests who stocked the medicaments that the wounded and sick needed; another for the armourers, another for the harness-makers, another for the butchers and the fish-merchants; and so on for each craft, for all those that there might be in the world, for each one of them there was a street set aside, all duly measured up and elegant and well-ordered.[110]

Some of the besiegers might be accompanied by their families, as illustrated in the will of Bazela Merxadrus, a citizen of Bologna, drawn up during the siege of Damietta: "He left his share in the tent, and the furnishings that belonged to him, to his wife Giulietta, for 'as long as she is in the army.' To one comrade he left two sacks of biscuit, two measures of flour, plus wine and wheat together with a pair of trousers, a shirt, and money for his part of the bread and wine which the group shared."[111]

The concentration of such large bodies of people and horses—far more horses than would normally be found even in a great city—over such long periods of time posed tremendous challenges of supply. Despite the best efforts of princes, commanders, and merchants eager for profit, severe shortages could arise, especially because the enemy would do everything possible to prevent food from reaching the besiegers. Only rarely did this result in rationing. Things were usually left to the market, and though the leaders of the host might draw on their own resources to distribute some alms of supplies or money to their followers or to the poor soldiers of the host in general (the latter is usually heard of only during Crusades), prices could go so high that even lords might go hungry and their men starve. Such extreme cases generally occurred only in sieges conducted deep in enemy territory, particularly overseas, since otherwise men would first desert.

That option was, of course, much more difficult for those inside the town. Even when the poor began to starve to death, the wealthy and the soldiers of the garrison were likely to have enough to eat, having had the resources to lay

in large stocks at the start or enough gold to buy a loaf of bread for the normal cost of a sheep.[112] On the other hand, since rich merchants had a great deal to lose if the town walls were not defended, and the garrison needed the help of the townsfolk to watch and man the ramparts, at least some food was often distributed in the form of rations once that became necessary. Otherwise, those who could not simply desert would be tempted to betray the town and let in the besiegers (likely receiving in return a rich personal reward and perhaps a promise to respect the goods and lives of community members), rather than watch their families starve; many towns were ultimately taken in just such a way. To reduce the risk of that turn of events, the leaders of the defense often took whatever steps they could to forbid and prevent any form of communication between the besieging army and the townsfolk. The besiegers would often aim to split the latter away from the soldiers of the garrison, who had more to gain and less to lose by prolongation of the defense, partly because they were less likely to go hungry, partly because they were more concerned to maintain military honor, partly because they did not usually have to worry about the fate of their wives and children if the place were captured by storm, and partly because even if the town fell, they usually had a castle or citadel to fall back to.

Occasionally, when hunger grew too great, the garrison would force the expulsion of so-called useless mouths—poor women, children, and the elderly, who could not fully participate in the defense or feed themselves—to stretch food supplies longer. This was done, for example, at Calais in 1347 and at Rouen in 1418.[113] A merciful commander might let the refugees escape, but more likely, they would be forced to stay and starve in the No Man's Land between the walls and the siege lines so that the defenders would have to feed them or watch them die. It is hard to imagine a more pitiful situation, and to witness it was hard on even the besiegers—as John Page, who was in the English army at Rouen, attests—and absolutely agonizing for those who had expelled them. Still, at Rouen the refugees were left in the ditches through the winter, permitted neither to escape nor to reenter their home city.

If a siege was sustained over harvest time, besieging soldiers would bring in the crops themselves, if necessary using swords to reap the grain. Ale was relatively quick and easy to brew, even in camp conditions, and the grain to make it would be available if any supplies were, but wine could easily run short. Wine's antibiotic properties were of great importance in warding off waterborne illnesses, which were particularly likely to arise and spread in the conditions of a siege camp anyway, so it took luck to conduct a long siege without serious outbreaks of disease. A hard-hitting epidemic could easily kill more men than a lost battle.[114]

ENDING THE SIEGE

Of course, disease could also strike inside a besieged town, where the need to accommodate refugees and reinforcing soldiers often made for very crowded

conditions. When Jerusalem fell to Saladin, to take an extreme example, "there were people there from Darum, Ramla, Gaza and elsewhere, so many of them that they filled the streets and churches and walking was impossible."[115] Epidemics do, however, seem to have struck defenders much less often than besiegers, perhaps because the townsmen were used to the local microorganisms and had better shelter and sanitation systems. On the other hand, starvation, which was a possibility but by no means a certainty for besiegers, was the inevitable fate of the defenders if the siege continued long enough. Either side might eventually reach the point where one or the other of these difficulties made it impossible to continue the siege. Both in the sources and in modern accounts (including this chapter), there is a tendency to focus on sieges pressed with unusual resolution: they are the most interesting and most complete tellings of the basic story. But it is important to bear in mind that most sieges either failed or succeeded before that point (where one side or the other was *unable* to continue) was reached. Sieges often broke up because the leaders of the besieging army found the soldiers unwilling to continue. This could happen for many reasons: because the money to pay them had run out, or because their service obligation had expired, or both, or because the army was needed elsewhere, to respond to a counterinvasion or rebellion or other emergency, or because it had become clear that success was unlikely in the end and that it would be better not to continue expending vast resources on a lost cause. Another common reason for raising a siege was the approach of a relief army that the besiegers did not feel strong enough to face with confidence. Conversely, defenders often surrendered when they calculated that they had met at least a reasonable minimum standard of honorable resistance and concluded that no relieving army would come to rescue them. If they surrendered while their walls were intact and their food stocks not exhausted, they could expect to get good terms; if they pressed the defense to the bitter end, the enemy could be expected to punish them for their obstinacy so as to set a precedent for future sieges, for example by allowing them their lives but forcing them to abandon their goods to the victorious soldiers.

Breaking off a siege was often a truly agonizing experience for army leaders, as the resources wasted in the effort were principally theirs, and the failure was attributed more to them than to their men. James the Conqueror recorded how, when it began to appear that he would have to abandon the siege of Borriana due to lack of supplies and the eagerness of his infantrymen to return home to harvest their crops, he purposely exposed himself to enemy fire from the walls, "to allow those inside to wound us, so that, if we had to raise the siege, it could be said that we raised it because of the wound we had received."[116] The soldiers were likely to have more mixed feelings. They would share some of the king's sentiments, feeling dismay at failure and the waste of their own time, effort, and suffering, and at losing the chance for loot and vengeance on their enemies. On the other hand, the decision of the army leaders to break off a siege often resulted from the eagerness of the troops to escape hard conditions or to get back to their homes and their own affairs.

Leaders would normally conceal any doubts they felt about the likelihood of success in a siege, to avoid stiffening the resolve of the defenders and to discourage desertion. Hence, the decision to end a siege was likely to come as somewhat of a surprise to the soldiers. A demoralized army in retreat was a tempting target, and the last to leave could pretty well expect to be attacked by the garrison as they departed. Everyone, but especially the camp followers, would therefore want to move out as quickly as possible. Considerable haste and disorder was likely to ensue, and panic was a real risk. Where bridges had to be crossed, the situation could be grim. In 1346, after Edward III began a great campaign of devastation in northern France, his adversary, King Philip, ordered the duke of Normandy to break off the siege of Aiguillon, far to the south. In the ensuing rush to evacuate, many men were pushed off the Garonne bridge and drowned. In such situations, siege engines were usually abandoned or set afire along with the soldiers' huts.[117] This too involved potential for disaster, as at the end of the long siege of Arras in 1414:

> When they saw how expensive everything was getting . . . and everywhere their horses dying of hunger, the [army's leaders] had peace proclaimed . . . at about three o'clock after midnight. They left the tents after the proclamation had been made; it said that no one on pain of hanging should set fire to his lodging, but the Gascons . . . did just this. They set fire to everything they could because they were angry at being forced to withdraw. The fire spread fast and came right up to the back of the King's tent; the King himself would have been burned if they had not got him out on the safest side. Those who escaped said that more than five hundred men lying sick in the tents were left there and died in the fire.[118]

Well-organized armies would, of course, employ a rear guard and perhaps set an ambush for pursuers, but in the chaotic wake of a major failed siege, even the former elementary step was often absent.[119]

The announcement of an agreement to surrender a town was almost equally likely to be a surprise to the besieging troops, since leaders generally kept negotiations quiet for a variety of reasons. As with the opposite case, the soldiers often had mixed emotions about such arrangements: happiness at the successful completion of a mission and likely the opportunity to go home, perhaps after substantial hardship; relief at avoiding the danger of an assault; but also often regret at losing the opportunity for a profitable sack. The surrender itself, however, would likely come only several days after the agreement was concluded and announced. Very often, surrender deals included a "conditional respite": the defenders were allowed to make one last appeal to their lord, informing him that they would have to surrender their town unless relieved by a certain day. In the interim, there would be a truce between the besiegers and the defenders, allowing no bombardment or assaults and no repairs or sallies. When the day came, if a relief army had not approached or

had failed to attack, there would be a formal ceremony of surrender. The lead-ing bourgeois, and perhaps their colleagues from the garrison, would present the keys of the city to the victor, who would then make a ceremonial entry into his conquest, likely proceeding to the main church to give thanks for his success. Typically, the town would then simply enter into the lordship of its captor, but if the defenders had held out too long or inflicted too many casu-alties, they might be expelled, with or without their movable possessions, or they might be required to stand aside under guard while the troops plundered their homes.

Sometimes the surrender of a town would comprise the surrender of its castle or citadel. Often, however, this would not be the case. If the townsmen gave up without the permission of the garrison commander, he might go so far as to burn the town from his refuge, to deny it to the enemy and to punish the treachery or faintheartedness of the burghers. More frequently, the gar-rison would fall back into the castle and either try to continue holding out or simply negotiate separate terms for themselves, then hand over their fortress in exchange for permission to depart with their lives, limbs, and possessions.

As already noted, one of the main reasons for a town to surrender before hunger absolutely forced it to do so was fear of what would happen if it were taken by storm. When it was, the results were almost always ugly. Once the cry "Town won!" or "Havoc!" went up, commanders allowed or even encour-aged brutal treatment of the townsfolk, partly to send a message to the inhab-itants of the next town they besieged and partly because they had little choice. Soldiers capturing a place by assault considered a spree of killing, raping, and looting their right. Especially when the defenders were of separate religion or ethnic identity from the besiegers, it was not unusual for men, women, and children to be indiscriminately slaughtered, as when the soldiers of the First Crusade took Antioch:

> Neither the victors nor the vanquished showed any moderation or self-control. Bohemund ordered his standard, easily recognized by the Turks, to be placed on top of a certain mountain, in full view of the citadel, which was still resisting, to make the city aware of his presence. Wailing and shrieking filled the city; while throngs pressed through the narrow streets, the brutal, bloody shouts of the victors, eager to kill, resounded. As they recalled the sufferings they had endured during the siege, they thought that the blows that they were giving could not match the star-vations, more bitter than death, that they had suffered. The same pun-ishment inflicted upon the hordes of pagans was justly meted out to the treacherous [Christian] Armenians and Syrians, who, with the aid of the Turks, had eagerly and diligently pursued the destruction of our men, and our men were, in turn, unwilling to spare them painful punish-ment. And yet I say that they would have spared many of them, had they known how to make a distinction between the native pagans and those of our own faith.[120]

Even when passions were not fanned by group hatred or by the sufferings of a long siege, many men would be killed and many women violated, though where slave-taking was allowed, the profit motive greatly reduced killings. Although this phase of a siege is usually described in the most general terms, even by participants, there is some reason to think that even when the chronicles say that "everyone was put to the sword," once the townsfolk fled into their homes, the soldiers involved in the sack would generally kill those they met in the streets and anyone who resisted them but spare the rest. We very rarely hear of significant casualties suffered by armies while engaged in a sack, which surely would have occurred if every armed citizen had nothing to lose by fighting to the last. This also seems likely to me on the basis of human nature: both in that *most* soldiers at this stage would have no desire for more bloodshed and in that even if they did, lust for killing would be counterpoised by disinclination to take on the risks inherent in fighting a desperate man, with no glory or profit to be won.

At the least, the troops would take any and all material goods they fancied, down to the bare walls. Even churches were usually plundered, though not always.[121] After a day or three of savagery, the sack might be called to a halt. At that point the surviving inhabitants might be given the chance to accept the new regime and keep at least their homes; but equally well, they might be expelled and see their town burned or the houses reapportioned among the conquerors.

SIEGES OF CASTLES

Efforts to capture a castle generally followed much the same patterns, and included much the same elements, as sieges of towns. The differences were more matters of scale and emphasis than of fundamentals. Castles hardly existed before the late tenth century; from then until the late eleventh century they were frequently less strongly fortified than walled towns. In that period, castles were generally made of wood, whereas towns often retained old Roman circuits of masonry. Once castles started to be built in stone, however, they were often constructed more solidly than urban fortifications, since the best building methods were too expensive to be generally used on the larger scale needed for towns. Castles could also be built on spots chosen specifically for defensibility, such as atop an outcrop. As the residences and symbols of lordship of powerful men, moreover, they were normally kept in good repair, whereas in periods of peace it was common for town walls to be allowed to decay seriously or even to go unfinished. Thus, castles were often physically tougher nuts to crack than towns. Moreover, castles were often held by quite small garrisons, whereas towns, by their nature, always contained substantial numbers of fighting men and even more noncombatants. This meant that it was relatively easy for castles to lay in supplies to last the defenders a long time. These supplies were also much more likely to be rationed out, so soldiers

in castle garrisons were much less likely to experience starvation than were burghers defending their town. The soldiers' food would all run out at once, rather than depending on their individual wealth and foresight, and when it ran low, they would begin to negotiate for surrender.

On the other hand, because of their smaller scale, castles did not require as large a besieging army, nor one so spread out, though the intention to stand off a relief army often did keep in the field armies much larger than would be needed simply to blockade the garrison. Thus geometry did not favor sallies from castles as strongly as it did sallies from towns. The fact that sieges of castles could be conducted by smaller forces also meant that they were somewhat less likely than sieges of towns to break up because the besieger ran out of money or found himself unable to keep his forces supplied. Conversely, however, they were also less likely to end with a rapid surrender, since garrisons were typically more committed to sustaining their military honor through a respectable defense than towns-men, less susceptible to threats to their families, and less concerned by the need to be on good terms with the conqueror after the siege was over. The garrison of a castle, when it surrendered, could usually just leave with little loss, whereas it was important for townsmen to make a deal that would allow them to keep their real property and their liberties and charters. Per-haps that is one reason why siege towers were used much less often against castles than against towns: threats played a larger role in efforts to capture the latter, and siege towers, even from an early stage in their construction, were valuable as instruments of fear.

The effectiveness of the threat of an assault was lessened if the soldiers manning the ramparts knew that they had another layer of defense behind them to fall back to. Most towns had castles or citadels attached to them partly for that reason, and many castles achieved something of the same result by having an outer palisade, then a circuit of walls around a relatively large courtyard or bailey, and finally, an inner stronghold or keep. Starting in the thirteenth century, some castles were designed in true concentric fashion, with two complete circuits of tower-studded walls, the taller one inside so that bowmen atop its towers could assist in the defense of the outer line. Fortresses built in this manner were extremely difficult to capture.

GUNPOWDER'S IMPACT

The impact of cannon on siege warfare is a subject still under dispute among historians. Some argue for an Artillery Revolution in the fifteenth century, when large bombards surpassed earlier forms of artillery in their effectiveness and proved able to demolish fortifications, including opening large breaches, in relatively short periods—weeks or sometimes just days, rather than months. Others see the changes brought about by guns as less significant and more gradual, evolutionary rather than revolutionary.[122]

It is clearly true that for the first 75 years or so after their first use in Europe (around 1327), gunpowder weapons evolved in a fairly linear manner, steadily growing in size and power. The first guns were functionally comparable to springalds, firing metal bolts or pellets primarily for antipersonnel effect.[123] After a half-century, cannon were being made that could match large counterweight trebuchets, firing 400-pound stones. By the second decade of the fifteenth century, the largest bombards had surpassed any previous engine in power, casting stones of up to 1,600 or 1,800 pounds. In the succeeding decades the technology was improved further through the synergistic effects of several developments. As cannon makers improved the strength of their creations, it became possible to make full use of recently invented wet-mixed gunpowder, which exploded with at least double the practical force of the original dry mixture. More strongly made guns also allowed greater use of iron cannonballs, which packed the same punch from a much smaller barrel since iron is three times as dense as hard stone. Longer barrels also increased muzzle velocity and accuracy and, moreover, reduced loading time. All of this put together meant that even strong fortifications with thick stone walls could be battered down in a few weeks or less, rather than over months.

As we have seen, however, the simple creation of a breach, even a broad breach, was by no means a guarantee of an easy assault. Indeed, the defender could use cannon and handguns to ensure that any attempt to storm a breach would exact a substantial cost in lives. Primitive handguns were awkward and inaccurate weapons, but, especially at short range, they could penetrate even the best armor. Still, owing to their slow rate of fire, the defenders' guns could not prevent the success of a determined assault. The creation of a breach had always been a likely occasion for the conclusion of a surrender agreement; now it was even more so, and it came faster. In my judgment it is fair to call the ways in which this altered the conduct of campaigns "revolutionary." Until that point, the defender had always enjoyed a great advantage in medieval warfare—overall as well as in the context of a particular siege—and outright conquest had been difficult and relatively rare. Now it became quite feasible, as the French, Burgundian, Ottoman, and Spanish states demonstrated.

How did all this affect the lives of ordinary soldiers? Very greatly. First, the Artillery Revolution put a premium on a state's ability to deploy standing forces, whose constant readiness allowed them to take full advantage of the accelerated style of campaigning possible with wall-breaking artillery. Partly for that reason, the proportion of year-round, full-time soldiers in most armies increased dramatically in the second half of the fifteenth century. In the context at hand here—the siege—the changing dynamic meant a major transformation of the soldiers' experiences. Long sieges, though not unknown, became much rarer, and with them the problems of starvation and disease among the besiegers.[124] Grand assaults with mass escalade and siege towers also became much less common, in part because of the increased effectiveness of the defenders' counterfire and in part because the relative ease of creating breaches made them unnecessary. Traction trebuchets, which had

absorbed so much of the time and labor of soldiers in the thirteenth century and earlier, largely went out of use. On the other hand, much labor was now devoted to digging trenches so as to allow guns and their crews to advance safely into battery range. This work, however, came to be often committed to specialists or to peasants drafted from the area, rather than to the combat infantry.[125]

Heavy gunpowder bombardments changed the very air in which the soldier lived, sometimes filling it with so much sulfurous smoke that the sky was barely visible and shaking it with sounds louder than any medieval men could otherwise experience.[126] The capture of Bayeux in 1450, a fairly typical siege of the Artillery Revolution era, was a very different phenomenon than the seven-month-long siege of Cherbourg in 1418 or Meaux in 1421, both of which ended only when the defenders faced starvation:[127]

> The town [of Bayeux] was enclosed on all sides, and severely battered by bombards for fifteen days, and hard-pressed by miners, so that it was ready to be assaulted. But the king of France and the lords felt pity at the prospect of the town's destruction, and would not allow it. Nevertheless, without their permission and without order, the soldiers, out of the great ardor they had to capture it, assaulted it two times in one day, on one side. Both sides conducted themselves very well; and many were killed on both sides by bolts and arrows, and by culverins [small guns]. But in the end the attackers accomplished nothing; yet if they had assaulted under the guidance of their captains, who would have known well how to manage the attack, it would have been taken by assault without fail; for they attacked only on one side.
>
> Matthew Gough, the captain, was very worried by these assaults, for some valiant Englishmen had been killed. And therefore he treated with the count of Dunois and the other French lords, and surrendered the town.[128]

CONCLUSION

The whole process of the siege—all the digging, hauling, scrounging, skirmishing, building, sallying, assaulting, bombarding, threatening, and negotiating—is usually viewed, as it has been above, largely in terms of its own internal dynamics. This makes sense, because the siege itself absorbed most of the attention and energy of soldiers participating in it, inside or outside the walls. Some of their thoughts, however, would normally also go to the role of the siege in the larger war, and especially to the possibility of an enemy army approaching to relieve the siege. Many sieges were ended when the besieging army was defeated in battle or chose to flee rather than face that challenge, perhaps more than were concluded by a successful assault. A fairly large proportion of all battles, conversely, were fought to break or maintain a siege. The possibility of a general engagement, in other words, was an element of the background of most sieges, even when none was fought.

NOTES

1. Otto of Freising, *The Deeds of Frederick Barbarossa. By Otto of Freising and His Continuator, Rahewin,* trans. Charles Christopher Mierow with Richard Emery (New York: W. W. Norton, 1966), 142; indeed, he regards this as a proverbial truth.

2. Jean de Waurin, *A Collection of the Chronicles and Ancient Histories of Great Britain, Now Called England,* vol. 2, *1399–1422,* ed. and trans. W. Hardy and E. Hardy (London: Longman, 1891), 248; followed and supplemented by a poem by John Page, an eyewitness, with this modernization from Dorothy Whitelock, ed. and trans., *English Historical Documents,* vol. 4 (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1968), 221, slightly modified.

3. Robert the Monk's description of the siege camp outside Antioch in December–February 1097–1098 (*Robert the Monk's History of the First Crusade: Historia Iherosolimitana,* trans. Carol Sweetenham [Aldershot, Hampshire: Ashgate, 2005], 123–124, 127). The daily wage for foot sergeants under Henry II, rather later, was one penny (Michael Prestwich, *Armies and Warfare in the Middle Ages: The English Experience* [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996]). See also Ralph of Caen, *Gesta Tancredi,* trans. Bernard S. Bachrach and David Bachrach (Aldershot, Hampshire: Ashgate, 2005), 80–81.

4. Pere III of Catalonia [Pedro IV of Aragon], *Chronicle,* trans. Mary Hillgarth, vol. 1 (Toronto, ON: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1980), 153. Ramón Muntaner, *The Chronicle of Muntaner,* trans. Lady Henrietta Margaret Goodenough, online ed. (Toronto, ON: In parentheses Publications, 2000), 556, available at http://www.yorku.ca/inpar/muntaner_goodenough.pdf, adds that the prince would likely have died had it not been for the princess's care and confirms that "the greater part" of the army died. In 1167, Frederick Barbarossa's army was struck by a severe outbreak of disease that "in large measure destroyed it" and killed an archbishop, six bishops, three secular princes, "and countless barons" (Rahewin, in Otto of Freising, *Deeds,* 337–38).

5. Guy Halsall offers a valuable corrective, with respect to the early Middle Ages (through 1000): "It seems that warfare was conducted rather more through set-piece battles than . . . through sieges" (*Warfare and Society in the Barbarian West, 450–900* [London: Routledge, 2003], 156). For the High and late Middle Ages, there were several major sieges for each full-scale battle, but even if we include minor sieges *and exclude minor battles* (as is often done), there were not "hundreds" for each battle.

6. As part of Christine de Pizan, *Book of Deeds of Arms and Chivalry,* trans. Charity Cannon Willard and Sumner Willard (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), 115–39; cannon, 117–19. Also used by the highly experienced and educated French commander Jean de Bueil late in the fifteenth century in his *Jouvencel,* ed. Léon Lecestre, vol. 2 (Paris: Renouard, 1889), 45–54.

7. Chrétien de Troyes, *Cligés,* trans. W. W. Comfort (Everyman's Library, 191), vv. 1197–1260, also available online at http://omacl.org/Cliges/, offers a nice (though fictional) illustration: "the castle was not easy to take when any one chose to defend it. The traitor made it secure, as soon as he planned his treacherous deed, with a triple line of walls and moats, and had so braced the walls inside with sharpened stakes that catapults could not throw them down. They had taken great pains with the fortifications, spending all of June, July, and August in building walls and barricades, making moats and drawbridges, ditches, obstructions, and barriers, and iron portcullises and a great square tower of stone." For a more elaborate, real example, which can be examined based on documentary evidence, see the case of Reims, discussed in Michael

Jones, "War and Fourteenth-Century France," in *Arms, Armies and Fortifications in the Hundred Years War,* ed. Anne Curry and Michael Hughes (Woodbridge, Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 1994), 117–19.

    8. Pere, *Chronicle,* vol. 2, 422. This was most likely to be necessary, as here, for castles rather than towns, since towns were usually located on rivers.

    9. Jean Froissart, *Chronicles,* trans. Thomas Johnes, vol. 2 ([London]: Hafod Press, 1805), 330 (Oudenaarde 1380).

    10. Rarely mentioned, but doubtless widely done. A. Tuetey, *Les Ecorcheurs sous Charles VII,* vol. 1 (Montbéliard: Henri Barbier, 1874), 35; note also Jean Devaux, "L'Alimentation en temps de guerre: l'apport des sources littéraires," *La vie matérielle au moyen âge. L'apport des sources litteraires, normatives et de la pratique. Actes du Colloque international de Louvain-la-Neuve, 3–5 octobre 1996,* ed. Emmanuelle Rassart-Eeckhout et al. (Louvain-la-Neuve, France: Université Catholique de Louvain, 1997), 94, 94 n. 10. Moving millstones would, of course, be a fairly major task, but it would greatly inconvenience the besiegers. They could also then be rolled off the wall tops against the enemy (Laurence Marcellus Larson, trans., *The King's Mirror [Speculum Regale—Konungs Skuggsja]* [New York: Twayne, 1917], 223).

    11. For an example of evacuation, see Muntaner, *Chronicle,* 261, on Gerona in 1285.

    12. Kenneth Fowler, "News from the Front: Letters and Despatches of the Fourteenth Century," in *Guerre et société en France, en Angleterre et en Bourgogne: XIVe-XVe Siecle,* ed. Philippe Contamine et al. (Lille, France: Centre d'histoire de la region du nord et de l'Europe du nord-ouest, 1991), and R.P.R. Nöel, "Town Defence in the French Midi during the Hundred Years War" (PhD diss., University of Edinburgh, 1977), 134–42.

    13. On the contrary, when a siege is pressed until the defenders face starvation, it is nearly always mentioned that they had even eaten their horses. As we will see below, defenders often made sallies from behind their walls, and cavalry was important for the ensuing fighting. Cf. Bernard S. Bachrach, *Early Carolingian Warfare: Prelude to Empire* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 81.

    14. James I of Aragon, *The Book of Deeds of James I of Aragon: A Translation of the Medieval Catalan* Llibre dels Fets, trans. Damian Smith and Helena Buffery (Aldershot, Hampshire: Ashgate, 2003), 187–88; James also used the metaphor of preparing a table for a meal (ibid., 209). Another example is Balliol's army for the siege of Berwick in 1333 (Clifford J. Rogers, *War Cruel and Sharp: English Strategy under Edward III, 1327–1360* [Woodbridge, Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 2000], 59–63).

    15. E.g., Jean de Joinville, *Joinville's Chronicle of the Crusade of St. Lewis,* in *Memoirs of the Crusades: Villehardouin and Joinville,* trans. Frank T. Marzials (New York: Dutton Everyman, 1958), 190; Muntaner, *Chronicle,* 260; *St. Omer Chronicle* (quoted below); Charles Wendall David, trans., *The Conquest of Lisbon* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 125–29; also Rogers, *Wars of Edward III,* 93: "Lord Robert thought he would catch them on the street of the suburbs, where the men-at-arms would not have been able to help against the infantry."

    16. *St. Omer Chronicle,* fos. 231–231v.

    17. Adolphe Magen, ed., *Jurades de la ville d'Agen (1345–55)* (Auch, France: Cocharaux, 1894), 87. Note the lack of specification of width, which suggests round stakes rather than planks.

    18. E.g., see illuminations in Jim Bradbury, *The Medieval Siege* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 1992), 287, 309. There is much more detail of interest

(including numerous plates) in Christine Raynaud, "Défenses annexes et fortifications de campagne dans les enluminures des XIVe et XVe siècles. Première approche," in *Krieg im Mittelalter,* ed. H. H. Kortüm (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2001).

19. *St. Omer Chronicle,* fos. 226v–227. Somewhat helpful in picturing this is the detail from Diebold Schilling's depiction of Morat, center-left (Phillippe Contamine, *War in the Middle Ages,* trans. Michael C. Jones [Oxford: Basil Blackwood, 1987], pl. 23).

20. It would be much more difficult, though, to push back a ladder using a spear or sword. A good swing with such a weapon could perhaps send a ladder sideways, especially if it were not resting on quite level ground, but this would require much more force. It would seem to me a priori, thinking in terms of the practical geometry of striking a man over a rampart, and also considering that (1) a wall defender, with much of his body covered, had less need of an agile parrying weapon and that (2) helmet tops, which the wall defender would have special opportunities to strike, were often very thick, which would put a premium on axes' leveraged, concentrated impact, that these weapons would have been much favored for wall defense. However, this is not borne out by the evidence of manuscript illuminations (which almost always show defenders using spears, swords, rocks, and bows or crossbows) or narrative accounts (except when axes are the normal weapons of the defenders anyway, e.g., the Varangians in Geoffroi de Villehardouin, *Chronicle of the Fourth Crusade,* in *Memoirs of the Crusades: Villehardouin and Joinville,* trans. Frank T. Marzials [New York: Dutton Everyman, 1958], 41–42).

21. To make this more difficult for the defenders, wedges could be used to hold the ladders in place, as in the illumination reproduced in Bradbury, *Medieval Siege,* 276. Somewhat surprisingly, it is very rare for manuscript illuminations to show, or chronicles to note, ladders held steady at the base.

22. Sophisticated methods: Bachrach, *Early Carolingian,* 103–4.

23. E.g., lime: Froissart, *Chronicles* (1805), vol. 1, 185, 205; Raymond d'Aguilers, *Historia Francorum qui ceperunt Iherusalem,* trans. John Hugh Hill and Laurita L. Hill (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1968), 78. Beehives: ibid. Pitch: Fudge, *Crusade,* 95, 104–5. Hot lime and beams: Froissart, *Chronicles,* vol. 1 (1805), 150; Eric McGeer, "Byzantine Siege Warfare in Theory and Practice," in *The Medieval City under Siege,* ed. Ivy A. Corfis and Michael Wolfe (Woodbridge, Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 1995), 126–27. Roof timbers: Suger, *The Deeds of Louis the Fat,* trans. Richard Cusimano and John Moorhead (Washington, DC: Catholic University Press, 1992), 88. Bars: Froissart, *Chronicles* (1805), vol. 1, 267. Columns, beams, trees, etc.: Ambroise, *The History of the Holy War,* trans. Marianne Ailes (Woodbridge, Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 2003), 85. Spiked beams, molten glass, millstones, wagons, plowshares: Larson, *King's Mirror,* 223–25. The defenders of Paris in 885–86 killed some Vikings with a mix of pitch, wax, and oil and struck down six with a single millstone rolled from the height of a tower (Abbon [Abbo], *Le siège de Paris par les Normands, en 885 et 886,* ed. and trans. N. R. Taranne [Paris: Imprimerie royale, 1834], 88–89, 94–95). Note also the spiked mallets wrapped with incendiaries mentioned by d'Aguilers, *Historia,* 125–26.

24. E.g., Fudge, *Crusade,* 104–5; Froissart, *Chronicle* (1805), vol. 1, 150; Larson, *King's Mirror,* 224. It is also possible that the boiling water was poured into thin clay pots or bottles and then thrown, which would have been fairly effective.

25. Note illuminations in Bradbury, *Medieval Siege,* 287, 276, 169, 309 (no hands); 183 (hands; no defenders).

26. Henry of Livonia [Henricus Lettus], *The Chronicle of Henry of Livonia,* ed. and trans. James A. Brundage (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 63, 98; Suger, *Deeds,* 88.

27. John Barbour, *The Bruce,* ed. and trans. A.A.M. Duncan (Edinburgh: Cannongate Classics, 1997), 656–58. Similarly at Dunwich in 1173, "there was no girl or woman in the town who did not carry a stone to the palisade for hurling" (Jordan Fantosme, *Jordan Fantosme's Chronicle,* ed. and trans. R. C. Johnston [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981], 65).

28. Muntaner, *Chronicle,* 450; note also Henry of Livonia, *Chronicle,* 97.

29. James, *Book of Deeds,* 223, 249–52; idem, *The Chronicle of James I, King of Aragon,* trans. John Forster (London: Chapman and Hall, 1883), 557. I take it that he is referring to siege camps; he had obviously made far more daily march camps than that in his long life of frequent campaigning.

30. Rows: James, *Chronicle,* 139–40. Plaza: e.g., Barbara Holmgren Firoozye, "Warfare in Fifteenth-Century Castile" (PhD diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 1974), 107; Hausbuch illustration above, p. 82; note also J. M. Upton-Ward, trans., *The Rule of the Templars: The French Text of the Rule of the Order of the Knights Templar* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 1992), 56–57.

31. Like Robert Guiscard's lodgings at the siege of Bari, "roofed with thatch and walled with branches to be protected from the winter's cold" (William of Apulia, *Deeds,* trans. G. A. Loud, 28; Malaterra, *Deeds,* trans. G. A. Loud, 2.40, http://www.leeds.ac.uk/history/weblearning/MedievalHistoryTextCentre/medievalTexts.htm, "built from branches and leaves"). Such dug-out shelters were particularly favored for siege camps by the English in the fifteenth century, as they offered protection against enemy guns (just like modern foxholes), but they were also used by the French (Waurin, *Chronicles [1422–1431],* 157; Gilles le Bouvier [Berry Herald], *Le Recouvrement de Normendie,* in *Narratives of the Expulsion of the English from Normandy, 1449–50,* ed. Joseph Stevenson [London: Longman, 1863], 323–24).

32. E.g., Pere, *Chronicle,* vol. 1, 164 (siege of Cagliari): "At that time there was such a great fire in the host that everything was burnt, and many men suffered great hurt."

33. Piers D. Mitchell, *Medicine in the Crusades: Warfare, Wounds and the Medieval Surgeon* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 56–57 (quoting Arnold of Villanova). Cf. the requirement for all leaders to ensure that their men bury their offal "within earth, that no stynch be in ther lodginges wher thorough that any pestelence or mortalite myght fall within the oste" in the earl of Shrewsbury's fifteenth-century military ordinances. From Sir Harris Nicolas, *History of the Battle of Agincourt,* 2nd ed. (London: Johnson, 1832), appendix VIII, 42.

34. Francesco Gabrieli, ed., *Arab Historians of the Crusades: Selected and Translated from the Arabic Sources,* trans. E. J. Costello (London: Routledge, 1969), 345.

35. E.g., James, *Book of Deeds,* 260.

36. The palisade might be set up more loosely than the sort described above for town defenses, to halt a cavalry charge while still allowing men on foot to slip between the stakes. This would require only about half as many palings (Joinville, *Chronicle,* 201). At Rouen in 1418, Henry V's camp was protected by "great trenches . . . and on the banks of these . . . high fences of thorns" (Waurin, *Chronicles [1399–1422],* 241).

37. E.g., using the fat of 40 pigs at Rochester in 1215: Prestwich, *Armies,* 294. Alternately, some of the props could be yanked out by cables; this would make the collapse more sudden and unexpected but was difficult to effect and therefore rather rare. For one example, see James, *Book of Deeds,* 96. For cases in which the mine

was used as a tunnel past the wall, see Jean Froissart, *Oeuvres,* ed. Kervyn de Letten-hove, 26 vols. (Brussels: Devaux, 1867–1877), vol. 7, 335; Snorri Sturlson [Sturluson], *Heimskringla: History of the Kings of Norway,* trans. Lee Hollander (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1964), 582.

38. Albert of Aachen (2.36), quoted in Mitchell, *Medicine,* 171, and also *Alberti Aquensis Historia Hierosolymitana,* RHC Occ. 4, 326–27—a particularly good description of the whole process. Similarly, David, *Conquest of Lisbon,* 145.

39. Froissart saw the undermining and capture of Terrieres in 15 days as an impressive success; the Black Prince's experienced and numerous miners took three or four weeks to undermine a very long segment of the walls of Limoges in 1370 (Froissart, *Oeuvres,* vol. 7, 335–36, vol. 8, 39–40). Many sieges in which mining was employed lasted much longer.

40. Sometimes this effort led to fighting inside the mines, e.g., Limoges in Rogers, *Wars of Edward III,* 192–193; James, *Book of Deeds,* 98; Paul Crawford, trans., *The Templar of Tyre: Part III of the "Deeds of the Cypriots"* (Aldershot, Hampshire: Ashgate, 2003), 106–7; Anna Comnena, *The Alexiad,* trans. Elizabeth A. Dawes (London: Routledge, 1928), 329.

41. Mining could also be undertaken directly against the base of the wall, rather than using the tunneling method described above. The defenders would obviously not simply permit men with pickaxes to chop away at their ramparts, so this type of mining would be done as part of an assault rather than as preparation.

42. Paul E. Chevedden, "The Invention of the Counterweight Trebuchet: A Study in Cultural Diffusion," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 54 (2000): 75. Despite the very early references to throwing "hills and mountains," it seems that these machines were usually used with relatively small stones—small enough, as in the quotation on p. 122, to be carried by a horseman in front of himself on his saddle.

43. Or, not infrequently, *actually* a ship's mast; trebuchets, and other siege engines, seem fairly often to have been built from dismantled ships (James, *Chronicle,* 139; Bradbury, *Medieval Siege,* 244).

44. Chevedden, "Invention," 74, 90. At Lisbon (1147), for example, each engine was manned by either 50 or 100 men (the text is ambiguous) (David, *Conquest of Lisbon,* 143). Simon de Montfort was killed at the siege of Toulouse by a stone from a traction trebuchet operated by women and girls. William of Tudela, *The Song of the Cathar Wars,* trans. Janet Shirley (Aldershot, Hampshire: Ashgate, 1996), 172.

45. James, *Chronicle,* 300. Hard stones, such as marble, were preferred for battering walls and might even be shipped long distances for the purpose; at Acre in 1190–91, Richard famously used some large stones brought all the way from Cyprus, one of which killed 12 men and was brought to Saladin to inspect (Ambroise, *History,* 98–99; note also William of Tudela, *Song of the Cathar Wars,* 51).

46. James, *Book of Deeds,* 30–31. It seems to me clear from the description of the dust here, and from ibid., 187 ("moulds for walls") and 219 (rapidly digging into walls), that thirteenth-century Spanish fortifications were often made of mud brick, which explains the greater effectiveness in rapidly effecting actual breaches that trebuchets seemed to achieve in Iberia and southern France (Peter of Vaux-de-Cernay, *History of the Albigensian Crusade,* trans. W. A. Sibly and M. D. Sibly [Woodbridge, Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 1998], 52; Nöel, "Town Defence," 264) (part of the town walls of Toulouse in the fourteenth century were made of baked mud, and many walls were earth faced with brick).

47. Calculating from a 14-hour day, appropriate for that time and place. Including the night firing, it would be about one shot per 57 seconds. Also see Joseph O'Callaghan, *Reconquest and Crusade in Medieval Spain* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 138.

48. David, *Conquest of Lisbon,* 143. That would be nearly one missile per machine per eight seconds.

49. Implied by Richard of Holy Trinity, *Itinerary of Richard I and Others to the Holy Land*, online ed. (Toronto, ON: In parentheses Publications, 2001), 147, available at http://www.yorku.ca/inpar/richard_of_holy_trinity.pdf; it is not specified that it was the soldiers who were hired, but it seems likely that along with camp followers, they were.

50. Guibert of Nogent, *The Deeds of God through the Franks,* trans. Robert Levine (Woodbridge, Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 1997), 65, notes that at Nicaea it was the common soldiers (neither rich nor poor) who did the work of pulling the trebuchets and "carried 'the burden and heat of the day.'" Peter of Vaux-de-Cernay, *History of the Albigensian Crusade*, 261, notes that at Beaucaire, Simon de Montfort used only one stone-thrower because he had few footmen to pull the engine (meaning operate it, not pull it "into position," as the translator adds; cf. the Latin text, *Historia Albigensium,* in Recueil des historiens de la France, 19:106).

51. James, *Book of Deeds,* 94 (and cf. 179); cf. also Joinville, *Chronicle,* 265.

52. Villard's design used an estimated 30 tons of earth (Chevedden, "Invention," 72). Lead, sometimes "foraged" from church roofs, was commonly used by Edward I, though in at least one case the counterweight was iron (Prestwich, *Armies,* 288, 291).

53. The same was true for cannon. Bert S. Hall, *Weapons and Warfare in Renaissance Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 62 (12 shots a day for a large bombard in 1412); Napoleon III and I. Favé, *Études sur le passé et l'avenir de l'Artillerie,* 6 vols. (Paris: J. Dumaine, 1846–71), vol. 2, 78–80, 96 (6 to 12 times per day for large bombards); Fudge, *Crusade,* 155–56; Charles Brusten, *L'armée bourguignonne de 1465 à 1468* (Brussels, France: Van Muysewinkel, 1953), 124 (10 to 14 shots per day for large cannon, two to three per day for very large bombards).

54. Estimates and reports of trebuchets' ranges and projectile weights vary widely; e.g., Prestwich, *Armies,* 289: "Modern reconstructions suggest that a range of 200 yards with a projectile weighing 33 lbs was well within [counterweight trebuchets'] capability" vs. Chevedden, "Invention," 72 (estimated 100 kg > 400 meters or 250 kg > 160 m); 75–76 (180 kg reported in 1218; 300-kg projectiles a fairly common maximum, but perhaps sometimes 900–1,200 kg); 93 and 93 n. 74 (43–54 kg to 150–200 m). The last-noted estimates seem fully credible for mid-sized machines. For stones of 280 and ca. 100 lb. at the end of the thirteenth century, see Crawford, *Templar of Tyre,* 24, 105; John France, *Western Warfare in the Age of the Crusades* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999), 122. The thirteenth-century *King's Mirror* has an interesting formulation: It recommends having "few powerful [trebuchets] with which to throw large rocks against stone walls to determine whether they are able to resist such violent blows," i.e., some stone walls can be destroyed thus, and some cannot. It also recommends having "weaker [trebuchets] for throwing missiles over the walls to demolish the houses within the castle" (Larson, *King's Mirror,* 220).

55. See Chevedden, "Invention," 97–98, for the evidence, but not the conclusion. Other evidence of trebuchets breaching or bringing down walls: Prestwich, *Armies,*

300 (Stirling 1304); Villehardouin, *Chronicle,* 113, 117; note also James, *Book of Deeds,* 135.

56. Gilbert of Mons, *Chronicle of Hainault,* trans. Laura Napran (Woodbridge, Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 2005), 133. More generally, note Eric McGeer, "Byzantine Siege Warfare in Theory and Practice," in *The Medieval City under Siege,* ed. Ivy A. Corfis and Michael Wolfe (Woodbridge, Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 1995), 125–26, 128 (tenth to eleventh centuries); Fudge, *Crusade,* 155–56, 360. Of course, the very many long sieges of the period, in which stone-throwers were almost invariably employed, generally imply that the walls could not be breached.

57. Froissart, *Chronicles* (1805), vol. 3, 444.

58. E.g., Crawford, *Templar of Tyre,* 100.

59. Henry of Livonia, *Chronicle,* 106; James, *Book of Deeds,* 178–79.

60. They were sometimes constructed elsewhere and brought to the siege site in pieces, but that was the exception rather than the rule.

61. Bradbury, *Medieval Siege,* 243–44 (a cubit, however, is roughly 18 inches or a bit less, not six feet).

62. Bradbury, *Medieval Siege,* 241. Cf. Larson, *King's Mirror,* 221: "A tower raised on wheels is useful in besieging castles, *if* it is constructed so that it rises above the wall which is to be stormed, even though the difference in height be only seven ells; but the higher it is, the more effective it will be in attacking another tower" (emphasis added).

63. Abbo, *Siège de Paris,* 104.

64. The best description of the construction and attempted use of a siege tower is in James, *Book of Deeds,* 158–61.

65. Terrifying: see Joinville, *Chronicle,* 186–87, though in a different context. For towers burned with all hands, see, e.g., ibn Al-Athir on Acre 1190, in Gabrieli, *Arab Historians,* 198–200, and cf. Albert of Aachen 7.3 and 12.6, quoted in Mitchell, *Medicine,* 175–76.

66. Froissart, *Chronicles* (1805), vol. 3, 323–24 (translation slightly modified).

67. Gutierre Díaz de Gamez, *The Unconquered Knight: A Chronicle of the Deeds of Don Pero Niño, Count of Buelna,* online ed. (Toronto, ON: In parentheses Publications, 2000), 80, available at http://www.yorku.ca/inpar/.

68. Ouranos includes these as devices of the ancients not used by Byzantines in his day (the eleventh century) (McGeer, "Byzantine Siege Warfare," 129). References to them in medieval chronicles and documents (e.g., Fudge, *Crusade,* 219–23; Geoffrey of Malaterra, *Deeds,* 2.40; Comnena, *Alexiad,* 271, 328 [superior description; use ineffective]; Ambroise, *History,* 85–86 [ditto]; Richard of Holy Trinity, *Itinerary,* 73 [ditto]) are much less frequent than references to stone-throwers or mining, and even rarer are instances of their use being successful, especially after the early Middle Ages. See also Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks,* 2.7, 7.37, http://www.fordham. edu/halsall/basis/gregory-hist.html; Ralph of Caen, *Gesta Tancredi,* trans. Bernard S. Bachrach and David Bachrach (Aldershot, Hampshire: Ashgate, 2005), 139–40; Bradbury, *Medieval Siege,* 15, also 17, 120 (Lisbon), 124 (Acre), 143 (Caerlaverock), 186; 274–75 (a good summary, though I think overstating the effectiveness of these weapons); Randall Rogers, *Latin Siege Warfare in the Twelfth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 166. An exception is Guibert of Nogent, who often mentions battering rams and sometimes gives them credit for good results (e.g., *Deeds,* 63, 128–30, 163); note also Rogers, *Latin Siege,* 130–31, 168.

69. Though even simple rams without frameworks could be used against weak walls not defended by good firing positions, as at Saint Amand, where improvised oak beams carried by 20 or 30 men each broke through a monastery's walls to enter the town (Froissart, *Chronicles* [1805], vol. 1, 161–62).

70. Geoffroi de Charny, *A Knight's Own Book of Chivalry,* ed. Richard W. Kaeuper, trans. Elspeth Kennedy (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996), 57.

71. Guibert of Nogent, *Deeds,* 130. At Acre in 1190, even the lords and their war-horses contributed to bringing up stones to fill in the ditches (Ambroise, *History,* 83).

72. Ambroise, *History,* 83. The Vikings in 886 killed cattle and then human prisoners to use their bodies to fill up the defenses of Paris (Abbo, *Siège de Paris,* 114–15).

73. James, *Book of Deeds,* 96 (ditches), 106–7 (cavalry at breach).

74. E.g., Antioch 1098: John France, *Victory in the East: A Military History of the First Crusade* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 257–58.

75. *Tournai Chronicle,* in Rogers, *Wars of Edward III,* 95–96.

76. David, *Conquest of Lisbon,* 131. See also Waurin, *Chronicles (1399–1422),* 370.

77. Abbo, *Siège de Paris,* 86–87.

78. Muntaner, *Chronicle,* 449–550, TSM.

79. Boncompagno da Signa, *The History of the Siege of Ancona,* trans. Andrew F. Stone (Venice, Italy: Filippi Editore, 2002), 13–14.

80. E.g., Vaux-de-Cernay, *History of the Albigensian Crusade,* 261 (and likewise for the defenders: Richard Vaughan, *Valois Burgundy* [Hamden, CT: Archon, 1975], 147); cf. also James, *Book of Deeds,* 85–86 (thirds). If the besieging army was, say, three times as strong as the defenders and had to cover four gates, then under this scenario, the blocking force opposite each gate would be only one-fourth the size of the force that could be brought against it. But, of course, it did not need to defeat the sally party, only occupy it long enough for reinforcements to arm and rush to its support. Still, this illustrates why a large portion of the besieger's army was usually required.

81. J. M. Tourneur-Aumont, *La Bataille de Poitiers (1356) et la construction de la France* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1940), 214; Crawford, *Templar of Tyre,* 106 (four shifts); Bernat Desclot, *Chronicle of the Reign of King Pedro III of Aragon,* trans. F. L. Critchlow, part 1 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1934), 213–14 (one-fifth of the knights in a siege force on watch).

82. James, *Book of Deeds,* 145. He had initially had around 700–800 knights for the campaign (cf. 77 and 78n, which does not seem to allow for James's own household), but his forces had been reduced by battle losses (89–92) and presumably in the several major assaults that were mounted (104) and through disease.

83. James, *Book of Deeds,* 167 (one night in five); David, *Conquest of Lisbon,* 129 (one in nine); Joinville, *Chronicle,* 179; cf. Richard II's archer bodyguard organized to stand watch one night in seven (Philip Morgan, *War and Society in Medieval Cheshire, 1277–1403* [Manchester, UK: Chetham Society, 1987], 197); townsmen in fifteenth-century Paris with two to three turns a week in a high-threat situation (Janet Shirley, trans., *A Parisian Journal, 1405–1449* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968], 125–26); or one household member once each eight days at Millau in 1412 (Nöel, "Town Defence," 112).

84. Which is not to say that footmen would not also participate in convoy duty; they might even be present in larger numbers than the horsemen. But the proportion of horsemen in the convoys would always be relatively high, meaning a relatively high burden of participation for them.

85. James, *Chronicle,* 257. Very many siege descriptions note skirmishes occurring "every day," e.g., Muntaner, *Chronicle,* 259; Rogers, *Wars of Edward III, 96.*

86. E.g., *Scalacronica* in Rogers, *Wars of Edward III,* 178 (and cf. 93); James, *Book of Deeds,* 225. For a similar duel between two archers at Acre in 1190–91 (one of them, interestingly, a Welshman), see Ambroise, *History,* 84.

87. Froissart, *Chronicles* (1805), vol. 1, 196. Cf. also *St. Omer Chronicle,* fo. 219v, 230 (possibly "jousts of war" rather than skirmishes); Rogers, *Wars of Edward III,* 88, 95–96; James, *Chronicle,* 374, 380, 454, 472; Pere, *Chronicle,* vol. 1, 162, 304–5, 336; Díaz de Gamez, *Unconquered Knight* (2000), 14. These may have had other purposes that are obscured by the sources, as in the instance cited below.

88. E.g., select Milanese troops "circling the camps, and threatened with shield and spear, wounding some who were close by" called "preliminary games" (Arnulf of Milan, *The Book of Recent Deeds,* trans. W. L. North, http://www.acad.carleton.edu/curricular/MARS/Arnulf.pdf, 13).

89. This is a modified version of the Evans translation; cf. Díaz de Gamez, *El Victorial,* 81–83; idem, *Unconquered Knight* (2000), 15–16. Regarding the wounds "hardly felt," cf. ibid., 30 ("so long as the battle lasted he felt nothing" of an arrow that had "gone through his leg"); Muntaner, *Chronicles,* 450–51: "the five wounds I had, which I felt but little except one, a sword cut along my foot"; "a woman was found there who had five wounds in her face from quarrels and still continued the defence as if she had no hurt."

90. E.g., Ambroise, *History,* 102; Rogers, *War Cruel and Sharp,* 64–65.

91. E.g., Waurin, *Chronicles (1399–1422),* 370.

92. De Bueil, *Jouvencel,* vol. 2, 113; de Charny, *Knight's Own,* 57–58.

93. James, *Book of Deeds,* 160; the "us" is royal and means James himself, but he was doubtless not alone in his feelings.

94. Ibn Al-Athir on Acre 1190, in Gabrieli, *Arab Historians,* 198–200.

95. Abbo, *Siège de Paris,* 104.

96. Though there is a curious passage in Rigord, *Deeds of Philip Augustus,* trans. Paul Hyams, http://falcon.arts.cornell.edu/prh3/408/texts/Rigindex.html, cap. 66, in which he says that the *ribaldi* of Philip Augustus's army were "accustomed to be the first to charge battlements" and scaled the walls of Tours with ladders. Note also Ambroise, *History,* 101–2 (assaults led by esquires and Pisans).

97. Weight: Bachrach, *Early Carolingian,* 105. In the earl of Shrewsbury's ordinances it was provided that each seven men-at-arms should prepare one ladder of 15 rungs; for the First Crusade's assault on Jerusalem, each two knights were to provide one ladder (or mantelet). Nicolas, *Battle of Agincourt,* appendix VIII, 43; d'Aguilers, *Historia,* 124.

98. E.g., Crawford, *Templar of Tyre,* 100; Barbour, *Bruce,* 634.

99. Clifford J. Rogers, "The Bergerac Campaign (1345) and the Generalship of Henry of Lancaster," *Journal of Medieval Military History* 2 (2004): 102; Froissart, *Chronicles* (1805), vol. 2, 686.

100. E.g., Henry of Livonia, *Chronicle,* 74.

101. Vaux-de-Cernay, *History of the Albigensian Crusade,* 53 (suburb of Carcasonne); James, *Book of Deeds,* 219 (barbican of Valencia).

102. E.g., Ambroise, *History,* 99 (at least gives this impression, though it is possible the reference is to the culmination of a deep mining operation); also apparently Guibert of Nogent, *Deeds,* 62–63, 117; Rogers, *Wars of Edward III,* no. 69.

103. Crawford, *Templar of Tyre,* 109; see also David, *Conquest of Lisbon,* 145.

104. Ambroise, *History,* 100–2. Bezant: Mitchell, *Medicine,* 68.

105. Comnena, *Alexiad,* 328–29.

106. Zurich: Albert Lynn Winkler, "The Swiss and War: The Impact of Society on the Swiss Military in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries" (PhD diss., Brigham Young University, 1982), 60–61. Murten: ibid., 78. Antioch: Ralph of Caen, *Gesta Tancredi,* 86; Jerry C. Smith and William L. Urban, trans., *Livonian Rhymed Chronicle* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1977), 124; in fiction, Chrétien de Troyes, *Cligés,* vv. 1197–1260.

107. E.g., Enguerrand de Monstrelet, *Chronicles,* trans. Thomas Johnes, vol. 2 (London: William Smith, 1840), 127–128; Mathieu d'Escouchy, *Chronicle,* printed (though not identified as d'Escouchy) in de Monstrelet, *Chronicles,* vol. 2, 139–347, at 182; Michael Mallett, "Siegecraft in Late Fifteenth-Century Italy," in *The Medieval City under Siege,* ed. Ivy A. Corfis and Michael Wolfe (Woodbridge, Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 1995), 253.

108. James, *Book of Deeds,* 105–8, TSM; also in Ferrán Soldevilla, ed., *Les quatregrans cròniques* (Barcelona: Selecta, 1971), 47–48.

109. As at Berwick in 1333. Rogers, *Wars of Edward III,* 35; cf. 96.

110. Block quotation from Colin Smith, ed. and trans., *Christians and Moors in Spain,* vol. 2 (Warminster, Wiltshire: Aris and Phillips, 1989), 55. Froissart, *Oeuvres,* vol. 5, 85–86 (Villeneuve); Firoozye, "Warfare," 106–7 (Santa Fe, Vittoria); see also James, *Book of Deeds,* 94, 269; Comnena, *Alexiad,* 138. The market of Saladin's siege camp outside Acre had 7,000 shops, according to al-Maqrizi (John Gillingham, "Richard I and the Science of War in the Middle Ages," in *War and Government in the Middle Ages,* ed. J. Gillingham and J. C. Holt [Woodbridge, Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 1984], 204 n. 50).

111. Bradbury, *Medieval Siege,* 198; note also Smith, *Christians and Moors,* vol. 2, 55: "In the camp, people had established themselves with their possessions and wives and children."

112. E.g., Waurin, *Chronicles, (1399–1422),* 249, on the siege of Rouen: "During three months there were no provisions whatever sold in the market, but people sold them secretly; and that which before the siege sold for one denier of the country, then sold for twenty, thirty, forty deniers; and at last the poor people could not procure food for any money."

113. Henry Knighton, *Knighton's Chronicle,* ed. and trans. Geoffrey Martin (Oxford: Oxford Medieval Texts, 1995), 78.

114. Pere, *Chronicle,* vol. 1, 153 (half the army died; cf. 166–67); vol. 2, 486–87; Gilbert, *Chronicle of Hainault,* 143 ("scarcely a tenth part of the emperor's army evaded death"); Bradbury, *Medieval Siege,* 83, 198; Halsall, *Warfare,* 153; note also France, *Western Warfare,* 136–37; James, *Book of Deeds,* 112; Joinville, *Chronicle,* 210; William of Apulia, *Deeds,* 61; Comnena, *Alexiad,* 102; Waurin, *Chronicles (1399–1422),* 320–21; and Gillingham, "Richard," 203. Many more examples could be added.

115. Ibn al-Athir, in Gabrieli, *Arab Historians,* 142–43. The total number in the city was variously reported at 70,000 men (not counting women and children) or 100,000 people. Ibid., 142, 158.

116. James, *Book of Deeds,* 168.

117. E.g., Rogers, *Wars of Edward III,* 136; "tents" set afire (e.g., Suger, *Deeds,* 33) were probably really huts or shelters of branches and thatch; tents were too expensive (and probably not flammable enough after drenching rain, as in the Suger case). Note also Díaz de Gamez, *Unconquered Knight* (2000), 80.

118. Shirley, *Parisian Journal,* 89–90.

119. E.g., Rogers, *Wars of Edward III,* 141, 136.

120. Guibert of Nogent, *Deeds,* 93.

121. For one example in which the people and goods within churches were spared, see the case of Luxembourg in 1443: Olivier de la Marche, *Mémoires,* vol. 1, in *Collection des mémoires relatifs à l'histoire de France,* ed. M. Petitot, vol. 9 (Paris: Foucault, 1825), 394.

122. Revolution (in the context of punctuated equilibrium evolution): Clifford J. Rogers, "The Military Revolutions of the Hundred Years War," in *The Military Revolution Debate,* ed. Clifford J. Rogers (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1995). Cf. Mallett, "Siegecraft," 244 ("there was little significant impact of gunpowder technology before 1500"), 255.

123. The early gun depicted in an illustration to Walter de Milemete's treatise on kingship (ca. 1326) is shown firing a lance-like projectile at a castle gate, but this is unlikely to really have been done; lances would not be very effective projectiles for that purpose.

124. Both the long sieges and their attendant difficulties would reappear as common aspects of warfare in the sixteenth century with the perfection of the *trace italienne* fortress, but that is outside the scope of this chapter.

125. At the end of the Hundred Years' War we read of a French siege force with 1,600–1,800 men-at-arms and archers and 700 laborers "to work the guns and bombards" (Monstrelet, *Chronicles,* vol. 2, 224–25); note also Michael Mallett, *Mercenaries and Their Masters: Warfare in Renaissance Italy* (Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Littlefield, 1974), 170.

126. Sky: d'Escouchy, *Chronicle,* 230; ibid., 341 ("The smoke was so thick, and the fire so terrible, that it resembled a hell"). Noise: Froissart, *Chronicles* (1805), vol. 2, 571 ("When they fired off this bombarde, it might be heard five leagues off in the daytime, and ten at night. The report of it was so loud, that it seemed as if all the devils in hell had broken loose"). J. R. Partington, *A History of Greek Fire and Gunpowder* (Cambridge: W. Heffer, 1960), 78 (Roger Bacon): "No one could stand the terror of the noise and flash."

127. Rogers, "Military Revolutions." Early in the fifteenth century, Christine de Pizan apparently thought a castle should be provided with supplies sufficient to withstand a six-month siege (*Book of Deeds of Arms and Chivalry,* trans. Charity Cannon Willard and Sumner Willard [University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999], 110–11); by the late fifteenth century, it typically took only about 18 days to breach defenses.

128. Le Bouvier, *Recouvrement,* 340–42.

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Last Joan of Arc Movie," *Journal of Religion and Popular Culture* 3 (Spring 2003), online journal at http://www.usask.ca/relst/jrpc/art-joanofarc.html. As Maeve Maddox, she is the author of the e-book *100 Writing Mistakes to Avoid* (2010). She is also a contributor on language to www.dailywritingtips. com/, while her teaching site AmericanEnglishDoctor.com focuses on literacy and general knowledge.

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