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# TEARS, SIGHS AND LAUGHTER

EXPRESSIONS OF EMOTIONS IN THE MIDDLE AGES

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# Tears, Sighs and Laughter

Expressions of Emotions in the Middle Ages

Editors:

*Per Förnegård, Erika Kihlman, Mia Åkestam & Gunnel Engwall*

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### *Abstract*

In the 1990s a new interest for research on emotions and affectivity in the humanities and the social sciences began to develop. This movement, later referred to as “the affective turn”, has been a most productive and vigorous field of research in the past decades as it opens up for new interpretations of historical source materials and enables studies of the relationship between states of mind and materiality. In addition, it prompts questions of, for example, gender, power and religiosity, thus being conducive to a fuller understanding of historical events, places and persons.

This anthology is the result of the Marcus Wallenberg symposium at the Royal Swedish Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities in early spring 2014. All studies included concern the interpretation of emotional expression in medieval art and literature, written by scholars representing a wide variety of disciplines.

### *Keywords*

Middle Ages, affectivity, expressions, emotions, medieval studies, material culture, humor theory, medieval texts, representation

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# Introduction

The purpose of the international Marcus Wallenberg symposium “Tears, Sighs and Laughter – Medieval Studies”, held at The Royal Swedish Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities in Stockholm 6–9 March, 2014, was to enable a discussion concerning interpretations of affections and emotions as expressed in medieval literature and art. Thus, the symposium aimed at creating an interdisciplinary meeting place for scholars from various fields. Our overall aim was to obtain a wide perspective on different forms of emotional expression, their interpretation, function and meaning. The contributors were encouraged to address questions such as: How are emotions like despair, desire, apathy, sorrow and joy expressed in medieval literature and art? What kind of influence does medieval culture exert on emotional expressions? Is there a difference in attitude as regards for example laughter and tears between different socio-cultural strata in the Middle Ages? Does gender come into play here? The result of this scholarly engagement is the present volume.

The theme of the symposium connects with the vigorous research on emotions and affectivity in the humanities and the social sciences visible in the last decades, which has a background in the formulation of the “affective turn” in the 1990s. Today, the study of human senses and emotions, cognition and affect, on the basis of current critical theories is a growing field and engages scholars from a wide range of disciplines. This field offers possibilities for new interpretations of historical source materials and enables studies of the relationship between states of mind and materiality, all of which are conducive to a fuller image of historical events, places and persons. In this context questions also arise concerning, for example, gender, religiosity and power. This type of research has provided new results on the meaning and interpretation of different emotional expressions. For scholars working with material from the pre-modern period it makes it possible – in a medieval context, and in both secular and religious cul-

tural spheres, – to clarify conditions and attitudes that have not previously been fully elucidated. In addition to Jean-Claude Schmitt and Piroska Nagy, who have both contributed to this anthology, Jacques Le Goff should be mentioned specifically. Barbara Rosenwein is another prominent figure in this field and is several times referred to in this anthology. Her concept of “emotional communities” is an essential contribution to this new orientation.

Of the three expressions found in the title of this anthology – tears, sighs and laughter – the latter has attracted most attention from scholars. In studies on medieval laughter it has often been connected with humor, but laughter has also been shown to function on many levels and to be a manifestation of a range of emotions besides joy and happiness: fear, superiority, relief or embarrassment, to name but a few. In this volume, such different perspectives of laughter and humor are discussed.

In recent years, corresponding studies have begun to appear on other forms of emotional expression such as tears, which likewise represent various emotional states, for instance bliss and longing for the heavenly kingdom. Several of the articles in this volume deal with the theory and practice of tears.

The third emotional expression, sighing, does not figure as much in this volume as the title might suggest. As a matter of fact, no contributor has chosen to deal directly with this topic. Instead, some articles cover feelings such as hatred, disgust and fear, which, of course, can assume different expressions, including sighs.

In the following, the contents of the nineteen articles in the present volumes are presented briefly.

In the opening article *Piroska Nagy* proposes a reflection on emotions in medieval texts, spanning three great questions. First, she addresses the question of how emotions are related to change in historiography. Second, coming back to the history of a recently studied cultural constellation particular to medieval times, the gift of tears, she argues that emotions, and not only their representation, changed through time. Third, using the example of two female mystics who both died in 1309, Angela of Foligno and Lukardis of Oberweimar, she shows that embodied emotions in the later Middle Ages had a transformative power which could go beyond what we imagine today.

In the past few years there has been a significant development concerning the history of emotions. It is now possible to make a first overview of this historiographical current and place it in a long-term perspective of the history of passions (from the Stoics to the Enlightenment philosophers), ethology (since Charles Darwin), and above all the recent anthropological and psychological investigations of emotions. In the light of these remarks, *Jean-Claude Schmitt* proposes a consideration – within the framework of medieval Western culture – of the connection between the emotions

and the experience of the visible (the gaze on the exterior world and images in particular) and the visual (the inner gaze of dreams and nightmares). He addresses this question of ontology by focusing on a largely autobiographical text from the early thirteenth century, the *Liber revelationum* by the Franconian Cistercian monk Richalm von Schöntal. This little-known text relates a multitude of visions and dreams.

The two following articles focus on emotions at the royal courts and how kings were expected to distinguish between the public and the private. *Corinne Péneau* analyzes a part of *Erikskrönikan* (*The Chronicle of Duke Erik*) in order to show how the anonymous author criticizes the Swedish king's public display of personal emotions and his attempts to strengthen his power. Exploring Iberian chronicles from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, *Kim Bergqvist* also analyzes the representation of emotion at the royal court. He observes an awareness of an opposition between private feelings and public emotions. Even if the king were to lose a family member, he was not supposed to show his grief by shedding tears in public.

Tears can, however, be provoked by a variety of sentiments, from anger to joy. Using different narrative sources describing the First Crusade in the Holy Land, as well as Scandinavian crusades in the Baltic area, *Kurt Villads Jensen* investigates whether the crusaders and missionaries are said to have shed tears. And, if so, for what reason did they weep?

*Wojtek Jezierski* is also interested in crusade narratives. His reading of the historiographical works of Adam of Bremen, Helmold of Bosau and Henry of Livonia focuses on how fear and disgust were expressed and perceived in the Christian missionary communities on the Baltic Rim in the high Middle Ages. For instance, the expression of disgust was used in order to draw boundaries between the missionaries and their heathen adversaries.

Hatred and fear are also central aspects of *Elisabeth Wåghäll Nivre's* analysis of Georg Wickram's late medieval prose novel *Von guten und bösen Nachbarn*. However, in Wickram's novel, these emotions are not a result of the clash between Christians and heathens but between neighbors in medieval cities. Big cities like Antwerp and Venice inspire these emotions and the city dwellers are characterized as either "good" or "evil". Two central notions in Wåghäll Nivre's analysis are those of *space* and *place*.

Even if one does not fear evil neighbors, fear of death is a shared feeling, and can be displayed in a number of ways. *Martha Bayless* uses several examples to show that medieval laughter and comic texts take their power from fear of death and bodily disintegration, reconfiguring the relationship of the individual to the group, and so perform a function unique to their status as social phenomena.

Indeed, the medieval Church had an ambivalent relationship to laughter. In the Gospel, Jesus never laughs, though he weeps once. Even if laughter, jokes and humor – parts of human nature as it seems – were not actually encouraged by the Church, they were often tolerated. In his paper, *Olle Ferm* uses copious medieval examples to show clerics who articulated a more humane discourse on laughter in contrast to the ideal asceticism.

Even if Jesus himself never laughs in the Bible, others do. For instance, according to the Genesis account, Sarah laughed mockingly at the prospect of becoming a mother at ninety. Focusing on biblical commentary from the twelfth century, *Alexander Andrée* seeks to explore the attitudes of certain medieval exegetes towards biblical manifestations of emotion, such as Sarah's laughter.

Bernard of Clairvaux, on the other hand, is often thought of as the perfect ascetic who never laughed. Our impression is that of a sinister monk, with a dark and pessimistic view of man and of the world. Yet, as *Wim Verbaal* argues in his article, Bernard's own texts do not confirm this impression. In them we can hear a joyous voice, full of confidence regarding man's capacity to overcome his burdens in life. His texts include a great deal of humor and show that laughing can be satirical and hilarious but also melancholic. In most cases it reveals an extremely subtle sensitivity, showing Bernard's acute eye on the world and the frailty of mankind. Bernard, however, never writes simply to amuse. His humor is pedagogical and aims at the inner conversion of his readers. Verbaal's aim is to lay bare the rhetorical functioning of humor in Bernard's textual pedagogy.

The smiling ideal, manifest in "the gothic smile" in the sculptures of the great cathedrals in France and Germany, has been explained as an effect of courtly culture and religious ideals equally. The cathedrals also created new public spaces in medieval towns, where the sculptures' smiling faces greeted visitors and travelers. From this starting point art historian *Mia Åkestam* discusses how international attitudes towards smile and laughter had effects on a local community, and prevailed from an emerging royal dynasty in the late twelfth century to St. Birgitta and the Birgittine Order at the end of the fourteenth century.

Some portions of the *Revelations* of St. Birgitta of Sweden appear to be designed to provoke laughter or even repulsion in their readers or listeners. Birgitta's *Revelations* clearly reflect well-known affective forms of medieval Christian spirituality, characterized by imaginative meditation on the humanity of Christ and the use of emotions to cultivate intimacy with God. *Claire Sablin* offers a close study of representations of Birgitta's emotions in selected passages of the *Revelations*, interpreting these emotions both within the context of late medieval spirituality and according to ideas about the significance of gender for emotional expression. Particular attention is given to three

emotional experiences that are prominent in Birgitta's texts: tremendous joy, copious tears and sorrow.

The following two articles also have links to St. Birgitta of Sweden. *Claes Gejrot* discusses and analyzes some expressions of emotions in the Memorial Book of the Birgittine house at Vadstena, the *Diarium Vadstenense*, a heterogeneous text that recorded major and minor events between the 1380s and the 1540s. *Roger Andersson*, focusing on another type of material from Vadstena, the sermons from an anonymous fifteenth-century preacher, analyzes how pictorial language is used for emotional appeal.

The next article also focuses on written material from Scandinavia, but the medium is quite different. *Magnus Källström* studies the expression of emotions in runic inscriptions in his search for traces of humor and laughter in these laconic messages.

The following two articles deal with happiness and joy, but from two very different angles. *Tomas Ekenberg* addresses the question: How is it that our happiness stopped being of primary significance to our moral philosophers? According to Ekenberg, at least part of the answer can be found in the Middle Ages. *Carin Franzén's* article deals with a special kind of joy, the *joi d'amor*, arguing that the phenomenon of courtly love was a discursive formation related to power, gender and sexuality in medieval culture.

Courtly love plays an important role also in the last article in this volume, but this time it is not of the joyful kind. *Sofia Lodén* examines the role of weeping female characters in Francophone texts and some of their medieval Scandinavian translations, arguing that the description of female sorrow tended to be modified when translated from Romance.

A lachrymose chapter thus concludes this book, but tears and sorrow are not true representatives of the emotions of the editors. Instead we would like to express our deepest felt gratitude to all participants of the initial Marcus Wallenberg Symposium and to all contributors to this volume.

Stockholm, May 2016

*Per Förmegård, Erika Kihlman, Mia Åkestam and Gunnell Engwall*



*Expression of emotion; the medieval smile. Margravine Reglindis, donor portrait, west chapel, Naumburg Cathedral, Germany, c. 1245–1260. © Vereinigte Domstifter zu Mersburg und Naumburg und des Kollegiatstifts Zeititz, Bildarchiv Naumburg. Photo: Matthias Rutkowski. (See also p. 225.)*



# The Power of Medieval Emotions and Change: From Theory to Some Unexpected Uses of Spiritual Texts

*Piroska Nagy*

Medieval Christian theologians considered that Christ's Passion, just like the tears he shed three times during his life according to canonical scriptures, proved his humanity.<sup>1</sup> Feeling emotions – in this case, suffering – and expressing them by a bodily gesture, were understood, in this sense, as a feature of humanity. If our late modern societies are taking emotions more and more seriously, they are also very commonly presented as belonging to the “nature of man”. As a universal attribute of humanity, therefore, emotion emerges as an important element in the understanding of man living in society;<sup>2</sup> emotional life appears as a structure which can be described and which needs to be taken into account. This idea has been suggested by a number of thematic studies on the ways a given emotion presents itself – fear, anger, jealousy – in a society or social group. While this awareness of the importance of emotions, of the *thematic* of emotion is a relatively new achievement, as we shall see, it has the disadvantage of singling out emotion as such, or a given emotion like anger or jealousy, as an essentialized “thing”, extracted both from its context and from the ongoing flow of affective states. Here I want to suggest a somewhat different approach to emotions for historians who need to deploy cultural constructivism in order to deal with affective life, as it is submitted to change. In order to better understand the various roles of emotions in history and more largely, in society, in what follows I shall argue for a both cultural and dynamic vision of emotions, by considering them in relation to movement, event, and, in this way, to historical change.

First I will address the question of how emotions are related to change in recent historiography, and reflect upon the major shift that took place in this field in the pre-

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<sup>1</sup> See Coccia 2009; Nagy 1994.

<sup>2</sup> This view is challenged today by the studies on emotions of animals, see Bekoff 2007, and the website <http://www.literati.net/authors/marc-bekoff/>.

ceding decades. Second, by revisiting the history of a cultural constellation, the gift of tears, which pertains particularly to the theme of this book, and which is particular to medieval times, I would like to suggest that emotions, and not only their representation, change through time. In more theoretical terms, this means that emotions as we meet them in historical sources are cultural phenomena that manifest through a variety of transformations. Third, using the example of two female mystics who died the same year, 1309, Angela of Foligno and Lukardis of Oberweimar, I will demonstrate that embodied emotions in the later Middle Ages had a transformative power which could go beyond their own personal sphere. Following this path, a whole continent of uses of emotion can be still unfolded.

## Thinking emotions in history

### *Emotions and change*

An important question in the historiography of emotions concerns the way we address the understanding of emotions in relation to change. What role can be conferred to emotions in historical change? Or, to put it another way, what do emotions change in history?

If we define history as the branch of knowledge that studies past societies through change, the first task in order to find a satisfying answer to these questions must be to consider how emotions participate in cultural and social change. Yet, for quite a long time, from the time of the birth of history as an academic discipline in the first half of the nineteenth century, until roughly the end of the twentieth, emotions were naturalized, considered as a residue of nature in man and society. At the end of the twentieth century, first the philosopher Robert Solomon and then the medievalist Barbara Rosenwein, described clearly this old model according to which emotions had been – and in popular culture still are – conceived in Western culture. They called it the “hydraulic model” of emotions,<sup>3</sup> according to which emotions are like liquids in each person, which can be suppressed, sublimated, but never cease to seek an outlet. This scheme – which gave the theoretical foundations for many works of social sciences during the first half of the twentieth century, from Freud to Elias and far beyond – understands emotions as our non-civilized aspect, capable of having only one possible history: the evolution towards their “reduction”, “restraint”, “rationalization”.<sup>4</sup> This is the view promoted by Elias’ notion of the *civilizing process*, in which “the history of the West is the history of increasing self-restraint”, or before him, for Johan Huizinga, who understood emotions as untamed passions.<sup>5</sup> For these scholars, the history of emotion consisted above all in conceiving the level of participation of emotions to

3 Solomon 1993, p. 77; Rosenwein 2002, pp. 835–836.

4 See Rosenwein 2002, pp. 826–827.

5 *Ibid.*, p. 827; Elias 2000; Huizinga 1965.



a moment of history in terms of quantity, more emotions meaning more nature, less emotions meaning more culture. In this way, the history of emotions could be seen in a teleological (and rather linear) perspective as a history of the progressive growth of reason in civilization, meaning, consequently, the progressive control and restraint of emotions. While the scheme of the civilizing process remains popular among some historians of modernity even today,<sup>6</sup> things have slowly started to change around the middle of the twentieth century.

*From sensibility in history to the history of emotions*

In his foundational article concerning sensibility (*sensibilité*) in history, published in the midst of the Second World War, the French historian Lucien Febvre considered whether a vision of history that charted a progressive restraint of “wild” emotions was possible in a time when “passions were unleashed”.<sup>7</sup> While Febvre’s article was the first manifesto calling for a history of “affective life”, a timid but constant questioning of emotions, mostly seen as passions, had already entered into French historiography in the period preceding Febvre’s intervention.<sup>8</sup> The interest in emotions was not the same as that of Edward Gibbon, in his *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* at the end of the eighteenth century, or of the great romantic historian of France, Jules Michelet, in the middle of the nineteenth, who both lavishly appealed to emotions in their historical narration firstly as a rhetorical tool, secondly as a historical driving force, which was at the same time considered as a universal feature belonging to human nature.<sup>9</sup>

A new era began in historiography when historians, nourished on readings of sociology and anthropology, started to think about emotions as a possible topic and even “problem” of history. This interest, arising alongside the “historical psychology” (*psychologie historique*) of Ignace Meyerson as early as the 1920s,<sup>10</sup> has never disappeared from what is generally called the Annales School, and was certainly nourished by the reflections of the whole current of thinkers interested in mass psychology who emerged by the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>11</sup> Under their influence, after the early works of Robert Mandrou or of the Italian Alberto Tenenti,<sup>12</sup> several historians during the 1960s conducted a series of studies into love, death, suffering, of which there are too many to enumerate here. In the next decades, it was in the wake of this trend,

6 This is still the view promoted by Muchembled 2011 and Pinker 2011.

7 Febvre 1941.

8 See Lefebvre 1932; several hints for instance in Bloch 1939; Rougemont 1939.

9 Gibbon 1776–1789; Michelet 1844–1867.

10 See Vernant 1989.

11 Le Bon 1895; Tarde 1901; and also Freud 1921. For an analysis of their relations, see Boquet & Nagy (eds) 2016.

12 Tenenti 1957; Mandrou 1959, 1961.

called *histoire des mentalités*, combined with the rather modern era-focused history of sensibility (*histoire des sensibilités*) around Alain Corbin, that a flourishing field of research emerged, concerned with questions connected to what came to be called, later, both a history of senses and a history of emotions.<sup>13</sup>

Not only did all these works focus on different phenomena of affective life in varied contexts, taking daring paths that had not been previously explored, and creating a great amount of new knowledge. They also showed that emotional change is always more complex than a somewhat simplifying reading of Elias would let us suppose. For instance, the French historian of ancient Greece, Hélène Monsacré, argued in 1984 in her *Les larmes d'Achille* ("Tears of Achilles"), that a great gap in standards and gender use had taken place between the *Ilias* and the *Odyssey*.<sup>14</sup> She demonstrated that ancient Greeks did not have "their" standard way of being moved, as emotional norms and behavior were both gendered and changed from one generation to another. While men could legitimately show their emotions in the eighth century, two or three centuries later, emotional expression became reserved to women. In roughly the same decade, Jacques Le Goff's research into the norms and practices of laughter suggested that there was rather a release, not a restraint, of emotional expression in western society during the last centuries of the Middle Ages.<sup>15</sup> The evolutionary idea of a development from "more" to "less" emotion in the perspective of a civilizing restraint started to be transformed into a more subtle, indeed multidimensional, vision of emotionality in cultures and society, with a more complex model than that of restriction, its reasons and forms.

These decades of European (and mainly French) research, which endeavored to frame and define the field of history of sensibility – one that includes a history of the senses, of the emotions, and all the blurred territory around them – greatly contributed to the emergence of what we now call the history of emotions in (initially American) historiography in the 1990s.<sup>16</sup> The decisive push came from outside, in history: from the joint effect of cultural constructivism and of the simultaneous cognitive revolution.<sup>17</sup> Cognitive psychology, based on clinical experiments, and even neuroscience, proposed a new understanding of emotions as being strongly intertwined with reasoning and cognitive elements of decision and action, in both the individual and society. Cultural anthropologists formulated their inquiry on the basis of this new knowledge of cognitive psychology. Their work demonstrated that the way emotions were con-

13 See for example Payen 1967; Delumeau 1978; the programmatic work of Alain Corbin on smell 1982, launching a research program he largely explored; Vincent-Buffault 1986.

14 Monsacré 1984.

15 Le Goff 1989, 1997; he follows the steps of Bakhtin 1968.

16 On this question, see Plamper 2015.

17 Harré 1986; Rosenwein 2002; Nagy 2013.

ceived, practiced and normalized was largely linked to the structures of cognition in a large number of cultures – and, at the same time, it depended strongly on cultural construction. Different cultures do not use the same concepts, and their understanding of sensory and emotional phenomena depends largely on their cosmology and vision of man. People certainly do laugh and weep, love and hate in other societies. They do not do so, however, in the same way as we do, nor for the same reasons: the very setup of their feelings, the meanings of their gestures and emotions can be very different according to the culture and the social situation. As Umberto Eco taught us in *Il Nome della Rosa*, laughter in a late medieval monastery could be considered a very dangerous thing,<sup>18</sup> while in lay society, at the same time, it was an accepted expression of well-being and of sharing. Putting aside the first pioneers in the field,<sup>19</sup> the joint cognitive-culturalist understanding of emotions gained much historiographical traction in the 1990s and the early 2000s.<sup>20</sup> The field of the history of emotions has exploded on the public scene in the last ten years and has received important institutional support and editorial visibility, in a number of different places.<sup>21</sup>

In order to place the explosion of emotions' studies in its context, the shift described above has to be related to the overall interest in emotions in late modern western societies. This social interest is visible, for instance, in the institutional and marketing use of emotions, frequently using cognitive psychology; in the ever-growing success of therapeutic culture;<sup>22</sup> as well as in the use of emotionality in various new spiritual movements. Their success looks like going against, at least by all appearances, the tendency of the organizations governing us to over-rationalize all the parameters of our lives. Further, it is also linked to the deep, undercurrent questioning in contemporary Western civilization whether Reason, as defined by Western modernity, might help us to lead a good life.<sup>23</sup> As Hervé Mazurel argues, this interrogation is rooted in the joint heritage of three great thinkers of the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century, Marx, Nietzsche and Freud, whose anti-idealist and anti-essentialist projects

18 Eco 1980, *First day, Compline*; in the film of Jean-Jacques Annaud, the scene is amplified in a memorable manner.

19 Stearns & Stearns 1988; Le Goff, who did not publish much on it, lectured on laughter several years, starting in October 1988 at École des hautes études en sciences sociales (EHESS) in Paris.

20 Rosenwein 2002; Reddy 2001.

21 After the French, Agence national de la recherche (ANR)-supported Emotions in the Middle Ages (EMMA) project (<http://emma.hypotheses.org>), see the research centres which are supported at the University of Queen Mary, University of London: Centre for the History of Emotions, [www.qmul.ac.uk/emotions/](http://www.qmul.ac.uk/emotions/); Max Planck <https://www.mpib-berlin.mpg.de/en/research/history-of-emotions>; ARC Centre of Excellence for the History of Emotions, Australia: [www.historyofemotions.org.au/](http://www.historyofemotions.org.au/). Several collections on the history of emotions have been published by Oxford University Press, Illinois University Press and Palgrave.

22 Illouz 2008.

23 Mazurel 2014.

contributed significantly to revalue the weight and force of affective life in the determination of human acts and representations.<sup>24</sup> Thus, the birth of the project of a history of sensibility has to be linked to the rupture launched in Western thinking by the demystifying hermeneutics of these three “masters of suspicion”, to use a term coined by Paul Ricoeur, and to the different intellectual projects which resulted from it.<sup>25</sup>

As a result, this important dimension of human experience, forgotten or relegated for a long time, has been slowly but surely included in the field of historical research. Historians in 2014 no longer consider emotions as a residue of some old natural state, which would resist historicization, but rather as an important dimension of human life, strongly linked to the Western cultural and cognitive structures and decisions, both in individuals (from brain to body, motivation and will) and in societies. In this sense, if something has changed, we did not have to “invent” emotions in order to make their history, as sometimes it is argued in opposition to the history of emotions. Rather, we had to turn them upside down, culturally speaking: through the deep historical transformation within our own culture, emotions have been turned from an element of nature to control or eradicate, to a structuring element of culture at all levels, subject to change and history. Without any teleology *à l'œuvre*, such a consideration of emotions in history also has the great advantage of being suitable for the project of a decolonized history, contrary to the “grand narrative” of a Western restriction-civilization of affects.

### *De-naturalizing historians' 'emotions'*

At the same time, as the term *emotion* became the hegemonic term designating the affective field in natural and social sciences, historians also adopted the word. In the last few years, however, the idea of ‘affect’, linked to the somewhat nebulous “affect theory”<sup>26</sup> in which it means a physical and pre-cultural affective movement that cannot be qualified as emotion, has also become popular. In any case, “affect” and “emotion” do not refer to clearly known, well-defined objects; definitions and theories are multiple and, as we shall see, they change.<sup>27</sup> In this sense, the adoption of the term “emotion” by historians happened, for some of us, against our inclinations, so much so that a group of French historians still remains attached to the idea of a *histoire des sensibilités*;<sup>28</sup> and important medievalist scholars of emotion, like Carla Casagrande

24 *Ibid.*, esp. p. 30.

25 *Ibid.*

26 See for instance Massumi 2002, 2015.

27 On both different conceptions and changes in sciences, see Leys 2011.

28 See the group of researchers who emerged around Alain Corbin and, in the next generation, Dominique Kalifa, Emmanuel Fureix, Quentin Deluermoz, Hervé Mazurel, Anne-Emmanuelle Demartini, to mention only a few of: if they use the term emotion, it is in order to integrate

and Silvana Vecchio or Esther Cohen, even today consider that their object is not (contemporary) emotion, but (medieval) *affectio*, *passio*, or movements of the soul.<sup>29</sup> As historians of a remote period, when the setup of affective life was considerably different of that of today, we have to base our study on the historical vocabulary and notions used to describe it in their context. Still, the term *emotion* seems practical, used as an academic consensus to designate the category of phenomena we are dealing with, rather than as the very object of our research in reality. Thus we speak of a *history of emotion* to refer to a unified field that contains emotions and feelings, from jealousy to anger or the long-lasting strong feelings of parental love, guilt or resentment. This field also includes moods like depression, boredom or gloominess and lasting dispositions (patience, home-sickness), and brings together all kinds of questions concerning individual and collective “affective life”, to use the term dear to Lucien Febvre. As a field, it is crossing the history of the senses and the history of the body, as well as that of cognition and intellect.

As far as the term is concerned, there is a great diversity of vocabulary to designate different types of feelings, emotions and affective states in all contemporary European languages. In French, for instance, *emotions* (sudden emotional reactions) and (long-lasting) *sentiments* have different meanings, and cover different fields than the English *feelings* and *emotions*. German has perhaps an even more varied vocabulary, including *Gefühl*, (sentiment), *Aufregung* (émoi, excitation, trouble) and the neighbouring *Erregung*, *Rührung* (tenderness, emotion), as well as *Emotion*. Still, the established term to name the field comes from English, and is nourished by a desire to ground historiography in science and psychology, pushed not only by interdisciplinary curiosity but also by academic imperatives,<sup>30</sup> among which the ever increasing hegemony of the English language has to be underlined, as it has lately become the (alas, more and more unique ...) scientific *lingua franca*.

In intellectual terms, using the word *emotion* to baptize the field of our enquiry in history was, above all, a way to signify its link with the interdisciplinary *emotion sciences*, which extend from social psychology to the neurosciences.<sup>31</sup> However, after several years of flourishing research, it is necessary to consider the pitfalls caused by this annexation of the history of emotions to that of emotion sciences. In spite of our good intentions, from the point of view of the object designated and of the way of access to it, it does not seem that the emotion studied by historians is the same as that considered by psychologists or neuroscientists. Firstly, as we have seen, the terms within contemporary languages, but in past languages as well, are many, all labeling specific

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it in a history of sensibility. See Ambroise-Rendu, Demartini, Eck & Edelman 2014.

29 See for instance Cohen 2010; Casagrande & Vecchio 2015.

30 On this question in a larger perspective, see Feuerhahn & Mandressi 2011.

31 This is well reflected in *Emotion Review*, see <http://emr.sagepub.com/>.

semantic fields attached to them; neuroscientists' notions of emotions do not register these nuances. For William Reddy, psychologists and neuroscientists sometimes even "kidnap normal English words such as emotion or perception, and apply them unproblematically to certain response patterns or certain imaging results".<sup>32</sup> In fact, his remark indicates an epistemological problem, which goes far beyond vocabulary. From neurosciences to psychology, and even between different trends of psychology, the term 'emotion' is used sometimes with different meanings – quite unsurprisingly, could we say, given the varieties of approaches taken.<sup>33</sup> Without entering here into the thicket of scientists' definitions, one can illustrate the diversity of approaches in psychology alone, by considering the wide range of possible therapies proposed for curing an emotional disorder today: drug-based therapies act on neuro-chemical balance; cognitive therapies wish to modify patterns of behavior linked to patterns of feeling; psychoanalytical cure aims at bringing to consciousness unconscious patterns; body-work therapies stimulate new ways of access to wellness through movement, touch, breath or feeling; group therapies work on reshaping experiences of intimacy; holistic and spiritual therapies propose to reconnect transcendent sources of life energy through one's very self.<sup>34</sup>

Such a multiplicity of approaches to 'emotion', let alone definitions, may make us wonder about the pertinence of the use of the term. Furthermore, if the difficulty of defining and delimiting the field of affective phenomena as they may be studied by different sciences reflects the flourishing and diversity of research in the field, emotion theories are also quickly moving and labile. Though historians are aware of the historicity of scientific theories concerning our centuries-old source material (a point to which I shall soon return), they tend to forget this lesson more readily when working on the theoretical framework of our own studies. Still, we all know and recognize that some sixty years ago the main paradigm was the hydraulic one, while our contemporary humanist and social-sciences conceptions of emotion are fertilized by cognitivism, generally in its most constructivist version, as described above. This change was certainly not the last one. In the wake of the cognitive revolution that social scientists welcomed, linked as it could be for several decades to cultural constructivism, in the next phase we could witness, in psychology and neuroscience, a new cognitivist current tending to re-naturalize emotion and, more largely, human nature – a current that has been gaining momentum in social sciences too.<sup>35</sup> While this new trend has to be situated and understood in the social, political and scientific context of which

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<sup>32</sup> Reddy 2017.

<sup>33</sup> See note 31 above; Plamper 2015 and <http://www.iep.utm.edu/emotion/>.

<sup>34</sup> Riis & Woodhead 2012, pp. 22–23.

<sup>35</sup> See a critical view in Feuerhahn & Mandressi 2011, esp. p. 9; Chamak & Moutaud 2014, esp. pp. 10–14; Leys 2011.

it was born, and which delimits its conditions of validity,<sup>36</sup> in the field of history (and not only of emotions), we need to be particularly aware of the advent of social neurosciences as a new paradigm.<sup>37</sup> This new paradigm aims at no less than the refounding of objectivity, by challenging social and cultural constructivism, among other relativisms, in order to propose a new objectivity standing firm on the basis of redefined human nature, in which the biological dimension would reign supreme.<sup>38</sup> In the field of history, an early product of this current was Daniel L. Smail's *On Deep History and the Brain* (2008), a book that demonstrates how this approach opens up the way to multiple natural determinisms, as it reduces to the nervous system and its potentialities what is central to society and culture.<sup>39</sup> First, Smail grounds his universalist approach in a concept of emotion which is in itself a cultural construction of our times. Secondly, as human history becomes submitted to bio-history with his approach, we also risk the loss of our *objet historique*, the very topic of our inquiry, in case we follow him. Finally, the question arises: what terrain remains for human freedom, social, cultural and intellectual creativity, in such a new vision of reality.

### *Exploring emotions' reality in history*

Therefore, I argue, historians of emotions, especially for remote periods, should not be fixed on the "psychology thing", when defining what emotion is for our own work. Historical evidence, itself multiple, delivers great amounts of information on past emotions, but of a radically different kind. The emotions we meet in the sources have little to do with the contemporary category of emotions that belongs to any psychological trend, let alone neuroscience. To recognize this fact may have a liberating effect on the way we conceive of our methods of studying historical emotions. In the framework of a comparative and heuristic approach, we can study what people of a given culture describe or live as an equivalent or a sibling of our 'emotion', described for instance as *passio*, or *motus animi* in the Middle Ages; or as a specific emotion, like the famous Japanese *amae* or the feeling of *fago* on Ifaluk.<sup>40</sup> We can study the way emotions are embedded in, and produced by, a given anthropology or vision of man, which are in their turn strongly tied to social and cosmological structures.<sup>41</sup> We can deal with the relation of emotions to the body, the organs and the senses on the one hand; to social communication and intimacy on the other. Our work consists in analyzing the historicity of a vocabulary, of concepts and metaphors, as well as of constellations of

36 See Feuerhahn & Mandressi 2011; Chamak & Moutaud 2014.

37 See Mandressi 2011.

38 I almost literally quote Feuerhahn & Mandressi 2011, p. 9.

39 See *ibid.*, p. 10.

40 See Harré 1986; Lutz 1988.

41 Rorty 2004, p. 278; see also Konstan 2016.



emotions in a given culture: it is in this way that we can encounter novelty, produce new knowledge and understanding – not only concerning remote periods, but also about our own time.

To take a case from medieval Western culture, it is by the use of historical methods that we may establish and understand the complex view of emotions fostered within the period, while also detecting an important shift occurring in the midst of the era. During the first section of the Middle Ages, our sources are dominated and saturated by an Augustinian view of man in which one's exposure to *pathos*, to being affected, that others call passibility (*passibilitas*), was considered as a consequence of original sin. Augustinian anthropology defined emotions in terms of a binary system between salvation and damnation, or virtues and vices, good and bad. During the high Middle Ages, especially the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, this view changed as a result of deep, internal cultural transformations in the West, concomitant to the discovery of Aristotelianism, giving way to a more neutral vision of emotions, which made *affectus*–*passio* a trait proper to the nature of man, without losing the question of their moral use. The morally oriented nature of medieval emotion theories is easy to deduce from the medieval Latin terms used to name emotions, most of which have their genealogy in antiquity: *perturbationes (animi)*, *inclinationes (animi)*, *motus animi*, *affectus*, *affectiones* and *passiones*, a word which will have a great importance in the last centuries of the Middle Ages. All of these terms describe movements, tensions of soul between desire and aversion, pleasure and suffering; all are strongly related both to the body and to rational powers. Medieval people speak about what we call emotions, without using the term. To be sure, the term 'emotion' is not known until the end of the period, and when it emerges in French in the fifteenth century, it means social unrest.<sup>42</sup> If pre-modern definitions and descriptions of emotions are related to religious anthropologies, and are therefore morally connoted and frequently embodied, this fact does not imply that medieval or ancient times would not have thought about emotions in a scientific framework, as Thomas Dixon argues.<sup>43</sup>

For all these reasons, historians have to consider emotions as cultural phenomena, for the concepts and categories, which express them, are constantly changing. In medieval narrative sources for instance, emotions frequently "pop up", come to the foreground unexpectedly (or sometimes expectedly) and create an event, a rupture in the homogenous flow of life. An emotional event can then, in a second phase, trigger processes of change – for the person(s) who live(s) it, and even more widely sometimes. This link between emotion and rupture, event, process and change, to which we shall come back later, appears as an anthropological structure of emotion in medieval texts: in the well studied chronicle of Gregory of Tours, the *Decem Libri Historiarum*; in

<sup>42</sup> Hochner 2016.

<sup>43</sup> Dixon 2003; Boquet & Nagy 2016 a, b.



hagiographical, spiritual and autobiographical narrations, from Guibert of Nogent to the female mystics, to which we will return soon, or again in chronicles of monastic or royal contexts all through the Middle Ages.

Without going further on this path here, it may be clear from these examples that emotion in (medieval) history is not the same as that of (contemporary) psychology. We have to start from, and work with, the sources at our disposal, the vocabulary and conceptual frameworks, the firm structures and smoother nebula of relations and ruptures they impose. What historians can access are affective phenomena as social and cultural constructs. What our documentation makes available for study, are written and iconographic descriptions, representations, theories, implicit conceptions and prescriptions of emotions, material traces of emotional practices, which can help us formulate clear ideas of what emotions were, or did, in past societies. This includes the way emotions were theorized, in different cultures' anthropologies, theologies, philosophies and psychologies. Studying the modes in which emotional expression was standardized or regulated in a given culture, society or social group means analyzing *emotionologies*, as Peter Stearns would say, *emotional regimes*, in the words of William Reddy, and *emotional communities*, for Barbara Rosenwein.<sup>44</sup> Each of these conceptual frameworks aids us to understand and decode the *emotional styles, patterns and scripts*<sup>45</sup> of understanding and behavior that existed in historical locations, and also according to which they changed.<sup>46</sup> We can study how people lived with these standards, norms and implicit conceptions: how they used them, how they played with them in different social contexts, through what we can consider their *rhetorics and politics of emotions* – terms which do not mean that people did not *feel* what they *performed*. We can gain access, by our evidence, to the ways by which and to the reasons why these practices changed – and think about the ways these changes were related to other, or larger, changes in society. In this sense, emotion can be defined and studied in relation to its importance in the relationships, events, changes and transformations within the social and symbolic construction of the culture that produces it – as well as with regard to the social construction of individual as a subject or self, made, in Western terms, of body and soul, in a way which is strongly related to the world of social symbols.

It is in this sense that emotion in history must be considered as a cultural phenomenon: most emotions and emotional expressions lose part or all of their meaning, even their very reality, outside the cultural context that produces them. Medieval literary models and great figures of emotions can be understood in relation to medieval theories of emotions, to medieval anthropology and psychology. For this reason, a historian of emotion has to be a cultural constructivist, not so much by conviction, but out

44 See Stearns & Stearns 1985; Reddy 2001; Rosenwein 2006.

45 See Kaster 2005.

46 See Rosenwein 2012, 2014.

of simple professional rigor. Adopting a constructivist attitude does not mean that we would not have to consider in any manner “natural”, bodily elements that make possible or express an emotion (like tears, blushing, trembling, etc.); nor that we would deny the existence of hardcore historical truth. What I speak about concerns our approach to sources and theories.

Indeed, this vision of emotion is as far as possible from the visions of neuroscientists and of most psychologists, who generally build their method on universalist and naturalized conceptions of affective life. Inconsistent with historical method, such an approach reduces emotion’s history to a staging, a *mise en scène*: for scientists, we are dealing only with representations of emotions, not emotions themselves, anchored as they would be in the brain or biology, unattainable for us. To rely upon emotion sciences’ theories for our work, as we have seen, is especially dangerous as scientific ideas are like shifting sands; we can, however, continue to read psychologists and neuroscientists, who may fertilize our reflection on a heuristic level. In this sense, when using inspiring readings of emotions’ sciences, we have to navigate between the Scylla of renaturalizing our emotion and the Charybdis of over-rationalizing it. Emotion as such, and especially in the form we meet it in historical documents – as a serious factor motivating and moving groups and individuals and as a salient experience – can easily sink in the ocean of multiple determinations, while we all know how much emotion has to do with unpredictability. In order to understand and to interpret emotions, we can and need to refer to our present-day perceptions and conceptions of them – but we have to do so with a great awareness of their historical nature and capacity of change.

## Change I: Medieval movements of emotions

Once we admit that the way emotions are considered by different sciences is subject to change, it can be useful to recall how far the word ‘emotion’ itself is attached to motion and change. Let us contemplate again the basic, medieval Latin word-list of emotions, where we find *perturbatio (animi)*, *inclinatio (animi)*, *motus animi*, *affectus*, *affectio* and *passio*. All of these terms designate different degrees and kinds of emotional movements, either active or passive, in the same way as today, when we speak about emotion, whatever word we use to name it, the idea of “motion” remains central to it. Still, if medieval emotion is movement, every concrete emotion acted out in a medieval context is morally valued: sadness, grief or weeping can be good or bad, according to the reason that inspires it; anger can be valued positively if performed by a lord, but appears as a sin for a monk; the pleasure of spiritual reading is positive, but the pleasure of a good meal is neighboring gluttony.<sup>47</sup> This binary moral division between

47 Nagy 2000; Rosenwein (ed.) 1998; Cohen Hanegbi & Nagy (eds) 2017; Casagrande & Vecchio 1987.

good and bad, affecting emotionality and already mentioned above, is anchored in the core message of Christianity that contains a moral discourse on emotions. In order to understand medieval emotions, it is necessary to start by recognizing that Christian anthropology is built on the centrality of emotions, especially love and pain. Firstly, out of his great love, God came down to Earth and suffered the Passion in order to save humankind. Secondly, a few centuries later St. Augustine argued that the soul's vulnerability to passion was a consequence of original sin. For this reason, since the Fall, humanity is passionate and life on Earth is all but *pathos*-less. Thus, if humans cannot escape emotions, one can turn them either towards God or away from Him, depending on how one interacts with a large array of vices and virtues. Turning oneself towards God, then, means converting one's emotions in the direction of salvation, by adopting an appropriate behavior and inner attitude.

With the advent of Christian societies, this discourse generated strong moral standards, related to the issue of salvation and afterlife, which affected not only the expression, but also the experience of emotions. In this sense, the medieval history of emotions in the Christian West has a strong undercurrent in the *longue durée*: the history of affective conversion. Slowly the whole society, including lay men and women, start to analyze their feelings and consider their moral impact on their potential afterlife; as a consequence, they adopt everyday devotional and mnemonic practices and exercises that may help them on the path of salvation. Even though all along the period and especially from the twelfth century on, the sources echo more and more divergent voices – among which some have a totally different agenda, and that can be described by Barbara Rosenwein's notion of "emotional communities" – still this main movement of conversion, a groundswell as Fernand Braudel would put it, makes an imprint, I would argue, on the whole emotional culture of the West, far beyond the elites.

### *Specific emotional constellations*

When trying to understand any emotional manifestation we meet in the medieval West, we have to keep always in mind this specific cultural context, which pervades most of the written and iconographic evidence. This context (like any cultural context) produced specific emotions and emotional constellations, which can be understood only as emerging out of this background, and which disappear when this cultural context changes.<sup>48</sup> In this sense, they are all but "representations" of emotions only, as some scientists would still frequently have it. Let us take an example of a phenomenon now well known, a specific, historically constructed emotional constellation: the gift of tears.<sup>49</sup> Christian notions of salvific weeping emerged out of the story of Jesus on

<sup>48</sup> See, in the same sense, Konstan 2016.

<sup>49</sup> Nagy 2000; Knight 2014.

the mountain, where he said: “Blessed are they that mourn / weep: for they shall be comforted.” The Vulgate version of the term is *lugent*, (Greek: *pentheunt*), expressing mourning and weeping at the same time. Weeping and grieving, linked to future happiness given by God as a reward, became henceforth attractive, and received an added value in the perspective of salvation. Early monasticism – and to start with, the desert Fathers – elaborated cultural scripts: practices, stories and prescriptions helping monks to weep and mourn in a salvific *ambiance*. A specific emotion emerged in relation to this special kind of weeping, *compunction*, which names a *punction* of the heart, a sharp pain, by a painful thought of the sins that purifies (Greek: *katanyxis*; *katanyssessthai*). Often named in monastic literature as “*compunctio lacrimarum*”, this emotion in action was reputed to produce tears. It is also expressed as “*compunctio cordis*”, compunction of the heart, a term which describes the emotional, inner side, the “movement of the heart”. This emotion, *compunctio*, names the root of the process of conversion, the main transformation. As a practice, it has two ends, as distinguished by Gregory the Great (d. 604), one of the most read authors during the Middle Ages: the regret of sins, already informed by God’s grace, guiding to, at the other end, salvific feelings and weeping, “*compunctio amoris*”, compunction of love. Tears, helping to proceed from regret to love, gain the reputation of washing sins away; they are understood to be a result of the grace of God. Weeping as an expression of compunction gains the weeper social value, as by its movement or process, one can be guided from the regret of past sins to the feeling of salvation to come.

In the context of Christian societies, and firstly of communities turned towards a spiritual life, the process or script taking shape around the emotion of compunction and the specific gesture of weeping, shifted from a literary model to a social practice. In the high and later Middle Ages, the gift of tears was sought and experienced by more and more men and women, desirous of salvation and sanctity. In eleventh- and twelfth-century monastic literature, more and more numerous are texts which start to speak with a growing concern about the “gift of tears”, a proof of God’s grace. In the spiritual writings of John of Fécamp (d. 1078), Peter Damiani (d. 1072) or Aelred of Rievaulx (d. 1167), as well as in a large number of *vitae*, we have more and more discussions about the quest for tears, as well as about spiritual practices that enhance the chance to weep. The milieus concerned by these tears belong to the world of monastic reform, with a strong interest in affective reform:<sup>50</sup> personal spiritual quest is for them tied to a collective and personal desire of return to the pure model of the desert, in which emotional change has an important place.

In the thirteenth century, the gift of tears comes out of the cloister, in the female and lay world of those seeking salvation and sanctity. A well-known example is the French king St. Louis, who regretted deeply, according to his biographer, that he was

<sup>50</sup> Nagy 2000, chapters 3 and 4; Mancia 2015.

not granted this gift, though he wept quite enough.<sup>51</sup> Weeping profusely for spiritual reasons had to be linked to an emotional consolation proving God's grace – a consolation that many mystics did indeed receive. The gift of tears, *donum* or *gratia lacrimarum*, became, in the later thirteenth century, one of the articles of canonization processes: it was frequently asked during a process if a candidate to sanctity had or not the gift of tears, which became then a real charisma.<sup>52</sup>

*Emotions lost, found and transformed*

Let us now return to our epistemological questioning about the historicity of specific emotions and emotional constellations; are the “gift of tears” and “compunction” *only* representations of emotions? The answer is certainly negative. Medieval evidence testifies that people were seeking, practicing, and living these emotions. The fact that they are models does not mean that they are not experienced: many are the men and women whose experience occurred and was understood as compunction and gift of tears. An inner transformation took place through these emotions for people of those times. Doubtlessly, the development of the medieval compunction of tears can be understood not only as embedded into a certain type of social and religious organization, but also in a specific, Christian anthropology. This is what I call an *emotional constellation* that lasts for some time: a cultural constellation proper, linking emotions, their expressions, values and meanings in a way that is specific to a given society, social group or age. In this context, man being made of body and soul, the latter is in a constant tension between worldly and celestial aims and desires. Emotions inhabiting a person's inner world could spiritualize or “carnalize” the self. Compunction was a well-known emotion for people of the late antique and medieval, Christian West; its bodily expression, the gift of tears, the *donum lacrimarum*, encountered great success. Their emotional constellation – which developed gradually between the fourth and the thirteenth century – belonged to the specific cultural context of early and high medieval Christendom, where salvation and salvific practices were at the center of society. The gift of tears achieved its greatest prominence in the second half of the Middle Ages, proving the deepening of Christianization, in terms of self-fashioning, habits and behaviors. With the advent of modernity, however, it slowly but surely declined. The term *compunction*, very rare today, may appear mostly in literary texts, as the reality it named, has disappeared in the last centuries. Elaborated in the early medieval West, this emotional constellation was “lost”, as Ute Frevert would say, with modernity.<sup>53</sup> Besides this example, several medieval emotional constellations have been studied,

51 Guillaume de Saint-Pathus 1899, p. 55; Le Goff 1996, p. 875, note 2.

52 Vauchez 1988; Nagy 2000.

53 Frevert 2011.

similar to the one which C. Stephen Jaeger calls “ennobling love”, or the complex medieval, indeed feudal, web of significations and uses of the kiss on the mouth analyzed by Yannick Carré,<sup>54</sup> all “lost and found”. All these examples – and many others could be quoted here – prove that emotions, as they are structured, named and expressed in a given culture and society change through time as the society and the culture that fostered them change. They can be strictly related to, and shaped by, a series of cultural conditions, so that as they appear, they also disappear at one time.

## Change II: The transformative power of embodied emotions

As we have seen, the constellation of compunction and gift of tears is a powerful tool of spiritual transformation: its success is due to its capacity to generate and channel individual, inner change, to wash away sins and give a taste of divine felicity. In what follows, I would like to concentrate on the transformative power of emotions that we have just perceived, in the cases of two female saints of the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. Living the same kind of emotional change on the micro-level, not only do they give excellent examples of the way emotion and change can be intertwined, they also provide one more argument, if needed, against a distinction of “representation” and “reality” of emotions in history.

The two women of my choice are both mystics, who experienced embodied emotions as a main expression of their devotion and sanctity: Angela of Foligno and Lukardis of Oberweimar. They both died in 1309, that is, two years before the opening of the Council of Vienne (1311–1312), which puts a radical end to the cultural climate that fostered female spirituality and religious self-expression right through the thirteenth century. Thus, their devotion and bodily charisma have to be understood in their larger cultural context: their cases can both be considered as examples of a female mystical experience pushed to the limits of what a woman could acquire *ex gratia* in the medieval Church. After a long period, starting with early monasticism, when monks and clerics promoted a kind of negative theology – the spiritualization of emotions and body, in order to get rid of emotions which created disorder in the body – in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, spirituality and emotions became gradually embodied, and the body figured as the very place and noble vehicle of incarnation of the spiritual. In this inversion, the *donum lacrimarum* as a personal and embodied charisma, proving God’s special, personal grace, plays an important role: one can observe the change in the way by which this spiritual device becomes, progressively, embodied during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.<sup>55</sup> While its popular success does not diminish among the bodily signs of divine grace, the gift of tears is quickly downgraded by new, bodily and mysti-

<sup>54</sup> Jaeger 1999; Carré 1993.

<sup>55</sup> Nagy 2003.

cal “gifts”, of which the most spectacular are *stigmata*, granted after St. Francis to several holy women. A first, individual level of emotional transformation can be observed in the late thirteenth century in some *vitae* or spiritual writings of holy women, close to what we have seen with the gift of tears above; in some others, the emotional transformation can be contagious, and affect a whole community.

### *Angela of Foligno*

Angela of Foligno<sup>56</sup> was an Italian mystic from Umbria, converted after having raised a family. She achieved a certain success, especially in (spiritual) Franciscan circles. She left a book of spiritual writings, the *Liber*, the joint product of a frater scriptor and her own voice; it was composed of two parts, the *Memorial* and the *Instructions*. Entitled *Passus priores*, first steps, the first part of the *Memorial* follows a neat spiritual progression in twenty steps. Sticking to these first steps, we can observe that in her spiritual progression, emotions – especially a form of suffering that is no longer called *compunctio* – play the key role.

After a first step of preliminary penance, Angela passes to a conversion process where suffering and pain remain central, and finishes with a sanctifying phase where the sensual feeling of sweetness is the core. While in the first phase, she rejects all things bodily, as assimilated to what is sinful and earthly, later she becomes gradually incorporated into Christ, experiencing new emotions that slowly replace suffering by pleasure, knowledge and joy. During this process, her whole life changes, and not only because she loses her husband and son. This transformation is a joint spiritual, emotional and corporeal process. It is remarkable that almost nowhere in the whole text, after the very first stage (steps 1 to 4), do clerics and the institution of the Church intervene in Angela’s transformation, which occurs through powerful emotions and their not less powerful bodily manifestations. Still, it is through a penitential phase – proceeding first by a preparatory penance (steps 1 to 4), then by the rejection of all sinful acts and facts of life (steps 5 to 8) and her own dispossession of all this-worldly (steps 9 to 12) – that she evolves, slowly, towards a eucharistic phase (steps 13 to 20), the joyous embodiment into the sacrifice of the loving Christ.

The process of her emotional and spiritual transformation can be described as analogous to sacramental efficacy, seized here in an individual way – a fact which reflects the mastering, by Angela, an illiterate lay woman, of the core of thirteenth century theology. Individualizing in this way the saving power of sacraments, Angela carried out her mystical transformation alone, with the personal help of “only” God and his saints. Doing this, she took a somewhat dangerous path: though Angela herself was beatified (and canonized only in 2013 by Pope Francis), the year after her death, in 1310, it was

<sup>56</sup> An analysis of Angela’s path is proposed in depth in Boquet & Nagy 2010.



exactly for this kind of proposition, this time written down explicitly in her book, that Margaret Porete was burned at the stake in Paris.<sup>57</sup>

To describe this kind of emotional transformation, it is convenient to use the notion of emotive, developed by William Reddy in order to designate emotional expressions that both describe (like constative utterances) and change (like the performatives of John Austin) the world,<sup>58</sup> and we can name Angela's transformation a sacramental emotive. In her case, the transformation process touches, as it occurs with the gift of tears, Angela's own personal reality: her whole life, spiritual and social, emotional and bodily.

While Angela is quite well known, my second example is a German Cistercian nun, known to but a few medievalists. In her case, which is different from several perspectives, the transformation is not only internal, but attains – and alters – her entire community.

### *Lukardis of Oberweimar*

Lukardis of Oberweimar<sup>59</sup> is known uniquely by an anonymous *vita*, which was not a successful text: not only was she not canonized, but also the *vita* has survived only in two manuscripts – a fact that reflects a minimal diffusion during the Middle Ages. Presumably, her name was unknown outside the Cistercian female convents. Her *vita* constructs her holiness by inversion, from sickness and abandonment to *charisma* and collective recognition. In this process, Lukardis proves to be an excellent example of what Esther Cohen calls “philopassianism”,<sup>60</sup> a cultural attitude which permeated and affected all spheres of cultural expression and investigation in the later Middle Ages in Europe, according to which pain became a positive force, a useful tool for reaching a variety of truths.

Lukardis, who became a nun at the christological age of twelve, suffered greatly from different ailments. The author of her *vita*, presumably living in or near to the convent and collecting the oral memory of the nun, as both of her Dominican confessors died before her, describes how she bore these *passiones*, which caused paralysis and terrible nervous pains in her hands and feet.<sup>61</sup> After a period of lonely suffering, Lukardis received God's grace in the form of visions and experiences of the senses and the body. The first notable episode describes an interior, spiritual event with no bodily trace, a meeting with Christ on the Cross, who asks her to help him.

<sup>57</sup> On her *oeuvre* and biography, see Field, Lerner & Piron (eds) 2013.

<sup>58</sup> Reddy 2001, p. 128.

<sup>59</sup> What follows has been developed extensively, but without the quotations, in Nagy 2014.

<sup>60</sup> Cohen 1995.

<sup>61</sup> *Vita venerabilis Lukardis*, (ed.) De Backer, 1899, chapter V, pp. 312–313.



[...] She understood that she should help him not only by remembering his Passion, but also through her assiduous compassion. She then recovered somewhat her strengths and fearfully replied to the Lord's words. *How can I help you, my Lord?* [...] And the Lord: *Join your hands to my hands, your feet to my feet, your breast to my breast, and thus I will be helped, and I will bear [this suffering] more lightly.* When the maid of the Lord did that, immediately she felt inside of her body the bitterest pain from the wounds, in her hands as well as in her feet and breast, even though the wounds would not be visible to the eye.<sup>62</sup>

In the first meeting Lukardis starts to construct her loving relation-identification with Jesus on the emotional level. This scene works as a real shift in her life, as well as in the *vita*: it gives a new meaning to her sufferings understood as *passiones*, an acting out of the memory of the Passion of Christ – a role for which she was chosen by God.<sup>63</sup> This happens early in the *vita* and engages the program of the *conformatio* of Lukardis to the suffering Christ. Albeit in a different way than with Angela – Lukardis, a very young girl, is doing penance and getting purified by her pains and suffering, before starting her eucharistic, loving conformation to the suffering Christ – here again we meet the process and efficacy of the sacramental emotive. Incorporation to Christ is part of eucharistic devotion: this gesture, frequently met in female *vitae*, can be understood both as the opposite of communion (instead of eating the body of Christ, the faithful gets incorporated to it) and as its equivalent on the symbolic, anthropologic level, as an identification by incorporation, which enables her to feel the suffering of Christ. Once again, no priest or cleric is present: the scene takes place during a mystical encounter in a vision.

The next significant step on her spiritual path is a second meeting with Jesus, which starts the exteriorization of her spiritual transformation, her incorporation into the body of Christ, passing from *intus* to *foris*: the invisible, inner wounds become visible and bodily:

The night of the feast of Saint Gregory the Pope, [...] she had a vision of a most beautiful, most tender and delicate youth, marked by five wounds. He approached her with a friendly demeanor, spontaneously and purposefully pressed her right hand on his right hand and said: *I want you to suffer with me.* She then understood that the suffering that she had since that moment experienced, had been long since foreseen in God's will. As she offered him her consent, immediately a wound appeared in her right hand. Some ten days later another wound appeared on her left hand, and similarly all five wounds appeared in her body in the right places.<sup>64</sup>

62 *Ibid.*, chapter VII, p. 314, with the editor's italics.

63 This is a pattern we meet in Helfta, and more generally in the Cistercian spirituality of the time; see Spitzlei 1991, pp. 166–169.

64 *Vita venerabilis Lukardis*, chapter X, pp. 315–316.

Through these steps, by which the sacred invests her body – proceeding, incidentally, by bodily contact and impression in both scenes – takes place the charismatic turn of the life of Lukardis, by which the sick and abandoned girl becomes a venerated *famula Dei* in the convent. From the suffering, penitential mode of compassion, here a shift takes place to the mystic, bridal union where suffering, love and pleasure are tightly intertwined.

The ground in which the charismatic gifts and authority of Lukardis grew was that of her *passiones*: through divine contact and repeated divine intervention, her special suffering became the way she lived the passion of Christ. Her physical suffering, understood and recognized by all of the sisters as an exercise in *passionis memoria*, was now accompanied by – and transformed into – spiritual felicity. Henceforth, the positive meaning of spiritual and emotional events overtook the hardships of her bodily pains. To those who asked how she could remain happy despite her suffering, she explained that her bodily passions were soothed in her soul by the sweetness of God's marvellous (*mirabilis*) consolation.<sup>65</sup> As if to prove the superiority of soul over body, her physical suffering was now transcended by spiritual, emotional events – raptures – proving her election, and resulting in constant spiritual joy.<sup>66</sup> In the next phase of her life, Lukardis could even offer her passion to the salvation of all the faithful, living and dead:

Since she could not find the strength to answer because of excessive pain, she raised her eyes, looked in the sky, as if saying: *I offer to your mercy, Omnipotent Father, this passion of mine with my patience, for the salvation of all and any of the living and the faithful departed.*<sup>67</sup>

Remarkably, from the first mention of Lukardis's miraculous phenomena, the witnessing nuns took on a growing role in the account of the *vita*. At this point, the emotional transformation of Lukardis also touched her fellow sisters. After receiving the Holy Spirit, Lukardis helps a nun who experiences the hunger of the Eucharist:

In the monastery [...] there was a nun called Agnes, very weak and leading a holy life. Whenever and every time she accepted the body of Jesus Christ, she hoped for, but was not given, plenty of it, and was every time extremely perturbed [...] She started thinking if there were any way she could fulfill her wish. [...] She then heard a voice telling her: *Have faith, daughter, and hurry to your sister Lukardis and join yourself to her, so that you can catch with your mouth the spirit of her mouth.* [...] As she learned that [Lukardis] wanted to agree to her wishes, she [Agnes] joined herself with her, and in such a way captured with her own mouth the spirit of her mouth. Immediately she felt in her mouth to have the Host as in the Sacrament, and as if the priest had given it to her with his hand.<sup>68</sup>

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, chapter XII, p. 316.

<sup>66</sup> For instance, *ibid.*, chapter XXXIV, p. 327, but we find this kind of feature all along the *vita*.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, chapter LVII, p. 342.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, chapter LI, pp. 337–338.

From this event on – where, again by a contact-miracle, Agnes receives the spirit of Lukardis as though it were the Holy Spirit – Agnes starts to take part in Lukardis's charismas, receiving the privilege to partake in the saint's consolations, sojourning among things divine, and even ecstasy.<sup>69</sup> Through a sort of contagion of grace, the whole convent starts to benefit from their divine gifts; God's grace, which illuminates her life, protects the abbey from a great fire, which destroys only the refectory.<sup>70</sup> Lukardis helps the needy and the ill: when a sister suffering from dropsy comes to her for consolation, she pronounces a biblical formula that fortifies her.<sup>71</sup> Grace, once received and recognized, is transmitted to her community and shared with the elect. Slowly her holiness and joy infuse the convent – as it can be proved by the *vita*, which is perhaps a common *oeuvre* of the nuns. In this way, the salvific, emotional and spiritual change of Lukardis was not only individual, as in the case of Angela; it touched the whole community. This relationship of participation and sharing transformed the convent of Oberweimar into a spiritual and emotional community, bound by a common understanding of how things spiritual can be lived, communicated and worked.

## Conclusion

I have tried to show, through a series of examples, how medieval religious sources demonstrate and construct the existence of an emotional efficacy, which can induce change. This change is individual in all the examined cases (emotional processes help their subject on their path towards salvation), and may be collective in some of them (the community of Lukardis). Emotions, in the above-mentioned cases, work as processes: something is happening through them that changes one's status or even a web of relationships, a whole community. It is this kind of process that William Reddy names *emotives*, or in another way, as in the title of his book, navigation of feeling, which means that emotions take the self from one place or state to another. Extending this definition to all kinds of emotional expressions, we can say that emotions do change their world. In the case of Angela, the emotional transformation that we called here a sacramental emotive, operates as an individual appropriation of the sacramental power of the Church and proceeds to a corresponding, spiritual and affective transformation. In the case of Lukardis, after her own transformation by the same process, emotional and spiritual transformation also creates a new identity, a new feeling for her community. Last but not least, these case studies help us to understand the capacity of emotions to impulse or generate change: emotions appear then, by their very nature, as strongly linked to the discipline of history which studies societies as subjects to change.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, chapter LII, p. 338.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, chapters XXI, LI and LXII, pp. 346–347.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, chapter XXI, p. 321.

More broadly, on the basis of these emotional transformations observed over many years, I have tried to argue here for a dynamic vision of emotion as a cultural phenomenon, faithful to what its name suggests: as a movement, which frequently takes the form of an event or of a process, in medieval narrative evidence, and which escapes any simple definition in terms of contemporary emotions. This vision also underlines the particularity of emotional processes as disposed to mutability, to slip without any linearity from one emotion to other, as from anger to grief, from suffering and sadness in compunction to joy. Respecting this particularity of (medieval) emotion can help us avoid any essentialization of “what emotion is”, a question to which answers can only remain diverse. “Emotion” for a historian appears then rather as a questionnaire to answer, involving a series of questions to address to a given document or problem: What terms designate it? What bodily and cognitive movements are associated with it? What is said about feeling, how is it conceptualized, what can we say about its social efficacy or about its historical action? In this way, the attitude to emotion promoted here can also successfully embrace changing theories, as it is the case with past and present science; it helps to live with a changing taxonomy and axiology.<sup>72</sup>

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Ms. 66, fol. 56. Initial D: The Fool with Two Demons (detail), illumination by the Master of the Ingeborg Psalter, after 1205. Tempera colors, gold leaf and ink on parchment. ©The J. Paul Getty Museum, This digital image courtesy of the Getty's Open Content Program.

# Demons and the Emotions

*Jean-Claude Schmitt*

Over the last two decades, the theme of emotions and, indeed, the word “emotion” itself have come to occupy an increasingly prominent place in the preoccupations of historians, and medievalists in particular. In some respects, this reflects a new approach, although it has its roots in a longstanding historiographical tradition that is usually – certain reservations withstanding – traced back to Jules Michelet in the nineteenth century, to Johan Huizinga’s *The Waning of the Middle Ages* (1919), Norbert Elias’s *The Civilizing Process* (1938), Lucien Febvre’s “history of sensibilities” (1941), Ignace Meyerson and Jean-Pierre Vernant’s “historical psychology”, and, even more generally, to the “history of mentalities”.<sup>1</sup> Numerous empirical studies have also paved the way, for example, those of Alphonse Dupront on the “crusading mentality” and the “panic pilgrimage”.<sup>2</sup>

What distinguishes the present-day “history of emotions” from its predecessors is its explicit aim to establish a precise field of research and also the innovative perspective adopted. Moving beyond the traditional input from the field of psychology, the history of emotions is currently developing a keen interest in cognitive science and biology, disciplines which themselves put the question of emotions at the heart of their present concerns. It also makes a break with the long-prevailing linear and evolutionary vision (from Descartes to Darwin and Norbert Elias) of the “domestication of emotions” by the progress of reason and civilization throughout history. Rather, it seeks to define the cultural specificities of emotions belonging to particular societies, groups, and historical eras, or perhaps more accurately, as Barbara Rosenwein rightfully suggests, those belonging to each “emotional community”.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See, in particular Nagy 2007 and Nagy & Bouquet 2008.

<sup>2</sup> Alphandery & Dupront 1954–1959, especially chapter I, 2: “Emotions et mouvements précurseurs de la croisade.” Amongst the forerunners, a mention should also be made of Denis de Rougemont’s classic work *L’amour et l’Occident* from 1939.

<sup>3</sup> Rosenwein 2006.

The history of emotions also seeks to understand the relationship between the intellectual categories through which a given culture conceives of emotions, and the ways in which these same emotions are expressed in the vocabulary and figurative codes of a historical period. It aims to present a unified ontology of man, moving away from a dualist vision of the person that opposes body and mind, or likewise opposes the emotions to reason and will. It is this question of ontology that I would like to address here by focusing on a largely autobiographical text from the beginning of the thirteenth century, the *Liber revelationum* by the Franconian Cistercian monk Richalm von Schöntal, who died in 1219.<sup>4</sup> This little-known text, which was not widely circulated during the Middle Ages, relates, as its title suggests, a very large number of visions and dreams. In it, Richalm's own words are transcribed, with his permission, and often in the first person, by an anonymous monk, referred to by the initial "N". Certain pages are written by Richalm himself.<sup>5</sup>

### *The Liber revelationum*

In Richalm's writings, the body is omnipresent. According to the text's editor, Paul Gerhard Schmidt, "no other medieval author informs his readers so extensively about his state of health": Richalm complains of toothache, a cough, respiratory problems, cold sweats, an irregular pulse (cap. 67), belly ache (which, he says, makes a noise comparable to the call of the toad, *sonum quasi bufonis*),<sup>6</sup> stomach ache (which makes him loosen his belt),<sup>7</sup> itching of the legs, which he rubs until they bleed.<sup>8</sup> Richalm also suffers from insomnia – an ailment he treats by eating liquorice – and from memory problems, which force him to make knots in his belt so as not to forget a sin that must be confessed.<sup>9</sup>

Richalm proposes a unique explanation for his physical ailments: they are due to a multitude of demons (*demonēs*) or evil spirits (*mali* or *maligni spiritus*) who constantly surround the monks and whom he alone hears talking among themselves and occasionally sees. These evil spirits compete with the good spirits (*boni spiritus*), who are just as numerous, and who have a positive influence on the monks' state of mind.<sup>10</sup>

There are a "multitude" of demons,<sup>11</sup> as numerous as the specks of dust that can be

4 Richalm von Schöntal, *Liber revelationum*, ed. Schmidt 2009.

5 *Ibid.*, Cap. 103, p. 124, l. 12; Cap. 155, p. 175, l. 28, where he dates his vision the second Sunday of Advent 1213.

6 Cap. 32, p. 37, l. 12.

7 Cap. 58, p. 72, l. 1.

8 Cap. 21, p. 27, l. 1–3.

9 Cap. 111, p. 134, l. 24: *facto nodo in cingulo ad memoriam huius rei*.

10 On the importance of demons in the Middle Ages, see Caciola 2003.

11 Richalm von Schöntal, *Liber revelationum*, ed. Schmidt 2009: Cap. 31, p. 35; Cap. 46, p. 57, l. 11.

seen floating in a ray of sunlight.<sup>12</sup> They are like an “army” (*acies*), besieging a man as if he were a stronghold.<sup>13</sup> They accompany him always and everywhere.<sup>14</sup> There exists a hierarchy among them that replicates that of the monastery, with their abbot, their prior, their cantor, cellarer, and even a bishop, which implies that their activity goes beyond the monastery boundaries. They particularly target the monks whose office they imitate.<sup>15</sup>

They have a semblance of a body, which enables them to cry out, make noises, moan, make a scraping noise,<sup>16</sup> and let off unpleasant odors. They appear in many forms: as an enormous cat, an ox, a boar, and also very often as lice and fleas that bite the monks. They also appear in the form of female genitalia (*in specie membri mulieris*)<sup>17</sup> to lead the monks into temptation. They have the power to act on the bodies and minds of men. They make them cough, spit, yawn, doze off at Mass;<sup>18</sup> because of them, the monks lean heavily on the choir stalls<sup>19</sup> or rest their chins in their hands in a sleeping position.<sup>20</sup> The demons contort the monks’ faces and cause them to grimace.<sup>21</sup> At night time, they prevent them from sleeping, making them toss and turn in their beds,<sup>22</sup> and wake them before Mass, even earlier than the prior.<sup>23</sup> They even hold power over the body beyond death: they make the dead move as if they were still alive for several days after their demise.<sup>24</sup>

It is futile to turn to physicians when seeking to fight such evils of demonic origins. Their skills are not adapted, their knowledge is limited. Confronted by an irregular pulse or a cold sweat, the *physici*, says Richalm, are unable to recognize the activity of demons. Their *ars* is limited, compared to his own *experientia*.<sup>25</sup> Richalm also refuses to turn to *benedictiones muliebres et aliquid talium carminum*, to witches’ magic in-

12 *Ibid.*, Cap. 61, p. 74, l. 1: “sicuti pulvis vel athomi in sole ... et ipsos puto omni homini eodem modo circumfusus et adherens.”

13 Cap. 15, p. 21, l. 20.

14 Cap. 29, p. 33, l. 15.

15 Cap. 84, p. 101, l. 20.

16 Cap. 46, p. 57, l. 4–8: *per sonum fricationis*.

17 Cap. 47, p. 58, l. 7.

18 Cap. 68, p. 83, l. 12; p. 126, Cap. 105, p. 126, l. 21; Cap. 9, pp. 16–17; Cap. 143, p. 167, l. 3.

19 Cap. 94, p. 113, l. 20.

20 Cap. 23, p. 28, l. 16.

21 Cap. 31, p. 35, l. 16–17.

22 Cap. 47, p. 58, l. 19.

23 Cap. 35, p. 42, l. 8.

24 Cap. 26, p. 31, l. 15.

25 Cap. 67, p. 82, l. 10: “*Richalmus*: Pulsum in egro faciunt malum, quando bonus est. Hos tamen pulsus sicut et sudores medici ex ipsius artis pericia bene discernunt. Cum non vere homo sudavit, ‘Fantasticus’, inquit, est sudor vel pulsus iste; et quod medici sciunt per artem, ego scio per experientiam. Nec puto medicos scire, quod a demonibus fiant, etsi sciant fantasticos a veris discernere.”

cantations, recommended to him by *stabularius Rudegerus*, most likely a layman.<sup>26</sup> Salt and holy water are nevertheless effective, as are, even more so, signs of the cross traced directly on the skin in great number all over the body;<sup>27</sup> the Church sacraments especially confession,<sup>28</sup> pious readings – “*magna virtus est in libris*”, declares Richalm<sup>29</sup> – particularly *Moralia in Job* by St. Gregory the Great.<sup>30</sup>

The autobiographical nature of this text, the care Richalm von Schöntal takes to note and describe his physical ailments and his spiritual disturbances, his desire to understand their origins in order to be able to remedy them, would seem to identify the *Liber revelationum* as an exceptional document for a history of emotions at the start of the thirteenth century, at least within the walls of a Cistercian monastery.

First, however, we must address the question of how to define emotions. The question is two-fold: how do historians of today define emotions, and how can this definition be applied to the past, to a context very different to ours, that was unfamiliar with our psychology and that did not have the word “emotion” in its vocabulary?

## Definition of emotions

Let us take as a point of departure the contemporary definition of emotions proposed by Piroska Nagy and Damien Boquet in the introduction to their co-edited volume, *Le sujet des émotions au Moyen Âge*: “An immediate, sudden affective reaction felt as a strong sensation, which is often accompanied by a physical response.”<sup>31</sup> Emotions (*émotions*), they say, are different from feelings (*sentiments*): “The term feeling (*sentiment*) refers to a more lasting state, which is also calmer and less physical.”<sup>32</sup> The authors also refer to psychoanalysis: “Behind the French term *émotion*, one can read the Freudian *affect-drive*, which draws on our representations concerning the classical-medieval *passion*.”<sup>33</sup> They add: “To be moved or delighted, embarrassed or frightened appear as emotions which elude us, which can often be perceived upon or within the body. But resentment, serenity, marital or maternal love are feelings which have no immediate bodily expression.”<sup>34</sup> They conclude by acknowledging the difficulty in

26 Cap. 71, p. 88, l. 13.

27 Cap. 21, p. 26, l. 21; p. 35; Cap. 30, p. 35, l. 8: *triginta cruces feci subtus vestes ad carnem*.

28 Cap. 40, p. 48, l. 18.

29 Cap. 30, p. 34, l. 12.

30 Cap. 89, p. 106, l. 18; Cap. 108, p. 130, l. 1–10.

31 Nagy & Bouquet 2008, p. 44: “Une réaction affective immédiate, soudaine, de l’ordre de la sensation forte, ayant souvent des manifestations corporelles.”

32 *Ibid.*, “Le sentiment désigne un état plus durable, mais aussi plus calme et moins corporel.”

33 *Ibid.*, “En arrière-plan de l’émotion française, on lit l’*affect-pulsion* freudien, qui se nourrit de nos représentations concernant la *passion* antico-médiévale.”

34 *Ibid.*, “Être ému ou ravi, avoir honte ou être apeuré nous apparaissent comme des émotions qui nous échappent, souvent perceptibles sur ou dans le corps. Mais le ressentiment, la sérénité,



distinguishing between the closely related notions “emotion”, “feeling”, “mood”, and also “temperament”. Does Richalm’s Latin text allow us to identify words which more or less correspond to such a modern definition of emotions?

We know that the word “emotion”, in the psychological and physiological sense we attribute it today, did not exist in the Middle Ages. *Émotion* first appeared in French at the end of the fifteenth century and until the seventeenth century it most often meant a riot, an insurrection. It was not until the nineteenth century that the modern meaning of the word began to gain ground.<sup>35</sup>

Ancient and medieval Latin texts contain, however, many terms which have been linked to our modern notion of emotion. Barbara Rosenwein has attempted to draw up lists of such terms found, for example, in the vocabulary of Cicero, and also in the Latin vocabulary of the early Middle Ages.<sup>36</sup> This vocabulary spans the entire Latin Middle Ages and numerous examples can be found in the *Liber revelationum*. A closer analysis of this text requires us to take into account the specificities of Cistercian monastic life and also the date the text was composed, at the beginning of the thirteenth century. To this end, this article will refer to Damien Boquet’s work *L’ordre de l’affect au Moyen Âge*, which is mostly concerned with the writings of the English Cistercian theologian Aelred of Rievaulx (1110–1167). The author, however, also demonstrates how Christian writers, starting with Augustine, adopt and adapt the ancient Platonic and Stoic heritage of the affect, with its notions of *apatheia* and *passio* (a translation of the Greek *pathos*).<sup>37</sup> For almost a thousand years, until the twelfth century, there is a “nebulous semantics”<sup>38</sup> around the lexical couplet *affectus*–*affectio*, with tension between, on the one hand, the submission of the affect to the will, and, on the other, the valorization of desire, itself torn between the seductions of the flesh and the attraction of celestial love. At the end of this period, the Cistercians, notably Bernard of Clairvaux and Aelred of Rievaulx, favor “affective dynamics” and make the flesh a “tool at the service of spirituality”.<sup>39</sup> Following this, in the thirteenth century, scholasticism, under the influence of Aristotelian thought, made a double innovation: at a lexical level, the term *passio* is introduced, which will go on to crystalize for centuries the “philosophical theory of passions”; at a hermeneutical level, Thomas of Aquinas proposes, in opposition to the Augustinian tradition of conflict between the flesh and the spirit, a “separation of the natural and supernatural order” and thus a “more serene vision of man”.

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l’amour conjugal ou maternel sont plutôt des sentiments qui n’ont pas de manifestation corporelle immédiate.”

35 Rey 1998, s.v. “Emouvoir”.

36 Rosenwein 2006, p. 40 and pp. 52–53.

37 Boquet 2005, p. 91.

38 *Ibid.*, p. 113.

39 *Ibid.*, pp. 329–333.

In this long history, what is striking is both the inertia of the vocabulary (even if, depending on the period, some terms are more prominent than others) and the semantic changes the vocabulary undergoes, which oblige the historian to approach each text with an open mind about the meaning of the words.

In our discussion of the *Liber revelationum*, amongst the generic words that may be used to refer generally to what we call “emotion”, the focus will be on a few terms which were well-known to and used by Christian authors from St. Augustine onwards. Let us start with the Latin nouns *motus* or *motio* and the verb *movere*, which Richalm mostly uses to speak of gestures and the “movements of the limbs” of the body. He says, for example, that the demons spy on his movements in order to know whether he is sleeping or awake:

(Demones) nesciunt autem interdum, utrum vigilem an dormiam, nisi signo aliquo deprehendant, sicut **manus erectione** vel **qualibet alia mocione**. (Cap. 30, p. 34, l. 9.)

Meanwhile (the demons) do not know whether I am asleep or not, unless they discover it through a sign of some sort, like **the raising of a hand** or **some other such movement**.

Another important term in the Latin vocabulary of the “emotions” is *perturbatio*, which Richalm also links to the demons’ attacks. The demons afflict on him wounds of the soul and body, feelings of sadness, weariness and anxiety, and all these ills are subsumed under the generic term *perturbatio*. Richalm adds that men “perturbed” in this way seek to comfort themselves and rebuff the demons by indulging in wine, horses and the frolics of jesters:

Demones **inmittunt** hominibus **corporis et anime lesiones, tristitias, tedia** et huiusmodi quaslibet **anxietates**; ex quarum **perturbacione** dum homines refrigeria requirunt, verbi gracia, vineas vel equos intuendo, ioculatoribus intendendo aliis huiusmodi, ipsi demones paulatim et pedetemptim se subtrahunt. (Cap. 18, p. 24, l. 9.)

The demons **let loose** both **physical and mental injuries** upon man, **sadness, weariness** and other **anxieties** of this sort; when man seeks consolation from his **perturbation** from these things, for example by turning to wine or horses, by focusing on other jesters of this kind, these demons withdraw slowly and step by step.

Another noteworthy term is *passio*. In Richalm’s writing, as elsewhere, it can take several meanings: sometimes, the word refers to the Passion of Christ or the martyrdom of a saint; on other occasions it refers to physical suffering and illness, for example, when Richalm speaks of his stomach aches, *passio ventris*.<sup>40</sup> However, only the third

40 Richalm von Schöntal, *Liber revelationum*, ed. Schmidt 2009, Cap. 64, p. 78, l. 3–4.



meaning, always negative, is of interest to us here: a suffering of the soul which is due to the demons' assaults. For example, Richalm mentions the "temptation of acedia or any other passion" which he fights by repeatedly making the sign of the cross:

Cum occupat vos aliqua **temptacio sive accidie**, de qua conquerimini, **sive alterius passionis**, crucem in facie, in pectore, in manibus et utroque latere facite, et ubicumque alias, quociens potestis. (Cap. 24, p. 30, l. 13.)

Whenever you are overwhelmed by a certain **temptation**, **whether of acedia** that conquers you, or **of another passion**, cross your face, your chest, your hands and on both sides, and everywhere else, as often as you can.

He also speaks of the "vexations and passions" that the demons inflict upon him and of the contagious "passion" that a quick-tempered and angry brother made him feel while he shaved his head:

Solent michi demones circumfundi et applicari secundum hominum **vexaciones et passiones**, quibus adjungor. Accessi preterita die ad radendum illum fratrem N., et statim, sicut ipse est vehemens et indignabundus, sensi me eadem **passione moveri** [...]. (Cap. 46, p. 57, l. 17.)

Demons usually press upon me and attach themselves to me in accordance with the **vexations and passions** of those, with whom I interact. Yesterday I came to shave our brother N, and immediately, just as he was vehement and enraged, I felt myself **being moved by** the same **passion**.

Against the demonic "passions that obstruct God's love and gentleness", he repeatedly maintains the effectiveness of the sign of the cross, as we can see from a conversation on this subject between Richalm and the monk N.:

N.: 'Itane, obsecro, et contra vicia expugnanda valet?' Richalmus: 'Non solum contra vicia, set contra omnia, ut dixi. **Passionem** illam, quam michi sepius conquestus estis, que **amaricat et exacuit mentem** vestram contra **amorem et dulcedinem** Dei, hoc modo vincetis.' (Cap. 72, p. 91, l. 5.)

N.: "But, I pray, does it have the strength to overcome vices?" Richalm: "Not only vices but everything, as I said. This **passion**, which you have often complained about to me, that which **irritates and inflames your mind** against God's **love and sweetness**, you will conquer in this way."

These few extracts suffice to show the particular meaning, negative and evil, that Richalm gives to the term *passio*. He does not, of course, see this word as the basis of a "theory of passions", which will only develop later. Let us therefore turn our attention to the most important word, *affectus*–*affectio*.

Used as a noun, *affectus* carries a positive value in Richalm's writing, as is generally the case in the vocabulary of Christian authors; it is used for the "affective" or emotional expression of spiritual qualities in a man or a supernatural being, of an action or a vision of divine origin. Richalm says, for example, that he is conscious of the "*affectus*" of the monks with whom he comes into close contact, especially during the ceremony of the tonsure; by this word, he refers to the expression of an inclination, a mark of affection:

Sepe cum adiungor hominibus, in ipsa adiunctione experior **affectus** eorum. Iam totondi fratrem illum; et inter tendendum applicui me ei proprius, ut experirer aliquid **affectuum** eius. (Cap. 73, p. 92, l. 4–5.)

Often, when I interact with others, I sense in this very interaction their **emotions** [*affectus*]. I have now shaved this brother; and whilst shaving I leaned in against him more closely, so that I could sense some **of his emotions**.

The monk N., for his part, reports that a "good spirit" has asked him several times to love him with such great *affectus* that he was unable to finish his words, which causes the monk to laugh. Here, the word *affectus* is used together with the related term and approximate synonym *affectio*:

Illi tali fratri N. frequentissime dicit spiritus **Dilecte mi!** Et tanto dicit **hoc affectu**, quod pre nimia **affectiois habundancia** nec totum ipsum verbum integre profert, set cum inceperit dicere, **pre nimio affectu** a dicendo resilit tam **mirabiliter** et tam **iocunde**, quod oportet me semper eadem hora **ridere** et in **risum** excitari [...]. (Cap. 17, p. 23, l. 15.)

To brother N. the spirit very often says, "**My beloved!**" And he says this with **such great emotion** [*affectus*] that he cannot utter the whole word in its entirety due to **the overflowing of emotion**, but when he starts talking, he recoils from speaking both **marvelously** and **delightfully on account of too great emotion**, which always makes me **laugh** and incites me to **laughter**.

*Affectio* allows Richalm to describe his "affective" relations with angels, but also with God, and in return God's love for him. It is with "intimate affection" that he gives thanks to God for his blessings:

Et post paululum cum iterum frater ille super aliquo beneficio cum **affectione intima** ageret gracias [...]. (Cap. 127, p. 156, l. 2.)

And after a little while when this brother again gave his thanks for some service with his deepest feeling [*affectio*].

Conversely, for Richalm *affectio* can also be applied to God's love for him, the "savor" of which he can discern in his true visions:

N.: 'Et quonam tandem modo possunt discerneri sompnia vera a falsis?' *Richalmus*: 'Per saporem et gratiam et amorem Dei, sicut et in hiis, que corporaliter ostenduntur; tamen quia nimia est confusio falsitatis, melius est non attendere. Quicquid michi apparuerit – sive in sompniis sive vigilantibus – sine gratia et affectione, non attendo. Mirum est, quod mali spiritus non possunt affectionem facere; faciunt tamen affectionem aliquo modo homini quasi bonam.' (Cap. 42, p. 51, l. 19.)

N: "And in what way can then true dreams be distinguished from false ones?" Richalm: "Through God's savor, grace and love, just as also in the things which are physically shown; nevertheless, since the confusion of falsehood is too great, it is better not to consider it. Whatever is revealed to me without grace or affection [*affectio*], whether in dreams or when I am awake, I do not consider. It is remarkable that evil spirits cannot create affection; nevertheless they create affection for man in some way, as if it were good."

Even more than the word *affectus*, the word *affectio* describes the relations of mutual affection within the community of monks and also between the monks and invisible powers, expressed by outpourings of shared happiness.

However, *affectus* is also a past participle that is neutral from a moral point of view, since the monk can as much be "affected" by a vice, such as weariness (*tedium*):

tanto tedio affectus sum (Cap. 196, l. 19.)

I was affected by such a great weariness

as by the joy (*iocunditas*) of a celestial vision, with its "torrent of pleasure, wondrous scents and sweetness":

In ipsa autem visione infusus est – ut ita dicam – magno torrente voluptatis mirique odoris corporalis fragrantia et ineffabili suaviatē dulcedinis, et cum hiis simul affectus est iocunditate. (Cap. 145, p. 168, l. 28–31.)<sup>41</sup>

In this vision, he was – just as I will say – hurled into a big torrent of pleasure and a fragrance of a wondrous bodily scent and an ineffable sweetness of delight, and with these he was at the same time affected by pleasantness.

The past participle expresses how the subject is overcome by a sudden intense spiritual joy with an explicit physical element.

41 See also Cap. 56, p. 70, l. 15–16: "tam iocundo affectu" and Cap. 125, p. 153, l. 14 (on the subject of a celestial voice), where the adjective "affectuosus" is accompanied by the related values of sweetness and joy: "Et dictum est ei voce dulci et iocunda et affectuosa in modum blandientis."

The pair *affectus*–*affectio* is, unsurprisingly, the linchpin of Richalm von Schöntal's understanding of the world of emotions. But he does not make the pair an object of speculation, as does Aelred of Rievaulx. When Richalm uses these words he gives them specific meanings, in accordance with the particularities of his anthropology, which is based on his everyday experience and dominated by the realm of spirits. In order to understand the “expression of emotions” in Richalm, one cannot simply seek generic concepts. It is necessary to enter the concrete narrative of his personal experiences.

### Emotional experiences

The text does not provide us with a generic concept of “emotion”, nor does it offer an analytical lexicon of emotions that would enable us to name each one. It does indeed use Greco-Roman medieval classifications of vices and virtues – for example, *ira*, *luxuria*, *spes*, *caritas* – but these are not emotions, even if emotions may be closely connected to such notions. One must look elsewhere for emotions – in the narrative sequences where Richalm describes his reactions to demonic assaults, which involve at the same time the body and mind. His reactions are sudden, but occur in complex situations, which can never be summed up in one word only. Each time, several terms are combined, nouns, adjectives, adverbs and verbs, which all contribute to clarify his judgement. An entire lexical landscape must therefore be taken into account, associating moral, spiritual, sensual, cognitive, positive and negative categories (*luxuria*, *acedia*, *gula*, *temptacio*, *taedium*, *compassio*, *compunctio*, *delectatio*, *dulcedo*, *dolor*, *jocunditas*, etc.) with physical manifestations, which, again, may be favorable or unfavorable (*fletus*, *ejulacio*, *erubescere*, *planctus*, *risus*, *gemitus*, etc.). The exterior effects are inseparable from the interior impulses: for example, Richalm says that at harvest time he felt the intense sweetness of “God’s grace”, which at the same time brought “delight to his soul and comfort to his body”. The effects of “God’s grace” “come upon” him (*inmittere*, *inmissio*) briefly and momentarily (*breves*, *momentanee*). Here we are getting closer to the suddenness that is characteristic of emotions. Such a description seems to fairly aptly set out the boundaries of what one could call Richalm’s “emotional landscape”.

Tempore secacionis cum fratres ad colligendum fenum procederent, **affuit gracia Dei** cui-dam fratri **inmittens ei suavitates et dulcedines** quasdam tam ad exhylandam mentem quam **corpus confortandum**. (...) Erant tamen **inmissiones** iste **breves et momentanee**, ac si aliquis post singula momenta infirmo singulas micas porrigat, ne deficiat, set erant mire suavitatis et dulcissime. (Cap. 129, p. 157, l. 1–4.)

At harvest time when the brothers went out to gather hay, the grace of God came upon a brother sending pleasantness and sweetness upon him both to delight his soul and to comfort his body. These emissions were nevertheless brief and momentary, and if anyone after every

individual moment offers individual crumbs to someone who is sick, he will not be weak, but they were wonderfully sweet and delightful.

The demons have a central place in this “landscape”. They attack both the body and soul of men: they cause sadness, weariness, anxiety. The verb “*inmittere*” is frequently repeated in this context as well, but with reference to the harmful influences that the demons “send into” the mind and body of men. Richalm complains of the weight and weariness that the demons cause in his heart and the pain that at the same time they inflict on his body, so severe that he believes he may die:

Et hec dicendo **inmittunt** michi tantum **gravamen et tedium cordis**, et tantum **dolorem** apponunt **omnibus membris**, quod, nisi conscius essem, non credo me subsistere posse.  
(Cap. 121, p. 147, l. 21.)

And when saying this they send upon me such great trouble and weariness in my heart, and they place such great pain upon all my limbs that, unless I had known, I think I could not withstand it.

On some occasions, Richalm lays more emphasis on the demonic assaults that target his soul. The demons encourage vices; one, taking the form of a large cat, even names himself “Accidia”!

Alio vero tempore cattus mire magnitudinis sibi astittit et se **accidiam** appellavit.  
(Cap. 102, p. 13, l. 8.)

But another time, a huge cat stood before him, and it called itself *acedia*.

Another demon is, by his identity, appearance and effect, entirely devoted to anger:

Vidi **demonem iracundie in specie iracunda** commoventem me **ad iram**.  
(Cap. 46, p. 58, l. 5.)

I saw the demon of anger who in an angry form moved me to anger.

Richalm is also “upset” and “agitated” (*turbari, conturbare*) and “moved to anger” (*ad iram commovere*) by a demon who wants to prevent him from singing calmly at Mass (*tranquillus*).

Cum fratres post primam ad missam in choro congregarentur, quidam eorum, qui erat sacerdos, set eo die celebrare noluit, subito **se sensit turbari et ad iram commoveri**. Et cum admirans meditareetur, quid hoc esset, audivit apud se demonem dicentem: “Non oportet, ite ad alios, quia hodie non cantabit.” Erant enim demones qui ita **eum conturbaverant**, ne, si forte cantare vellet, **tranquillus** ad altare accederet [...]. (Cap. 92, p. 111, l. 17.)

When the brothers gathered in choir for mass after prime, one of them, who was a priest but did not want to celebrate this day, suddenly felt that he was agitated and moved to anger. And when he, astonished, thought about what this was, he heard in himself a demon saying: "It is not necessary, go to the others, because he will not sing today." For there were demons who disturbed him in this way, so that he would not approach the altar calmly, if he happened to want to sing.

As Richalm overheard a demon saying to his subordinates, their actions are adapted according to social station: they "kill" the poor by making them wrathful and the rich by making them proud:

Audivi tamen quod demon dixit aliis demonibus subditis sibi, et hanc regulam docuit: "Pusillanimum vel pauperem **ira et tristitia**, divites vel fortes **superbia et elacione** interficite!" (Cap. 85, p. 103.)

But I heard a demon saying to the other demons in his power teaching this rule: "Kill the weak hearted and poor with anger and sadness, the rich and strong with arrogance and pride!"

At other times, the demons prefer to attack the body: they cause outbursts of guffawing laughter, similar to their own jeering sniggers (*cachinni*), which are in conflict with divine joy (*leticia*, *letus*, *gaudium*, *spiritalis gaudium*, *gaudere*); but the wording is sometimes ambivalent, since in the same sentence, *gaudium* and *gaudere*, repeated nine times, can also mean the joy that the demons themselves feel when the monk is stricken by *tristitia*:

et tamen, quando vident me **gaudere**, augent eandem **leticiam** ita, ut resolvant me etiam in **cachinnos**, vel aliquid operis applicant, quod **letus et gaudens** expleam. **Cachinnos, inquam, excitant michi**; etiam cum de Deo **gaudeo**, **cachinnos de eodem gaudio** quasi augentes michi idem **spiritalis gaudium** et extollentes usque ad **cachinnos**. Et multum **miratus sum**, quod et **gaudent me tristitia possideri**; et tamen, cum **gaudeo**, augent michi idem **gaudium**, (...) Et scio modo, quod **gaudium**, quod in Deo habeo et de Deo concipio, **per cachinnos corrumpunt** et faciunt exalare et deviare a Deo [...]. (Cap. 73, p. 92, l. 2.)

and nevertheless, when they see me rejoicing, they augment this very joy, so that they release me in jeering sniggers or they apply themselves to some other work, since I am filled, happy and joyful. Jeering sniggers, I say, they cause in me; also when I rejoice on account of God, jeering sniggers come from that same joy, as it were augmenting in me that same spiritual joy and raising it to laughter. And I wondered much, since they also were happy that I was possessed by sadness, and nevertheless, when I was happy, they augmented in me that very same happiness. ... And I just know that the joy I have in God and receive from God, they corrupt through the jeering sniggers and make it expire and deviate from God [...].

The demons also provoke wild and inappropriate gestures: they cause men to rub themselves in an indecent manner, they distort the way men speak, walk and move, they mix their own grunting with the monks' singing at mass, causing them to sing with a hoarse voice and out of tune (*rauce vel dissona cantare*):

Et cum sit disciplina hominum quelibet membra sua in conspectu hominum quiete tenere, sepe faciunt homines **se inhoneste fricare**. Ipsi enim tanquam inimici omnis honestatis et discipline homines **in voce, in gestu, in incessu deformant** tanta subtilitate et tam multiformiter, ut credibile non sit, nec exprimi potest. Vocibus enim in divinis officiis psallentium voces suas permiscunt, et *rauce vel dissona cantare* faciunt. **Gestus eciam hominum deformant**, membra corporis contra id, quod decet vel expedit, rapiendo vel retinendo [...]. (Cap. 102, pp. 123–124, l. 21–24.)<sup>42</sup>

And even though everyone is taught to leave their limbs alone in other people's view, men often **rub themselves in a dishonorable manner**. These men just as enemies of all honesty and discipline **deform** people **in voice, gesture and in their approach** with such a great subtlety and in so many ways that one cannot believe it nor express it. For they mix their own voices with the voices of those singing in the divine office, and they sing discordantly and hoarsely. **They also deform people's gestures** by snatching away or holding back the bodily limbs from that which is decent or useful [...].

The demons cough, belch, yawn, sneeze, laugh, moan and lead men to believe that they themselves are acting in this way. They make invalids moan by themselves letting out cries of distress. They make men toss and turn restlessly:

Certum est eciam, quod **tussunt, eructant, oscitant, sternutant, rident, gemunt frequentissime**. Et homines credunt se hoc facere. Et quod dant has voces '*ach, ach*' per infirmos vel alios quoslibet (...) Unde manifestum est, **omnem malum et incompositum motum** in quocunque membro ab eis maxime fieri. (Cap. 84, p. 102, l. 13.)

It is also certain that they very often cough, throw up, yawn, sneeze, laugh and complain. And people believe they themselves do this. Also since they give these sounds '*ach, ach*' through the sick and everyone else (...). Whence it is clear that every wicked and disordered movement in every limb most of all comes from them.

Richalm has experienced this first hand, while at the monastery's infirmary: a demon let out a moan so close to him that he thought he himself was crying out in his illness. The demon wanted to make him return to his room. It also sometimes happens that demons give him a strong urge to urinate.

42 See also Cap. 104, p. 126, l. 16: "Unde colligi potest huiusmodi **motus membrorum** frequenter per demones fieri et maxime in illis, qui ita **inconcinne et incomposite** membra sua movent."



Ego hac nocte fui in infirmatorio, et mira mecum egerunt. **Ingemuerunt apud me**, ut crederem me ipsum hoc facere et putarem me infirmari, et exsuscitaverunt me, ut irem ad cameram. Solent enim michi in virga dolorem facere et punctionem, quasi urina artet me. (Cap. 52, p. 63, l. 19.)

That night I was in the infirmary, and they did wondrous things to me. They wailed around me, so that I would believe that I myself did this and would have me think I was ill, and they excited me so that I would go to my room. For usually they hurt me and make a pricking pain with a rod, as if urged to urinate.

If the demons cause all this discomfort in men, it is because they feel the same “emotions”. They cry out and howl with pain when the Mass begins, but nevertheless want to attend so as not to miss an opportunity to attack the monks:

Audivit enim quidam frater, quod **cum maximo ululatu et planctu**, cum incipiente erant misse in ecclesia, ad hoc opus accesserunt. Et licet graviter **ibi torqueantur**, volunt tamen potius sic interesse quam nostre lesioni deesse. (Cap. 99, p. 119, l. 22.)

For a brother heard that they approached this work with great wailing and lamentation, when the masses were about to begin in the church. And even if they are tormented seriously there, they nevertheless want to take part in this way rather than to be without our injury.

The demons are distressed by Richalm’s piety and shout abuse at him when he is in the choir of the church. Addressing the monk H., they accuse Richalm of being a traitor, comparing him to the traitor Sibiche of “old tales”, namely in the epic legend of Dietrich von Bern:

ut (...) postea ad sextam in chorum convenissemus, demon **aperta voce indignacione me vituperavit**, clamans contra me: *Gucguc, gucguc, gucguc*. Et preterea convertit sermonem ad ipsum dicens: “O, bone H., nescis tu, quia iste est Sibecho?” Quod est nomen cuiusdam traditoris, sicut refertur in antiquis fabulis;<sup>43</sup> quasi diceret: “Iste est traditor pessimus, ne acquiescas ei.” (Cap. 99, p. 120, l. 10.)

so that .... afterwards when we had gathered in the choir for sext, a demon with a clear voice blamed me with indignation and called out to me: *Gucguc, gucguc, gucguc*. And furthermore he turned his speech towards himself saying: “O, kind H., do you not know that he is Sibiche?” This is the name of a traitor, just as is told in the old stories, as he were to say: “This is a most vile traitor; do not obey him.”

One day, a demon confesses to another demon that he doesn’t feel well (*bene non habeo*) because Richalm is reading St. Gregory the Great’s *Moralia in Job*:

43 Sibiche is the name of the traitor in the legend of Dietrich. *Lexikon des Mittelalters*, s.v. “Dietrich von Bern (Dietrichsepik)”, vol. 3, pp. 1016–1019.

Consuevit quidam frater habere lectiones cottidie in *Moralibus* (...) Post paululum autem eadem die cum ad psallendum in choro idem frater stetisset, audivit demonem dicentem ad alium demonem: “**Ach**, iterum vidi istum legentem in *Moralibus*, et ideo **hodie bene non habeo**.” (Cap. 108, p. 130, l. 9.)

A brother used to give lessons daily over *Moralia* (...) But shortly after, this day, when this same brother was in the choir in order to sing, he heard a demon saying to another demon: “Ach, again I saw him reading the *Moralia* and therefore I do not feel good today.”

A demon is also distressed by the confession that a brother to whom he is assigned makes to Richalm. He groans miserably (*ingemere et misere clamare*) in the choir and complains (*dolere, pro dolor*) to another demon upon seeing that the monk who has done penance is “happy as an angel” (*letus sicut angelus*):

Frater quidam fecit michi confessionem preterita die in capitulo; qui cum redisset in chorum, demon ille, qui eum impugnat et ei semper adheret, et qui in capitulum euntem comitatus fuerat, iuxta eum in choro **ingemuit et misere clamavit**: “**Ach, ach! O, o!**” Cui alter respondit: “**Quid voluisti illuc ire?**” Et ait: “Nesciebam, **proch dolor**, nesciebam. **Ach michi!** Ipse est tam **letus sicut angelus**.” Dixit autem de me, quod ita **letus** essem, non de illo fratre, cuius audieram confessionem. Et de mea **leticia**, quam secutus fratrem illum in capitulum compererat, ita **dolebat**. (Cap. 40, p. 48, l. 18.)

A brother made his confession to me yesterday in the chapter; when he had returned to the choir, the demon who assails him and who is always close to him and who had followed him when he entered the chapter, sat beside him in the choir lamenting and calling out miserably: “Ach, ach! O, o!” Another demon responded to him: “Why did you want to go there?” And he says: “I did not know, *proch dolor*, I did not know. *Ach mihi!* He is as happy as an angel.” He talked about me, that I was so happy, not about the brother, whose confession I had heard. And on account of my happiness, which he had discovered when he followed that brother into the chapter, he thus suffered.

All the “emotions” felt by the demons and caused by them in the bodies and minds of men are, needless to say, given a negative connotation. The “emotions” felt and caused by the “good spirits” are however a different matter. These good spirits are also present *en masse* around the brothers. They provoke positive responses and cause them to say good things. These demons are prone to overwhelming joy, which they pass on to men. The rule, therefore, is simple: all the good deeds of man come from the good spirits, all his evil deeds come from the evil spirits:

Intantum autem quidquid boni loquimur et agimus, **bonorum est spiritu**, et quidquid mali, **malorum** [...]. (Cap. 15, p. 21, l. 22.)

In short, whatever good we say or do comes from the spirit of good things, whatever bad, from the spirit of bad things [...].

When Richalm is distressed (*nimis perturbaretur*) over not making spiritual progress and becomes concerned (*cogitationes sue assidue conarentur*), the good spirits give him “hope of consolation”: one night while the other brothers are kneeling down in prayer, he receives the order to rejoice in the Lord, in the form of an inscription repeated nine times on a parchment: *Letificaberis!* (“You will rejoice!”)

Frater quidam dum in spiritalibus per multa tempora nullum profectum acciperet et ob hoc **nimis turbaretur**, et **cogitationes** sue de tandem recipiendo profectu sibi spem facere assidue conarentur, ipse tamen **consolationem non admisit**. Tandem nocte quadam, cum fratres ad complendos nocturnos ad oraciones super formulas procumberent, vidit ante se in cedula pergameni novem vicibus scriptam hanc dictionem *Letificaberis* non in una linea protensa, set in novem lineis, una sub altera ordinatis. Quo facto expectate diu **consolationis certam spem** cepit habere. (Cap. 131, p. 159, l. 1–9.)

When a brother for a long time did not make any progress in spiritual matters and because of this was very distressed and his thoughts constantly tried to fill him with hope about eventually making progress, he himself nevertheless did not admit this consolation. One night, finally, when the brothers in order to finish the nocturn bent down for their prayers *ad formulas*, he saw before him on a small piece of parchment this word *Letificaberis* [“You will rejoice”] written nine times, not in a long line but in nine lines, one above the other. After this he had a sure hope of the long awaited consolation.

There is constant competition between the two types of spirits, the good and the evil. The “good spirits” apply themselves to mitigating the assaults of the evil spirits and to encouraging good things:

Set et **boni spiritus** non minus assunt nobis, **sedeant inimicias** et quecunque **bona suggerunt** [...]. (Cap. 13 p. 19, l. 11.)

But also the good spirits are not less by our side, they mitigate enmities and bring out everything good.

Amongst the “good spirits” is the “good angel”, the guardian angel, who never abandons the man to whom he has been assigned, even if this man commits the worst of sins. On a more general level, the “good spirits” rejoice (*gaudere, iocundari, pre nimia leticia*) at the good deeds carried out by the men they watch over:

Et bonus angelus sibi commissum nunquam vel in maximo et impurissimo peccato relinquit, nisi adhereat ei et consulat quantum potest. Boni, inquam, spiritus tanta dignacione assistunt nobis, quod nec maximis quibusque peccatoribus dedignantur adesse; et super bonis actibus nostris et profectu **ita gaudent et iocundantur**, ut pre nima **leticia** se vix capiant. Felix hora, qua creavit eos Deus! (Cap. 60, p. 73, l. 17.)

And the good angel never abandons the person entrusted to him, even in a most great and vile sin, but keeps close to him and advises him as much as he can. The good spirits, I say, help us with such dignity that they do not refuse to be close to the greatest sinners; and they rejoice and feel delighted in such a manner that they can barely contain themselves on account of the great joy. A blessed hour, when God created them!

The good spirits incite Richalm to patience (*ad pacienciam instruere, ad pacienciam hortari*) giving the example of Job; patience is torture for the evil spirits, who are “nourished and fattened” by the impatience (*impaciencia*) of men:

**Boni spiritus** frequenter instruunt me **ad pacienciam** et dicunt: “Cum demones ita cruciant te et incidunt, tu teipsum perdis, quia **minus paciens habetis**.” Et hortantur me multum **ad pacienciam** dicentes, quod pretendere debeam illam sententiam in Iob *Et bestie terre pacifice erunt tibi*. Nam **de impaciencia** tua ipsi pascuntur et pinguescunt; sed **per pacienciam** plus tu eos quam ipsi te cruciant. (Cap. 72, p. 89, l. 12.)

The good spirits often instruct me towards patience and they say: “When the demons come upon you and torment you, you lose yourself since you have little patience.” And they encourage me much towards patience saying that I should assert this sentence from Job: “And the beasts of the earth will be peaceful towards you.” For they feed off and get fat from your impatience; but through your patience you torment them more than they would torment you.

Finally, one of the spirits surrounding Richalm is a joyful spirit (*spiritus valde iocosus*) who only speaks of joyful things and inspires “joyful” words in him; such “joyful spirits” (*spiritus iocosi*) only attach themselves to “joyful” men (*hominibus iocosis*) and make them laugh (*movent homines ad ridendum*). Richalm concludes “this is why we often laugh at the words of such a person”. The joy that emanates from these “good spirits” causes an infectious laugh to which no one is immune:

Quemdam **spiritum** soleo habere valde **iocosum**, qui nulla mecum confert **nisi iocosus**; et tales spiritus presunt **hominibus iocosis** et in eis operantur hoc modo: Cum **spiritus iocosus** hominem, cui preest, quoquam duxerit ad **loquendum iocosa**, sint alii comitantes eum eiusdem generis spiritus, qui ad singula, que ille protulerit, **movent homines ad ridendum** et respondendum. Et inde est, quod talis hominis sepe verba **ridemus**. (Cap. 58, p. 71, l. 20.)

I have a very joyful spirit, who never speaks of anything unless he is joyful; and such spirits are in charge of joyful men and work in them in the following manner: When a joyful spirit has brought a person, of whom he is in charge, to a place, in order to speak of joyful things, other spirits of the same kind are following him, who make people laugh and respond to every single thing he brings out. And therefore we often laugh at the words of such a person.

## Emotions beyond good and evil?

In Richalm von Schöntal, the “emotions” can be identified in the narrative sequences that portray the rivalry between the “good” and “evil spirits” to govern man’s body and soul. The vocabulary of the “emotions” can therefore not be dissociated from the broad moral divide between good and evil, vice and virtue, righteousness and sin. Any list of the key terms used by Richalm to draw up the “emotional landscape” of the *Liber revelationum* must take this fundamental divide of medieval culture into account. We can also distinguish between terms which refer to moral categories (vices, virtues, etc.), to ailments and physical or psychological qualities (sweetness, pain, etc.) and to the reactions of the mind and body (laughing, moaning, etc.):

<i>Moral categories: Good</i>	<i>Evil</i>
bonus	malus
verus	falsus
gracia Dei	
amor, affectio, affectus	
	accidia
	superbia, elacio
	taedium
	ira, iracondia, iracondus
	gula
	luxuria
leticia, gaudium, iocunditas, iocundus	tristitia, misere, gaudium
amicitia	inimicia
paciens	impaciens
<i>Ailments and physical or psychological qualities:</i>	
	passio, vexatio, lesio, punctio, torqueari, vituperacio, amaricare, exacuire
	deformare
	dolor
	gravamen

suavitas, dulcedo, voluptas	
compunctio	
compassio	
confortare, refrigerium	
fraglancia	
<i>Reactions of the body and mind:</i>	
affectus (past participle)	affectus (past participle)
tranquillus	(con)turbare, perturbacio, commovere, motus,
motus, mocio, movere	mocio, movere
	deformare
	incompositus
	inhoneste
	indignacio
risus, ridere, exhylare	cachinnus, cachinnatio
	gemitus, ingemere
	planctus, ululatus
	Ach, o
	sternuere
	tussire
	eructere
	oscitere
	fricare

This glossary does not allow us to identify a list of “emotions” in the modern sense of the word. What it shows us is not psychology as we understand it, but above all an anthropological system different from ours, one in which spirits both good and evil are permanently attached to man and are the source of the impulses of his soul and the reactions of his body.

It is usually said that mediaeval anthropology defines the individual as the union of a body and a soul, which are interdependent, even if from the thirteenth century onwards the influence of Aristotelian naturalism on scholasticism tends to acknowledge a greater autonomy of the body. However, a careful reading of the *Liber revelatio-*

*num* reveals a more complex conception of man, of one whose thoughts and physical movements are completely subjugated by ever present spirits, notably demons. These demons are not only “companions” of man, as the text sometimes suggests, but they give him a sort of second nature, and are omnipresent in his thoughts, his visions and his dreams, his gestures, in the spontaneous reactions of his body (when he coughs, yawns or spits), and also in his speech (when he repeats a word because a demon makes him stammer). What is more, demons share the “emotions” of men. This anthropological system is doubtless not unique to Richalm von Schöntal. It is pervasive in monastic culture, as for example is shown by thirteenth century Cistercian collections of *exempla*.<sup>44</sup> But its features are exceptionally pronounced in the work of Richalm, who seems obsessed by demons.

This observation should make us cautious with respect to the “history of emotions”: perhaps it is not enough to relativize “emotions” historically, in the way that historians normally do, saying that emotions change according to different cultures and eras, and that our emotions are not the same as in the Middle Ages. The way we conceive of human psychology has, however, no meaning in the ‘spiritual’ context of the *Liber revelationum*. The urges that Richalm feels are not the result of his temperament or of his affectivity, but of the active presence of demons.

It does however happen that Richalm manages to remove himself from the moral framework which makes him judge his “emotional experiences” as good or as evil. One day, he declares to the monk N., who writes down all that he says, that he has involuntarily omitted to tell him something; for two years, he says, iron keys have been appearing to him, frequently and one by one, just like those that men use to lock and un-lock doors. In contrast to these keys, and basing himself on a reminiscence of the Apocalypse, he hopes that his mind will be ‘open’ to heavenly knowledge and he undertakes in advance to communicate all his ‘revelations’ to his interlocutor.

Unum est, quod hactenus vobis non aperui, nescio tamen quare, quia non voluntarie feci. Iam forte per duos annos multociens claves ferree, quibus homines utuntur ad serandum et reserandum, michi apparuerunt in multis formis et diversis, et multe simul et singule singulariter. Rogo igitur attente et supplico devote, quatenus ei supplicare dignemini, *qui aperuit et nemo claudit* (Apoc., 3, 7), ut intelligenciam meam in bonis gracie sue aperiat, scientes, quod si quid michi revelaverit, vobis communicabo. (Cap. 126, p. 155, l. 5–9.)

There is one thing I have not yet disclosed to you, although I do not why, since I have not done it voluntarily. By chance, keys made of iron, which people use to lock and open doors, have for two years appeared before me many times in many and diverse shapes, both many at

44 See e.g. *Collectio exemplorum cisterciensis in codice parisiensi 15912 asservata*, eds Berlioz & Polo de Beaulieu, 2012. The *exemplum* no. 394, p. 118 and 437, describes the multitude of demons perched on the roof of a monastery. I thank Marie-Anne Polo de Beaulieu for having brought this text to my attention. The table of titles in this collection is in itself a rich source of information on the “emotions”.



the same time and separate separately. Therefore I ask attentively and pray devoutly, to what extent you will deign to pray to him who has opened and no one closes, so that he opens my understanding in the gifts of his grace, knowing that if he reveals something to me, I will tell you.

In the same chapter, Richalm amasses brief accounts of strange events which he does not link to the intervention of good or evil spirits and of which he gives no moral interpretation. But these events did not move or intrigue him any less than the other 'revelations', and he wants to report them in full to brother N. He remembers for example that at the time when he was still a novice and his weakness attracted the attention of the other monks, while he himself lacked self-confidence, one day he had to wash his head by himself in order to undergo tonsure; when he felt his hands on his head he was filled with a "great sense of gentleness" (*dulcedo quedam*) which comforted him (*cum dulcedine fortitudo*), while a voice encouraged him to wash his head all by himself. Richalm does seem to be describing a heaven-sent comfort, but he gives no explanation for the event:

Quidam frater cum novicius adhuc esset et fratres debilitatem eius multum intenderent et ipse de ea multum diffideret, accidit, ut tempus rasure adveniret et ipse iuxta consuetudinem ordinis propriis manibus, licet debilis valde, caput suum lavare cepisset, subito apposita est ei **dulcedo quedam** et cum **dulcedine fortitudo**, et *simul vox facta est* (Luc, 1, 44) ad eum, vox interior: "Accipe, modo lave te." (Cap. 126, p. 154, l. 1-7.)

A brother, while he was still a novice and the brothers paid much attention to his weakness and he himself mistrusted it much, it happened that the time for shaving had come and according to the custom of the order he began to wash his head with his own hands, although he was weak, and suddenly a certain sweetness came upon him, and with this sweetness strength, and at the same time a voice came to him, an inner voice: "Take this, now wash yourself."

He remembers another short incident, which he relates afterwards, that shows him sitting up in bed one night, crying because the Lord had not raised him up. He sees before him, in a strange light which is not daylight, a very beautiful apple and a magnificent pear, which remind him of the fruits that mothers and wet nurses offer to children to console them. But prompted by a "childish feeling of resentment", he refuses to take the fruits that are held out to him, just as capricious children do when they are eventually given what they want. The apple and pear disappear from Richalm's sight as suddenly as they had appeared, and he says that he saw neither the hand nor the person who had held them out to him:

Frater, cum diu aliquid peteret a Domino, non est exauditus. Nocte igitur quadam, cum sedens in lecto suo se non esse exauditus **amarissime flesset**, representatum est ei pulcherrimum pomum et pulcherrimum pirum, sicut solent matres vel nutrices facere infantibus, ut **a fletu conquiescant**. Ipse vero etiam **rancore puerili** correptus, sicut solent pueri **indignari**

**ad accipiendum**, manum non apposuit. Set cum diucius ante ipsum morarentur, tandem sublata sunt. Tenentis autem nec manum nec persona nullatenus vidit, poma vero vidit in luce, set non diei. (Cap. 126, p. 154, l. 24–p. 155, l. 4.)

A brother, even though he had for a long time prayed to the Lord, he had not been heard. One night, while sitting on his bed weeping most bitterly that he had not been heard, a most beautiful apple and a most beautiful pear appeared before him, just as mothers or wet nurses offer infants, so that they will stop crying. But he, also attacked by a childish resentment in the same way children usually are offended to take it, he did not put his hand to them. But when they had remained before him for a long time, they were finally taken away. But he did not see the hand of the one holding them nor a person, but he saw the apple in the light, but not in the light of day

Events like this, recounted briefly and without any explicit interpretation,<sup>45</sup> allow Richalm to present personal emotions which are beyond the scope both of the customary moral readings and of his usual explanations of the opposing influences of good spirits and demons. These emotions reveal that the author has a finely tuned sense of introspection in observing his own feelings and psychological reactions, in a way which brings him closer to us and allows us perhaps to recognize that he did in fact have “emotions” quite similar to ours.

*Translated from the French by Alice Duhan.*

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<sup>45</sup> See also Richalm von Schöntal, *Liber revelationum*, ed. Schmidt 2009, Cap. 125, p. 153, l. 9–27, for two accounts concerning the monk’s haymaking and harvesting, and Cap. 126, p. 154, l. 8–13, the nocturnal apparition of a little bird, and *ibid.*, l. 14–23, the appearance of a book that hits him on both sides of his face because he has neglected his daily reading.

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# The Law and the King's Heart:

## Emotions as Political Statements in the *Chronicle of Duke Erik*

Corinne Péneau

The *Erikskrönikan* (*Chronicle of Duke Erik*) deals with kings, Swedish laws and political matters. Emotions play a rather small part in the chronicle and, when the author mentions some specific emotions, most of them are *clichés*. The love that Erik, for instance, feels for his bride Ingeborg, who was merely a child, is a reference to the courtesy that characterizes him.<sup>1</sup> When attending a banquet with the king, the knights express their joy, a feeling that can be described as typical of chivalric literature, where it emphasizes a moment of peace.<sup>2</sup> When the Swedish knights are meeting around their peaceful king, they also feel this specific joy. In the last verses of the chronicle, it is announced that the whole country could share this joy, if the king is good:

Jak hauer thz hört sakt allan myn aller  
warder konunger a morasten walder  
med alla landa vilia ok lagha  
han skal varda goder i sina dagha  
[...] Gud giffue oss then sagdo the  
at rikeno matte gläde aff ske.<sup>3</sup>

Joy, a typical feeling for the aristocracy, becomes a feeling that every Swede can share or will be able to share in the future.

But still, and surprisingly, emotions and feelings become crucial when it comes to

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<sup>1</sup> *Erikskrönikan*, ll. 1832–1837.

<sup>2</sup> Köhler 1974, pp. 90 and 120–126.

<sup>3</sup> *Erikskrönikan*, ll. 4456–4459 and 4464–4465. “I have heard it said throughout my life: / if the king is elected at the Stone of Mora, / by the will and laws of all the provinces, / he will be a good king in his age. [...]” / “God give him to us, they said, / so the kingdom may gain joy!” For the translation into English, see Carlquist & Hogg 2012, p. 230. Henceforth I have followed their translation, with a few exceptions.

important political matters. The end of the chronicle does in fact celebrate the union of the knights and the peasants during the revolt against King Birger and during the election of a new king.<sup>4</sup> Otherwise, we find very few references to any kind of emotions.

Here I would like to return to two episodes of the war opposing King Birger to his brothers, the very beginning of it – when Birger called his brother to judge him and finally exiled him – and the end – the Nyköping Banquet. I will start with the last of these, which is the only example of laughter in the chronicle, and then I will analyze the relation between laws and emotions in the former episode. My aim is to show how the author criticizes the way the king strengthens his position of power by describing his personal emotions.

### The laughing king

The most famous episode of *Erikskrönikan* is called the “Nyköping Banquet”: King Birger invited his two brothers Erik and Valdemar to Nyköping Castle in 1317, but, during the night, he imprisoned them and later let them starve to death, in captivity. Their deaths became one decisive factor of the revolt that followed. Birger had to take refuge in Denmark and a new king was elected. For Birger, the Nyköping Banquet was vengeance for the *coup d'état* of Håtuna, when he was imprisoned by his brother. Two years later, in March 1308, King Birger had taken an oath *super corpus Christi*<sup>5</sup> to make peace with his brothers, upon which he was released from prison and could become king again, at least over his own part of the realm.<sup>6</sup> In particular, he had to swear that he would put neither a knight nor an “honorable man” into custody. He could only do so after a real trial, had this knight or this man been found guilty:

Astringimus etiam in vi eiusdem nostri  
sacramenti, quod milites, armigeros et  
notabiles personnas regni capere vel  
captivare, seu bona ipsorum occupare non  
debemus, nisi prius legitime sint convicti,  
nec exactiones indebitas in ipsos exercere.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup> See Péneau 2008.

<sup>5</sup> *Sveriges traktater med främmande makter*, 1877, p. 332.

<sup>6</sup> Rosén 1939, pp. 142–159.

<sup>7</sup> *Sveriges traktater med främmande makter*, 1877, p. 334: “We also swear by the power of our oath that we would neither capture nor keep in prison knights, squires and honourable men, nor take their goods if they have not been condemned by law, nor tax them with undue fines” (my translation).

The author of the chronicle insists – a thousand verses before the description of the Nyköping Banquet – on the fact that Birger's oath was taken in Nyköping, just after Easter, and sworn by the sacred Host:

han swor sik alzstingis meen  
 Ok giorde sin skapara mykit i geen  
 A gudz likama ok a hans blodh  
 thy wär at han sik ey forstodh  
 Ath gud läte wara thz ey ohämpt  
 han matte thz heller hawa onämpt  
 än swerya thz han ville ey halla  
 thy wart hans plagha margh falla<sup>8</sup>

The author does not give the text of the oath, but it is obvious that he has this specific article in mind when he later describes the Nyköping Banquet: he compares Birger with Judas and the sufferings of Duke Erik with the Passion.<sup>9</sup> Erik's body is the visible sign of the renewing of God's Passion, the betrayal of the king that he announced a thousand verses earlier. There can be no doubt that he had this specific article in mind because he insists on the fact that Birger placed not only his two brothers and their men in custody, but also two of his own men because they tried to warn him against the consequences of his action. No feeling is mentioned to describe the deaths of the dukes: the hearers know they have to feel the same emotion as when they hear about Christ's death.

In the king's oath, written in 1335 for Magnus Eriksson's *eriksgata*, this article was extended to all Swedes:

The third article is that he must be a faithful and loyal king for all his people, so that he must not imprison or give the order to imprison or, in one way or another, harm anyone, rich or poor, before he has been found legally guilty [...].<sup>10</sup>

8 *Erikskrönikan*, ll. 2846–2853: “He took an utterly false oath / and hurt a lot his Creator again / (swearing) on God's body and on his blood. / What a pity that he did not understand / that God would not let his betrayal unpunished. / He should have left it unsaid / rather than swearing that he did not want not keep / because his agonies became numerous.” (Carlquist & Hogg 2012, p. 159.)

9 Jansson 1971, pp. 170–175.

10 Södermannalagen 1904, pp. 27–28: “Thriði articulus at han scal trygger ok troin konunger uæra allum almogha sinum. sua at han ængin fatøkan fanga eller richan. eller epti buði sino fanga lata. eller ok nocrom lundum fordærua utan han se laghlicha fyr foruunnin [...]” (my translation).

We can suppose that, before the redaction of a detailed king's oath, the commissioners of the chronicle wanted to demonstrate the necessity of a specific article protecting the knights as well as the people against the arbitrariness of royal power. They also wanted to show its efficacy by describing the consequences of its violation. Sweden is far from being the only country where this kind of guaranty was imposed on the king. The English *Magna Carta* and its article 39 *Nullus liber homo capiatur* is the best known example, but, in the late Middle Ages, we also find some examples of it in Castille, Aragon and France. As François Foronda showed in his book *El espanto y el miedo*, the nobles justified their demand for such a guaranty by their fear of being arrested or even murdered by the king.<sup>11</sup> This fear can be described as a political emotion because its description, for instance in chronicles, is a mere justification for their actions against the king.

To return to the Swedish context, we can see that fear is not the argument that has been chosen to justify the revolt. No feelings are specified to describe the behavior of the dukes' men, even when they gathered after their death. They only want to ask for justice. In contrast, the king and the queen loudly demonstrate their emotions. They laugh when they think that they have triumphed: for instance, it is said about Queen Märta that "no one had ever seen the queen so happy"<sup>12</sup> as on the evening of the Nyköping Banquet. It is also said about the dukes that Birger "rejoiced to see their pain and sufferings" and that "he did not fear their death."<sup>13</sup> But the Swedes take arms against the king. He soon has to flee to Denmark with the queen, but his wicked counselors, Brunkow, Walram, Lyder Foss and Ulf Svalbeck, are executed near Stockholm, and his own son Magnus later shares the same fate. When the news of their counselors' execution reaches the king and the queen, "they moaned over their death" (*Tha lotho the illa om thera dödh*).

After this remark, nothing is said about King Birger. At the end of the chronicle, it is only repeated that he was responsible for the death of his brothers. But Queen Märta "had further a greater sorrow / when she knew that junker Magnus was dead"<sup>14</sup>, and the author insists on the fact that the situation has completely changed: "and she who used to smile started crying". But tears and laughter are not only used to describe positions on the wheel of Fortune: both tears and laughter are indeed the sign that something goes wrong. After he has caught his brothers, King Birger laughs:

<sup>11</sup> Foronda 2013, pp. 145–180.

<sup>12</sup> *Erikskrönikan*, ll. 3780–3781: "man sigher at man aldregh saa / drotningena swa gladha som tha."

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, ll. 3969–3971: "thz lyste konungenom wäl ath see / Thera pina ok thera nödh / han war örädde w m thera dödh."

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, ll. 4393–4395: "hon fik sihan en högre sorgh / hon fra at joncker magnus doo / hon grät tha thz hon förra loo."



Tha slo konungin synom handom saman  
 ok loo fastelika ok giorde sik gaman  
 rät som han ware en amblodhe  
 then sik enkte got forstodhe  
 min drotzete signe then helge and  
 nw hauer iak swerighe i mynne hand  
 Tha swarade en riddere het herra knut  
 Jak tror tik brister alt annat wt<sup>15</sup>

This is disrespectful indeed. And because the king is influenced by his evil counselors, the author says that “The king made a fool of himself” (*Konungin giorde sik siälff til gäk*). There is no difference between the king and a *gäkare*, a jester. Birger’s behavior makes him a subject of mockery: he laughs when the situation is far from being funny and the audience knows that the story will end badly for him and his kin. We may notice the allusion to the king’s hands, first in a literal meaning, and then in a figurative one: he claps his hands, because he is happy, and because he thinks that he has “Sweden in his hand”, which means “in his power”. This antanaclassis puts emphasis on the ridiculous situation of the king, a fool who pretends to have power. It means that a true king cannot laugh: if Birger laughs, he is no longer the legitimate king of Sweden. Laughter can include or exclude someone. Olle Ferm has shown that laughter can build a community, because a man who laughs proves that he is included in the game.<sup>16</sup> But one can also laugh *with* someone or *against* someone; Birger clearly laughs *against* his own brothers, *against* his own people, while pretending he rules them all. So, by laughing, Birger excludes himself from the Swedish political community. Because he had sworn on the Host that he would place no one in custody without a fair judgement, he excludes himself also from the Christian community.

In the chronicle, the aim of the author is not to give a realistic description of emotions. In fact, he used them very rarely and nearly always to comment on a political crisis, thinking, as far as we can judge from the example of Birger, their expressions in public irrelevant, especially for rulers.

15 *Ibid.*, ll. 3914–3921: “So the king clapped his hands, / laughed loudly and made jests / just as if he were an idiot / that did not understand well. / ‘May the Holy Spirit bless my *drots!* / I have now all Sweden in my hand!’ / So a knight named Sire Knut answered: / ‘I think you lack everything else!’” (Carlquist & Hogg 2012, p. 205.)

16 Ferm 2002, pp. 76–77.

## Emotions and laws

One of the main interests of the author of the chronicle is the Swedish law, and surely this was true also of his audience, which included some *lagmän*. When the chronicle was written, the legislative power of the king was increasing and the Swedish laws were not only put into writing, but also transformed. There are almost no sources of the debates that took place on these transformations, but one of my hypotheses is that it is possible to find at least a shadow of them in *Erikskrönikan*, especially in some verses in which the mentionings of emotions, mainly the king's emotions, are not as scarce as in the rest of the poem.

In 1303, Duke Erik visited the court of King Birger, a meeting that can be seen as the origin of the war between the king and his brothers. It was an occasion for the king to give a list of four accusations against Erik: the duke has exported food outside Sweden against the king's order; he broke the king's sworn peace, riding through Sweden with Birger's enemies; one of the duke's knights slapped the king's gatekeeper; and the fourth accusation is that the duke's men always defeat the king's men in tournaments. Those accusations appear in the text in direct speech.

The framing of this discourse is important. The king does not want to explain his allegations and asks a bishop to do so: in strong contrast with his brother, who behaves perfectly, with courtesy (*honom följde tokt ok ädela sidi*),<sup>17</sup> Birger seems to be in a hurry and he is threatening. The bishop refuses to speak, alleging that he is a priest. The aim of this remark is probably to show that a priest cannot act as a judge on behalf of the king, or, less technically, that those accusations are false. A knight, whose name is not given, finally agrees to explain why Erik has been called for. Birger's attitude and the fact that he does not speak for himself cast a strong doubt on the whole accusation.

When he has finished talking, the knight asks the king quite rhetorically to be "merciful and good" (*naduger ok goder*)<sup>18</sup> towards Erik, but the king answers with anger that he has banished his brothers from the realm. The whole attitude of the king offers us a caricature of a bad king. Four different crimes are described. The historian Gustav Cederschiöld, supposed that a written document presented the accusations in four points.<sup>19</sup> No such document has, however, been found and it would be quite astonishing if such a text had ever been written. What the author is aiming for is not to blame his hero, but to show that the king is dangerous.

The first three accusations may have been used by Birger to exile his brother in May 1304, but the author added a fourth accusation that previous research have characterized as highly fanciful. The king probably wanted to make things clear in case his

<sup>17</sup> *Erikskrönikan*, l. 2071.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, l. 2135.

<sup>19</sup> Cederschiöld 1899, p. 117.

hearers still had any doubt about the seriousness of the crimes committed by Erik. This fourth accusation gives the key to the whole oration:

thz haffuer warit ok är ok än  
 thz en herra ok hans män  
 at the taka eth torney  
 hwat thz waller thz weet jak ey  
 huar idre men koma saman ok wy  
 ärom wy halffwo flere än j  
 tha wardom wy trodhne nider  
 ok tappom alt thz wy sätiom wider  
 thz görin i alt for eth haat.<sup>20</sup>

Obviously blame like this appears to be a perfect travesty: its aim is to show the king and his men in a bad light. On the other hand, Erik and his retinue are presented, one more time, as chivalric heroes. Mats Kettilmundsson is mentioned here as one of the leaders (*herra matius er ther höwitzman aat*)<sup>21</sup> and the knight who is speaking – or perhaps the narrator with a tone full of irony – adds “what an insult to the king!” (*konungenom alt til smäligheet*).<sup>22</sup> When he describes the beginning of the war between the king and his brothers, the author plays with his audience, who know the end of his story, introducing the man who would lead the revolt against Birger after Erik’s death and become regent.

But, in my opinion, he goes further and questions Birger’s ability to be a judge: hatred cannot be a sufficient reason to accuse Erik. The three other accusations are more reliable, but the author minimizes them, describing them as offenses against the king’s feelings as well.

The first accusation is that Erik exported victuals abroad, despite the fact that the king had forbidden it. As we can read at the end of the chronicle a good king has to be *är säll*, (*årsäll*) an expression meaning that “he will be blessed by good years”, or more precisely that he will give good harvests to his people.<sup>23</sup> With this accusation the author suggests that under the rule of King Birger times were not plentiful and that the king himself is to be blamed for it. But the key to this passage is that the duke disobeyed the king’s order: it is the special relationship between the king and his brother that is at stake. What the author probably has in mind is the ordinance of Skänninge, when he puts these words into the anonymous knight’s mouth:

20 *Erikskrönikan*, ll. 2120–2128: “It was and it is still in the habit / of a lord and his men / to take part to a tornament. / What the cause is, I do not know, / But whenever your men and we meet, / We are twice more numerous than you / But we are trampled underfoot / And lose evething that we have put at stake. / You are moved by hatred!” (Carlquist & Hogg 2012, p. 127.)

21 *Ibid.*, l. 2129.

22 *Ibid.*, l. 2131.

23 *Ibid.*, pp. 717–718 (Carlquist & Hogg 2012, p. 257).

jak vndrar hwi ider kom thz i hoogh  
 medhan min herra haffdit forbudit  
 i haffwin ider ey jämt vmskudat  
 Thz i vilin göra myn herra a moth  
 nw er ofsent at radha a both<sup>24</sup>

In the fourth article of Magnus Ladulås's act from 1284, it is indeed stipulated that very large fines will be incurred by anyone who acts against a king's letter. The accusation is therefore rather meaningful, but the following verses show that the problem is not what Erik did, but what the king felt:

han giffuer ider ok en annen saak  
 fore widermödo ok vmak  
 Thz han hauer hafft aff idre högferd  
 [...]
 j haffin reeth hans hierta at ider  
 thz i ridhin med wenkte hand  
 mz hans owinom gönom hans land  
 i haffin konungsins edzöre forbrutit<sup>25</sup>

This second accusation is quite serious. The king's *edsöre* could be compared with the King's Peace. The author does not seem to question its necessity: on the contrary, he explains how good those laws are that protect women or private estates.<sup>26</sup> But he seems to criticize their extension, as it can be seen in the first article of the Ordinance of Skänninge. This article stipulates that when the king is in a land – a province – no one else may carry weapons. The aim of Magnus Ladulås was to establish the king's monopoly of violence. With the same logic, the third article forbids feuds among the king's men and the sixth lays down the maximum number of armed riders that may follow a man, depending on his rank.

The third accusation could also be a reference to an article of this ordinance: one of the knights from Erik's retinue is accused of slapping the cheek of the gatekeeper of the royal stronghold because he had refused to let him in. The reason why he was refused access to the fortress is not given, but, in the Ordinance of Skänninge, the king forbids every man who has not been invited to come to the meetings he has organized.

24 *Ibid.*, ll. 2087–2091: “I wonder how you could think of doing so / when my Lord had forbidden it. / You have not even realised / that you wanted to act against my lord. / Now it is too late to put it right!” (Carlquist & Hogg 2012, p. 126.)

25 *Ibid.*, ll. 2092–2094 and 2097–2100: “He has also another charge against you, / for the pain and the affliction / he had because of your conceit. (...) / You have burnt his heart with anger / when you rode with an armed hand / with his enemies through his land; You have broken the king's *edsöre*.” (Carlquist & Hogg 2012, p. 126.)

26 Péneau 2005, pp. 37–40.

Besides, this porter was one of the king's servants and the king "liked him" (*som ... honom war kär*): what is at stake is the extension of the *Lex julia majestatis* that was introduced in Sweden in 1279 and was a council's decision called *De captivitate regis*.<sup>27</sup> In a donation act written in July 1282, Bengt, who was King Magnus's brother, explained that this law concerns the king and his men who are "a part of his body" (*pars corporis ejus sunt*).<sup>28</sup> Erland Hjärke recognized a quotation from *lex Quisquis*, the Roman imperial law that added the murder of an emperor's counselor to the list of crimes against the state.<sup>29</sup> With the Ordinance of Skänninge, the aim of King Magnus was to give a wide interpretation of *lèse-majesté* and also to extend his powers because those crimes had to be judged directly by the king who could take possession of all the offenders' goods. The debate must have continued when the son of Magnus Ladulås became king. The fact that only a part of the articles of the Ordinance of Skänninge were introduced in the Law of Uppland shows that there was a great resistance from, at least, a part of the aristocracy<sup>30</sup> and it is worth noticing that Duke Erik's supporters are called *upplenske men*, the "men from Uppland", in the chronicle.<sup>31</sup>

In the Law of Uppland (*Upplandslagen*), *lèse-majesté* is introduced in article 15 of *Manghelgdsbalken* (which means that it is not subject to the king's judgement), and it exclusively concerns someone that takes arms against the king "or the realm where he is born", the focus being slightly displaced from the king's body to the kingdom. This crime is punished by death, not by exile, and the goods of the offender become property of the Crown.<sup>32</sup> The mention of the kingdom and of the Crown, and even the special expression used when speaking about the king – "the almighty king" (*allwaldughum kononge*) – shows that the crime considered here is committed against an institution, not against an individual. The author may refer to this law when he writes that the King's counselors – the men that persuaded Birger to kill his brothers – were condemned with "the law of the realm" (*mz rikesins rāth*)<sup>33</sup> and the same can be said of Magnus Birgersson.

The accusations against Erik seem to prove the danger of letting the king acquire too much power. The behavior of Birger – his anger and his lack of pity – shows that he cannot be trusted as a judge as far as his emotions are concerned, not only because

27 Hjärke 1950, p. 33.

28 *Diplomatarium Suecanum* 1829, n 753, p. 615.

29 Hjärke 1951a, pp. 19–22 and Hjärke 1951b, pp. 39–41.

30 Bjarne Larsson 1994, pp. 29–34.

31 Péneau 2005, pp. 69–76.

32 *Upplandslagen* 1834, *Manhælgðis*, XV, pp. 146–147: "hwar sum awghæn skiold förær. gen allwaldughum kononge. ællr gen hanz riki. hanær siælfær föddær innæn han hawær fore giört hals. æn han fangin wærpær. ok þær til iorþ ok goz hanz undir krununæ. hwat han fangin wærpær. ællr æi."

33 *Erikskrönikan*, l. 4366.

he could let his sensibility overcome his sense,<sup>34</sup> but also because his emotions cannot be shared with his people. Moreover, laws cannot be interpreted in terms of love and hate, sadness and resentment, or if they can, they are not to be trusted because justice cannot only depend on the king's heart.

When the chronicle was written, the men that ruled Sweden had taken arms against their king and exiled him. There is no doubt that the verses I have just gone through had a very specific meaning for men that had violated *lèse-majesté*. Those verses had a satirical tone: they were meant to justify the deposition of Birger. But through the evocation of the king's bad emotions, the author goes much further and also stresses the necessity of controlling the king's power. Therefore he deals with a question that was probably among the most debated and the most interesting for his audience between the election of the young Magnus Eriksson and the redaction of the six articles of the king's oath in April 1335.<sup>35</sup>

The text of the oath ends with these words: "All peace grows and all disorder declines depending on who the king is" (*Alder friþer ökis ok ofriþer forgangis æfter sum kunungr ær till*).<sup>36</sup> It means that the action of a good king – who keeps his words – gains efficacy by following the prescription of the oath, but it also means that a king who betrays his people and refuses to follow the injunctions in the oath can provide neither peace nor justice. The sentence, perhaps inspired by a proverb,<sup>37</sup> already appears in the Ordinance on election (in Swedish *valstadga*), which includes the first known redaction of the king's oath.<sup>38</sup> In this law, which contains a lot of historical allusions, there may be a way to remember the limits of an oath – in this context especially the oath that Birger had taken in 1308. In Magnus Eriksson's law (*Landslagen*), the statement loses its connotation, but still emphasizes the role of human uncertainty in politics. If we return to the first quotation, about the hope that "the kingdom may be joyful" (*at riken matte glæde aff ske*), we can find the same pessimism: joy is not linked to the election, to the specific ritual that makes a new king,<sup>39</sup> but is postponed, being only an effect of the good choice that has been made.

Some years later, as Olle Ferm has shown,<sup>40</sup> St. Birgitta used some articles of the

34 Verdon 2007.

35 Moberg 1984, p. 99; Wiktorsson 1976, pp. 53–58.

36 *Landslagen*, pp. 12–13.

37 We find a similar statement, maybe a proverb, in a Swedish mirror of princes from the middle of the fourteenth century, *Um styrilsi konunga ok höfþinga*: "When a man can do whatever he wants, then he acts as he is" (*Tā mannin må som han vil / Tā gör han som han är til*). Moberg 1984, p. 29.

38 *Södermannalagen*, pp. 27–29.

39 See Moeglin 2006.

40 Ferm 1993.

king's oath against Magnus Eriksson, but she also remembered the efficacy of the accusations against Birger, the laughing king. She described the judgment of King Magnus by the celestial court. As Magnus was then still alive, he was condemned to lose all control over himself, so that his people could see and understand that God had abandoned him. God's Justice said: "Ego diminuem ei prudentiam et scienciam agendorum, ut similior videatur fatuo et ioculatori in verbis et operibus suis quam homini sapienti"<sup>41</sup> ('I will decrease his prudence and his knowledge of how to act, so that, in his words and his deeds, he will look more like a fool or a jester than a wise man'). Far from being considered as merely cruel or as a real tyrant, far from causing fear among his people, the Swedish king becomes a fool. His people's contempt makes him lose his power quite automatically.<sup>42</sup> This was the first step towards a contractual interpretation of the king's oath.

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<sup>41</sup> Birgitta, *Revelaciones* VIII.56 (§ 57), ed. Aili 2002, p. 218.

<sup>42</sup> Péneau 2006.



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# Tears of Weakness, Tears of Love:

## Kings as Fathers and Sons in Medieval Spanish Prose

Kim Bergqvist

Crying, the shedding of tears, is a constant human gesture, a bodily function integral to human existence. Its signification and cultural relevance, however, are not. The meanings attributed to and interpretations made of weeping men and women vary according to each historical situation, with each cultural context or emotional community (to use a phrase coined by Barbara Rosenwein).<sup>1</sup> In the Castilian nobleman Don Juan Manuel's book of chivalry (*Libro del cauallero et del escudero*, 1326), the eponymous squire and the old knight take leave of each other "weeping plenty, with pleasure" (*llorando mucho, con plazer*).<sup>2</sup> Shedding tears was understood in different ways according to the situation at hand – it could be pleasurable, but it could also be an expression of devastation<sup>3</sup> – which makes us aware of it being an ambiguous act, a gesture that was open to the interpretation of medieval agents and requires careful reading by medievalists today.<sup>4</sup> A ritualized performance of an emotion, by an individual or by a group, and a private display of feeling had different functions and deserve different explanations.

The role of fatherhood in medieval history and literature has been a somewhat

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<sup>1</sup> Rosenwein 2006.

<sup>2</sup> Juan Manuel, *Libro del cauallero et del escudero*, in *Obras completas*, ed. Blecua 1982–1983, p. 53.

<sup>3</sup> Most often at the occasion of someone's death. In Don Juan Manuel's *Libro de los estados* (*Book of the Estates*), ed. Blecua 1982, chapter VII, p. 216, the young *infante* Turin comes across a dead man for the first time, and the deceased's loved ones weeping and grieving for him. Turin's teacher explains that all things living feel anger (*enojo*) and fear (*espanto*) in the face of death, because it is the opposite of life.

<sup>4</sup> Gertsman 2012, pp. xii, xv. Such an approach has quite recently begun to be employed by historians, and such great figures of twentieth-century historical studies as Norbert Elias, Johan Huizinga and Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie were far from grasping the cultural relativity of emotional expressions. See Blanchfield 2012, p. xxii.

neglected theme in scholarship until relatively recently. The long-established view has been that fathers took little part in the upbringing of their sons, because many boys were raised at courts or households presided over by men other than their fathers. This perspective colors the analysis in Ruth Mazo Karras's influential book on medieval masculinity, where the treatment of fatherhood as a theme amounts to no more than the following passage:

Fatherhood meant more than participating in the conception of a child, since the father also gave the child a name and a social identity. Medieval fatherhood, however, did not mean participating continuously in the upbringing of a child. Mothers and servants commonly took the leading role in childrearing. Even sons who followed in their fathers' footsteps, as knights or as craftsmen, usually trained in a household other than their fathers'. It is hard to know what role paternal love played in fatherhood, because the extant sources [...] tend to show fathers mainly concerned with getting their children established in life. Fathers did grieve when their children died. But father/son companionship or bonding is not a prominent theme in literary sources. Fathers may be proud of their sons, but do not play a major role in their formation. It was the fact of patrilineal reproduction, rather than the relationship with a son, that contributed to medieval manhood.<sup>5</sup>

Even if we cannot fully grasp the relationship between medieval fathers and their sons, we should be able to get further than this. In connection with the recent burst of studies engaging with the history of emotions, fatherhood should be an aspect of this field that is ripe for astute analysis of gender and emotionality in medieval Europe.<sup>6</sup> In what follows, it is my intention to examine weeping, the emotions connected to it, and the portrayal of kings as fathers and sons in thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Spanish literature, with examples from history writing, imaginative literature, and a reading of the relevant didactic texts. The aim is to offer some reflections on the attitudes taken towards lachrymose behavior, and towards the bond between royal fathers and their sons, and to reach some insight into the distinction between the political and the emotional life in the context described. My results will not be conclusive, for they are drawn from a relatively small corpus of texts, and my aim is first and foremost to offer some interpretations and preliminary conclusions as well as to stimulate further research into this subject area.

As historians, we have to approach agents and their actions in a methodologically consistent manner. Feelings are hard to construe as actions, but the emotional expressions with which they are connected are actions – no matter if they are conscious or unconscious, voluntary or involuntary – and can thus be interpreted. Moreover, we

<sup>5</sup> Karras 2003, p. 166.

<sup>6</sup> An attempt to approach the topic in medieval Castilian literature was made by María Luzdivina Cuesta in an article published in 1997. She is, however, mostly interested in the representation of the relationship between fathers and daughters, and the paternal preoccupation with the daughter's marriage.

need to be sensitive to the particular context in which emotional expressions were constructed. The gestures of weeping may be interpreted on the one hand as an expression of an emotional state of grief, sorrow, or exultant joy, and on the other be loaded with significance not primarily related to the actor's emotions but first and foremost to the interpretation of the gestures in a ritualized form, or as political communication by and for an intra-textual or an extra-textual audience that encountered these representations.

In other words, we have to examine the emotional aspect of medieval textual evidence and ponder the key role emotions played in medieval society, not because it was "uncivilized" (as Elias would have it), but because medieval agents were "sensitive, adaptive, and attuned to possibilities of adjustment".<sup>7</sup> Hence we have been doing violence to medieval society by trying to overlook or explain away the role of emotions.<sup>8</sup> I would like to repeat the plea of Barbara Rosenwein that in the future emotion needs to be included as an essential aspect of history proper, not treated as a separate field.

### The weeping king Alfonso X and the false death of his son

Some medieval chronicles make it difficult for the scholar to know what is actually a credible representation of the past and what parts of the text should be regarded as *topoi*: though even these cannot be treated as mere generic commonplaces, devoid of meaning, and have to be regarded as parts of the discourse. Relating to kings and grief, we may be quite certain that the death of each king held by the chronicler in esteem is presented as giving rise to a great amount of communal grief and crying among the population. This may tell us a lot about the chronicler's attitude – or that of his patron – towards the monarchs, but is in all probability not very useful in examining the meaning of grief, mourning, and the performativity of tears, except as public rituals. Other textual evidence seems to represent grief in ways that do not appear to be related to the employment of *topoi*.

The relationship between a king and his subjects and that between a father and his son were bonds that were understood to be similar in medieval Europe, a fact that is evidenced by the political writings of Thomas Aquinas.<sup>9</sup> The idea of the king as *pater patriae* became even more important to early modern rulers, but it was already present in medieval political thought. In medieval Western societies, fatherhood held great socio-political relevance and potency, not least as a metaphor for God, the king, and

<sup>7</sup> Rosenwein 1998, p. 3.

<sup>8</sup> Peyroux 1998, pp. 4–5, argues: "When we write histories of the past in which feeling is omitted, we implicitly disregard fundamental aspects of the terms on which people act and interact, and we thus deprive ourselves of important evidence for the framework of understanding in which our subjects conducted the business of their lives."

<sup>9</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *De regimine principum*, transl. Dyson 2002, p. 10.

the priest, and their relationships to their respective communities.<sup>10</sup> Thus it is understandable that the bond between a king and his own natural son, bearing this double connotation of kingship and fatherhood, would be a contentious link, fraught with tension and great importance. A striking example of the – to the modern reader – paradoxical relationship between the roles of king and father can be found at the end of the *Crónica de Alfonso X* (*Chronicle of Alfonso X*), written by the chancellor Fernán Sánchez de Valladolid in the 1340s, on behalf of the ruling King Alfonso XI of Castile and León (1311–1350), who wished to complete an existing tradition of history writing, begun during his great-grandfather's reign, before his own regime could be portrayed as the fulfilment of this long chain of rulers.

In the midst of political turmoil and civil war raging because of a succession crisis, King Alfonso X (1221–1284) is reached by false news of the death of his second son, the *infante* Sancho (later King Sancho IV), and is struck by grief. This grief is apparent, expressed by copious weeping. His counsellors, upon seeing his reaction, are mortified.

When King Don Alfonso saw that it said in the letter that Prince Don Sancho, his son, was dead, he grieved greatly; and so as not to reveal it before those who were with him there, he withdrew to a private room so that no one dared to go to him in it. King Alfonso began to weep hard for Prince Don Sancho, and so great was the grief he experienced from it that he spoke very dolorous words, saying many times that the best man he had in his family was dead. When those of King Alfonso's house saw that he was so withdrawn, they realized that he was demonstrating much great sorrow on account of the death of his son; so one of his confidants named Master Nicolás dared to go to him in the chamber, and he spoke these words to the king: "Sire, why are you showing such grief for Prince Don Sancho, your son, who has dispossessed you? For if Prince Don Juan and these other nobles who are here with you realize it, you will lose them all and they will make some movement against you." And so as not to reveal that he was weeping or grieving for Prince Don Sancho, King Alfonso concealed it [...] and he spoke these words: "Master Nicolás, I am not weeping for Prince Don Sancho, but I weep for myself, a miserable old man; because since he died, I shall never recover my realms, [...] more quickly would I have recovered them from Prince Don Sancho, only one man, if he had lived, than from so many others." And with this reason he hid the grief for his son.<sup>11</sup>

10 Moss 2013, p. 7.

11 Fernán Sánchez de Valladolid, *Chronicle of Alfonso X*, transl. Thacker & Escobar 2002, p. 257. The original reads: "Et quando el rey don Alfonso vio la carta que dezié que era muerto el infante don Sancho su fijo, tomó muy fuerte pesar, como quier que lo non mostrase ante los que estauan y. Et apartóse en vna cámara solo, asy que omne ninguno non osaua entrar a él, et començó a llorar por él fuertemente. Et tan grande fue el pesar que ende avía que dezía por él muy doloridas palabras, diziendo muchas vezes que era muerto el mejor omne que auía en su linaje. Et quando los de su casa vieron que así estaua apartado, entendieron que mostraua grant pesar por la muerte de su fijo. Et atreuióse vno de los sus priuados, que dezían maestre Njcolás, e entró á la [cámara] a él et diox estas palabras:

– Sennor, ¿por qué mostrades tan gran pesar [por] el infante don Sancho, vuestro fijo, que vos

In medieval societies, tears were often seen as a mark of sincerity in the display of emotions.<sup>12</sup> Being conceived as such, this form of emotional expression could also be manipulated, to feign sincerity. In this case however, a show of sincerity seems to be unwanted. Alfonso is rather depicted as withdrawing of his own accord into solitude in a private chamber, which suggests the interpretation that he senses the inappropriate or unacceptable nature of his behavior, or at least that it was not intended for the public gaze. Since for a man to be seen weeping in public was not generally regarded as negative or improper,<sup>13</sup> the actions that follow upon Alfonso's receiving the letter must be related to the particular background of this episode, that is, the power struggle between King Alfonso and his son.

One of Alfonso's advisors follows him into the chamber to reproach him for his behavior and the outcome it may have. To have someone of lower status reprimand the king is certainly an effective way of textually undermining his authority, and I am convinced this is a conscious strategy employed by the chronicler Fernán Sánchez to point out the king's weakness.<sup>14</sup>

The historian Marlen Ferrer has offered a completely different reading of this episode, which she treats briefly in her 2008 doctoral dissertation, *Emotions in Motion*.<sup>15</sup> She considers the episode to be positively attuned to Alfonso, since it shows him displaying parental love and affection, a trait she argues was highly valued in society at that time – and in this last respect she is correct. As she shows, the great legal code of Alfonso X, the *Siete partidas* (c. 1256–1265), teaches the lesson that true parental love should stem from reasons both natural and moral.<sup>16</sup> The problem in this case is that the idea that parental love was much valued in Spanish society at the time hinders a correct reading, grounded in an understanding of the context of production of the sources, of this episode and others, which we will see further on. Ferrer has not real-

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tenía deseredado? Ca sy vos lo saben el infante don Juan e estos otros ricos omnes que son aquí convusco, perderlos hedes todos et tomarán carrera contra vos.

Et por mostrar que non lloraua nin avía pesar por el jnfante don Sancho [...] dixo estas palabras: – Maestre Njcolás, non lloro yo por el infante don Sancho, mas lloro yo por mí mesquino viejo que, pues él muerto es, nunca yo cobraré los míos regnos, [...] más ayna los cobrara yo del infante don Sancho, si biuiera, que era vno, que de todos.

Et con esta razón se encubrió del pesar que tenía por el fijo." *Ibid.*, ed. González Jiménez 1998, pp. 240–241.

12 Blanchfield 2012, pp. xxii–xxvi.

13 But perhaps it was starting to be. Reading Don Juan Manuel's *El conde Lucanor*, we note that most examples of intense crying are by women, or by un-gendered groups, and in the cases where men weep it is either related to religious feeling, repentance and confession, or in a state of madness (as in Cuento LI), see Juan Manuel, *El conde Lucanor*, ed. Bleucia 1982–1983.

14 Cf. Classen 2012, p. 235, on King Sigeband in the heroic epic *Kudrun*.

15 Ferrer 2008.

16 *Ibid.*, pp. 323–325.

ized that Fernan Sánchez de Valladolid composed his chronicle in part to contrast the pitiful reign of Alfonso with the more successful rule of his great-grandson of the same name, Alfonso XI, on whose behalf he was writing his chronicle. The latter was more victorious in his military struggles, enforced monarchical authority more successfully, and had fewer problems in subjugating the noble families trying to oppose his political strategy.<sup>17</sup>

In all probability this particular scene is not based on any previous written evidence (such as documentary sources or letters) but either stems from an oral tradition or is a product of the chronicler's imagination. Either way it was meant to communicate a particular message to the intended audience. As such it should be considered indicative of mentalities held towards the mid-1300s in the courtly environment of the Crown of Castile. To understand this scene, we must consider what it was meant to convey to the intended audience of a historical discourse at the court of Alfonso XI. More than a depiction of a factual event and real feelings, but also more than a literary trope, I think we must interpret it from the perspective of both author and audience: it is meant to convey a sense of real emotion, not of a ritualized performance, and so could be deemed according to the emotional standards of the audience.

### Emotional communities and emotional regimes

First of all, I would like to argue that the royal court of Castile and León in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth century constituted not only a social community, but also what Rosenwein termed an *emotional community*,<sup>18</sup> a social group "whose members adhere to the same valuations of emotions and their expression".<sup>19</sup> Rosenwein explains:

These are precisely the same as social communities – families, neighborhoods, parliaments, guilds, monasteries, parish church memberships – but the researcher looking at them seeks above all to uncover systems of feeling: what these communities (and the individuals within them) define and assess as valuable or harmful to them; the evaluations that they make about other's emotions; the nature of the affective bonds between people that they recognize; and the modes of emotional expression that they expect, encourage, tolerate, and deplore.<sup>20</sup>

This description is applicable to a medieval royal court, in that the members of these milieus were molded by the same religion, the same teachings, and the same literature. I do not view the court as an *emotional regime*, a term coined by William Reddy<sup>21</sup> that

<sup>17</sup> See Gómez Redondo 2000, esp. p. 110.

<sup>18</sup> Rosenwein 2006, pp. 23–25.

<sup>19</sup> Rosenwein 2010, p. 1.

<sup>20</sup> Rosenwein 2002, p. 842.

<sup>21</sup> See Reddy 2001.



in my opinion is best applied to modern societies with more consolidated statecraft and better and more intensive links between the state and its common citizens.<sup>22</sup>

Reddy apparently assumes that each emotional regime becomes socially uniform.<sup>23</sup> I, on the other hand, am unsure of the extent to which the emotional attitudes and norms inherent in a medieval court milieu would have affected the emotional life of the majority of the subjects of the kingdom or principality – basically anyone outside the very restricted social group that led their lives at least in part at the royal court. I am reluctant to accept the idea that all systems of emotional norms tended to become universalized in this manner. I think that we are rather more equipped to study the court as a social, cultural, and emotional milieu apart, where conceptions of emotions and attitudes towards them were to a large extent shared between its members (and with other Christian European elite communities), but not necessarily directed at a larger social community. The courtly conduct and the emotional attitudes connected to the court were a symbolic capital that was probably closely guarded and hard-won. That is, its exclusivity was protected. The whole point of presenting oneself as courteous was often to signal membership of the upper social stratum of society, and in doing so to draw sharp boundaries downwards.

There is another important question that needs to be tackled. Even if the king was part of the court milieu and thus belonged to the same emotional community as the other members of court, would it be reasonable to assume that his position, his office, by the late thirteenth century entailed such a distinct role to that of other lords of high station, that the exigencies were greater? Did the aristocracy expect a more ideal behavior in emotional regard from their king than they expected of each other? This question has not been answered by previous research, and we shall return to it later.

To a medieval audience, the above-related episode from the chronicle of Alfonso X might very well have sounded an echo of a story from the Bible. We should consider the biblical precedent, namely the grief of King David when he learns of the death of his rebellious son, Absalom.<sup>24</sup> This story would have been well known to the audience of the chronicle, and was a narrative parallel its author must have had to reckon with. King David was the foundation of traditions that defended the divine right of kings – what Walter Ullman called the descending theory of government. As one of the most widely diffused themes of sculptural art in the Romanesque period, the effigy of this biblical monarch was also present in many cathedrals and churches, not least in medieval Spain, which ensured that people recognized his story.<sup>25</sup> In 2 Samuel 18:33 it is said that “the king was much moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate,

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Ferrer 2008, p. 340.

<sup>23</sup> See the review by Stearns 2003, p. 474.

<sup>24</sup> I am grateful to Professor Wim Verbaal for his suggestions regarding this point.

<sup>25</sup> Klosko 2012, p. 301; Ullmann 1965, p. 13; Moráis Morán 2011.

and wept: and as he went, thus he said, O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!"<sup>26</sup> It is an expression of grief both lachrymose and verbal. David's grief and crying is also the cause of outrage amongst his men, seemingly for the same reason as that of King Alfonso. The men interpret David's grief as a betrayal of them, saying that he would prefer them dead, even though Absalom was disloyal. The followers of the king expected their loyalty to be rewarded, above and beyond any family ties that bound the king to his son.

In his article "Frustrated Masculinity: The Relationship between William the Conqueror and his Eldest Son," William Aird argues that we need to emphasize the complexity of the father-son bond in the construction of medieval masculinity. While the son represented a continuation of the lineage and the ambitions of the father, at the same time he embodied a threat to the father's position and role in the family, since he would eventually come to replace him: the son was therefore an ever-present *memento mori*.<sup>27</sup> If this holds true for a wider range of medieval experiences, which is likely, perhaps we see indications of the same fears and anxieties in the case I have expounded on above. An article by Jonathan Lyon examines the preparation of youths from the most prominent noble lineages of twelfth-century Germany to be lords, and their fathers' involvement in this process.<sup>28</sup> Lyon points to similar frustration among these young noblemen, whose fathers' longevity hindered their sons from assuming political power and the role of paterfamilias. Often, inter-generational conflicts would be the result of such frustration.

Prince Sancho's uprising against his father King Alfonso could certainly be ascribed to similar emotions. Knowing that he was not next in line to the throne, he could probably accept that he would not be king, since he had an elder brother who would rule after the death of their father. But after the premature death of the heir, the *infante* Fernando de la Cerda, the appointment of Sancho's young nephew as new heir angered him greatly, since Sancho was then closest in line to the throne in his own generation. A boy would not sidestep him, and the wrong he felt his father was doing him by making this choice only contributed to the widespread criticism of the king.

The reasoning ascribed to Sancho in the *Crónica de Alfonso X* when he appoints himself heir indicates that he believed himself to be fully in the right. He apparently thought his actions – the forceful protection of the realm in the absence of his royal father (when Alfonso was abroad to seek to fulfil his imperial ambitions, after having been elected King of the Romans in 1257 but never crowned or anointed by the Pope) – would earn him fatherly love and that he "deserved to inherit [the realm] after the

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<sup>26</sup> King James's Bible (1611).

<sup>27</sup> Aird 1999, p. 55.

<sup>28</sup> Lyon 2008, p. 307.

king's days".<sup>29</sup> He came to see the king's later actions as unlawful and illegitimate and his own rebellion as justified – and Fernán Sánchez's version of events supports the claims of Sancho IV, who in hindsight came out victorious.

### Public and private emotions

Marlen Ferrer identifies an *emotional exchange model* in the depiction of the relationship between parents and children in the legal code of Alfonso X, the *Siete partidas*: "While parents were expected to employ affection and care towards the child, the child was obliged to love, obey and serve his parents."<sup>30</sup> While correct, this description is far from exhaustive. I agree that parental love was highly valued and looked upon as a natural aspect of the relationship between parent and child, but we must not forget that the role of the father consisted in both loving and chastising his children. It is clear that a father had a responsibility to love (*amar*) his children, but also to instruct (*castigar*) them.

The role of the father in the household and that of the king in his realm is often presented as parallel. Aristotle in his *Politics* says that the rule of a father over his children should be as by a king over his subjects.<sup>31</sup> And according to Thomas Aquinas, "he who rules a household is not a king, but the father of a family. He does, however, bear a certain resemblance to a king, and for this reason, kings are sometimes called the 'fathers' of their peoples."<sup>32</sup> This idea is also present in the literature composed in early fourteenth-century Castile, such as the book of chivalry, the *Libro del Caballero Zifar* – attributed to Ferrand Martínez, a cleric of Toledo – which states that "the king should love his subjects as his sons".<sup>33</sup> And in the *Siete partidas* (Second Part, Title X, Law 2), we read that the king should treat his subjects as a father who rears his sons with love, and chastises them with piety.<sup>34</sup>

The instructive faculty of the father is in focus in the most didactic part of the *Libro del Caballero Zifar*, the "Castigos del rey de Mentón" ("Instructions of the King of Mentón"), where the eponymous knight Zifar, now king, has had his sons returned to

29 Fernán Sánchez, *Chronicle of Alfonso X*, transl. Thacker & Escobar 2002, p. 212. The original reads: "merescia heredarlo después de sus días", Fernán Sánchez, *Crónica de Alfonso X*, ed. González Jiménez 1998, p. 186.

30 Ferrer 2008, p. 387.

31 Aristotle, *The Politics*, transl. Sinclair 1981, p. 92.

32 Thomas Aquinas, *De regimine principum*, transl. Dyson 2002, p. 10. The original Latin: "qui autem domum regit, non rex, sed paterfamilias dicitur. Habet tamen aliquam similitudinem regis, propter quam aliquando reges populorum patres vocantur."

33 Ferrand Martínez, *El Libro del Caballero Zifar*, transl. Nelson 1983, p. 187. The original reads: "Ca el rey deve querer su pueblo como sus fijos [...]", Ferrand Martínez, *El Libro del Caballero Zifar*, ed. González Muela 1982, p. 272.

34 *Siete partidas*, vol. II, 1807, p. 87.

him. It begins: "Entering the room with Garfin and Roboan, his sons, the king sat on his throne. He ordered them to be seated before him, with their faces turned toward him, just like a teacher who prepares to instruct scholars."<sup>35</sup> The first thing he does, after they have been apart for many years, is to offer them extensive lessons on how to live their lives and to behave properly according to their position in the social hierarchy. It is made clear that a lenient father can never have well-bred sons, and that any man who has sons ought to be merciless towards them.<sup>36</sup> The filial gratitude to the wise father for the lessons imparted is emphasized: "After the instruction the king had given them, they both knelt at his feet and kissed them while shedding many tears of happiness and showing gratitude to him for the great favor he did for them."<sup>37</sup>

In this we find another clue to the reasoning ascribed to King Alfonso in the *Crónica de Alfonso X*. Since it was his responsibility as a father to raise his son properly, what was viewed as moral failings of the son, his choice to rebel, also reflected negatively upon the father. Perhaps this is what the audience was expected to read into Alfonso's words – "I am not weeping for Prince Don Sancho, but I weep for myself, a miserable old man"<sup>38</sup> – an admission of failure as a father. The connection between the two roles – which I have shown was not only a theme in scholastic political philosophy but also present in Castilian literary and legal works – though not necessarily their inseparability,<sup>39</sup> would then have led to the conclusion that Alfonso was also a failure as a king.

Another complex cluster of ideas is directly related to the type of narrative episode at hand, namely that of public appearance and private emotions. Certain previous studies have given the impression that there was no division between public and private life in the Middle Ages.<sup>40</sup> This entails an understanding of emotional expression as a purely communicative and social act, symbolic and strategic in its nature, a tool for the exercise of social and political power.<sup>41</sup> I beg to differ. Medieval authors did not discuss the

35 Ferrand Martínez, *El Libro del Caballero Zifar*, transl. Nelson 1983, p. 153. The original reads: "E entróse en su cámara con Garfin e con Roboán, sus fijos, e asentóse ante él, las caras tornadas contra él, e bien así como maestro que quiere mostrar a escolares", Ferrand Martínez, *El Libro del Caballero Zifar*, ed. González Muela 1982, p. 233.

36 *Ibid.*, ed. González Muela 1982, p. 252.

37 *Ibid.*, transl. Nelson 1983, p. 225. The original reads: "Después que el consejo les ovo dado el rey, dexáronse caer amos a dos a sus pies e fuéronelos besar, llorando de los ojos con grant plazer e gradesciéndole quanta merced les fazía", *Ibid.*, ed. González Muela 1982, p. 322.

38 Fernán Sánchez, *Crónica de Alfonso X*, transl. Thacker & Escobar 2002, p. 257. The original reads: "non lloro yo por el infante don Sancho, mas lloro yo por mí mesquino viejo ...", Fernán Sánchez, *Crónica de Alfonso X*, ed. González Jiménez 1998, p. 240.

39 See Rodgers 1991–1992, p. 67.

40 Ferrer 2008, pp. 34–35.

41 See e.g. Althoff 1998.

distinction explicitly in terms familiar to us, but there was some consciousness of the different nature of the public sphere, notions that differentiated actions performed in public from private ones. Paul Hyams, in relation to the problematic concept of feud, argues that by the twelfth century at the very latest, there was an awareness among the people that the king, transformed into a sacral figure by the coronation, possessed a different kind of authority, whereby his actions could be legitimated as acts of *publica potestas*. Hyams speaks of “a sense of the privileging of acts performed in the public interest over selfish and private ones”.<sup>42</sup> This is precisely what we are dealing with here, in my opinion.

We see quite clearly in the case of the *Crónica de Alfonso X* that the private emotions, the grief, sadness, and suffering of the father over his loss, had to give way to the precedence of the political demands on the king. That is, if private emotions were not in line with political concerns, they had to be suppressed. Alfonso does not manage this satisfactorily: he is represented as a weak ruler whose emotional nature overtakes his rationality. In the end, the scene depicted is not supposed to be ambiguous or apprehended as paradoxical, but rather straightforwardly negative. We cannot deduce whether this really happened, or whether he expressed true feeling, but we can understand it as a depiction of emotional expression that was meant to convey a lesson to the audience. That is, he has no license to express his private emotions on the public stage. Herein lays a tentative conclusion that medieval agents could and did make distinctions between public and private concerns, consciously or unconsciously, and that as regards the office of the king, the former should be prioritized. There were notions that enabled the identification of private feelings as detrimental to the public figure.

But the episode also begs the question of whether Alfonso's portrayed reaction should be understood as a deviation from the emotional norms of a certain community (the royal court of Castile), or whether it can better be understood if we consider the exceptional demands and requirements placed upon the monarch in the given context. What were the ideals for emotional display? How do we know? We may approach an answer to this question by examining the didactic literature, mirrors for princes and similar texts, produced in the same milieu.

### Jaume I of Aragon and his illegitimate son

Another approach is to look at similar texts from other contexts. In the neighboring kingdom of Aragon, King Jaume I *el Conqueridor* (1208–1276, [James I]) produced an autobiography, *The Book of Deeds of James I of Aragon* (in the original Catalan *Llibre dels feits*), which gives intimate insight into his private and emotional life, at least such as he would have liked it to be perceived. It is an exceptional source; a text that is cer-

42 Hyams 2010, pp. 160–162, quote on p. 162. See also Hyams 1998.

tainly self-exulting, and portrays King Jaume as a model knight and an authoritative king,<sup>43</sup> but there is no reason to believe that this bias and subjectivity should be in any way harmful to the realistic representation of medieval emotions – or at least ideals, norms, and attitudes connected to emotional expression – except to ascribe ideal emotions to the king himself and his friends and negative emotions to his enemies.

A particularly relevant example is that of the rebellion of the nobles against Jaume, in which his illegitimate son was involved. The story ends with Jaume's legitimate son, Pere, taking his half-brother captive and having him drowned. Apart from the version in *The Book of Deeds*, the chronicler of Pere (who succeeded Jaume), Bernat Desclot, also mentions the events in question in his chronicle, *Crònica del Rey en Pere*.

It grieved him deeply for he was his son, but on the other hand he was thereby greatly comforted, inasmuch as Ferran Sànxex had plotted many evil things against him and against the prince his brother.<sup>44</sup>

Desclot is apparently aware of the two distinct reactions pertaining to the different roles Jaume upheld, those of father on the one hand, and king on the other.<sup>45</sup> Jaume's main concern was not (at least ostensibly), as his own autobiography shows, the bonds of parental affection that bound him as a father to his son; the relationship between him as king and his son as a vassal – with all the regulations of proper conduct inherent therein – determined the emotions he was expected to express in this situation. And even though Desclot later attributed grief to Jaume in the moment he learns of his son's death, which speaks to the humanly imaginative in the chronicler and his attitude towards emotions, Jaume himself only expresses pleasure, since that emotion best emphasized his correct kingly disposition:

Before we left there, news reached us of how Prince Peter, while besieging a castle of Fernando Sánchez, had taken him prisoner and had had him drowned. And this greatly pleased us when we heard of it, because it was a very serious thing that he, being our son, had risen against us, after we had done him so much good and given him so noble an inheritance.<sup>46</sup>

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43 Aurell 2012, p. 51.

44 Ferrer 2008, p. 395. The original reads: "[...] pesa li molt, per ço com era son fill. E d'altra part aconfortas s'en molt, per ço com havia pensada tan gran malea vers ell e vers l'infant En Pere son frare", Desclot, *Crònica*, ed. Coroloeu 1885, p. 130.

45 See Ferrer 2008, pp. 390–397.

46 Jaume I, *The Book of Deeds*, transl. Smith & Buffery 2003, pp. 372–373. The original reads: "E a nós plac-nos molt quan ho haguem oït, per ço car era molt dura cosa que ell era nostre fill e era's llevat contra nós, al qual nós tan de bé haviem feit e tan honrat heretament haviem dat", Jaume I, *Llibre dels fets*, ed. Soldevila 2007, p. 517.

The modern-day translators of Jaume's *The Book of Deeds* ascribe "a streak of cruelty" to him, and argue that Desclot's version is intended to redeem the heroic king.<sup>47</sup> I think we should rather see in it the constant precedence and urgency of political concerns for the king, which certainly affected his social display of emotions. The king's private feelings were another matter, not intended for public consumption and therefore withheld from the chronicle discourse. We cannot infer from this that he was cruel or did not grieve.

It was the immediate situation that decided which emotional responses were legitimate. On losing a friend or comrade-in-arms in battle, weeping seemed to have been an expected response, as is evidenced by *The Book of Deeds*, though the repression of these emotional outbursts was also common. Perhaps it is correct to assume, that the court and the battlefield were distinct social fields that required different emotional expressions – and this is more or less the perspective taken by Ferrer – but that is probably not enough of an answer. Weeping had a particular and closely regulated role to play in religious worship and mourning, and seems overall to have become connected mainly to religious feeling by this time.

Marlen Ferrer interprets another episode from *The Book of Deeds*, that of Jaume withdrawing into a private chamber when struck by grief at the news of the death of an uncle, as a ritualized form of grief: "[...] we could argue that we should understand Jaume's emotional conduct, his withdrawal to the more private sphere of the household/court as having a ritual dimension, the withdrawal itself actually displaying his grief".<sup>48</sup> Such an interpretation is indeed possible, but is it really necessary to explain this action in terms of ritual? This reading offers no possibility of identifying a non-ritual form of mourning, since its public expression is evidently ritualistic. In the case of Alfonso, he apparently did not wish to display his grief, but on the contrary, hide it. From my point of view, ritual has no bearing on these textual passages. The imaginative and the didactic literature of the period offer an explanation of the problem, which is related to the ideas of self-restraint and the moderation of emotions.

### Moderation (*mesura*) as a dominant cultural ideal

The *Siete partidas* of Alfonso X, written sometime around 1256–1265,<sup>49</sup> is an invaluable source for the political thought of this monarch and his contemporaries. It regulates every conceivable aspect of social and political life, including the ideal behavior of a king to members of his family and of his court, to his counsellors and all his other subjects. It is obvious that political relations were often depicted with the use of emo-

47 Jaume I, *The Book of Deeds*, transl. Smith & Buffery 2003, pp. 372–273, note 190.

48 Ferrer 2008, pp. 383–384.

49 O'Callaghan 2001, pp. xxx–xl.



tion words. For instance, Title XI of the second *partida* – which describes how the king should manage the upkeep of the kingdom, including practicalities such as roads and castles – deals with “How the king should love his land” (*Cual el rey debe amar a su tierra*).

Another important source is a mirror for princes produced in much the same context: at the Castilian royal court, although a few decades later. The *Castigos de Sancho IV* was composed sometime around the close of the thirteenth century, in 1292 or 1293, a few years before the death of King Sancho.<sup>50</sup> It is basically a collection of *exempla* in the form of a dialogue. An examination of these sources will help us conclude which emotions were frowned upon in the upbringing of male royal children, and which expressions were to be avoided or repressed. A conclusion that comes out of the reading of these texts is that the king indeed had to meet greater expectations than anyone else – that is, if he acted dishonorably, it was a greater shame because of his high station – since the king is the example everyone else takes after (*a enxenplo del rey se torrnan todos los otros*).<sup>51</sup> Many of the virtues mentioned in the *Castigos* were the same as those that appear in mirrors for princes of the Carolingian era, the cardinal virtues of rulership.<sup>52</sup>

In the *Castigos* the passions, which are also called movements of the heart (*mouimientos del corazón*), are seen as a lesser form of virtue, uncontrolled by reason.<sup>53</sup> True virtue is only possible if the good passions are regulated by reason and understanding, and when man is accustomed to them. Virtue, thus understood, allows men to act according to moderation.<sup>54</sup> We may determine that emotions that were allowed unmanaged expression were frowned upon.

The most central emotion that is shown to be illicit in the text is anger, *ira* or *sanna* in the original Castilian. Medieval theologians considered anger a sin that had arisen out of the Original Sin. Thus, it had a prominent place in catalogues of sins.<sup>55</sup> Previous research into the history of emotions, notably by contributors to the anthology *Anger's Past*,<sup>56</sup> has shown that anger could also be positively charged; legitimate reasons gave rise to righteous anger. In some situations, lords and kings (who were depicted as mild

50 Gómez Redondo 1998, p. 913. See Bizzarri 2004 for an updated introduction and new interpretation of this text.

51 *Castigos de Sancho IV* (Ms. E), ed. Bizzarri 2001, p. 143.

52 Althoff 1998, p. 61.

53 *Castigos de Sancho IV* (Ms. B), ed. de Gayangos 1952, p. 196. This theme is developed more extensively in this second redaction of the *Castigos*, composed in 1353, e.g. in ms. B (Ms. 6603 of the Biblioteca Nacional de Madrid).

54 *Ibid.*, pp. 195–196; Cf. *Castigos de Sancho IV* (Ms. E), ed. Bizzarri 2001, pp. 162–163.

55 Althoff 1998, p. 60.

56 Rosenwein (ed.) 1998.



in their natural dispositions)<sup>57</sup> were expected to act on their wrath to renegotiate or resettle social relationships or hierarchies.

In the *Castigos*, the appeal to avoid anger is part of a larger model of restraint and self-control. A lord should know how to act according to *mesura*, that is with moderation, and to avoid excess in all things. The *Castigos* say that “*Non cae al rey ser desmesurado en el logar ó debe auer mesura*” (“It is not fitting for the king to be immoderate when he should display moderation”).<sup>58</sup> Also, more generally formulated, “in the customs of men all the extremes are reprehensible and evil [...] and the mean [the middle state] is to be praised, because, according to the Philosopher, all virtue resides in the mean.”<sup>59</sup>

This ideal of moderation is also apparent in the *Siete partidas*. In the Second Part, Title XXI, Law 4, the four major virtues are listed as: “*cordura: e fortaleza, e mesura: e justicia*”,<sup>60</sup> which in Latin would be *prudentia*, *fortitudo*, *moderatio*, and *justitia*. The ideal of moderation is also explicitly attributed to the king, the highest order of the clergy, and the knighthood. *Mesura* is expected to a higher degree according to the nobility of birth and lineage.<sup>61</sup>

This ideal is present in many types of text produced in this society. For example, Juan Ruiz's, the Archpriest of Hita, *Libro de buen amor* (“Book of Good Love”) also expounds this ideal: “Be modest and gentle as a dove, proud and poised as a peacock. Restrain yourself: do not show anger, peevishness, or irritation; the lover takes pride in his self-control.”<sup>62</sup> Although here the ideal of restraint is not socially exclusive: “The poor man hides his poverty and the misery of his life by a show of humor and a cheerful face; he holds back his tears.”<sup>63</sup> Juan Ruiz portrays a lack of self-restraint as indicative of madness: “She said, ‘Madman, why do you have to lament so much? Your futile complaints will profit nothing. Temper this grief with good sense. Wipe away your

<sup>57</sup> Althoff 1998, p. 70.

<sup>58</sup> *Castigos de Sancho IV* (Ms. E), ed. Bizzarri 2001, p. 149.

<sup>59</sup> The original reads: “... ca en los costumbres de los homes todos los extremos son reprehensibles é malos, [...] et el medio es de loar; ca segund el filósofo, toda virtud está en medio”, *Castigos de Sancho IV* (Ms. B), ed. de Gayangos 1952, p. 196.

<sup>60</sup> *Siete partidas*, vol. II, 1807, p. 200.

<sup>61</sup> “Los homes, quanto son de mejor linage et de mas noble sangre, tanto deben seer mas mesurados”, *ibid.*, vol. III, 1807, p. 688.

<sup>62</sup> Juan Ruiz, *Libro de buen amor*, ed. & transl. Mignani & Di Cesare 1970, p. 132. The original reads: “Sey, como la paloma, linpio e *mesurado*; / sey como el pavón, loçano, sossegado; / sey cuerdo e non sañudo, nin triste nin irado: / en esto se esmera el qu’ es enamorado”; *Ibid.*, ed. Ciceri 2002, p. 149 (l. 563), my emphasis. The translation rewrites the original poem, but *mesura* is quite well represented by the concept of self-control.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, ed. & transl. Mignani & Di Cesare 1970, p. 142. The original reads: “el pobre con buen seso e con cara pagada / encubre su pobreza e su vida lazada, / coge sus muchas lágrimas en su boca çerrada”; *Ibid.*, ed. Ciceri 2002, p. 163 (l. 636).

tears and plan your next move.”<sup>64</sup> The same notions are reflected in the *Libro del Caballero Zifar*, which states that a noble man must be moderate in his speech, gestures, deeds, and desire for honor.<sup>65</sup>

Barbara Rosenwein has convincingly shown why one needs to avoid explaining a ‘new’ model of self-restraint as the beginning of a civilizing process.<sup>66</sup> We should rather read this as a cultural ideal, in this case influenced primarily by Greek philosophy. Aristotle seems to be the main inspiration. Self-restraint is here part of a tradition inherited from classical antiquity, related to the Stoic ideal of eradication of emotions, but in another form, first and foremost connected to the peripatetic school.<sup>67</sup> It strives not towards a complete eradication of emotions, but towards their moderation and control, in that it understands emotions to be opposed to reason and logic, their very enemy in fact – and one must therefore learn to be controlled by the latter so as to minimize the influence of the former.<sup>68</sup> That cultural ideal is comprehensive and includes, among other aspects, emotional norms and attitudes. Whenever and wherever we choose to locate its appearance, or perhaps should I say re-appearance, the rise of self-restraint and courtliness was a recurring ideal that shaped the actions and attitudes of medieval agents, secular as well as clerical.<sup>69</sup> This ideal was exclusive, insofar as it was attributed to the highest orders of society as a distinguishing trait. The same virtues that were held to be central to the king were also desirable in the nobility and among the knighthood.<sup>70</sup> We can see this in the *Siete partidas* and in the *Castigos de Sancho IV*.

If the chronicler Fernán Sánchez represented Alfonso’s manner of tackling his grief as improper and immoderate, can we detect a similar tendency in the portrayal of other emotions? The king is depicted more frequently as angry and wrathful than grieving.<sup>71</sup> This emotion was, as we have seen, regarded as a sin, but could also be employed justly. The distinction hinged on legitimate cause.<sup>72</sup> Even a king needed a valid and right-

64 *Ibid.*, ed. & transl. Mignani & Di Cesare 1970, p. 166. The original reads: “Diz: ‘Loco, ¿qué avedes que tanto vos quexades?/ Por ese quexo vano [vós] nada non ganades;/ tenprat con el buen seso el pesar que ayades;/ alinpiat vuestras lágrimas [e] pesat qué fagades”; *Ibid.*, ed. Ciceri 2002, p. 193 (l. 792).

65 Ferrand Martínez, *El Libro del Caballero Zifar*, ed. González Muela 1982, pp. 239–240, 260–268.

66 Rosenwein 2002, pp. 826–828.

67 Knuuttila 2004, p. 6, further pp. 88 and 102 on the Platonic application of this idea.

68 Ferrand Martínez, *El Libro del Caballero Zifar*, ed. González Muela 1982, p. 260. Similar ideas are expressed by Don Juan Manuel in several of his works.

69 See Hyams 1998, pp. 105–108. Also Jaeger 1985.

70 Rochwert 2002, pp. 93, 95.

71 Since I submitted this study for publication, a highly relevant article by Simon Doubleday (2015) has appeared in print.

72 For a discussion of anger in theological discourse and aristocratic society, in connection with

ful reason to display and act out his anger, and in that case it could be performed to restructure social relations and impose hierarchical ties. Let us consider the depictions of Alfonso's anger to determine whether Fernán Sánchez ascribes legitimate cause to the king's actions.

With all this, the two departed from one another very angry. King Alfonso kept his plan to finish what he had begun with the pope and with the King of France; and he again had the council who were there summoned to give him advice, and he asked that they agree to mint those coins as has been said. But they, who felt very aggravated, dared not tell King Alfonso, and they went to speak with Prince Don Sancho, begging him for mercy's sake to take pity on them, because if they returned to their lands with this reply, they would be very badly received and everybody would be very angry at them. They said that he, Prince Don Sancho, knew very well how many deaths, how many outrages, and how many cruelties and sufferings the king, his father, had brought about in the kingdom, for which *all of them were angry at him*.<sup>73</sup>

In this scene, it strikes us that not only the king and the prince were angry with each other because of their disagreement, but that the men of the council, and indeed the whole people of the realm, also felt legitimate anger in the face of the suffering they underwent and which they believed had been caused by King Alfonso's misjudgment and wrongful actions. We can then see the representation of the king's anger in this case as another example of the exemplification of Alfonso's actions demonstrating his unsuitability: he is revealed as an unjust king. As Gerd Althoff has pointed out: "[a]nger functioned [...] as proof that a ruler could not meet the demands of his office".<sup>74</sup> In this way, we can move beyond the understanding of emotions as communicative acts. The depictions of emotional expression in a chronicle could function as legitimizing and de-legitimizing tools, but they hinged on affective understanding of these emotions among their audience; an audience, we have to assume, that shared a set of valuations of and attitudes towards emotions and emotional expressions. Within the emotional community of the fourteenth-century Castilian court, emotions too

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the exercise of lordship and legitimate authority, see Barton 1998.

73 Fernán Sánchez, *Chronicle of Alfonso X*, transl. Thacker & Escobar 2002, pp. 241–242, my emphasis. The original reads: "Et con tanto se partieron muy despagados el vno del otro. Et el rey fincó con entendimiento de yr por el pleito adelante e de lo acabar commo lo auía començado por el Papa e por el rey de França. Et tornó a mandar librar los conçejos que estauan y ayuntados para les dar recabdo que consintiesen labrar aquellas monedas, ca segunt es ya dicho. E ellos que se sentien por mucho agrauaiados, non lo osauan dezir al rey et fueron fablar con el infante don Sancho pidiéndole por merçet que se doliese dellos, que sy con esta mandadería tornasen a sus tierras que serían muy mal reçebidos et que se ternían por mucho agrauaiados todos. Et que bien sabía cuántas muertes e cuántos desafueros e cuántos despechamientos auie fecho el rey su padre en la tierra por que estauan todos despechados dél [...]"; *Crónica de Alfonso X*, ed. González Jiménez 1998, p. 219.

74 Althoff 1998, p. 67.

rashly expressed were seen as indicative of lack of reason and moderation. Outbursts of grief could apparently serve the same function as anger in this respect.

## Conclusions

This study has shown that there was indeed, in thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Iberia, a consciousness of an opposition of private feelings and public emotions. In this respect, in the case of kings, public and political concerns were always of greater importance.

We have seen how representations of public expressions of emotion can be interpreted as manifestation of the strength or weakness, the legitimacy or unjustness, of power. A writer of a historical discourse could, in this way, use current attitudes towards the expression of emotions to evoke an expected response to his narrative from the intended audience.

Perhaps most importantly, emotions and their expression were crucial to the behavior of the private and the public agent; the appropriate emotions simply differed in accordance with each context and situation. The ideal of moderation, which can probably be linked first and foremost to the recovery of Aristotle, had gained such ground that it was highly influential in the formation of attitudes towards emotional expressiveness. In this process, intense expressions of grief began in some instances to be regarded negatively and severely, since it betrayed a lack of will power and rationality.



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# Crying Crusaders

Kurt Villads Jensen

In 1187, the Danish King Canute celebrated Christmas in Odense together with his magnates and most trusted warriors. A lavish dinner of roast pork and the traditional heavy drinking<sup>1</sup> were suddenly interrupted when a papal legate entered the royal court and read aloud a bull. Jerusalem had fallen to infidels, and while Pope Gregory VIII was writing his letter to summon the Christians to take up arms, fight back and regain the Holy City, tears poured from his eyes, falling to mix with the ink and stain the parchment.<sup>2</sup> So relates a short text from Denmark from around 1190, the *De profectiōe Danorum in Hierosolymam*.<sup>3</sup> It continues with an explanation of how the king and magnates burst into tears and sighs and were unable to speak or respond to the legate<sup>4</sup> – however, not for long. Esbern Snare of the mighty Hvide-family jumped to his feet and delivered a long and stirring speech about the ancient Danish tradition of heroic deeds and he persuaded all those present, one after another, to take the cross and swear to liberate Jerusalem. The author of the narrative calls the fall of Jerusalem

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1 Medieval Danes' reputation for heavy drinking during Christmas was so strong that enemies planned their campaigns to coincide with the feast of Nativity, in the firm belief that they would meet no resistance. Count Adolf of Schauenburg and Holstein conquered Hamburg in Christmas 1201 because he knew that *nullatenus ducem* [Valdemar of Denmark] *venturum propter festum nativitatis, quod Dani festivis potationibus honorare solent* ('Duke Valdemar would certainly not come because of Christmas which the Danes use to celebrate with festive drinking'); Arnold of Lübeck 1868, VI, 14, p. 236. Unpredictably, and against all ancient customs, Duke Valdemar and his men had kept sober and laid siege to the city and took Count Adolf prisoner.

2 "... cum hec nostra scriberetur epistola, lachrymarum profusio paginam stillando maculavit", in *De profectiōe Danorum in Hierosolymam*, ed. Gertz 1917–1922, p. 463, ll. 14–15.

3 The best introduction to this source is Skovgaard-Petersen 2001.

4 "Quod rex audiens et uniuersi considerentes in profusionem lachrymarum et suspiria resoluuntur, ut penitus omnes obmutescerent ...", in *De profectiōe* ... p. 463, ll. 2–3.



a lamentable matter – *lacrymabile negotium* – and asks, “Hearing of this event, who would not break their heart, except if it were made of stone, so that they burst into tears and sighs.”<sup>5</sup>

Based on this unique source, one may be tempted to conclude that Danes in the Middle Ages were emotionally driven and wept easily, but that would be erroneous. In fact, *De profectione* continues for page after page without any tears at all. The Danish crusaders went to Norway and got drunk, got involved in fighting, lost some of their ships in storms, were attacked by pirates, and were delayed in different ways. At last they reached the Holy Land, and suddenly tears returned to their eyes.

As soon as they set foot on the holy ground, tears flowed abundantly from within them and demonstrated their rejoicing and the exultation of their hearts. They continued to the Holy City, now filled with pagans and idolatry, so that tears and sighs came from the depth of their hearts, especially of those crusaders who had visited Jerusalem earlier, when it was still a Christian city.<sup>6</sup>

The Danish crusaders followed an old tradition of weeping for Jerusalem, which ultimately stretches back to the Bible. When Christ approached Jerusalem, he wept and prophesied that enemies should besiege the city and tear it down to the ground, because Jerusalem did not recognize the time of God’s coming (Luke 19:41–42). In the late eleventh century, crying and open demonstrations of emotions became closely connected to a new, compassionate devotion to the suffering Christ, which has even been called “the greatest revolution in feelings that Europe has ever witnessed.”<sup>7</sup> This revolution was contemporary with Anselm of Canterbury emphasizing the human nature of Christ as a necessary precondition for incarnation and salvation in a new way, while Anselm strove after the tears that would wash away sin. This was when the first crusade was launched, warriors took up the cross and followed Christ to wage wars to wash away their sins. The crusades were an act of remembering and of repeating, they were centred on the *imitatio Christi*.<sup>8</sup> In this mental atmosphere, what role did tears play for the crusaders?

5 “Cuius, uel saxei, hec audientis fundamentum cordis non concutitur, ut prorumpat in lacrymas et singultus?” *Ibid.*, p. 462, ll. 16–17.

6 “Quanta nempe gaudia, quam multa cordis exultatio negotiatoribus nostris specialiter inerant, fletus ubertim fusus ostendit, cum terram sanctam suis ceperunt calcare uestigiis, ...” *Ibid.*, p. 488, ll. 18–20; “Conuenerunt tandem ad ciuitatem sanctam, paganis et idolatria occupatam. Ex intimo cordis affectu fletus subeunt et suspiria, precipue ab his, qui eam prius uiderant gloria et honore sublimatam.” *Ibid.*, p. 489, ll. 4–6.

7 McNamer 2009, p. 2. The recent interest in the history of emotions is inspired by, but also significantly differs from, Norbert Elias’s classical works from the 1930s; see Lemmings & Brooks (eds) 2014. For crying in the Middle Ages, see Gertsman 2012, and Nagy 2000.

8 Purkis 2008.

In the following, some passages from crusade narratives will be presented and discussed, first some early ones describing the First Crusade to Jerusalem in 1096–1099, and then briefly some Nordic accounts from around 1200. These chronicles have been searched for each occurrence of the word for tears, *lacrimae*, but for practical reasons other expressions for weeping or sorrow have not been included. This is not a comprehensive or methodologically fully satisfying way of proceeding, but it may nevertheless offer a first inroad into such vast material and point to some tendencies.

Ten years after the conquest of Jerusalem, more than a handful of histories of the First Crusade had been written, and they laid out a pattern, which became decisive for all later understanding of crusading. They differ greatly, however, in the role they assign to weeping.

*Gesta Francorum* is one of the earliest chronicles of the First Crusade and the conquest of Jerusalem. It is relatively short, in simple language with few literary pretensions, composed by an author who is unknown but who was not clerical.<sup>9</sup> Tears are mentioned only on four occasions. On three of them Muslim war leaders began to cry when they realized how strong the Christian army was, or with what determination the Christians were fighting. Not a flattering picture of Muslims. The fourth person mentioned weeping was a woman: the mother of Sultan Kerbogha of Mosul warns him, ‘with tears’, against entering into war against the Christians. His army is by far the strongest, he has never lost a battle, but the Christian crusaders fight with God on their side and will win.<sup>10</sup> Kerbogha does not listen but leaves to lay siege to Damascus, where a Christian army, inflamed by the newly discovered Holy Lance from the Crucifixion, defeats him.

Later authors were not satisfied with *Gesta francorum*’s simple style and rewrote it. Robert Monachus (Robert the Monk) *Historia Hierosolymitana* from c. 1110 became a true medieval bestseller and by far the most widely diffused report of the First Crusade.<sup>11</sup> Robert included the story about Kerbogha’s mother’s tears but greatly expanded it with many details which were purely his own inventions. More significantly, his narration also includes a number of weeping crusaders.

The leader Bohemund wept for joy, when a great number of magnates joined the crusading army.<sup>12</sup> He again wept for joy when a Christian traitor secretly opens Mus-

9 For *Gesta Francorum*, see France 1998 and Rubenstein 2005.

10 “Mater uero eiusdem Curbarum [Kerbogha] ... dixitque illi lacrimabiliter: ‘Fili, suntne uera quae audio?’ Cui ait ille: ‘Quae?’ Et dixit illa: ‘Audiui quia bellum uis committere cum Francorum gente.’ ... Christiani nequeunt uobiscum bellare, scio namque quod non ualent uobis pugnam inferre, sed deus eorum pro ipsis cotidie pugnat, eosque die noctuque sua protectione defendit.” *Gesta Francorum*, ed. Hill 1967, chapter 23.

11 For Robert Monachus, see the Introduction by Carol Sweetenham, in Robert the Monk 2006.

12 ‘Boamundus autem, ut conspicatus est tot consules, tot duces, tot optimates obuiam sibi occurrere, in coelum manus erigens, abortis prae gaudio lacrymis, fleuit uberrime.’ Robert Monachus, ed. le Bas, 1866, 2, 16.

lim Antioch for the Christians and Bohemund's tears were caused by 'a greater devotion towards God'.<sup>13</sup> Robert the Monk also mentioned the tears and lamentations of the wife of a mighty French crusader whom the Holy Virgin had protected through many battles, but had now 'permitted at last to become a martyr'.<sup>14</sup> Tears were thus a sign not only of devotion and of some sort of imitation of Christ but also of martyrdom.

Robert's ninth book describes the bloody conquest of Jerusalem, and it opens with a prayer on the relation between tears and religious warfare: "Oh sweet Jesus, when your armies caught sight of the earthly walls of Jerusalem, how many waters did their eyes not let out? ... They fought against your enemies in Jerusalem, although they came from so far away, and they spurred you to come to their help. They fought better with tears, than by trusting spears, because although they let their tears flow everywhere onto the land, they also ascended to heaven before you, their defender."<sup>15</sup> The crusade succeeded because Christ fought for the crusaders, not vice versa, and he did so because of their tears.

After the conquest, the crusaders went in procession to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre to give thanks to God, and the floor of the church was flooded with the rain of their tears.<sup>16</sup> Afterwards, they collected loose body members in baskets and threw them outside the city, and they washed the blood away from the holy places with water.<sup>17</sup> The rain of tears and the water are mentioned so near to each other in the narrative, that they somehow become connected – tears are cleansing.

Other chroniclers elaborated on the different types of weeping crusaders. Albert of Aachen's *Historia Ierosolymitana* is the longest of the early narratives.<sup>18</sup> We hear again about Bohemund, who this time also weeps on losing battles. A prominent figure in Albert's tale is Godfried of Bouillon, the first ruler of the Christian Kingdom of Jerusalem. Godfried and his successor, King Baldwin I, wept a number of times: when visiting the Holy Sepulchre, when they departed from good friends on the battlefield, when dead Christians were buried. A typical example of the last case is the story of the young and brave Arnold who had trailed runaway horses into the mountains and was

13 "Boamund magno succensus est gaudio, magnaue in eo apud Deum excrevit devotio, lacrymas ab oculis uberes erupit, et Deo gratias agens, manus in coelum tetendit." *Ibid.*, 5, 10.

14 *Ibid.*, 5, 7.

15 "O bone Jesu, ut castra tua viderunt hujus terrenae Iherusalem muros, quantos exitus aquarum oculi eorum deduxerunt. ... Itaque contra inimicos tuos, qui in ea [Iherusalem] erant, jam scilicet a longe positi, pugnabant, quoniam ad auxilium suum ita te concitabant; et melius lacrymis, quam jacula intorquendo pugnabant, quoniam licet ubertim in terram defluerent, in coelum tamen ante te propugnatorem suum conscendebant." *Ibid.*, 9, 1.

16 "... et pavimenta imbre lacrymarum inundabant..." *Ibid.*, 9, 9.

17 "... Membra truncata in sportis colligebant, et foris defferebant et pavimenta templorum domorumque a sanguine aqua eluebant." *Ibid.*

18 See Albert of Aachen 2007, and the introduction by Susan B. Edginton.

suddenly attacked by Muslims, who killed him and cut off his head and took it back home to Ascalon with them. The body of Arnold was found and brought back to Jerusalem and buried, while King Baldwin and all nobles cried. Later the Muslims sent Arnold's head to the king in Jerusalem – not as an act of love, Albert remarks, but to make the sorrow and weeping even deeper.

Christians wept at funerals, especially when kings had died. Baldwin I fell seriously ill, but recovered because of the prayers and tears of orphans and widows, and he could resume his work as an *athleta Christi*, as Christ's crusader.<sup>19</sup> Not for long, however. Baldwin died soon after of his illness during a military expedition in Saracen lands. All present began weeping and mourning, as expected, and their grief would have been twice as loud if they had not feared that the Muslims would find out that the king had died. They hid this sad fact,<sup>20</sup> opened the king's dead body and embalmed him, put him back on his horse and rode home to Jerusalem, where he was given a fitting burial in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. The episode illustrates neatly how weeping was indispensable at death, but also highly ritualized and could be shortened or postponed, if necessary for military reasons.

In an earlier part of his book, Albert told the lachrymose story, as he calls it, of the unlucky knight Gerhard: during a siege, Gerhard had been caught by the city's Muslim defenders, who bound him with ropes to the top of a ship's mast and stretched him out in cross shape, to mock the Saviour. They raised the mast, so the crusaders outside could see Gerhard, and he began shouting in tears and begged them to negotiate his release and not let him suffer such a grave martyrdom. The answer from the commander, Gotfried, was the only sound one from a military one point of view: it would be better to let Gerhard die than leave the city unconquered. To comfort him, Gotfried adds that if Gerhard dies from this life, he will dwell in heaven with Christ. Gerhard realizes that tears are of no avail, so he stops crying and donates his horse and armour to the Holy Sepulchre.<sup>21</sup> The attack begins, and the crusaders shower the city with stones and with arrows, of which ten also hit Gerhard. It is unclear from Albert's

19 "... precibus et lacrymis pupillorum et viduarum sanitas redditur, et corporis sui debilitate alleviata, ex toto athleta Christi convaluit". Albert of Aachen 1879, xii, 23.

20 "Jam sic defuncto principe clarissimo in terra barbara, egregii principes et commilitones, equites et pedites, prae dolore in lacrymas cum magno ululatu et planctu fluxere nimias, et amplius fletum congeminaissent, nisi timor esset, quem in terra undique hostili apprehenderunt in tanti principis amissione. Quapropter dissimulata illius morte ..." *Ibid.*, xii, 28.

21 "Sed erectus et affixus in culmine mali idem Gerhardus, in hanc miserabilem vocem cum lacrymis erupit ...: O dux illustrissime, ... peto, ut aliqua misericordia vel humanitate super me movearis, et tam gravi et saevo martyrio me perire non patiaris. 'Mori siquidem habes, et utilius est, ut solus moriaris, quam decretum et iusjurandum nostrorum violetur ... Si enim praesenti vita moriaris, vivere habes cum Christo in coelestibus.' Haec Gerhardus intelligens, et nulla se lacrymarum prece videns proficere, summopere ducem exorat ut equum et arma sua sancto praesentaret sepulcro ..." *Ibid.*, vii, 2.

formulations whether this shortened his life, or whether it prolonged his suffering and made him a more effective martyr.

More examples could be presented from this early period, but they would not fundamentally change the conclusion, namely that there were different types of weeping crusaders and that medieval chroniclers differed much in the extent to which they applied the theme of tears.

Let us now turn to the crusading chronicles from the Northern area. The most vivid and detailed description of Baltic crusades in the twelfth century is the huge and eloquent *History of the Danes* by the Danish historian and cleric Saxo, completed around 1200. It aims at presenting Denmark as an empire and the continuous military expeditions against the pagan Wends in Northern Germany as an imperial obligation to create peace. In the 900-page long narrative, there are actually only 34 mentions of tears, only 34 occurrences of some form of the word *lacrimae*. It is clearly not something that Saxo finds appropriate. In Saxo's opus, the *populus* or *plebs* wept now and then, a warrior who betrayed his king could shed tears of shame, sometimes ecclesiastics wept when they attempted to persuade each other to become bishops, and women shed tears because they are women, *ob id muliebriter*.<sup>22</sup>

In general, however, tears are despicable and ridiculous in the *History of the Danes*. One of Saxo's austere heroes, Starkad, became so irritated at a flute player that he threw a bone – probably from the delicious Danish roasted pork – at the poor man and hit his distended cheek so that he lost air and began weeping. "It was difficult to tell whether he played more loudly than he cried, but the flautist's bitter flow of tears demonstrated how little strength there is in a spoiled and luxurious body."<sup>23</sup> Saxo's narrative does not entail any crusader weeping – no tears of joy when pagan land is conquered and converted, when pagan wooden idols are chopped and burned, no tears of sorrow when crusaders die, no weeping kings.

One explanation could of course be that real Danes don't cry. This at least was the impression of the well-informed Adam of Bremen who wrote in the 1070s:

For tears and lamenting and other signs of remorse, which we consider beneficial, the Danes detest to such a degree, that none of them will weep for their sins, and not even for their dear ones who have died.<sup>24</sup>

22 "Waldemarum pro sponsam filii Gerthrudem ob id muliebriter lacrimantem oculos inserere monitus ..." Saxo, *Gesta Danorum*, ed. Friis-Jensen, 2005, 14. 54. 13. 1.

23 "Itaque mimus, nescias sonorius cecinerit an fleverit, quam parum in luxuriosis pectoribus fortitudo possideat, effusa lacrimarum acerbitate testatus." *Ibid.*, 6. 8. 11. 12.

24 "Nam lacrimas et planctum ceteraque compunctionis genera que nos salubria censemus. ita abhominantur dani, ut nec pro peccatis suis. nec pro caris defunctis ulli flere liceat." Adam of Bremen 1876, 4, 6, cited here from Bibl. Reg. Hafn., ms GKS 2296 in quarto, f. 62r, online ed. on <http://www.kb.dk/da/nb/materialer/haandskrifter/HA/e-mss/clh.html>.

This explanation is, however, not really satisfying, because other authors around the Baltic wrote about crusaders in the same manner as Saxo, and without tears. Helmold of Bosau finished his *Chronica Sclaworum* in 1171 and wrote about the imperial, the Saxon as well as the Danish, religious expansion in the Baltic, but the few tears he included in his opus were shed by ecclesiastics and had little to do with warfare. The only exception was Helmold's short description of the German King Conrad and the French King Louis' fatal crusade to the Holy Land in 1147, which ended with total defeat for the Germans. "Those who experienced it still deplore it with tears today", Helmold wrote a generation later.<sup>25</sup>

Henry of Livonia described in his chronicle the many crusades from Riga into Lithuania, Livonia and Estonia in the long period from the 1190s until 1227.<sup>26</sup> The only weeping in Henry's chronicle directly related to crusading came when Bishop Albert of Riga preached 'with tears' to crusaders on their way back home and urged them to return to Livonia. As recompense he offered them eternal life and even better indulgence than the former, full indulgence that they had already gained.<sup>27</sup> It is unclear how we should understand an indulgence that is better than a full indulgence.

Arnold of Lübeck continued Helmold's chronicle until around 1209 and was writing in the same period as the anonymous author of *De profectioe Danorum*. Arnold's lamentation at the fall of Jerusalem in 1187 is as moving as the letter of Pope Gregory mentioned earlier, and he is also convinced that he is living at the end of time where the world is getting old and evil prevails.<sup>28</sup> But again, tears were not used by Arnold as an element in staging or explaining the crusades in the Baltic.

## Conclusion: To cry or not to cry

What can we conclude from all these tears, or the lack of them? To what extent were crusaders actually associated with tears, and was weeping a good or a bad thing?

First, it is important to stress the difference between authors. Some found crying

25 "Tanta fuit clades exercitus et miseria inexplicabilis, ut eorum qui interfuerunt adhuc hodie lacrimis deplangatur." Helmold of Bosau 1937, chapter LX.

26 For Henry of Livonia, see Tamm, Kaljundi & Jensen (eds) 2011.

27 "... Peregrinos ... convocat, ecclesie dampna lacrimando indicat et ... ipsos invitat et crucis signum resumere in plenariam ante neglectorum delictorum remissionem ammonendo confortat et ... maiorem indulgentiam et vitam promittit eternam." Henry of Livonia, *Henrici Chronicon Livoniae*, (eds) Arbusow & Bauer 1955, 11, 9.

28 "Inter hec autem fluunt lacrimae, trahuntur suspiria, et vox ploratus et ululatus in excelso levatur. Insolito namque timore turbata, confusa sunt viscera, corda tremuerunt, ingenii flos interiit, manus scribentis elanguit. Nam propter inimici zizania, messem Christi suffocantia, spinarum multiplicantur scandala, ita ut sancte ecclesie area, raro tritico, tota squalescat in palea. Ubi enim sapiens et intelligens? ubi leges, ubi iura, ubi iustitia, ubi religio, ubi pax, ubi veritas, ubi castitas coniugalis, ubi celibatus spiritalis?" Arnold of Lübeck 1868, 4, 1.

ridiculous, like Saxo, while others considered it an emotion that could only be found among infidel Muslims, as the *Gesta Francorum* did. Others let their protagonists weep in a number of situations.

Second, some occasions were deemed more appropriate for tears than others. The most prominent type of weeping was when entering the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, Jerusalem or the Holy Land. In this respect, *De profectione Danorum* conforms finely to the classical crusading literature. This category is absent from the Nordic crusades. Henry of Livonia was trying to turn Riga into an *Outremer*, a land on the other side of the sea just like Palestine, or into a Jerusalem of the north, but it was never ascribed the same significance as the real Jerusalem, and the crusaders did not shed tears when entering Riga.

A second kind of tears were those shed for joy because of crusading successes. Not all narratives exploit this possibility, but some do allow the war leaders to shed tears when praising great warrior heroes or expressing gratitude over the great number of participating crusaders.

A third type of weeping was linked to the tears shed in mourning for dead kings, which is very common in the crusade narratives, or for the martyrs who gave their life for Christ, which seems to be more seldom. The latter is probably related to the fact that most theologians of the twelfth century and later had difficulties with categorizing a crusader's death as a genuine martyrdom.

In spite of this, tears were relatively unusual among crusaders. One explanation may be that it simply did not belong to the narratives' heroic genre, with its 'remarkable absence of tears', in Albrecht Classen's words. Heroes, he wrote, 'clench their teeth and courageously march into their death'.<sup>29</sup> This is a precise description of all warriors, even those fighting for a religious goal. Heroes could be moved to tears by the brave deeds of their comrades or when mourning over death, but not when fighting.

However, this does not mean that crusaders were devoid of emotion. The same narratives, also from the Baltic area, describe how crusaders were driven by rage – *ira* – and by zeal for God, and how they wanted to take revenge on the heathens and kill them all.<sup>30</sup> Such expressions were taken from the Old Testament and are part of what modern theologians call *herem*-theology, the idea that the pagans should be sacrificed to the Lord and exterminated, and that this was justifiable and necessary to avenge the *ira*, the wrath of God. This *herem*-theology or theology-of-strong-emotions became common with the reform papacy of the late eleventh century and was one of the driving forces behind the crusades.<sup>31</sup>

Maybe we can actually distinguish between two different form of compassionate

29 Classen 2012.

30 Throop 2011; for the Baltic area, Jensen 2013.

31 Althoff 2013.



devotion to Christ, which emerge around 1100. The one *internalizes* the devotion, suffers with Christ and sheds tears together with Him. The other *externalizes* the devotion and is filled with anger, wants to fight alongside the fighting Christ and take revenge. The crusaders chose the revenge compassion rather than the *imitatio* compassion.

Is there any exception to this general picture that most crusaders, also in the north, were eager to take revenge, but less prone to weep? Yes, one person, the most famous of all the Nordic crusaders, namely King Erik of Sweden. In the 1150s, he led a crusade against the apostate Finns to take revenge. His *vita* narrates how after a splendid victory the King prayed to God, and began weeping. When he was asked why, he answered that he was happy about the victory but sorry for all the souls of the dead Finns, who were now in hell, because they had not received the Sacraments.<sup>32</sup> It is a beautiful combination of the two different kinds of compassions, the revengeful and the suffering, and it is very unusual. Maybe the norms for crusader tears had changed, when the *vita* of St. Erik was written in the mid-thirteenth century.

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32 "... versus Finnones expeditionem dirigit ipsosque fide Christi prius oblata ac pace exhibita renitentes et rebelles in ultionem sanguinis Christiani manu valida aggreditur ac bello devictos victor prostravit. Cumque tanta potitus victoria in orationem se prostrasset, atque cum lacrimis ... oraret ad Deum, interrogatus a quodam suorum familiarium, cur fleret? ... sic dicitur respondisse: gaudio quidem et Domino glorifico pro data nobis victoria, sed vehementer doleo, quod tot eorum animæ hodie perierunt, qui si sacramenta fidei recipissent, ad salutem fuerunt perpetuam reservati." Israel Erlandi, in *Scriptores rerum svecicarum mediæ ævi*, II, ed. Fant et al., 1828, p. 274.



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# Fears, Sights and Slaughter:

## Expressions of Fright and Disgust in the Baltic Missionary Historiography (11<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> centuries)

*Wojtek Jezierski*

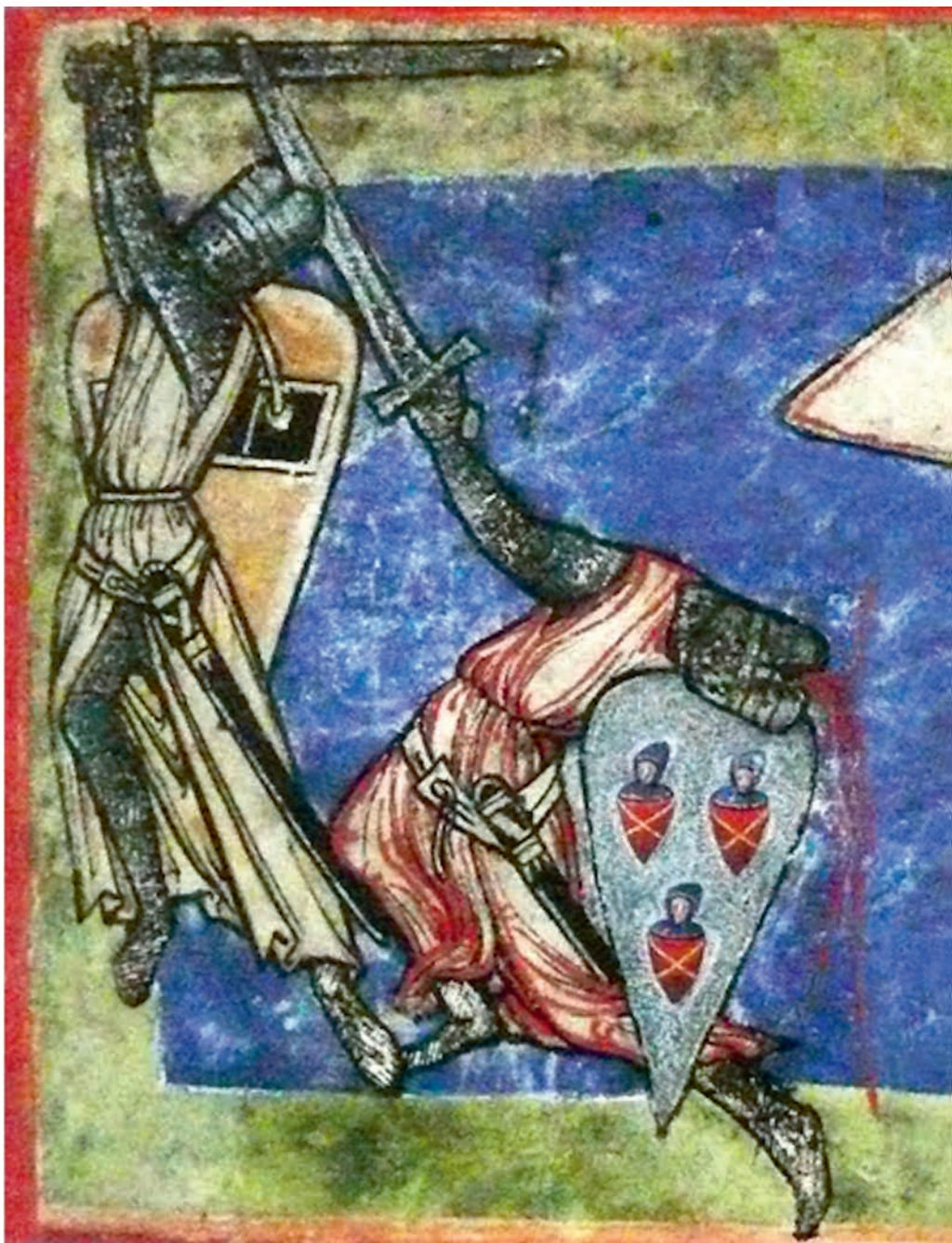
In the early spring 1205 a large Lithuanian expedition, some two thousand men, marched against the Estonians intending to plunder their countryside. On their way north they passed the city of Riga. Just outside the city, a rich and powerful man called Svelgate (Lith. *Žvelgaitis*) separated from the troops together with a small escort:

Cui inter alios viros de civitate cum pace obviam exeuntes unus ex civibus, nomine Martinus, ad bibendum potum mellitum prebet. Quo exhausto exercitum preeuntem insequitur et socios suos alloquitur: “Nonne Theuthonicorum nobis medonem prebencium trepidantium manus vidistis? Adventum quidem nostrum fama volante cognoverant et ideo timore concussi adhuc trepidare non cessant.”<sup>1</sup>

Svelgate also promised his companions that once they have finished with the Estonians they would take Riga on the way back. Indeed, soon afterwards the Lithuanians appeared again, but this time they were met by strong joint German-Semgall forces who expected their attack and whose scouts had followed the Lithuanians’ every move. Finally, when the two armies clashed in a forest outside Rodenpois (Latv. Ropaži) some 35 km east of Riga, the Lithuanians were slaughtered and Svelgate died, having been pierced by a javelin.

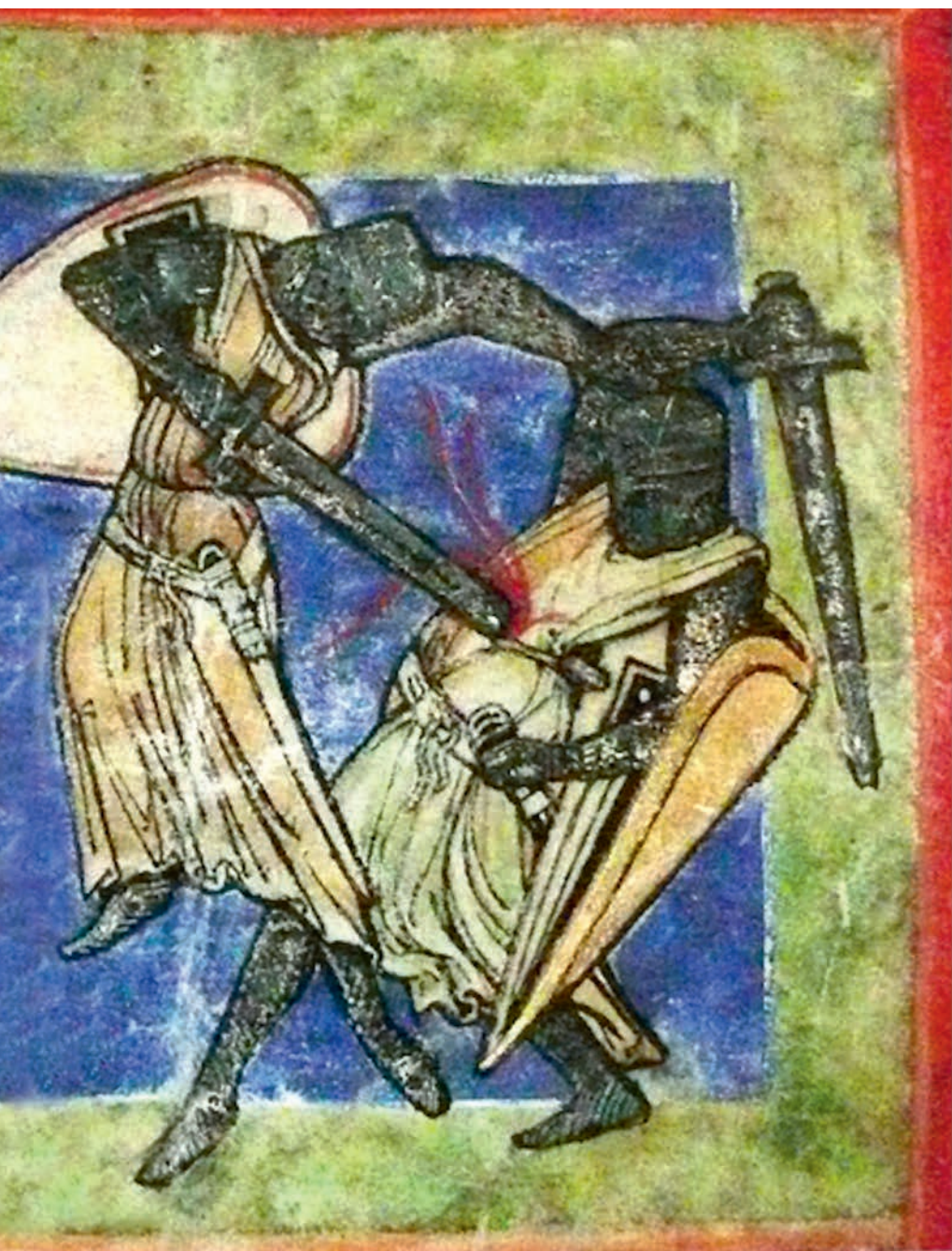
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1 Henry of Livonia, *Chronicon Livoniae*, ed. Bauer 1959, chapter IX. 1, pp. 34–35. “The men of the city went out to meet them in peace, and a certain citizen named Martin offered them a honeyed drink. When he finished it, Svelgate followed the army which was going ahead, and spoke as follows to his companions: ‘Did you not see the Germans offering us mead with a trembling hand? They had known of our arrival from rumor and the fear which then struck them still causes them to shake’” (transl. Brundage 2003, p. 47).



*Fighting knights, from Trier Jungfrauenspiegel (Speculum virginum), c. 1200, Mittelrhein or Trier. Trier Episcopal Library, no 132, sheet from Manuscript Inv. Nr. 3984. Kestner-Museum, Hanover, Germany. Photo: Kestner-Museum/Wikimedia Commons.*





What makes this first, absolutely marginal, episode outside the gates of Riga quite fascinating is that, despite the chronicler's claims,<sup>2</sup> it seems that no one could have heard what Svelgate actually said. The ensuing preparations to fend off the purported Lithuanian attack were instead based on previous experience, rumors, speculations, and the premonitions of the Semgallian chieftain Viesthard. In other words, these preparations were based on sheer hypothetical possibilities (*in futuro civitatem cum habitatoribus suis destruant*) and no certainty of an attack. How could anyone have eavesdropped on Svelgate's remark about Martin's trembling hands? This all seems to be a product of the chronicler Henry of Livonia's imagination. An imagination so tuned in on anxiety and fear that it would fittingly fill in an adversary's perspective even if he had no information about it whatsoever.

In general it seems that angst, fear and sporadic horror must have been the most frequent emotions felt by missionaries working on the forefront of Christianization. Their constant exposure to the attacks of the pagans and the necessity of relying on the kindness of (nearly absolute) strangers in their daily proselytizing activity created a deeply rooted sense of insecurity about one's position and suspicion towards non-Christian others – the very object of missionaries' and crusaders' evangelical efforts.<sup>3</sup>

David Fraesdorff has shown that in the medieval imaginary, the North was a cold, dark and inhospitable place which contemporaries closely associated with fear and devilish manipulations. He argues convincingly that even if this discourse was quite broad and well-established throughout early medieval Europe, including authors such as Isidore of Seville, Gregory of Tours or Hildegard of Bingen, its intensity, sophistication and cultural impact expanded once the missionary activity in the north gained momentum in the tenth, eleventh and twelfth centuries. According to both Fraesdorff and Volker Scior, authors such as Rimbert, Thietmar of Merseburg, Adam of Bremen, Helmold of Bosau not only (re-)produced and adapted this discourse to new Nordic and Baltic circumstances. They also channeled missionary experiences from the region and contributed to converting ideological convictions about, say, heathen treachery or Slavic hospitality into practical actions and expectations about the future.<sup>4</sup> Risk and the sense of danger, as well as accompanying emotions like anxiety or panic, constituted important components in this discourse, although who or what inspired terror in the missionaries differed from one author to another.<sup>5</sup>

Furthermore, as we shall see, fear and threat of military intervention were just as

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2 "Suellgatem, qui se civitatem Dei subversum dixerat." *Ibid.*, ed. Bauer 1959, chapter IX, 4, pp. 38–39.

3 Jezierski 2015.

4 On the circular relationship between emotional experiences and expectations, see Büchsel 2012, p. 152.

5 Fraesdorff 2005; Scior 2002; see also Kaljundi 2008; Jezierski 2016.

important and often quite concrete means of missionizing,<sup>6</sup> even more so after the crusading movement accelerated around the Baltic Sea after the mid-twelfth century.<sup>7</sup> Still, researchers have devoted a disproportionate amount of space to the military techniques that the crusaders used to induce fear – much more than to how the menacing and threat filled dread was experienced by contemporaries on both sides of the front. Finally, despite the fact that the paramount importance of fear and a sense of danger during this period has been widely acknowledged,<sup>8</sup> surprisingly little research has been done on the actual expressions of these emotions in the missionary and crusading context. Symptomatically, the seminal two-volume *The Experience of Crusading* from 2003 – although admittedly focused on the Holy Land and not northern Europe – does not devote a single article to the crusaders' emotions, let alone their fear and disgust.<sup>9</sup>

Perhaps this deficit could be explained by the lack of appropriate analytical tools that were only recently provided by the rapidly growing wave of research on the history of emotions, with its strong interdisciplinary input (stemming from cognitive psychology, anthropology, sociology, etc.).<sup>10</sup> Taking inspiration from the history of emotions, the question I would like to investigate is twofold: on the one hand, I am interested in the ways missionary historiography represented expressions of fear and trauma. On the other hand, I would like to explore the ways these texts inspired fear and disgust in their audience. These two aspects, mimetic and affective, should help us better understand firstly how missionary historiography channeled and shaped personal and collective experiences of danger, and secondly, what implications the literary representations of these experiences had for creating or not creating the feelings of community among their missionary readers.<sup>11</sup> Missionaries on the Baltic Rim often considered themselves to be a frontier society of sorts,<sup>12</sup> and scenes of dread delivered by their historiographers necessarily conveyed an emotional attitude which forged expectations regarding the hardships attached to the task of conversion. What then – according to missionary historiography – were or should the missionaries be afraid of? How did these authors present these perils to their audience? Did they sugarcoat them or reveal their horrific implications?

In the following, an analysis of expressions of fear will be combined with how the

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6 McLuhan 2002.

7 See the articles collected in these volumes: Murray 2001; Murray 2009; Lind, Jensen, Jensen & Bysted 2012.

8 Fumagalli 1994; Scott & Kosso 2002; Dinzelbacher 1996.

9 Bull & Housley 2003; Edbury & Phillips 2003; cf. Menache 2010.

10 For an overview, see Rosenwein 2002; Plamper 2012. For summaries of the *emotional turn* in medieval studies, see particularly Airlie 2001; Schnell 2004; Rosenwein 2006; Büchsel 2012.

11 Schnell 2009, pp. 8–19, 24–35; Gerok-Reiter 2007.

12 Bartlett & MacKay 1989; Lehtonen & Jensen 2005; Jezierski 2016.

emotion of disgust – both as an expression of feeling and as a literary suggestion of disgusting objects – was represented by the missionary historiography. Although we have learned to consider fear analytically as a separate emotion,<sup>13</sup> disgust does connect so intimately with the uncontrollable incitement to avoid, flee or shiver in front of the disgusting object that it is highly relevant to consider these two emotions together. Disgust also seems to be more difficult to convey literally than fear. Furthermore, this emotion seldom surfaces in medieval missionary historiography as it is explicitly named much less frequently. However, according to Aurel Kolnai and William Ian Miller, disgust both as an emotive response as well as a literary and rhetorical tool seems to be particularly potent for expressing and inspiring almost physiological aversion and corporal fright. It also tends to be blended with moral contempt – a quality seldom found in fear.<sup>14</sup> In other words, when analyzing disgust in the three missionary accounts I will be primarily concerned with what role scenes of disgust played in the overall experience of the horrific.

With the above questions in mind I would like to investigate three texts stretched between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries: Adam of Bremen's *Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum* (1070s), Helmold of Bosau's *Chronica Slavorum* (c. 1168–1172), and Henry of Livonia's *Chronicon Livoniae* (c. 1224–1227). From the point of view of missionary experience and expressions of fear this corpus of texts offers an opportunely diversified assemblage of perspectives and vantage points on Christianization, both from the period preceding the crusade movement and afterwards. Most importantly, however, within the genre of missionary/crusading historiography, these three texts were composed in radically dissimilar circumstances and widely disparate distances from the main course of events.

Adam's *Gesta* was written in a politically volatile situation in northern Saxony during the 1060s and 1070s; a period when the episcopal supremacy of Hamburg-Bremen in the north had been seriously questioned. When it comes to Adam's own experiences of the missionizing, however, one needs to acknowledge that he only had second-hand information and wrote his work in fairly comfortable circumstances in Bremen, rather far from the missionary forefront.

Helmold wrote his *Chronica* in Bosau, which was a rather marginal missionary outpost in Wagria at this point. The author was therefore deeply involved in the daily practice of Christianization. His point of institutional reference was the episcopal chapter of Lübeck, but his point of view, unlike Adam's, was much more personal and guided by a desire to contribute an accurate description of the Slavs as the object of his evangelical concern, and to describe the realities of missionary work. Most importantly, Helmold wrote in a transition period in which missionizing was still driven by

13 Leys 2010.

14 Kolnai 2004; Miller 1997.



individual missionaries like himself, but military support was quickly becoming the main tenet of Christianization, especially after the 1147 crusade against the Wends.<sup>15</sup>

Finally, Henry of Livonia composed his *Chronica* in an era when the crusading military industry was becoming synonymous with Christianization. Even though he wrote and operated mostly from his peripheral parish in Papendorf (Latv. Rubene) on the Latvian-Estonian borderland and not from central Riga, he actively partook in and personally saw large-scale armed operations, witnessing the unprecedented mobilization potential in the era of military orders.<sup>16</sup>

The varying distance from the frontline of Christianization, the uneven grade of engagement in the practice of missionizing, and the different political and individual agendas which these three authors represent offer a fortunate opportunity to use these circumstances in an explanatory fashion regarding how they pertain to the sense of fear and disgust on the Baltic Rim between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries.

### Adam of Bremen's *Symphonie des Grauens*

The first missionary mind from which if not fear, then at least some deal of anxiety could be extracted is that of Adam of Bremen, and comes in the form of his *Gesta*. It is well known that the work was composed in the 1070s and was addressed to the newly appointed Archbishop Liemar with the aim of reigniting his missionary vigor after the weakening of the bishopric's position during his predecessor Adalbert's period in office. Given its strong geographical focus and structure, the fourth and last book of Adam's *Gesta* can be read as a detailed plan for a missionary undertaking, but the whole work was in fact composed with a forceful evangelical intention.<sup>17</sup> As recently pointed out by Ildar Garipzanov, the *Gesta* rest on a dramaturgical idea of history, that is, for Adam the course of events in northern Europe unfolded as a struggle and a series of confrontations between Christianity and (broadly considered) paganism.<sup>18</sup> This historical struggle culminated – at the very center of the programmatic last book of the *Gesta* – in the description of the epitome of paganism that Adam's addressee, Archbishop Liemar, would have to confront: the heathen temple at Uppsala.<sup>19</sup> From the point of view of fear and disgust that my article addresses, most of the description of the temple appears to be irrelevant as Adam's main intention was to picture an imposing structure, a remarkable pagan stronghold cast in gold. It is only towards the end of his description, as Adam's focus shifts from the temple towards the adjacent sacrificial grove, that horrific elements find their way into the picture:

15 Scior 2002, pp. 138–146, 186–191. See also Kaljundi 2009.

16 Brundage 2011; Johansen 1953; Vahtre 1969.

17 Scior 2002, pp. 68–72, 137.

18 Garipzanov 2011; Janson 2010.

19 Scior 2002, pp. 117–119.

Sacrificium itaque tale est: ex omni animante quod masculinum est, novem capita offeruntur, quorum sanguine deos [tales] placari mos est. Corpora autem suspenduntur in lucum qui proximus est templo. Is enim lucus tam sacer est gentilibus, ut singulae arbores eius ex morte vel tabo immolatorum divinae credantur. Ibi etiam canes et equi pendent cum hominibus, quorum corpora mixtim suspensa narravit mihi aliquis christianorum LXXII vidisse [fuisse].<sup>20</sup>

Henrik Janson offers a well-supported interpretation that the description of the Uppsala temple should be read as an allegoric criticism of Pope Gregory VII's ecclesiastical policies in Scandinavia which bypassed Hamburg-Bremen at the time the *Gesta* were composed.<sup>21</sup> Janson's meticulous analysis, recently seconded by Timothy Bolton, has dissected every element in the description of the Uppsala temple, pointing at possible symbolic senses as well as Biblical, vernacular, and classical sources of these elements.<sup>22</sup> Irrespective of the partisan agenda embedded in Adam's description of the temple – whose efficacy hinges on the question of whether all of Adam's readers were competent enough to produce such an allegoric, politically charged reading of the fragment that Janson proposes – I would like to emphasize the affective dimension of this description. Given my focus on fear and disgust I concur with Garipzanov, for whom the core meaning of the representation of the *templum nobilissimum* considers the Christian view of the pagan error and the loathing that such a view was meant to evoke. Adam's current political goals would soon wither away and the medieval audience of the *Gesta* were not all able to partake fully in the author's literary erudition and political agenda, which informed his work in general, but particularly the description of Uppsala. Hel mold of Bosau can be taken as an example here: the purportedly crucial temple was absolutely irrelevant in his opinion.

There can be no doubt that Adam's vision of Uppsala was intended to make an abhorrent impression on the audience and ideally frighten them or at least leave them in awe. After all, according to the schoolmaster of Bremen, emotionally powerful heathen deities such as Thor, *tonitrus et fulmina ... gubernat* ('which governs thunder and lightning') and particularly Wotan, *id est furor* ('that is the Furious') were active

20 Adam of Bremen, "Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae Pontificum", ed. Buchner 1978, IV, chapter 27, pp. 472–473. "The sacrifice is of this nature: of every living that is male they offer nine heads, with the blood of which it is customary to placate gods of this sort. The bodies they hang in the sacred grove that adjoins the temple. Now this grove is so sacred in the eyes of the heathen that each and every tree in it is believed divine because of the death and putrefaction of the victims. Even dogs and horses hang there with men. A certain Christian told me that there had been seventy-two bodies suspended all mixed together" (transl. Tschan 2002, p. 208). The last sentence of Tschan's translation has been amended for the same reasons as proposed by Garipzanov 2011, p. 27, and note 56.

21 Janson 1998.

22 Bolton 2006.

around temples.<sup>23</sup> But what can we speculate about the intended effect of the frightening remnants hanging in the adjacent grove? It seems to be a sight of impurity and danger, as it were. The most disgusting element, according to Adam at least, was that even (*ibi etiam*) animals (horses and dogs) were hanging there with men. It is this confusion or promiscuity (*mixtim*) of human and animal species and their blood that offended the Christian eyes, or at least the Christian who supposedly reported what he saw in Uppsala to Adam. As Miller puts it, “these things offend because of their contaminating powers; they offend not because of what they look like, but for what they are, for their moral failings if you will”.<sup>24</sup> The most striking part of this scene, however, is that Adam framed the entire episode as a spectacle. There is little doubt that in Adam’s mind the feast in Uppsala was put on as a spectacle for the pagans. Yet it seems that in his rendition the sacrificial feast was just as much of a spectacle – even if a repulsive one – for the Christians and particularly for Adam’s audience. In both cases it was meant to be gazed at.

Uppsala is not the only evidence that Christian suffering was a matter of horrific but seemingly necessary display for Adam. For instance, in 994 a Viking raid went upstream along the Elbe in order to plunder the province around the city of Stade. Only a small Saxon force stood its ground to protect the area. The defenders were outnumbered, their soldiers were soon cut down and the leading nobles were captured. However, one of their leaders, Count Siegfried, “stealthily slipped away by night with the aid of a fisherman”. When the Viking pirates found out about this, they were enraged and gathered all the nobles whom they had in chains, severed their hands and feet and cut off their noses. Importantly, “among them were some noble men who lived a long time afterwards, a reproach to the Empire and a pitiful spectacle for all the people”.<sup>25</sup> It therefore seems that these maimed nobles could be exploited at least twice to scare others. First the Viking pirates used them as a terrifying example that would paralyze their Christian opponents. Later writers like Adam also exploited these nobles, as their miserable lives served as a convenient and frightening reminder to motivate his missionary readers in their zeal.

Interestingly, Adam’s predilection for spectacle was occasionally counterbalanced with noticeable restraint. At times the schoolmaster explicitly denied his readers the unbecoming or even disgusting details. At the very end of his description of the horri-

23 Adam of Bremen, “Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae Pontificum”, ed. Buchner 1978, IV, chapter 27, pp. 472–473 (transl. Tschan 2002, p. 207).

24 Miller 1997, p. 80.

25 Adam of Bremen, “Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae Pontificum”, transl. Tschan 2002, II, chapter 31 (29), p. 76: “cuiusdam piscatoris auxilio furtim nocti sublatus evaderet ... omnes quos in vinculis tenuerunt, meliores ad ludibrium habentes, manus eis pedesque truncarunt ac nare precisa deformantes ... ex quibus erant aliqui nobiles viri, qui postea supervixerunt longo tempore, oprobrium imperio et miserabile spectaculum omni populo”; *Ibid.*, ed. Buchner 1978, pp. 266–270.

fiying spectacle supposedly taking place in Uppsala, Adam mentions the pagan chants which accompanied the sacrifice. The scene is muted nonetheless and the readers are denied the opportunity to hear anything of it: "the incantations ... in the ritual of a sacrifice of this kind are manifold and unseemly; therefore, it is better to keep silent about them".<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, it seems that disgust was a matter of moral or even moralistic concern for Adam, it was not exclusively connected to pagan rites or warfare atrocities. As convincingly shown by Janson, Adam used the accounts of pagan cults as a point of critique in a very contemporary debate and conflict over Hamburg-Bremen's episcopal authority in Scandinavia. Sometimes, however, the criticism was explicit. In 1062 or soon afterwards, Archbishop Adalbert, Adam's main protagonist, was planning a synod in Schleswig which would gather the Scandinavian bishops and confirm Adalbert's patriarchal authority as something almost equal to Rome. The synod would also address burning issues like the supposedly endemic simony, illegitimate consecrations or episcopal disobedience.<sup>27</sup> Of particular importance was the presumed disobedience of Bishop Adalward whom Adalbert had consecrated as bishop of Sigtuna and who, having been expelled from his bishopric, went on to usurp the church at Skara. Years later, in recounting the preparations for the synod, which eventually never took place, Adam quoted the pieces of correspondence circulating between Pope Alexander II, Archbishop Adalbert and his Nordic suffragans. After quoting only two of these letters, the mere listing of the evils the synod was to address made him write: "this is what I have to say about the synod, but there is also much else which I omit out of disgust".<sup>28</sup>

As suggested by Miller, such a strong connection between disgust, morality and concrete political goals produces the feeling of indignation, that is, an emotion which is more convenient for strategic use than disgust in general.<sup>29</sup> Hence, what we could interpret at face value as Adam's reticence was in fact yet another piece of drama informed by his agenda of ecclesiastical politics. He theatrically suggested he would hold the horrible up to his readers' eyes and then exaggeratedly put it out of sight saying: "Oh, it's too much!" All this in order to score yet more points with his readers, particularly Liemar, to purify clerical leads in Scandinavia, stifle the independence of kings like Emund the Old (king of Sweden, 1050–1060) and Harald Hardrada (king of Norway, 1046–1066), and reconsolidate Hamburg-Bremen's position in the north.

As a last example of Adam's preference for the presentation of spectacular suffer-

26 *Ibid.*, IV, chapter 27, transl. Tschan 2002, p. 208: "ceterum neniae, quae in eiusmodi ritu libationis fieri solent, multiplices et inhonestae, ideoque melius reticendae"; *Ibid.*, ed. Buchner 1978, pp. 472–473.

27 Janson 1998, pp. 162–171.

28 Adam of Bremen, "Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae Pontificum", transl. Tschan 2002, III, chapter 76, p. 182: "hec habui de synodo quae dicerem, cum et alia multa sint, quae fastidii causa omitto"; *Ibid.*, ed. Buchner 1978, pp. 428–429.

29 Miller 1997, pp. 35–36, 195–205.

ing in order to both move and disgust his readers, a gory scene from late tenth-century Oldenburg should be mentioned:

Sexaginta, inquit presbyteri ceteris more pecudum obtruncatis ibi ad ludibrium servati sum. Quorum maior loci prepositus nomen habuit, noster consanguineus. Ille igitur cum ceteris tali martyrio consummatus est, ut cute capitis in modum crucis incisa ferro cerebrum singulis aperiretur. Deinde ligatis post terga manibus confessores Dei per singulas civitates Sclavorum tracti sunt [aut verberare aut alio modo vexati], usque dum deficerent. Ita illi spectaculum facti et angelis et hominibus in stadio medii cursus exhalarunt victorem spiritum.<sup>30</sup>

Here, again, martyrdom was first and foremost a matter of display for the Bremen schoolmaster. The quotation: *a spectacle to angels and men*, which Adam had taken over from 1 Corinthians 4:9, was obviously a widespread and a popular way of describing missionary suffering and hardships in the eleventh century. For instance, Bruno of Querfurt's half a century younger *Vita quinque fratrum* also occasionally presented the destitutions that the five brothers suffered in their mission to Poland in the same sense of display and exemplariness.<sup>31</sup> In light of the examples above it is clear, however, that Adam elevated St. Paul's words from a mere figure of speech to a way of framing suffering as a piece of drama. For a crafty writer like the Bremen schoolmaster, such a manner of writing constantly helped him disarm the potentially horrible dimension of martyrdom which implied actual distress. Almost immediately after every horrifying example of martyrdom such as that of St. Boniface, St. Olaf, the Oldenburg martyrs was an accompanying comment that the afflicted were crowned with martyrdom while breathing forth their victorious spirits.<sup>32</sup> Adam did want to scare his missionary readers whose immediate occupational hazards he was depicting, but he did not want to scare them so much that they refrained from their task. Just like all the previous examples, the Oldenburg episode does not reveal anything about the internal experience of the suffering subject.

The only feeling of fear that is truly Adam's in the entire *Gesta* is expressed in his

30 Adam of Bremen, "Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae Pontificum", ed. Buchner 1978, II, chapter 43 (41), pp. 278–281: "There ... sixty priests – the rest was slaughtered like cattle – were kept for mockery... [T]he provost of the palace named Oddar ... and others were martyred in this manner: after the skin of their heads had been cut with an iron in the form of a cross, the brain of each was laid bare; with hands tied behind their backs, the confessors of God were then dragged through one Slavic town after another, harried either with blows or in some other manner, until they died. After having been thus made 'a spectacle ... to angels and men,' they breathed forth their victorious spirits in the middle of the course." *Ibid.*, transl. Tschan 2002, p. 84.

31 Bruno of Querfurt, *Vita quinque fratrum*, chapter XIII, ed. Klaniczay 2012, pp. 262–263, chapter XXXII, pp. 306–307.

32 For St. Boniface, St. Olaf and others crowned with martyrdom, see Adam of Bremen, "Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae Pontificum", ed. Buchner 1978, I, 10 (11), pp. 174–175, I, 21, pp. 194–195, II, scholia 41, pp. 300–301, IV, 18, pp. 456–457.

prologue where he lays out his historiographical program, although this emotion should perhaps be trimmed down to anxiety or even worry. Full of rhetorical figures that were meant to win him the readers' sympathy (particularly Archbishop Liemar's), Adam expressed his worries about recognition, not some deep aversion to pagans. The prologue is speckled with the author's anxiety about the reception his *Gesta episcoporum* would meet and how this would influence his own position:

I entreat the more indulgence because, since scarcely any predecessor has left a tread to follow, I did not fear, as if in the dark, to grope along an unknown way;

It was my purpose to please not everybody but you, father, and your Church. To please the envious is very difficult. But because of the ill will of my rivals ...

Let all know that for this work and for such a bold venture I neither desire to be praised as an historian nor fear to be condemned as a falsifier etc.<sup>33</sup>

This tirade of the worried schoolmaster can be read on at least three levels. As shown by Gerd Althoff, in the most immediate context of Adam's *Gesta*, hidden behind this veil of literary worry, was an awareness of the precarious political standing of both Liemar and the writer himself in post-Adalbertian Hamburg-Bremen.<sup>34</sup> On a slightly more general level, this rhetorical yet fully honest *captatio benevolentiae*, as well as the hints of some prospective envious or hard to please readers reflected the competitive and contentious nature of the contemporary episcopal palaces in northern Germany and Bremen under Archbishop Adalbert in particular.<sup>35</sup> Finally, read through the lenses of the history of emotions, Adam's prologue revealed a cluster of feelings focused on personal achievement and recognition that were detached from more ordinary worries and dangers experienced by field missionaries of his time. In other words, the *praefatio* did not by any means represent a sympathetic type of fear which would enable the subject to commiserate with the fears and suffering of others.

Putting it in broad terms, one could say that in the missionary geography of anxiety and danger Adam offered his readers (and himself) the fear of a safe place. Rather than allowing his readers to fully face the horrible, in his comfortable position in Bremen as an armchair missionary, he carefully crafted silent, anodyne images of the not-so-

33 Adam of Bremen, "Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae Pontificum", transl. Tschan 2002, pp. 1–5: "... eo maiorem flagito veniam, quoniam fere nullius, qui me precesserit vestigia sequens ignotum iter quasi [palpans] in tenebris carpere non timui ...; Nobis propositum est non omnibus placere, sed tibi, pater, et ecclesiae tuae. Difficillimum est enim invidis placere. Et quoniam sic aemulorum cogit improbitas ...; In quo opera talibusque ausis sciant omnes, quod nec laudari cupio ut historicus nec improbari metuo ut falsidicus"; *Ibid.*, ed. Buchner 1978, *Praefatio*, pp. 160–163.

34 Althoff 1988.

35 Jaeger 1994; Jaeger 1985, pp. 67–69, 74–76.

frightening and not-that-repulsive which guaranteed that none of his readers would feel upset or insecure.<sup>36</sup> Fear and disgust in Adam's rendering, as an emotional experience, reduced the reader to a passive onlooker watching a grand spectacle: the clash between Christianity and paganism. Adam's attitude therefore seemed to be somewhat voyeuristic – he did not commiserate with the subject of his gaze. As La Rochefoucauld put it: *Nous avons tous assez de force pour supporter les maux d'autrui*. Intended or not, Adam's standpoint regarding the pain of others was aesthetic, not ethical. This is suggested both by the stylistic approach, that is, by amount of literary quotations and references he put into the descriptions of scenes of suffering or disgusting views, and above all by his framing of these episodes as dramatic pieces, as spectacles.

### Helmold of Bosau: *Cape Fear*

A hundred years after Adam, in the late 1160s and early 1170s, when Helmold of Bosau composed his *Chronica Slavorum*, the afore-mentioned cruel scene from Oldenburg and the brains laid bare were still “a spectacle ... to angels and men”. But the author, writing for his clerical public in Lübeck, introduced some important changes to the way the whole story was framed. In the *Gesta episcoporum* the story was narrated in the form of a dialogue between the inquisitive Adam and the quite responsive Danish ruler, King Sweyn II Estridsen (1047–1074/76), whom he met in Bremen. Priest Oddar (see note 30) was Sweyn's relative (*noster consanguineus*), and even though it took over twenty years between the priest's martyrdom and the birth of the future king, the memory of the incident must have been stored in the family remembrance. In one way or another Adam was thus confronted with a story enveloped in a powerful emotional charge. In Helmold's rendition the dialogue with King Sweyn has disappeared however. In a certain respect, by erasing Sweyn's testimony as the basis for this story, Helmold's adaptation of Adam's text reveals the mechanism hinted at in the imaginary conversation between Svelgate and his companions outside the gates of Riga. Somebody's personal fear and disgust were detached from their own experience and gradually worked into the emotional habitat of the missionaries. The wording of Sweyn's direct speech and Helmold's unspecific and anonymous rendition are exactly the same. It is the distance that appeared that mattered. It marked the moment an individual experience entered the sphere of tradition and a once actual horror felt by a sensing subject became a residue in the general, literarily reproducible anxiety.

Still, in general it seems that the way Helmold operated with scenes of horror was much different from Adam's distanced view. Helmold did not frame the scenes of martyrdom in an exemplary manner, i.e. as spectacles, which after all must have had an estranging effect on Adam's audience. Nor was an act of suffering or dying praiseworthy

<sup>36</sup> Jezierski 2016, pp. 178–183; Mieszkowski 2012; see also Sontag 2004.



*per se* in Helmold's view. Quite the contrary, it was the carnage of Christians that was foregrounded, not their uncertain reward:

Quanta enim mortium genera Christicolis intulerint, relatu difficile est, cum his quidem viscera extorserint palo circumducentes, hos cruci affixerint, iridentes signum redemptionis nostrae [...] Eos autem, quos custodiae mancipant pecunia redimendos, tantis torturis et vinculorum nodis plectunt, ut ignorati vix opinabile sit.<sup>37</sup>

It therefore appears that Helmold's description rather implicated proximity to the suffering subject and conceived him in emphatic, rather than aesthetic terms. Many of Helmold's accounts of the Slavs or Christian suffering were secondhand, just like Adam's. But his personal involvement in the mission was – in emotional terms – a good source to build his commiseration on, and – in literary terms – it enabled him to fill in the missing points in his narrative more convincingly. Above all, his individual fear and distress were conveyed in the *Chronica* as part of the missionary experience. Adam's *laudabile periculum* ('praiseworthy hazard'), as he describes the very act of missionizing,<sup>38</sup> sounds utterly bleak when confronted with Helmold's personal memory of the mission he undertook under the leadership of Bishop Gerold of Oldenburg in Wagria in January of 1156.

The destruction of the heathen temple hidden in the woods of Wagria in the course of this mission has been analyzed on numerous occasions, but among the details of this description one can also spot the actual missionaries scared to death. *Non tamen sine metu* ('not without fear') did they start destroying the figures and burning down the place, all the time under the threat of an imminent attack by the indigenous people who were gathered somewhere in the vicinity.<sup>39</sup> It is hardly surprising then that after years of living under the threat of pagan raids and several personal confrontations, Helmold had something to say about the corporal sensations evoked by fear. Note that this even applied to situations of which Helmold was certainly not a witness. For instance, during the winter of 1123/24 Duke Henry of Lübeck organized a campaign against the Rani (Rugians). After a daylong pursuit through the ice and deep snow, the

37 Helmold of Bosau, *Chronica Slavorum*, ed. & transl. Stoob 1990, chapter 52, pp. 198–199. "It is difficult to tell in how many ways [the Slavs] brought the Christians to death: they have ripped out the intestines of one Christian and wrapped them around a pole; they have crucified yet another, in order to mock the sign of our salvation [...] Those, whom they kept as hostages to be exchanged for ransom, have been tortured and chained in such a manner that people who have not heard it before could hardly believe."

38 Adam of Bremen, "Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae Pontificum", ed. Buchner 1978, I, chapter 26 (28), pp. 198–199.

39 Helmold of Bosau, *Chronica Slavorum*, ed. & transl. Stoob 1990, chapter 84, pp. 290–291. "... et ingressi atrium omnia septa atrii congressimus circum sacras illas arbores et de strue lignorum iniecto igne fecimus pyram, non tamen sine metu, ne forte tumultu incolarum obrueremur".



duke's troops were confronted with the enemy on a thin strip of land embraced by the sea on both sides. The Saxons and the Obotrites formed a strong front and "the Rani, as they saw the brave men crowding in front of them, trembled out of great fear and sent their priest to negotiate peace".<sup>40</sup>

Helmold's expressions of fear and disgust, if they were to become an object of the audience's emotional response, could hardly be classified as equally distant and uninvolved as in Adam's case. The question appears to be what brought these images closer to the recipient. The answer seems to relate to which senses Helmold's description activated. According to William Ian Miller, American medievalist and legal anthropologist, disgust is an emotion that operates quite unevenly on the human hierarchy of senses. It is most closely associated with taste, smell and touch and rather remotely linked to sight or hearing.<sup>41</sup> As it happens, different senses imply varying distances from the object of their perception. On the one hand, sight and hearing can act in the most remote manner, and in the context of the questions considered here would suggest a greater distance from the object of fear and disgust. Taste, smell and touch, on the other hand, demand immediacy to the object.

If we now take this insight about sensual distancing and estrangement into the missionary experience of fear and disgust we are able to better address the variety of literary stimuli our authors worked with. Consider, for instance, the way Helmold reported on the customs and pagan gods of the Obotrites, which comes close to Adam's vision of the Uppsala cult. In comparison with Uppsala, Helmold's picture reads as being much fuller, containing more details and acting on more senses than Adam's account, which delivers only strictly visual stimuli. For instance, the Obotritian pagan cult was, like that in Uppsala, expressed through the confusion and promiscuity of human and animal species. But that did not seem to be its most offensive aspect: "When the sacrificial offer is killed, the priest tastes the blood in order to better comprehend the divine instructions. Many believe that the daemons are more easily attracted thanks to the blood."<sup>42</sup> Taste then, and the perhaps more vaguely implied smells, of the pagan cult practices sneaked into the picture. It seems, in fact, that Helmold did comprehend the heathen Slavs in somewhat culinary-consumptive terms, where taste and ingestion perhaps constituted the primary senses associated with disgust: "The Slavs are known for their *insatiable cruelty* and never stop plaguing the adjacent regions both from

40 *Ibid.*, chapter 38, pp. 156–157. "... videntes igitur Rugiani impetum viri timuerunt timore magno [Jonas 1.10] miseruntque flaminem suum, qui cum ipso de pace componeret". See also *ibid.*, chapter 36, pp. 150–151: *perterritos*.

41 Miller 1997, pp. 61–85; Chu & Downes 2000.

42 Helmold of Bosau, *Chronica Slavorum*, ed. & transl. Stoob 1990, chapter 52, pp. 196–197. "Post cesam hostiam sacerdos de cruore libat, ut sit efficiator oraculis capescendis. Nam demonia sanguine facilius invitari multorum opinio est."

land and sea.”<sup>43</sup> Similarly, though on an entirely different occasion, when describing the campaign of the Rani (Rugians) which Duke Henry the Lion unleashed against the Danes in 1168 (shortly before the latter conquered the heathen island), Helmold remarked: “After a long fasting, the Slavs *satiated* themselves on the treasures of the Danes so they have grown heavy, fat, and strong.”<sup>44</sup> Finally, apart from elaborating more closely on the vampiric tastes and corporal cravings of the Slavic *truculentae bestiae* (wild beasts), Helmold, contrary to the coquettish Adam, did not refrain from reporting the words and incantations which accompanied their superstitious rituals. Quite the opposite, his readers were able to exactly learn what deities and for what reasons the pagans invoked them: the Diabol and Zcerneboch (the black god).<sup>45</sup>

Summing up Helmold’s take on fear and disgust, one should say that his text, thanks to its multisensory impact described above, had a much bigger potential to act on the audience’s emotions and empathy. Experiences and expressions of disgust and fear attached to it were not reduced to passive exhibition, but instead acted through suggestion of smells, tastes and bodily responses – a rhetoric of gut-feeling of sorts. It cannot be denied, of course, that Helmold did employ Biblical quotations in his descriptions of battle cries or bodies trembling out of fear, particularly from the Book of Maccabees and Book of Jonah. Yet in the context of his personal understanding and experience one could claim Biblical discourse was lowered from the level of conscious literary rhetoric and composition, as in Adam’s case, to a basic, if somewhat formulaic, discourse of the perception of surrounding reality. Finally, a new element, absent from Adam’s *Gesta* due to the lack of his direct involvement on the missionary front, was the occasional focus on an anxious and frightened subject.

### Henry of Livonia: *Le Salaire de la peur*

While it takes some effort to mine Adam’s *Gesta* for scenes of fear and disgust, Henry of Livonia’s *Chronicon* is surely a text where it takes a lot *not* to find frightening scenes or people scared to death. It seems that the period when Henry composed his work, between the beginning of the mission in Livonia in the 1180s and the late 1220s, was one long nightmare. If we were to fully rely on Henry we would have to conclude that anxiety in the east Baltic was endemic, horror intermittent, and relief from these tensions truly exceptional during this period.

43 *Ibid.*, chapter 52, pp. 198–199. “Fuit preterea Slavorum genti crudelitas ingenita, saturati nescia, in paciens otii, vexans regionum adiacentia terra marique.”

44 *Ibid.*, chapter 109, pp. 376–377. “Et saturati sunt Slavi post diutinam inedia[m] divitiis Danorum, incrassati, inquam, sunt, impinguati sunt, dilatati sunt”; with a quotation from Jeremiah 5:28: “sicut decipula plena avibus sic domus eorum plenae dolo ideo magnificati sunt et ditati / incrassati sunt et impinguati.”

45 *Ibid.*, chapter 52, pp. 198–199; on these beliefs, see Rosik 2012.

First and foremost one should stress that if individual, personal experience of fear was something Helmold's *Chronica* contributed to our general understanding of the missionary sense of fright, then the new horizon opened by the *Chronicon Livoniae* was that angst and panic were emotions essentially lived through collectively. Furthermore, fear in Livonia was often experienced in extreme, horror-like circumstances which had profound consequences for communal feelings such as solidarity and trust in general. Consider, for example, the siege of the Teutonic Order's fort, Holme, in 1206 by the troops of Prince Vladimir of Polotsk (1186–1215). The Russian army approached the unsuspecting Livonians living around the fort, some of whom had to flee to the adjacent woods; others, however, hid themselves in the fort together with the Germans. The siege went on for several days during which time the Russian forces were joined by the pagans from Treiden (Latv. Turaida) who hoped to join the Russians in an expedition against the city of Riga, once Holme was taken. Within the walls an emotional storm was passing through:

Theutonici vero cum pauci essent, utpote viginti tantum, timentes tradi a Lyvonibus, qui multi erant cum eis in castro, nocte ac die armati in munitione desuper sederunt, custodientes arcem tam de amicis infra quam extra de inimicis.<sup>46</sup>

As it turned out, the Germans' anxiety was quite well-founded; the Livonians did confer daily with the leaders of the Russian army about surrendering the fort and its defenders. It became clear to everyone that as soon as Holme fell, Riga's destiny would also be decided. Simultaneously,

Nam in Riga errant timores intus propter civitatem nondum firmiter edificatam et timores extra propter suorum in Holme obsessionem.<sup>47</sup>

A defeat seemed inevitable, but in the meantime Livonian scouts reported to the Russian duke that the roads leading to Riga had been mined with caltrops, *ferreis claviculis tridentibus* ('little three-pronged iron bolts'), as Henry puts it, which cut both the hoofs of horses and the feet of men. Rumors also spread that ships had arrived in the bay of Riga carrying German reinforcements.

46 Henry of Livonia, *Chronicon Livoniae*, ed. Bauer 1959, chapter X, 12, pp. 60–61. "Indeed, since there were few Germans, scarcely even twenty, and since they feared betrayal by the Livonians, many of whom were in the fort with them, they sat armed night and day high on the ramparts, guarding the fort both from friends within and enemies without", *ibid.*, transl. Brundage 2003, p. 63.

47 *Ibid.*, "In Riga they feared both for themselves, because the city had not yet been securely built, and for those of their people who were being besieged in Holme", transl. Brundage 2003, p. 63.

Quo timore rex perterritus Rigam cum exercitu suo non descendit [...] [a]t ille, cum post undecim dierum castri inpugnationem nichil proficeret, sed magis per suorum interfectionem deficeret, simul et adventum Theuronicorum timeret cum omni exercitu suo [...] et reversus est navigio in terram suam.<sup>48</sup>

Let us dissect the different kinds and vectors of fear revealed in this episode, because fear was much more than just an automatic reaction to risk and peril. First of all, one should observe that the fear of the Germans besieged in Holme functioned as a threshold of the community. It constituted – and at the same time emotionally amplified – the moment of determination of one's friends and enemies. The Livonians who sought refuge in the fort were not some ordinary heathen peasants happening to live near the rampart, but recently converted neophytes and wannabe good Christians. They were, in other words, one of the main reasons for the Germans' presence in the region. Nonetheless, their company in the fort, once its gates were barricaded, posed a possible threat and an actual dilemma for the German defenders: how far could they be trusted? Should the brothers have a fear *of* or *for* the Livonians? Put bluntly: fear and mistrust kept the Germans sleepless during the siege and unmistakably marked the limits of the community. At the same time, the feeling of fear experienced by their compatriots in Riga was evidently a form of sympathy and care for their besieged brothers in Holme. They clearly feared *for* them. Finally, the winning strategy for both Riga and Holme turned out to be the sowing of insecurity and terror among their opponents, particularly in Duke Vladimir, without ever risking confrontation on a full scale.

As we can see through this example, the emotion of fear in Henry's *Chronicon* can be considered on many levels. It is not only a more or less voluntary reaction, but rather an action or relation directed towards others – as enmity, sympathy, or, as in the borderline Livonian case, as an affective ambiguity. There is then something essentially political about this fear, in a Schmittian sense,<sup>49</sup> as a moment of choosing one's friends and enemies; similar examples seem to corroborate this impression. What briefly appeared in Holme was a political relationship instantly opening, questioning and calling for a decision on the limits of the community, while the deeply felt and widespread fear was what brought forth and affectively accentuated this moment. The sheer intensity of fear and isolation in which this emotional gathering found itself brought

48 *Ibid.*, "Fearing this, the terrified king [prince] did not descend to Riga with his army. [...] And since he had gained nothing after besieging the fort for eleven days but rather had lost through the deaths of his men, and since he feared the arrival of the Germans, he rose up with his army and [...] sailed back to his own country", transl. Brundage 2003, p. 64.

49 Schmitt 1932; Wittrock & Falk 2012. For a wider sense of the connection between politics as a means for structuring power relationships and feelings accompanying such struggles for dominance in the Middle Ages, see Miller 1990, p. 181; White 2013, p. 289.

about a moment of political decision.<sup>50</sup> In an analogous situation from 1211 during a raid of the Oeselians upstream of the Aa river, the Livonians from the ravaged parish of Kuppeseele (Latv. Kizbele) sought refuge in Riga.

Rigenses autem civitatem diligenti custodia servantes et traditionem quorundam perfidorum timentes, adventum episcopi et peregrinorum expectabant.<sup>51</sup>

Fear did then fully reveal how fragile and devoid of mutual trust the Christian and neophyte coexistence was. Furthermore, it was not only Christians or neophyte Livonians who were forced to choose their friends and enemies in moments of dread – this compulsion applied just as much to pagans. For instance in 1220, after the Danish army conquered the land around Reval, the Danish leaders baptized the people of Harria (Est. Harjuma) and urged them to plunder the land of the Jerwanians “so that, seized by fear, they would depart from the rule of the Rigans and accept Danish rule and baptism”. The very same summer, “the Wierlanders, first defeated by the Rigans were terrified by the threats of the Danes and accepted their dictation and their rule”.<sup>52</sup> Here, again, perhaps in a more straightforward manner, we find the same mechanism of fear working as a threat, and pressure on the pagans to pick their religious and political adherences wisely.

The predominantly collective character of experiencing fear in Henry’s milieu should be considered in a twofold sense: firstly, people saw others’ dread, which profoundly contributed to their own sense of togetherness. Secondly, his audience also read fear as something shared by many at the same time. This hallmark of collectiveness and imminence of angst and horror in Henry’s account can help us better address the expressions of fear his *Chronicon Livoniae* delivers. What strikes one initially about these examples is the corporal dimension of dread, which was totally absent from Adam’s work. As we saw in the scene opening this article, trembling hands were a sure sign

50 Schmitt 2008, p. 45: The only scientifically arguable criterion today is the degree of intensity of an association and dissociation, i.e. the distinction between friend and enemy; see also Strandberg 2012.

51 Henry of Livonia, *Chronicon Livoniae*, ed. Bauer 1959, chapter XIV, 12, pp. 128–129. “The Rigans, however, were keeping careful watch over the city and feared that they would be betrayed by some treacherous people, so they awaited the arrival of the bishop and the pilgrims”, *ibid.*, transl. Brundage 2003, p. 108.

52 *Ibid.*, transl. Brundage 2003, p. 190. “... quatenus timore illo correpti a dominio Rigensium recederent et ipsorum dominium et baptismum reciperent ... Vironenses a Rigensibus primitus expugnati, comminatione Danorum exterriti verbum eorum atque dominium acceperunt ... Dani quoque, postquam Revalensem provinciam totam baptizaverunt, miserunt sacerdotes suos ad Harioneses et baptizatis illis incitaverunt eos, ut irent ad Gerwaneses cum exercitu, quatenus timore illo correpti a dominio Rigensium recederent et ipsorum dominium et baptismum reciperent”; *Ibid.*, ed. Bauer 1959, chapter XXIV, 2, pp. 258–259.

of a scared person. Later, during the same conflict with Svelgate and his troops in 1205, the people of Riga and the Semgallians prepared an ambush for the returning Lithuanians in the forest outside Rodenpois (Ropaži). But as the enemy approached, well over one thousand in number, “when the Semgallians saw their great multitude, many of them trembled and, not daring to fight, wished to seek safer places”.<sup>53</sup>

Apart from bodily seizures, screaming was also a common expression of fear. Sometimes it was not just a reaction but, again, was meant to induce fear in one’s enemy. During the winter of 1208 the troops of the Teutonic Order crossed the Dvina River near Ascheraden in search of the Lithuanians ravaging the Livonian countryside.

Quos ut viderunt pagani sese persequentes, rebus certis territi simul omnes exclamaverunt clamore magno. Et convocantes suos in occursum revertuntur christianorum. Quorum clamorem et multitudinem non verentes christiani et in Deo confidentes elevatis vexillis subito irruunt [...].<sup>54</sup>

Similarly, in an autobiographical passage describing an interrupted baptismal rite which Henry performed in Wierland in 1219, he noted that all of a sudden: “A great clamor arose and a rushing of our army through all the streets and everyone ran to arms, crying that a great host of pagans was coming against us.”<sup>55</sup>

As all the examples considered above reveal, Henry’s mindset operated with collective rather than individual subjects as protagonists of history who at all times shared the focus of their activity and feelings as both an expression of their emotional state and the motivation of their actions. It is perhaps of little wonder that the way martyrdom has been conceptualized by Henry differed substantially from both Helmold’s and, above all, from Adam’s. As mentioned above, martyrdom for Adam was an individual experience exclusively rewarded with the crown of martyrdom and, as in St. Olaf’s case, an individually granted celestial distinction: “There even today the Lord by the numerous miracles and cures done through him deigns to declare what merits are

53 *Ibid.*, transl. Brundage 2003, p. 49. “quorum multitudinem Semigalli videntes plures ex ipsis tremefacti et pugnare non audentes ad tutiora loca divertere querunt”; *Ibid.*, ed. Bauer 1959, chapter IX, 3, pp. 38–39.

54 *Ibid.*, ed. Bauer 1959, chapter XI, 5, pp. 74–77. “When the pagans saw that they were following them, they were terrified by the definite turn of events. They cried out at once with great yell, called together their men, and turned to meet the Christians. The Christians, not fearing their yell and their numbers, and confiding in God, raised their banners and suddenly rushed upon them”; *Ibid.*, transl. Brundage 2003, p. 73.

55 *Ibid.*, transl. Brundage 2003, p. 179. “Dumque iam eum in sacro linire deberemus oleo, factus est clamor magnus et concursus exercitus nostri per omnes plateas, et currebant omnes ad arma, clamantes magnam paganorum malewam contra nos venientem”; *Ibid.*, ed. Bauer 1959, chapter XXIII, 7, pp. 240–241.

his in heaven who is thus glorified on earth.”<sup>56</sup> Nothing could be more distant from Henry’s vision of martyrdom as both cruel and glorifying, though almost always a collective transmigration between the worldly and celestial communities of the martyrs.<sup>57</sup> Even when individuals suffered martyrdom, like Bishop Theoderich of Estland in 1219, their destiny was always to join the *consorcium martyrum* or *sanctorum communio* or *societas* as in the case of a nameless anchorite from the monastery of Dünamünde (Latv. Daugavgrīva) who was killed at about the same time.<sup>58</sup>

Marek Tamm, who has scrutinized the scenes of martyrdom in the *Chronicon Livoniae*, points out the evangelical potential of this phenomenon in a Baltic context. In Henry’s mind the desire to die a martyr’s death was at that time becoming attainable not only for clerics and crusaders, but for converts and neophytes as well.<sup>59</sup> Hence, like the aforementioned scenes of sieges lived through under great panic, scenes of martyrdom also exposed the fact that the religious rupture and us–them divide in Livonia were not absolute, but porous. Just like the emotion of fear, suffering appeared to be socially ambivalent – associative just as dissociative – which kept the aforementioned supposedly absolute Schmittian friend–enemy distinction in check.

Further, even if Henry’s examples of postulated martyrdom were meant to be inspirational and exemplary – both for his crusader audience, converts and his immediate addressee, Bishop William of Modena, whom the author might have hoped to convince to sponsor these hypothetical canonizations in Rome<sup>60</sup> – they were not intended to be spectacular and sensational in the same sense as Adam of Bremen’s. This does not mean that Henry lacked the sense of drama, quite the opposite. He merely reserved this dimension, for instance, for the evangelical teachings and missionary theatre such as the one staged in Riga in the winter of 1205/06, which, *nota bene*, profoundly scared the pagan public at some point.<sup>61</sup>

Given Henry’s strong insistence on the collectivity of fear and suffering, it is time to inquire about the sense of disgust his *Chronica* was inspiring in its audience and its implications for the experience of disgust in the Baltic missionary and crusader historiography in general. As an example, consider the siege of the pagan Estonians defend-

56 Adam of Bremen, “Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae Pontificum”, transl. Tschan 2002, p. 97. “Ubi hodieque pluribus miraculis et sanitatibus, quae per eum fiunt, Dominus ostendere dignatur, quanti meriti sit in celis, qui sic glorificatur in terries”; *Ibid.*, ed. Buchner 1978, II, chapter 61, pp. 300–303.

57 Henry of Livonia, *Chronicon Livoniae*, ed. Bauer 1959, chapter IX, 12, pp. 42–43, chapter X, 7, pp. 52–53, chapter XIV, 8, pp. 118–119, chapter XIV, 11, pp. 126–127, chapter XV, 9, pp. 146–147, chapter XXIII, 4, pp. 234–235.

58 *Ibid.*, chapter XXIII, 11, pp. 252–253, chapter XXII, 8, pp. 228–229.

59 Tamm 2011, pp. 151–154.

60 *Ibid.*, pp. 149–151.

61 Henry of Livonia, *Chronicon Livoniae*, ed. Bauer 1959, chapter IX, 14, pp. 44–45; on this spectacle, see Petersen 2011.



ing themselves from the united forces of the Livonians, Letts and the Sword Brethren in the fort of Fellin (Est. Viljandi) in August of 1223 (still fresh and vivid in Henry's mind, considering that he began writing just two years later). The siege did not cease for more than two weeks and eventually the hot Baltic summer took a disastrous toll on the defenders:

Cum enim esset calor nimius et multitudo hominum et pecorum fuisset in castro et iam fame et siti deficerent, facta est pestilencia magna per fetore nimio interfectorum in castro, et ceperunt homines egrotare et mori [...].<sup>62</sup>

Totally exhausted, the Estonians soon gave up the fort and sought peace with the Christians.

Scenes of martyrdom could be disgusting too; the brutal fate which Hebbus, the magistrate of Jerwia (Jerwen) and his Danish companions met from the pagan Saccalians can easily match the blood-drinking rituals described by Helmold:

Post hoc iidem Saccalanenses abierunt in Gerwam et comprehendentes ibi Hebbum, qui erat advocatus eorum, et cum ceteris Danis reduxerunt eum in castrum suum et crudeli martyrio cruciaverunt cum et alios, dilacerantes viscera eorum et extrahentes cor Hebbi adhuc vivum de ventre suo et assantes ad ignem et dividentes inter se, comederunt illud, ut fortes contra christianos efficerentur, et corpora eorum canibus et volatilibus celi rodenda dederunt.<sup>63</sup>

Like Helmold's descriptions of disgust, Henry's also activates multiple senses operating with both optical, gustatory and olfactory means to suggest the sensation of disgust. What was different was by how many this sensation was shared, although the contrast with Adam's purely visual depiction of heathen Uppsala that was observed and reported by only one person is perhaps even starker. This is not to say that sight and vision do not suggest and imply "unnerving touches, nauseating tastes, and foul odors,"<sup>64</sup> but that direct references to these phenomena were both more effective in making such a suggestion and implied a physical proximity which vision alone cannot convey. In addition, building on Miller's conception of how different senses implicate proximity and distance from the disgusting object, we can now, after analyzing the senses of disgust of all three authors, make further corollaries about what implications

62 *Ibid.*, chapter XXVII, 2, pp. 294–295. "Since the heat was, indeed, exceedingly great and there was a multitude of beasts and men in the fort, and they were perishing from hunger and thirst, there was a great pestilence because of the excessively great stench of those who had died in the fort and the men began to get sick and die"; *Ibid.*, transl. Brundage 2003, p. 215.

63 *Ibid.*, chapter XXVI, 6, pp. 284–287. "They tore out their viscera and plucked out Hebbus's heart from his bosom while he was still alive. They roasted it in the fire, divided it among themselves, and ate it, so that they would be strong against the Christians. They gave the bodies of the Danes to the dogs to gnaw and to the birds of the air"; *Ibid.*, transl. Brundage 2003, p. 209.

64 Miller 1997, p. 80.

the experience of disgust can have for an individual and collective feeling of dread. It is because different senses have a differential bearing on the togetherness vis-à-vis the singularity of the experience of disgust. This, in turn, can help us better understand why Adam's purely visual disgust may have been experienced as alienating, whereas Helmold's and Henry's multisensory repulsion suggested a greater deal of commonality. While it is always possible that people, even if in a group, do not participate in a vision of disgust as they happened or chose to look the other way, it is extremely difficult once you are close enough to hear or smell the other way. Hearing and smell, in contrast to vision or taste, operate in a much more involuntary manner and suggest the immediate sharing of the same sensation if experienced collectively.<sup>65</sup> That is why, in the last instance, Adam of Bremen's fear and aversion as mute, safe, and strongly literary emotions were much less involving for the audience than Helmold of Bosau's and Henry's much fuller, vibrant smells, tastes and sounds of missionary dread, gore and repulsion, experienced *by*, *with* and *in front of* many.

As a final point, one should observe that the exacerbating depictions of cruelty, as well as the intense emotional response of disgust they were meant to evoke (especially in Helmold's and Henry's chronicles), probably had more to do with a specific rhetorical development in the era of crusades than with some general growth of violence or brutality. As pointed out by Daniel Baraz and Gerd Althoff, the ecclesiastically minded authors working during the high Middle Ages in general, and crusading historiographers in particular, reinvented the ancient and Biblical *topoi* and rhetoric of violence and cruelty which suited both their overarching ideological goals as well as their short-term political interests (e.g. in the Investiture conflict and during the specific crusades).<sup>66</sup>

## Conclusions

When analyzing the expressions of fear and disgust in the missionary historiography written between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries, we should treat the texts of Adam of Bremen, Helmold of Bosau, and Henry of Livonia as authorial creations and personal statements to the same extent as mouthpieces for larger discourses and channels for other missionaries' experiences of danger and aversion. On the one hand, it would be naïve not to acknowledge the rhetorical craft and, in Adam's case particularly, eloquence invested in composing the literary and no doubt strategic display of the frightening. As shown by Leonid Arbusow, Henry of Livonia also operated within a very repetitive discourse, heavily dependent on Biblical quotations.<sup>67</sup> On the other

<sup>65</sup> Lopez 2016; see also Troschianko 2013; Merleau-Ponty 2022, pp. 251–270.

<sup>66</sup> Baraz 2003, pp. 75–121; Althoff 2013.

<sup>67</sup> Arbusow 1951.

hand, it is often very difficult, unless an author mentions a concrete, traceable experience, to determine whose dread we are actually dealing with. As we have observed, personal fears had a tendency to transform into impersonal, literarily reproducible and rather general anxiety. Yet the fact that most instances of fear and horror in these chronicles were not direct reports, but rather creations of a specific emotional imagination shaped in and focused on risk and danger, should not discourage us from taking them in the right earnest. After all, it is crucial to consider the coordinates and conditions of these imaginings – literary, institutional, environmental as well as personal – which made these created emotions and expressions plausible and sincerely affective for the audience.<sup>68</sup>

Hence, if we attempt to answer the initial question of what emotional response the representations of fear and disgust inspired in the readers, the main tenet of Adam of Bremen's *Gesta*, broadly speaking, was that they encouraged an aesthetic attitude towards fear and disgust. It was a histrionic form of employment of events as tiny pieces of drama, through which Adam represented other people's predicaments (but not their sensations!) almost always with an onlooker slipped into the picture as a stand-in for the reader and Adam himself.<sup>69</sup> As a result, this dramatic compensation for his own distance from the missionary front might actually have had an estranging impact on his audience and, paradoxically, enthused them as well as himself with a sense of security rather than fright.

In comparison with Adam, Helmold of Bosau inclined his audience and himself towards a more ethical attitude towards the afflicted people's suffering and fright. His attitude was ethical in the sense that it fulfilled the two basic requirements posed by the emotion of compassion: it acknowledged the seriousness of others' affliction as well as the fact that the afflicted did not deserve it. But above all, Helmold's personal missionary experiences, his own fears and dreads as well as his prolonged and exposed location in Wagria, were similar and very close to those of the sufferers constituting a firm basis for his sympathy and compassion.<sup>70</sup> Against this background, Adam's attitude could be considered empathetic at best – indubitably concerned about others' suffering, but not really imagining himself in the same position.<sup>71</sup> Considering all of the above, Henry of Livonia should be positioned at the crossing point between the similarly conceptualized ethical and strongly political (in the above-discussed Schmitian sense) attitudes towards fear and suffering.

As Martha Nussbaum has observed, certain feelings and emotions (e.g. love or

68 Schnell 2009, pp. 35–51; Gerok-Reiter 2007.

69 Booker 2009, pp. 104–126.

70 Nussbaum 2001, p. 300; see also pp. 306–307, 320–321.

71 *Ibid.*, p. 328: What is wanted, it seems, is a kind of "twofold attention" in which one both imagines what it is like to be in the sufferer's place and, at the same time, retains securely the awareness that one is not in that place.

grief) expand the boundaries of the self – both individually and collectively I would add – attaching the subject to its surroundings, whereas others emotions (e.g. disgust) “draw sharp boundaries around the self, insulating it [the subject] from contamination by external objects.”<sup>72</sup> In other words, these three personal missionary attitudes towards fear, disgust and suffering translated into more general visions of what effects fear could have on missionary communities. In Adam’s case, it seems, fright and horror were above all carefully and sparsely infused literary tools to motivate his missionary readers in their individual zeal. Adam’s own fear, on the other hand, was self-contained and self-oriented. In Helmold’s case, horror, anxiety and bloodshed were facts of life one had to reckon with earnestly and that even the promise of martyrdom could not eradicate. For Henry, finally, fear was a powerful, omnipresent and somewhat all-purpose emotion with a contradictory potential to consolidate, disrupt and antagonize communities. Paradoxically then, in both Helmold’s and Henry’s case, fear was not always insulating and divisive, but could sometimes function as an expanding emotion both in an in-group and out-group direction.<sup>73</sup> In all three cases, however, disgust certainly had an insulating effect and strongly contributed to the drawing of sharp boundaries between the missionaries and their heathen adversaries and antagonists in an almost human-animalistic opposition.

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<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 300, see also pp. 297–301, 342–349.

<sup>73</sup> For a thorough discussion on the evangelical expansion through emotions in Henry of Livonia’s chronicle, see Kaljundi 2016.

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# A Dangerous Place to Be:

Fearing City Life in Georg Wickram's  
*Von guten und bösen Nachbarn* (1556)

*Elisabeth Wåghäll Nivre*

The growth of early modern European towns and cities has been of great interest to researchers of many disciplines for decades, including political, economic, demographic, geographical, religious, and other aspects which have been studied in depth. The interest in urban areas, in the shaping of what at times is considered 'the modern world' is immense, but there are still relatively few studies of the early modern city in literary texts by scholars of literature.<sup>1</sup> Looking at the city from the perspective of its early modern authors it becomes evident that they, too, had a growing need to understand and to express their experiences of city life in writing. In the early modern German prose novel<sup>2</sup> the city becomes more than a mere name mentioned in passing or used to give the reader an idea of where the story takes place geographically. The city becomes the stage on which the action takes place and where the protagonists live. The growing towns and cities are thus places for people to meet and interact. They are densely populated spaces, where neighbors no longer necessarily know each other, and often fear the unfamiliar and unknown next door. Hatred, crime, and violence characterize life in the early modern city as depicted in a great many texts. The protagonists in the texts of the German author Georg Wickram (c. 1505–1561) have to proceed tactically, adjust to the dangers surrounding them, and work hard in order to create a safe haven in large dangerous cities like Antwerp and Venice. They rarely show any strong emotions publicly but suffer quietly, worry and cry when alone without friends and family. In the following I will take a closer look at one of Wickram's novels and the way he utilizes

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1 Both Garber 1998 and Peters 1993 focus on the organization of a print market and literary culture in the growing early modern towns and cities.

2 "Prose novel" is the term used by German literary scholars to define a variety of (fictional) texts written in prose at the end of the Middle Ages and especially after the introduction of the printing press in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries; see Bennewitz 1991, Müller 1985, and Roloff 1983.

his characters when depicting difficulties and dangers in the early modern town or city.

Most scholars agree on Wickram's special position in sixteenth-century German literature. As the illegitimate son of a well-known burgher of Colmar he is not likely to have received any formal education. Wickram did, however, establish himself as a city clerk in Colmar and later in Burgheim am Rhein, and he also wrote a large number of prose texts and didactic plays between 1539 and approximately 1560. Even though many of his texts contained traditional topics he often used them for his own purposes, trying to make them fit a plot that had more in common with the urban life he himself was familiar with than the courtly life depicted in medieval as well as many early modern texts.<sup>3</sup> Wickram simply makes use of his everyday experiences by mixing them with well-known themes, blending the old and conventional with his own new ideas in a way that few of his contemporaries in Germany did. Wickram is in many respects highly conservative in that he never tries to overtly provoke his readers. He is nevertheless the first German author to write a truly original text that takes place in an urban setting and portrays craftsmen and tradespeople. He further paves the way for these protagonists – if acting morally immaculately – to achieve great social recognition and rise in society to reach positions that had traditionally been reserved for patricians and the nobility.

*Von guten und bösen Nachbarn* ('Of Good and Bad Neighbors')<sup>4</sup> from 1556 thus presents familiar problems to its readers in a new setting with new characters. Wickram's text is the first prose novel in the German language that completely abandons the courtly setting to depict instead city life and city dwellers and connect the urban space with primarily the dark sides of society. While the characters move around they try to establish relationships with the city and its people with the aim to define the city for themselves, to turn the abstract notion of space into a familiar – and thus less frightening – place. This distinction between space and place, which has been defined by the Chinese-American scholar Yi-Fu Tuan, was intended mainly for the definition of geographical space, but it seems fruitful also for the analysis of spatiality in a more abstract sense in literary texts. Tuan writes:

In experience, the meaning of space often merges with that of place. 'Space' is more abstract than 'place.' What begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value. Architects talk about the spatial qualities of place; they can equally well speak of the locational (place) qualities of space. The ideas 'space' and 'place' require each

3 For further information on Wickram and his work, see Wåghäll Nivre 1995a and Wåghäll Nivre 1996.

4 Wickram, *Von guten und bösen Nachbarn*, ed. Roloff 1969. All references to *Von guten und bösen Nachbarn* are taken from this edition. All translations into English are mine. Diacritical marks from the original have been omitted with the exception of the conversion of the super-script *e* above the vowels *a*, *o* and *u* to *ä*, *ö*, and *ü*.

other for definition. From the security and stability of place we are aware of the openness, freedom, and threat of space, and vice versa. Furthermore, if we think of space as that which allows movement, then place is pause; each pause in movement makes it possible for location to be transformed into place.<sup>5</sup>

When reading Wickram and linking different aspects of threat to space, as an abstract not yet defined location, it becomes clear that Tuan's concept of space and place points at a key problem in the representation of fear in written discourse by presupposing expressions of uncertainty in the narrative which are closely linked with different forms of spatiality. Below I will investigate the quickly growing early modern city as a location for criminal behavior, violence, and force as expressed in Wickram's text. The aim is to show how the characters deal with situations of conflict, how they express and cope with feelings of anxiety, distress, and fear, but also what impact this has on the plot.<sup>6</sup> Textual examples from *Von guten und bösen Nachbarn* will be used to analyze the situated use of negative emotions, of fear: what do some of the main characters regard as threatening, how do they react to threat in different urban settings, and what does fear accomplish in the text?

Scholarly work on emotions in general and fear in particular has grown steadily in the last few decades, especially after the 1983 publication of Jean Delumeau's seminal work on sin and fear.<sup>7</sup> In the following I will, however, not study the theological relationships between sin and fear but instead focus on both verbal and physical-bodily

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5 Tuan 1977, p. 6. See also Kermode 2013, pp. 1–24. Lloyd Edward Kermode criticizes Michel de Certeau's concept of space as inhabited and practiced place (cf. de Certeau 1984), since it tends to imply that 'place' is negative/passive and 'space' positive/active. Referring to a study by Andrew Gordon, Kermode argues that de Certeau's concept needs to be used with care for places of cultural activity since the theater as well as the city have been "brought into being in *previous* performance and space usage" (Kermode 2013, p. 6). This discussion of space/place fits well with Yi-Fu Tuan's idea of place as a pause rather than as an indication of stability, as claimed by de Certeau. It proves especially fruitful in regard to situations where fear of space is expressed, or when space is a "no-thing" (*ibid.*). It thus seems extremely important to view space and place as combined, interrelated, and requiring each other, and to look at space as an active, dynamic location where meaning/identity is shaped.

6 The analysis does not include the aspect of gender, since it focuses solely on the male characters in the text. Fear also affects female characters, but this requires further analysis for a differentiated discussion. For a study of gender in Wickram's work, see Braun 2001 and Wåghäll Nivre 2004.

7 Delumeau first published his book in French in 1983. It did not appear in English translation until 1990 (Delumeau 1991). For an overview of current research in the field of fear, see Laffan & Weiss 2012. Of great importance for the research on the history of emotions is the work carried out by Peter M. Stearns and Carol Z. Stearns (1985), William M. Reddy (1997) and Barbara H. Rosenwein (2002 and 2010). In Germany, Andreas Bähr has published extensively on fear in the seventeenth century. His *Habilitationsschrift* is a thorough investigation on the concept of fear for the constitution of the subject (Bähr 2013).

aspects of fear in everyday secular relationships in the early modern city, as depicted by Wickram. I understand 'fear' as an emotion that is closely tied to power relations and hierarchies and that oscillates between the individual and the social, making the negotiation of boundaries and spaces important for the plot.<sup>8</sup> Fear is the result of a perceived or experienced threat that challenges power relations and invades the place that the fearing individual has defined as his or her own, thus redefining space and overthrowing stability and order. Fear is furthermore an integral part of the shaping of 'emotional communities', a term coined by Barbara H. Rosenwein. In her research on emotional history Rosenwein stresses that "a history of emotions must problematize the feelings of the past, addressing their distinctive characteristics" and goes on to claim that "emotional communities are, almost by definition [...] an aspect of every social group in which people have a stake and interest".<sup>9</sup> Emotions are thus representations of human agency at a given time and in a given society.<sup>10</sup> Wickram seems in his texts to try to create his own emotional communities in order to use them as models for the shaping of an ideal world. Although loss of order is the main threat that overshadows all his texts *Von guten und bösen Nachbarn* depicts how fear can be overcome and order be reestablished as well as how the city can be made pleasant and inhabitable for the good neighbors.

"Du solt wissen / das noch andre Portugaleser aus Lisabona in diser Stadt Antorff sind / und derselbigen nit wenig / Aber fürnemlich zwen verlotteter böser buben / einer Lorentz genant der ander Veit."<sup>11</sup> When Lasarus, a young Portuguese apprentice, comes to Antwerp he is immediately introduced to the evils of the city by a friend and thus quickly learns that the big city offers no safety and that people around him can be divided into 'us' and 'them'. The young hero in Wickram's prose novel does not seek heroic or chivalric adventures on his travels but rather security and a quiet place to live. He has to make a living as a goldsmith in an urban setting but is constantly threatened

8 Bourke 2003, p. 124. Joanna Bourke discusses the complexity of emotions such as 'fear' and 'anxiety' in an important article focusing on historical research. Bourke points out that emotions are "social enaction" (p. 113) and thus very closely tied to narrative. Bourke stresses: "for historians, shifts in the way people narrated fear altered their subjective experience" (p. 120). For the literary scholar the structure of the narration – the way emotions are expressed in written discourse – is central.

9 Rosenwein 2010, pp. 10 and 12. Cf. Rosenwein 2002, pp. 821–845.

10 Cf. Pollock 2004, p. 571 on 'anger' as culturally constructed. Pollock states: "The history of emotions is a tricky undertaking. Imbued with our own cultural understanding of what anger, sadness or love is, we are directed to recognize in the past those emotions which seem similar to ours, even as we strive to uncover different ways of feeling – but then how do we recognize these as emotions?" (p. 572).

11 "You should know / that also other Portuguese men from Lisbon are in this city of Antwerp / and not few of them / especially two shabby, evil lads / one named Lorentz, the other Veit." Wickram, *Von guten und bösen Nachbarn*, p. 143.

by malicious characters. He thus has to deal with real threats such as fistfights and weapons as well as with his own very personal feelings and emotions when approached by people who scare him – or his family. The title of Wickram's text prepares the reader for the dichotomy inherent in the book: the contrasts between good and evil. City life is depicted as a battle for the good life that the honest, orderly, peaceful citizen needs to incessantly defend in controversies with disorderly, immoral, quarrelsome and often criminal neighbors.

Wickram's plea for good neighborhood has been met with strong criticism – *Von guten und bösen Nachbarn* did not reach the popularity of his earlier novels – and it has even been called a true orgy of emotional friendship<sup>12</sup> – but it is probably the first German "Großstadtroman" situated almost exclusively in big European cities where it is no longer possible to know everyone; it thus becomes increasingly important to tell friends from enemies. The story is set in three of the largest European cities of the sixteenth century, Antwerp, Lisbon, and Venice (and in an unnamed Spanish town). Each one of these cities had at least 150 000 inhabitants and belonged to the most important European centers of trade and shipping. Wickram's fascination with these cities is thus understandable, especially when considering that only one half of one percent of the German cities had more than 10 000 inhabitants at the time of the Reformation.<sup>13</sup> We know that Wickram, who never traveled further than Frankfurt am Main, had no first-hand knowledge of the cities he used as setting for his *büchlein* ('booklet', p. 7). Neither does, or can, he describe their geographical position, nor any important landmarks.<sup>14</sup> Even though these cities mainly function as a backdrop for interpersonal relationships they remain in focus of Wickram's attention throughout the text, since it is life in the city that shapes the outer and inner life of the characters.

### Fearing the neighbor: verbal abuse

Abuse in the first part of the text is no stronger than verbal, even though the reader is immediately shown a fictional world where physical intrusion is a constant threat. The first chapter introduces the reader to the problematic situation of one of the main characters, Robertus, who lives in Antwerp:

Er het einen zänckischen, arglistigen und alventzischen nachbauren / der was ein Tuchbereiter / der hett vil knecht auß fremden nationen und landen / wann die also bey einander waren / erzalt ir yeder, was in seiner haimat landtleuffig unnd breuchig wer.<sup>15</sup>

12 Lugowski 1976, p. 139. There is only one full-length study of *Von guten und bösen Nachbarn* from later years, an unpublished dissertation by Annemarie Wambach (1998).

13 While natural disasters, diseases, and wars frequently severely reduced the number of inhabitants the migration to the cities regularly increased.

14 For a discussion of Wickram's understanding of geography, see Wåghäll Nivre 1995b.

15 "He had a quarrelsome, malicious and envious neighbor, a textile worker who had many ap-

Robertus cannot ignore his neighbor – they live too close together. The neighbor even “lieff mit angenehcktem schwert für sein thüren / [Robertus] fand in von ungeschicht in seinem laden sitzen / sich in etlichen registeren zu ersehen”.<sup>16</sup> The evil neighbor cries out in invectives and keeps scolding Robertus and his children in front of the customers in Robertus’s shop. Robertus is surprised and somewhat scared (“etwas schrecken empfang”, p. 14) but also embarrassed to be provoked by the neighbor in front of everyone. Nevertheless, he first tries friendliness:

Er sagt mit sänffter stim / „Lieber nachbaur / ir überfarend mich gar ungewarneter sachen / ich bit euch von wegen guter nachbaurtschafft / habt ir etwas mit mir zu reddten / gond zu mir inn mein hauß / es ist euch doch zu yeder zeit offen / unnd gar nicht verboten harin zu gon.“<sup>17</sup>

As nothing helps, Robertus not only feels distressed but also threatened by the neighbor – by his physical presence and his constant verbal abuse – and worries for the members of his family who are no longer safe in their own home. When shortly after the unpleasant incident in the shop the family is struck by illness and nine of his ten children die within a month Robertus is prepared to make a very important decision. After talking to his wife and servants he decides to leave Antwerp for Lisbon, Portugal, to take over the house and the business of a relative. Wickram at first gives his readers numerous examples of the threatening and stressful behavior of the neighbors strengthening his arguments with marginalia in the printed text stating that “real friends” who do not surrender to hardships or fear will always be helped (p. 18). Wickram then fairly briefly describes the parents’ grief when the children die without digressing into long lamentations. Their difficult situation is instead illustrated by a radical change of (geographical) location involving removing the couple from a place that they used to call home but that has since caused them so much agony. Strong emotions are thus not entirely suppressed but rather expressed indirectly, transformed, and represented by means of physical movement and the search for a new space that can be turned into a place – a place to call home.

As the protagonists do not have any previous experience of the foreign city, Robertus immediately tries to make new contacts upon their arrival. In order to feel safe in

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prentices in his shop who were from foreign countries. When they gathered they talked about traditions and customs in their various home countries.” Wickram, *Von guten und bösen Nachbaurn*, p. 12.

16 “carried a sword when passing Robertus’s house. He also visited Robertus’s shop for no other reason than to check/spy on him”. Wickram, *Von guten und bösen Nachbaurn*, p. 13.

17 “He said in a friendly tone: ‘Dear neighbor, you accuse me of surprising things. I kindly ask you to come to my house and discuss things with me in a friendly manner as good neighbors do. My house is always open and it is not at all forbidden to enter it.’” Wickram, *Von guten und bösen Nachbaurn*, p. 14.



the city they need not only a secure home but also good friends and neighbors, people whom they can trust. Wickram here strictly focuses on personal relationships. At this point little or nothing is said about the house, the immediate neighborhood or the surrounding city. To the reader the city is still like an open space that needs to be filled with life. The protagonists, on the other hand, do not seem to have any language problems in Portugal – this is something mentioned much later in the text. Wickram instead switches to Robertus's meeting with a young Spaniard, Richard, on a ship. The two experience a number of adventures while traveling for business reasons, and despite their difference in age a close friendship is established between them. As a sign of their close ties Richard marries Robertus's daughter Cassandra, after which Wickram shifts his focus from Robertus to the young couple and their life in Lisbon.

Richard works assiduously on establishing himself in the new country, but once again the main characters are threatened by a malicious and envious neighbor who has himself wanted to marry Cassandra. Now his feelings are hurt and he wants revenge. The introduction of the neighbor and his cohort is sudden and their evil plans do not in any way correspond with their previous total irrelevance to the plot, but Wickram ties the following acts of violence closely to a communication system of honor and shame that is completely independent of such aspects as nationality and ethnicity.<sup>18</sup> A verbal dispute between Richard and the neighbor triggers the conflict, which leads to a planned attack on Richard, its outline cover several pages. This is the first time the city appears in the text as an integral part of the plot, as an open space to fear unless appropriated and filled with good neighbors.

### Physical threats: weapons, injuries, and deaths

Very soon Wickram shows his readers that verbal disputes can quickly end up in bodily injuries, even in murder. One evening when Richard is on his way home with his new friend Lasarus the evil neighbor and his companions are sneaking around, waiting for Richard to be on his own. He is unaware of the planned attack, but the reader is told that he is well prepared for a fight because of his familiarity with the dangers of the city. Wickram assures the reader that Richard has "alle zeit etlich Pomerantzen bey im / so mit bley außgefüllt waren",<sup>19</sup> and he wears a breastplate (*einen Pantzer*) under his clothes when leaving home to walk the city streets at night. Richard is thus ready for much more than an argument with those that he might meet in the dark alleys of the city. He has taken action to prevent feelings of fear by being well prepared in the case of an assault, but his precautions indicate that he feels constantly threatened. He is, moreover, lucky; Lasarus not only hears noise from the street after entering his house but

<sup>18</sup> See Christadler 2007, p. 236.

<sup>19</sup> "at all times carries Oranges filled with lead", Wickram, *Von guten und bösen Nachbarn*, p. 53.

also every word Richard is saying when being approached by the neighbor. He grabs his sword and quickly runs out to help his friend. Bravery and concern for the friend here overcome all feelings of fear. The strong ties of friendship lead the protagonists to forget all their worries and to act quickly. Even if it says that Lasarus's appearance helps Richard to gain courage ("mer mannes mut überkumen", p. 55) and to fight for his life, Wickram here too prefers to express emotions through activity.

The open street functions as the stage in a play. The houses lining the alley create a closed-off space, a small room where the assault takes place. Richard and Lasarus dominate the fight even though they are outnumbered by the neighbor and his evil companions. Two men are killed, but two manage to escape although severely hurt. Richard and Lasarus simply leave the dead bodies on the street (p. 55), as if wanting to make a statement after having conquered a dangerous urban space. They go home to sleep before meeting again in the morning for the purpose of bringing order back. The reader can only imagine the fear felt by the protagonists during the fight and the relief following its successful outcome, but Wickram leaves it up to the reader to interpret the situation. Out of consideration for their family members Richard and Lasarus do not tell anyone at home about the assault. They do not want to stir up emotions, to frighten and terrify them ("sie nicht angshafft machete / und erschreckete", p. 55). Even though the fight must have been very loud, Lasarus seems to be the only one who has heard the noise from the street. No other people have left their houses to see what happens outside their doors. After the fight the street is again desolate. Only the two bodies indicate that something terrible has happened, transforming the open space into a place of crime.

As in many other early modern prose novels there are breaks, ruptures, and gaps where the inner logic of the texts fails in the eyes of a modern reader. Wickram makes use of the urban space for his own purposes to create suspense and to tell a good story but also to moralize and portray an urban landscape of viciousness and violence. Lasarus, the good friend and only eyewitness to the nightly controversy, is also quickly involved in the fight. The following morning, when the streets are full of life again Richard and Lasarus go out to make sure that their nightly adventure receives a proper ending, still without showing any strong reaction to the vicious attack. The protagonists are rather characterized by rationality and a sense of duty. They find a large crowd of people gathered around the dead bodies. Lasarus tries to listen to the speculations, "damit er doch von dem volck eines jeden rhatschlag und meinung vernemen möcht".<sup>20</sup> He immediately realizes how quickly the gossip among the curious observers is turned into rumors that spread around the city. The killing of two *Riffner*, criminals, in a public area can of course not be kept secret, and Richard and Lasarus need to find the two

20 Approximately: "to find out what people are talking about". Wickram, *Von guten und bösen Nachbarn*, p. 56.

men who were injured by them. They look in the *Scherhäusern* (barber shops) and find the man whom the neighbor had paid for killing Richard. He is severely wounded and dies in front of them while confessing his sins – fearing God’s punishment. Order is, however, not restored until the fourth person is found. Richard and Lasarus search for him unsuccessfully all over Lisbon before doing the only right thing: reporting what has happened to the (police) authorities. “Also haben sie solche sach / der Oberkeit / so darzu verordnet gewesen / angezeigt”.<sup>21</sup> Wickram’s exemplary protagonists know the rules of the early modern city. They look for help, and trust that the local legal system will make sure that order is restored so that people can live together in peace and justice.<sup>22</sup> In Wickram’s text social order is managed by the municipal authorities. It is a matter for the secular powers to prevent violence and to protect its good God-fearing citizens from evil and to turn the city into a safe place to live.

### Fearing the Other: encounters with unfamiliar towns and people

Not long after this rather traumatic episode Richard travels with Lasarus to his former home town in Spain. On the first day Richard wakes up early in the morning and goes for a walk by himself, even though he does not know his way around the foreign town (p. 64) nor speaks the language. He does not get very far before he is kidnapped and brought on board a Turkish ship in the harbor. The kidnappers are hoping for a large ransom from the friends and family of the wealthy-looking stranger, but once again good friends and neighbors save the protagonist. When Lasarus gets up he quickly realizes that something is wrong since he cannot find his friend in or around the house. He starts searching for Richard with the help of a solid network of friends and is able to locate him after questioning people he meets about where he has last been seen and with whom. Several people have been round the port during the early morning hours, and their stories help Lasarus to draw his own conclusions. When eyewitnesses are needed for the narration, then Wickram will include them. Someone has always heard or seen something if this benefits the narration. Most importantly, a friend is always close in Wickram’s text, and in the big cities friends have to be carefully chosen.

Lasarus has no intention to give up his search. Richard does not know, however, that Lasarus is looking for him in the harbor, fearing for his friend’s life. He can do nothing but wait. The sharp contrast between the man locked up in the ship, lamenting his foolish naivety when first encountering the Turkish tradespeople and trusting their promises – the text says that he cried inwardly (“ward er inniglichen weinen”,

21 “So they notified the higher authorities that were in charge of this.” Wickram, *Von guten und bösen Nachbarn*, p. 57.

22 Valentin Groebner has shown for fifteenth-century Nuremberg that private violence often was suppressed by municipal powers of order (Groebner 1995, pp. 162–189).

p. 65) – and his friend searching for him on busy city streets and in the harbor helps the reader to visualize what the text describes in words: Lasarus knows about the dangers of entering a ship with criminals/pirates and his heart is trembling with fear (p. 67). When also warned by another friend to act on his own he immediately decides to follow the advice and reports the kidnapping to the authorities. He says: “so fügt ich mich onverzognlich zu dem Obersten gubernator / so von dem Künig über das Port gesetzt ist / zeigt im die sach von anfang an / und begert das er mir etlich diener zugeben wolt / die mir die Türkischen schiff hülffen ersuchen”.<sup>23</sup> The kidnappers can thus be caught and punished and order is reestablished. There is no hint of revenge, since that would be morally reprehensive in the world depicted by Wickram. Lasarus and Richard have fully accepted the legal system; they expect “fair punishment” (*verdienthen Lohn*, p. 70) of the offenders, and that justice is done by judicial powers. As soon as a dangerous situation is solved, Wickram’s characters regain their inner (emotional) balance. By conquering foreign space – here symbolized by the Turkish ship – the city becomes a safer place for the good neighbors and friends who find their outcome there.<sup>24</sup>

A last example from the final pages in *Von guten und bösen Nachbaur* depicts the probably most gruesome act of violence in Wickram’s prose novel: a father kills his own son by mistake while intending to kill his lodger, Lasarus Jr. The passage ends with the landlord taking his own life and Lasarus Jr. returning from Venice to Lisbon since he has no interest in staying in a city “dieweil im die sach so nahend mißraten were”.<sup>25</sup> Lasarus Jr. obviously understands that he is the target, but nothing in the text indicates that he has been personally threatened or felt any fear before the murder. The brief story about the travels of Lasarus’s son is simply used to present an example of cultural encounters in urban spaces. The reader here experiences a young man who is sent out to see foreign cities and to learn his trade as a goldsmith, before he returns home to marry the woman he loves. Lasarus Jr., who is first sent to Antwerp and then to Venice, learns a great deal more about life than just goldsmith’s work. When Wickram mentions that the newcomer is shown around town by his new colleagues – a kind of early modern sightseeing (p. 142) – with visits to important sites – he simultaneously thematizes the importance of learning foreign languages and getting to know foreign cultures. Even though the author seems concerned about the safety of young Lasarus, who needs to be trained to be “street smart” in order to survive in the foreign city, he leaves it to the reader to interpret Lasarus’s reactions. The whole passage seems utterly hypothetical.

23 “I will thus immediately go to the highest governor who has been made responsible for the port by the king, tell him the whole story and ask him to give me several of his servants to help me search for the Turkish ship.” Wickram, *Von guten und bösen Nachbaur*, p. 67.

24 Two recent dissertations deal with the importance of trade and money in Wickram’s work: Politis 2007, and Schulz 2008.

25 “since the thing almost went wrong”, p. 174. Wickram here refers to the fact that Lasarus almost was killed but that nothing happened to him.

Venice becomes the backdrop for what life in the city could be like if evil powers were allowed to rule. Lasarus can leave without having to worry further about life in Venice, but he needs to take his newly gained knowledge back to his home town to be able to arrange for safe living conditions for his wife-to-be and their future children.

The passage cited above where Lasarus Jr. is warned by his friends upon his arrival in Antwerp shows that fellow countrymen can be just as friendly or dangerous as foreigners. It is the sheer number of people in the city that makes it difficult to tell friends from enemies. Lasarus needs to use all his senses and to learn from experience. He can return to Lisbon unharmed after learning his lesson to be careful. Despite their trust in the legal system the male characters in Wickram's novel try to find a solution to the dystopia they have experienced, a fearful life in the city. The end of *Von guten und bösen Nachbarn* shows a family that chooses to withdraw from the dangers that surround them. Lasarus and his wife live with their parents in a house that has been remodeled to offer only one entrance/exit to the outer world. When they visit each other they can do so through connecting doors inside the house. The door to the outside world needs only to be opened when contact is required with others than their best friends. This early modern 'gated community' tries to lock out violence and thus suppress feelings of fear – but also to let morally immaculate and God-fearing citizens live together in harmony. In *Von guten und bösen Nachbarn* Wickram creates his own municipal paradise, a place where fear is excluded.

## Conclusion

A close reading of Wickram's text shows that he is able to include large cities in his plot and to make them important scenes of action, even though he is only capable of giving his readers a very broad and general representation of each city. They are important international meeting places where the protagonists live and learn and not only a place mentioned in passing, in an itinerary or on a map. The cities in *Von guten und bösen Nachbarn* are depicted as locations where the protagonists need to negotiate their living space and battle fear due to threats from next-door neighbors, other inhabitants of the city, or from foreigners. Joanna Bourke claims:

As with all emotional experiences, fear is about encounters – successful ones as well as the torment of failed ones. Emotion-displays [sic!] of fear are exercises of power: who becomes frightened and what is the outcome of their displays? Fear is about relations of power and resistance. The emotion appears as the link between the psychological feeling or experience and 'being in the world' or acting as social beings.<sup>26</sup>

I propose that Wickram's prose novel deals with exactly this concept of fear. Both the successful defense against a threat – real or imagined – and the positive outcome of a

<sup>26</sup> Bourke 2003, p. 129.

fight result in growing self-confidence among the protagonists. Fear can be suppressed as soon as the protagonists feel that they are in control of a situation. Then it need not be mentioned. Wickram's aim is nevertheless to prevent his protagonists – the good neighbors – from feeling fear. After one of many acts of violence in the text it is stated that all young men should understand the text as a warning. Wickram gives the readers examples of the dangers awaiting them in foreign lands and stresses the importance of not trusting foreigners:

Hie mügen alle jungen gesellen / ein exempel nemen / so die frembden land brauchen / das sie nit all ort und winckel erschlieffen / sunderlich zu unzeiten und spoter oder gar früher stunden / sie sollend auch nit eim yeden, so sie mit glatten und süssen worten kan ansprechen, glauben geben / Ihr geschafft und befehl an keinen andren orten und enden / offbaren / dann da es in zu thun befolhen ist.<sup>27</sup>

Even though foreign places are mentioned as specifically dangerous one can conclude that ethnic, national, or religious boundaries are of relatively little importance in Wickram's text. Only the encounter with the Turkish pirates indicates the common early modern fear of the Turks. Wickram does not worry about wild animals, dangerous monsters or natural disasters but rather about fellow men and women. The more people in one spot, the greater the danger, so it seems.

Wickram wants to give his readers tools for dealing with difficult situations, to help them avoid violence and, hence, fear. *Von guten und bösen Nachbarn* can be regarded as his contribution to offering ways of managing emotions like fear.<sup>28</sup> One could claim that the problems that the friends in Wickram's novel encounter in the big cities of Antwerp, Lisbon, and Venice could have faced them in any German town or city. Envy, greed, theft, and violence can be found at all times and everywhere, but by situating his novel in major European cities Wickram is able to depict an emerging notion of alienation and anonymity that is related to the size of the city and that can only be overcome by the establishment of a tight social network. In Wickram's world these networks are built on friendship and trust. Furthermore, the networks in *Von guten und bösen Nachbarn* are international. Wickram does reflect on the importance of knowing foreign languages and foreign countries. Languages connect by making communication possible and granting verbal power to the speaker. They are thus of the greatest importance to his protagonists, who believe in friendship – in conversation and discussion – as a way to overcome or suppress violence and to deal with anxiety and fear.

27 "All young men should learn from this example when they travel to foreign countries that they do not fall to sleep in just any spot, especially not very late or very early in the morning. They should also not trust everyone who talks to them in slick and sweet words or do their business anywhere else than they have been told [by their superiors]." Wickram, *Von guten und bösen Nachbarn*, p. 72.

28 Cf. Pollock 2004, p. 585.

Linda Pollock has stressed how important it is for a person articulating an emotion to be understood by the other part, and that “the intended recipient requires a cultural script so that he or she can make use of what emotion is being conveyed even when an emotion word is not used”.<sup>29</sup> In works of literature this communication needs to be developed between characters in the text as well as between author and reader. In *Von guten und bösen Nachbarn* fear is expressed both in action and in words. Sometimes the reader is left to draw conclusions beyond the context, and at other times Wickram piles examples on top of each other, but the message never gets lost in his text: Wickram wants good neighbors to take control and make the city a place where they can live in harmony with God and create their own social and emotional community.

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<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 573.



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# Laughter in a Deadly Context:

*Le Sacristain, Maldon, Troilus, Merlin*

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Laughter is expressive; but what does it express? Over the centuries the possibilities of humorous expression have been tabulated, among them scorn, triumph, superiority, clever incongruity, playfulness, and relief.<sup>1</sup> In more recent years the social aspect of humor has come under the spotlight. Of all the emotions, humor is arguably the most social: fear, anger, and disgust are emotions of aggression and isolation; more positive emotions such as love and gratitude may occur alone or among intimate associates. By contrast, groups are the natural province of humor. Numerous studies have demonstrated that laughter is socially contagious, it is magnified in large numbers, and indeed humor most likely originated to promote social harmony and non-aggression.<sup>2</sup>

Yet it is striking that literary texts rarely portray these social aspects of humor. Laughter in particular is disproportionately displayed by lone individuals, rather than occurring in groups, as is more common in real life. In one sense this is not surprising: literature takes greater account of the extraordinary than of the commonplace and depicts individuals more than group processes. But the tendency of literature to portray a particular, socially unusual type of laughter may mean that the social dimension is excluded from analysis.

I would like to reintroduce the social context to some representative samples of medieval humor and laughter.<sup>3</sup> As I shall demonstrate, in comic texts humor performs its social function of fostering this sense of cohesion, depicting a world of abundance and corporeal satisfaction; in more serious texts, laughter is distinctively singular and isolating. In both contexts, laughter and humor operate against a backdrop of one of

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<sup>1</sup> The literature on these is voluminous; for a round-up, see Martin 2007 and Keith-Spiegel 1972.

<sup>2</sup> E.g. van Hooff & Preuschoft 2003; Prerost 1977; Robinson & Smith-Lovin 2001; Gervais & Wilson 2005, and Provine 1992.

<sup>3</sup> On medieval laughter, see Le Goff 1989 and Classen 2010.

the most serious matters of all: death. I will analyze these – humor and laughter in the face of death – as represented by texts from medieval England, Wales, and France.

That humor and laughter have an important social dimension is clear from their evolutionary origins. Studies in animals as well as in humans demonstrate the same point: that laughter most centrally arises in a context of play and that it denotes safety. A kind of proto-laughter emerged early in vertebrate evolution, and the response is still retained in species far removed from humans, as experiments with laboratory rats have found. When tickled, rats emit a high-frequency “chirping” sound and, as in humans, this response occurs most frequently in contexts of social play.<sup>4</sup> Primatologists have theorized that primate laughter very probably originated similarly, in rough-and-tumble play. Monkeys and apes engaged in social play display a “play face” or what is called a “relaxed open-mouth display,” accompanied by a rhythmic grunting, the primate proto-laughter.<sup>5</sup> When primates play, they engage in chasing, attacking, wrestling and tickling; all of these serve as practice in vital abilities and in social skills and to help the brain develop.<sup>6</sup> But all these are activities that could be interpreted as aggressive and lead to retaliation and harm, so the primate engaging in play needs a clear sign that these “attacks” are non-serious. Hence a visual sign: the play face, or smiling; and an audible sign, the rhythmic grunting, which may have developed from panting, and which in humans takes the form of laughter. Both the visual and the audible signs signal that the activity is non-threatening, that it is not a matter of life and death.

Thus laughter evolved in a social context, as a signal between associates, reflecting and assuring conditions of safety. A related phenomenon confirms the social character of laughter. As noted, tickling was an early primate way of producing laughter, and laughter and tickling are still related in humans, though many people do not find being tickled actually pleasurable. However, the tickling and laughing are still physiologically related: a study has determined that those who laugh most at tickling laughed most at a comedy film.<sup>7</sup> What is more, both tickling and laughter are social, in that a second person is needed to stimulate the response.<sup>8</sup> It is difficult to tickle oneself. One exception confirms the social nature of tickling: studies find that people are more ticklish when the hand tickles the opposite-side foot than when it tickles the same-side foot.<sup>9</sup> Because the hand has crossed the median line of the body, the brain perceives the opposite-side hand as more of an “other,” interprets the situation as a social situation, and is more likely to respond with a tickle reaction. The “safety” of tickle laughter

4 Panksepp 2000; Panksepp & Burgdorf, 2000, 2003.

5 van Hooff 1972, pp. 212–213; see also Preuschoft & van Hooff 1997.

6 Gervais & Wilson 2005.

7 Harris & Christenfeld 1997; see also Fridlund & Loftus 1990, with caveats by Harris & Alvarado 2005.

8 Fridlund & Loftus 1990.

9 Provine 2000.

is confirmed by the finding that tickling produces laughter only when performed in a trusting environment.<sup>10</sup>

Similarly, laughter is essentially social – nobody makes a joke when they are alone. The studies find that a person is also less likely to laugh out loud when reading or watching something alone, even if the material is ranked equally funny with humor experienced in a group.<sup>11</sup> According to one finding, people are thirty times more likely to laugh in company than when alone,<sup>12</sup> and a person who does laugh when alone is most likely enjoying a “pseudo-social” situation such as watching a television comedy. This in fact is why producers put “laugh tracks” on comedy television shows, to fool the brain into thinking it is in a social situation. The laugh track also plays into the fact that laughter is socially contagious. Experiments with a “laughter box” – a box that produces a laughing sounds – find that the sound of laughter alone is enough to trigger laughter in most listeners.<sup>13</sup>

Humor has been identified as having “broaden-and-build” effects – it fosters more creative problem-solving, cements social relationships, rewards cooperation, and enhances social cohesion. In short, it is meant to be experienced in groups of two or more, and usually is. It needs other people.

So play is nonserious by definition. It can only be funny if it is non-threatening, if it is trivial – it has to work carefully if it wants to incorporate serious elements such as injury and death to keep them unthreatening. Death and the emotions that typically accompany it are antithetical to humor: we might regard humor and death as naturally arranged on opposite ends of a spectrum. It takes considerable literary and emotional skill to bring them together. These are the juxtapositions to be examined in this article: the way in which humor is a communal, relaxed emotion, and laughter a signal that there is no threat; and the way in which these factors are deployed when the individual is alone and when the sobering subject of death arises.

One of the most prominent comic texts featuring death is one of the French fabliaux, *Le Sacristain*, which is structured almost as a comic treatise on how to deal with death.<sup>14</sup> In the story, a merchant and his wife are reduced to poverty when bandits waylay the merchant, steal his merchandise, and kill his servant. The merchant's wife tries to comfort her husband, reminding him that riches can be regained. She utters an

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<sup>10</sup> Harris 1999.

<sup>11</sup> Martin & Kuiper 1999; Provine & Fischer 1989.

<sup>12</sup> Provine 2000, p. 45; Provine 1992.

<sup>13</sup> Provine 1992.

<sup>14</sup> The text has survived in three recensions. *Le Sacristain* I and *Le Sacristain* III are short and appear in one manuscript each. This article will address *Le Sacristain* II. All are edited in Noomen 1993, pp. 140–189. The motif of the “Corpse Many Times Killed” is widespread; for instance see Espinosa 1936.

ironically prophetic and thematically appropriate statement, though, when she reflects on the finality of death: “mort ne puet on restorer” (“a dead man cannot be brought back”, p. 86).

Thus the very real, sobering, and non-comic death of a servant begins the story. As the couple attempt to return to normality, the lecherous sacristan of the church begins to pursue the wife, hoping to seduce her. Although she and her husband are happy with each other, their need for money leads them to hatch a plan to trick the sacristan. The wife agrees to accept the sacristan’s money in return for an assignation at her home. The sacristan arrives as planned, thinking he is going to enjoy the wife’s favors, and once settled in front of her fireside, he attempts to consume her much as a man would consume a tasty snack. At this point the plan calls for the merchant husband to hit the sacristan over the head, but the plan goes badly wrong when the husband strikes too hard and accidentally kills the monk.

The story is hence marked by a second death. Where the first death was shocking and saddening, this second death is positioned more as an annoying inconvenience. Even though the story has sketched out the sacristan in more detail than it described the servant, he has been depicted as an obnoxious lecher rather than as an innocent victim. The narrative makes clear that he intended to violate his monastic vows in seducing the wife; he does not even seem to be emotionally involved, but merely promises her a hundred livres in what is clearly a business transaction for him. Moreover, as he is a monk who has taken a vow of poverty, it is a reasonable assumption that the hundred livres with which he wants to pay the wife will be stolen from the church. Thus not only is the monk corrupt and devious at every turn, but he is annoying and unsympathetic, pestering the virtuous wife and making a nuisance of himself.

The sacristan’s death, then, stands in contrast to the death of the servant that opened the story. The servant cannot be brought back: this is death at its most serious and most threatening. By contrast, the sacristan is brought back again and again. The merchant and his wife, horrified that they have accidentally murdered the sacristan, decide to hide the body in the monastic latrine, propped up on the seat with a twist of hay in his hand. Carnal in his desires, having abandoned the things of the spirit in life, in death the monk has been reduced to unwanted ordure: corrupt waste to be disposed of.

The dead sacristan is discovered in the latrine by a fellow monk who is afraid he will be accused of the murder; the second monk then hauls the dead body back into town and leaves him, coincidentally, at the door of the merchant and his wife. They open the door to the appalling discovery that the body of the sacristan has returned. As he pestered the wife in life, so does he continue to pester her in death. The merchant next hides the body in a dungheap, where he discovers a stolen slab of bacon hidden in a bag. Taking the bacon home, he leaves the dead sacristan in the dungheap – again

the sacristan is reduced to the corrupt carnality he has exhibited in life. Meanwhile, the thief who hid the bacon returns to retrieve it, and is consternated to find a dead monk instead. Deciding this alarming turn of affairs must be a judgment from God, he takes the monk back to the farmer from whom he stole the bacon and hangs him in the larder. The monk has now been exchanged for meat: again a carnal equivalent. When the farmer's household goes to cut a slab of bacon and finds that the bacon is wearing hose, they are predictably appalled. They set the monk on a pony and plan to say he went insane, and they drive the pony away, where it goes first into a sewer ditch and finally into the monastery kitchen. All of these locations, from dunghill to sewer to kitchen, confirm the dead sacristan's new identity not as a mournfully dead person, but as the equivalent of a piece of meat. The story began with the murder of the servant and the doleful assertion that "mort ne puet on restorer," but the comic wanderings of the monk stand in opposition to the somber beginning. As the tale plays out, it becomes clear that death does not have to be tragic; instead it is turned to comedy, a source of mirth – dead men can be and are brought back. In its limited but assertive way, the story has undone death. In doing so it has also undone sorrow.

*Le Sacristain* stands in contrast to several other key medieval texts concerning laughter. *Le Sacristain* does not depict laughter; instead it is intended to inspire it. The essential problem tackled by the text is the possibility of laughing in the presence of death, and it succeeds in making this possible by undoing death and making it ludicrous rather than sobering. The other texts to be discussed – the Old English *The Battle of Maldon*, a series of Merlin texts, and Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* – depict just this conjunction of death and laughter within the text itself. They show how under extraordinary conditions a person of remarkable qualities can respond to death with laughter, and indeed is defined by the ability to do this. It was Ernest Becker, in *The Denial of Death*, who inaugurated the idea that the basic drive of human existence is not sexual, as Freud maintained, but the fear of death. The study of human responses to this fear have given rise to the field of psychology known as Terror Management Theory.<sup>15</sup>

The issue of how to respond to the threat of death is on view in each of these laughing texts. It forms the heart of *The Battle of Maldon*, an English composition most likely of the very late tenth or early eleventh century. The poem depicts a genuine battle in which the Anglo-Saxons lost to a Viking force, a grievous defeat and one which precipitated a cascade of humiliating losses to the Vikings as the eleventh century progressed.<sup>16</sup> The worst blow to the English was the death of the nobleman Byrhtnoth in the conflict; the poem is ardent to represent Byrhtnoth as valiant, courageous, and

15 Becker 1973; on Terror Management Theory, see for instance Greenberg, Pyszczynski & Solomon 1986 and Goldenberg, Pyszczynski, Greenberg & Solomon 2000.

16 Edited in Scragg 1981; on the historical battle, see Scragg 1991.



undaunted in battle.<sup>17</sup> As the poem depicts the event, Byrhtnoth is pierced by a Viking spear, but withdraws the spear and kills the Viking before he dies. The text reads:

Ða he oþerne ofstlice sceat  
 þæt seo byrne toþærst; he wæs on breostum wund  
 þurh ða hringlocan; him æt heortan stod  
 ætterne ord. Se eorl wæs þe bliþra:  
 hloh þa modi man, sæde Metode þanc  
 ðæs dægweorces þe him Drihten forgeaf. (ll. 143–148)

Then he [Byrhtnoth] shot the other man speedily so that the mailcoat burst; he was wounded in the breast through the locked rings; the bitter point stood at his heart. The nobleman was the happier for that; he laughed then, a proud man, gave thanks to the Ordainer for the day's work that the Lord gave him.<sup>18</sup>

This moment of laughter is striking. It is clearly not a laughter of hilarity; the literature on the poem has identified it as sardonic or triumphant.<sup>19</sup> Certainly the scene portrays the exhilaration of Byrhtnoth avenging himself for his own mortal wound; moreover the poem seeks to authorize Byrhtnoth's heroism by describing a moment of triumph to weigh against the larger defeat of Byrhtnoth's forces. But Byrhtnoth's laughter may signal more than this: like all laughter, it signals an absence of threat. In the immediate context this seems nonsensical: Byrhtnoth is in the middle of a deadly battle, and even as he laughs another Viking is bearing down on him, the Viking who will deal him the final death blow. As he lies stricken he utters a lengthy prayer, demonstrating his humility and entreating God for the safe passage of his soul. Byrhtnoth's prayer signifies that he is free from any arrogant assumption that he in God's good graces, though paradoxically his humility suggests that he will be.

The laughter comes at a key turning point, as Byrhtnoth makes a transition from the material realm to the intangible one, from martial concerns to spiritual ones. In both realms the laughter serves as a sign of the highest worthiness and detachment from fear both physical and incorporeal. Death holds no threat for Byrhtnoth. The laughter is a signal of the ultimate safety: that Byrhtnoth has triumphed over death.

These twin triumphs – triumph over death in both the martial realm and the spiritual one – also feature in the account of Byrhtnoth in the twelfth-century account contained in the *Liber Eliensis*. The retelling of the battle is famously exaggerated, and the account as a whole is intended to glorify Byrhtnoth, who was a patron of Ely. The description of him states that:

17 A few critics have argued that in following the heroic model, Byrhtnoth cannot conform to Christian ideals of virtue; see for instance Robinson 1993 and notes. The majority of critics regard the poem as laudatory of Byrhtnoth, a position with which I agree.

18 My translation.

19 Niles 2000. See also Robinson 1993.

Erat sermone facundus, viribus robustus, corpore maximus, militie et bellis contra hostes regni assiduus et ultra modum sine respectu et timore mortis animosus.<sup>20</sup>

He was eloquent in speech, vigorous in strength, most powerful in body, unrelenting in military action and battles against the enemies of the kingdom, and courageous without consideration for or fear of death.<sup>21</sup>

The text goes on to praise Byrhtnoth's dedication to the Church. The same considerations are at work here: Byrhtnoth is portrayed as a godly man, as befitted a patron of the institution, but also a man of great martial prowess; and both these sets of virtues culminate in a lack of fear in the face of death. *The Battle of Maldon* is primarily a heroic poem and the *Liber Eliensis* account primarily an ecclesiastically oriented one, but both acknowledge the fearlessness of laughter.

Unsurprisingly laughter is not employed to the same ends in all texts. It is important to distinguish this usage, the laughter that signals an unflinching fearlessness, from the laughter that denotes an ignorant arrogance. The latter motif is the subject of a proposal that links the instance in *Maldon* to laughter in two other Old English texts:

The poet says (147) *hloh þa, modi man*, and both the phrasing and the situation are echoed elsewhere in early English literature in a way that suggests that the words are a narrative formula. In *Judith*, 23-6, Holofernes *hloh ond blydde ... modig ond medugal* before Judith decapitates him. Later, in *Layamon's Brut*, ed. F. Madden (London, 1847), vol. II, p. 203, line 13, we are told that *þa king loh* at the very moment when, unbeknownst to him, Rowenna is pouring poison into his cup. This laugh may be a conventional dramatic signal that a mortal blow is imminent at the moment when the threatened person least expects it.<sup>22</sup>

The difference is that, unlike the arrogant and oblivious malefactors in *Judith* and Layamon's *Brut*, Byrhtnoth knows he is going to die. He has already suffered a grievous wound, making his fate clear to both the audience and to himself. The audience is not laughing at his misbegotten pride; the joke is not on Byrhtnoth. Rather, the joke is on the Viking who thought he was destroying a man whose soul, as his dying words make clear, is in the hands of God.

A striking parallel is found in a later English text, Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*, of the fourteenth century.<sup>23</sup> His tempestuous love affair with Criseyde having come to a bad end, Troilus, despairing, expends himself on the battlefield and is finally killed in

20 Blake 1962, p. 134.

21 A translation is available in Fairweather 2005; the translation here is my own.

22 Robinson 1993, p. 113, note 33.

23 Chaucer 1984. See also Stierstorfer 1999.

battle. After death he ascends through the heavens and, looking down at the strife and passions of the world, is able to laugh at them:

And down from thennes faste he gan auyse  
 This litel spot of erthe that with the se  
 Embraced is, and fully gan despise  
 This wrecched world, and held al vanite  
 To respect of the pleyn felicitie  
 That is in heuene aboue, and at the laste,  
 Ther he was slayn his loking down he caste.

And in hym self he lough right at the wo  
 Of hem that wepten for his deth so faste,  
 And dampned al our werk that foloweth so  
 The blynde lust, the which that may nat laste,  
 And sholden al our herte on heuen caste. [...] (ll. 1814–1825)

And down from there he began to survey  
 This little earth that with the sea  
 Is embraced, and considered that all was vanity  
 Compared to the full felicity  
 That is in heaven above, and finally  
 He cast his look down at the place where he was slain.

And in himself he laughed at the distress  
 Of them that wept so hard about his death,  
 And condemned all our deeds that follow  
 Blind lust, which cannot last,  
 While we should set our hearts on heaven. [...] <sup>24</sup>

Again this is not the laughter of hilarity but the laughter of detachment, and again, the detachment is a detachment from the fear of suffering and death. For much of the poem Troilus has suffered for love so greatly that he declares himself on the brink of death; even his stratagem to receive a first visit from his adored Criseyde rests on the premise that he is ill. Although we can see that Troilus no longer cares about earthly passions, his is not a state of mind accessible to us, the audience; both he and his detachment are beyond our reach. He is on the other side of suffering, and on the other side of death – closer to the “god of love” who has been guiding things all along. Once again the laughter denotes a lack of threat, a fearlessness, an overcoming of death. The distress of the mourners is so incongruous with reality that laughter is the natural response of someone with a larger perspective. Troilus is no longer afflicted by the short-sightedness of earthly fears; his sights are now on the eternal, and laughter is the result.

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<sup>24</sup> My translation.

The same is true in the concatenation of texts concerning the laughter of Merlin. The motif of Merlin's unearthly laughter was evidently so attractive that it was employed repeatedly in a series of texts. The earliest surviving text in which the theme appears is the so-called *Lailoken B* (also known as *Lailoken and Meldreth*), a Welsh-derived narrative about a "wild man of the woods."<sup>25</sup> The wild man, Lailoken, speaks in riddles and prophecy and laughs for no clear reason. He finally reveals that he has been laughing at the adultery of the queen, betrayed by a leaf that became entangled in her hair when she lay in the shrubbery with her lover.

Geoffrey of Monmouth adopted the motif for his *Vita Merlini*, a product of the first half of the twelfth century.<sup>26</sup> In Geoffrey's version, the wizard Merlin again spends a good deal of his life in a state of madness in the wilderness, a madness that also manifests itself in powers of prophecy. Brought into civilization, Merlin laughs three times at events that remain inscrutable to others. When prevailed upon to explain, he finally reveals the reasons for his laughter. The first instance is borrowed from the *Lailoken* tradition, with the addition of an ironic detail: Merlin laughs at the king tenderly removing a leaf from the queen's hair, not knowing that she acquired the leaf while lying in the shrubbery with her lover. The subtlety of the king removing the leaf emphasizes the loving tenderness and faith that has been betrayed, and Merlin's laughter signals his detachment from such human concerns. The two additional instances of laughter underline this detachment: in the second episode he laughs at a man sitting on the ground begging, not knowing that beneath him a trove of gold is buried, and in the third, at a man who is buying shoes and patches to patch them later, not knowing that he is about to die.<sup>27</sup>

The laughter is of a similar character in many later Arthurian works. In the Vulgate *Merlin* and its Middle English version, *Of Arthour and of Merlin*, Merlin laughs at the man buying shoes unaware that he will die soon; the adulterous queen and the unwitting king; and a man mourning his dead son, unaware that the boy's real father is the priest who is burying him.<sup>28</sup>

Merlin's laughter in such texts has been characterized as sardonic, a type of "prophetic laughter", and certainly it is a grim hilarity, evidence both of his prophetic powers and of his detachment from earthly emotion.<sup>29</sup> Yet Merlin's laughter is no less understandable, no less sympathetic to us than the laughter of Byrhtnoth in the thick of

25 The Latin text is edited in Ward 1893, with translation in Clarke 1973, pp. 231–233; on the tradition, see Jarman 2003. On the history of Merlin, see Knight 2009; Goodrich & Thompson 2003.

26 Clarke 1973.

27 *Ibid.*, pp. 64–67, 78–79.

28 The Vulgate *Merlin* is edited by Sommer 1908–1912, *Of Arthour and of Merlin* by Macrae-Gibson 1973.

29 Thorpe 1973; Burrow 2002, p. 80; Ménard 1969, pp. 436–439.

battle or of Troilus as he rises into the afterlife. The laughter of Byrhtnoth, Troilus, and Merlin arises from situations in which death inspires no fear. All three are signalling a genuine fearlessness, an indifference to mortal threats. These are just the signals that laughter evolved to convey in playful situations.

But it is significant that each of these figures laughs alone, not in a group, not communally, as laughter evolved to be experienced. The laughter is in effect a signal to us, the audience, but it is singular by nature. The situations are distinct from the playful contexts in which primates, laboratory rats, or human groups communicate their good humor. In those contexts, the point of laughter (or its analogues) is not only to signal the lack of threat, but to impart the same spirit of playfulness to others. As the studies cited above have demonstrated, laughter is magnified in groups. Yet in *Maldon*, *Troilus*, and the Merlin texts, the laughter is not only the province of a sole figure, but the point made by the text is the emphatically isolated and exceptional status of the laughter. In each of these instances, the laughter has triumphed over any fear of death: Byrhtnoth by his valiant defiance of the Vikings; Troilus by achieving the perspective of the afterlife; Merlin by his insight and eerie detachment from the cares of humans. But although they can convey this attitude to us, their isolation betrays the fact that this feeling is not communal. We *see* their triumph over death, but we do not *feel* it. We do not join in the laughter.

The position of the audience, instead, is that of the merchant and his wife in *Le Sacristain*. They have been alarmed and mournful at the murder of their servant in the beginning of the tale, and fearful that death is irreversible. But the comic arrangement of the tale fashions death as a triviality. Decay and corrupt carnality, horrifying in the context of the graveyard, here appear in latrines and dungheaps, sites of comic mishap. The sacristan proves to be not much different in death than he was in life: carnal, persistent, and annoying. In the end he is dispatched to that ultimate place of comedy, the kitchen. The predicament of the merchant and his wife is not permanent. Unlike the tragic situation of Troilus and Criseyde, their happy relationship survives, their wealth is regained, and they finish the tale presumably enjoying the side of bacon revealed in their quest to rid themselves of the sacristan. They have traded in disagreeable carnality for delicious carnality: death has led not to tragedy but to dinner.

In Terror Management Theory, the human dilemma is that of death, the ultimate terror; and culture is designed and structured to help humans cope with this dilemma. In *The Battle of Maldon*, *Troilus and Criseyde*, and the Merlin texts, we can see portraits of isolated beings who have overcome death *in extremis*. But however much they signal to us, we cannot join them. Where we can experience a temporary lessening of the threat is when we enter into the more familiar and accessible domestic world of *Le Sacristain* – when we laugh, death stands at bay and dead men are indeed brought back.

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# Laughter and the Medieval Church

*Olle Ferm*

Was the Church an institution strictly dominated by seriousness, where laughter was banned and humor a suspect phenomenon? In any case, well-known literature from our own time might make us think so.<sup>1</sup> Nor is it difficult to find in the past ecclesiastical authorities who denigrated or even condemned laughter, since it was a sign of frivolity and a lack of recognition of our sinfulness. Tears would be more appropriate. “As long as we remain in this vale of tears, we should not laugh, but cry” (*quamdiu ergo sumus in ualle lacrimarum, non debemus ridere, sed flere*), admonishes Jerome (320–420).<sup>2</sup> He had support from the Bible, which reminds us of the consequences in the afterlife of earthly levity: “Woe unto you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep” (*vae vobis qui ridetis nunc, quia ridetis et flebitis*), Jesus said.<sup>3</sup> According to the Bible, Jesus at one point weeps; but nowhere does he laugh. Inspired by such ideas, a rigorous discourse arose, represented mainly within a wide-ranging monastic culture.<sup>4</sup> But the solemnity was not universal. A backlash arose, giving rise to a different, more life-affirming discourse, one which also attempted to give moral legitimacy to laughter.

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1 Bachtin 1984, pp. 9–19, who definitely has inspired Eco’s novel *Il Nome della Rosa*, where the monk Jorge represents this cheerless norm.

2 Jerome *Opera homiletica*, ed. Morin 1958, pp. 99, 125–126; cf. Alexander Andree’s article in this volume, on p. 182.

3 Luke 6:25, John 11:34. This was noted already by John Chrysostom (344–407), who nevertheless did not object to someone sometimes laughing. It is not a sin in itself. John Chrysostom, *In epistolam ad Hebraeos, Homilia XV*, PG 63:121–124, and *De statu ad populum Antiochenum, Homilia de statu XXI*, PG 49:158–159.

4 Laughter and the medieval church is treated in e.g. Moretti 2001; Ferm 2008; Wilhelmy 2012. On laughter in the monastic culture at large, see Resnick 1987.

## The monastic tradition

The principal monastic rule in the West was that of St. Benedict from the first half of the 500s.<sup>5</sup> The ideal is clearly articulated there. A monk must be humble, serious, and dignified. That means he must speak little, not be “ready or quick to laugh” (*non sit facilis ac promptus in risu*). Therefore he must also avoid “vain words or those that might incite laughter” (*verba vana aut risui apta*). The cautionary example is the fool (*fatuus*), because he laughs loudly; however, a smile may be acceptable, although this is not explicitly stated. Obviously, praxis could differ. Jokes were told and were acceptable, if not commendable. It is stated in the Rule that monks during Lent should minimize food, drink, sleep, talk, and joking.<sup>6</sup>

Benedict’s rule is carefully worded and moderate – others were sharper in tone and expression<sup>7</sup> – but it left some questions unanswered. Hence a commentary tradition arose, where ambiguities could be explained and gaps filled in. The best-known commentaries are from the first half of the 800s, composed by the abbots Smaragdus of St. Mihiel and Hildemar of Corbie. Smaragdus claims that it “is in accordance with human nature to laugh” (*naturaliter est enim homini ridere*) and that “therefore it is not possible to completely prevent one from doing so” (*et ideo non potest hoc illi penitus prohiberi*), which leads to the conclusion: What “even nature compels, man cannot completely relinquish” (*et natura compellente penitus non potest homo relinquere*). He continues: it is not in itself commendable to laugh, so therefore laughter is only permitted if it is “gentle and dignified” (*caute et honeste*) and cannot be associated with “the sin of frivolity” (*levitatis vitium*) or cause loss of “fear of the Lord” (*timor Domini*).<sup>8</sup> Smaragdus thus does what Benedict obviously did not want to do, i.e. openly admit that laughter cannot be avoided. Otherwise, Smaragdus follows his model in condemning belly laughs and excessive indulgence in laughter.

Hildemar believes that Benedict’s Rule has been partly misinterpreted. Benedict did not say that a monk “does not laugh, but only that he does not like to do so” (*non dixit non ridere, sed non amare*). Nor did he say that “a monk must never laugh” (*ut numquam rideat monachus*), but only that he should not be “ready or quick to laugh” (*non sit facilis ac promptus in risu*). “Lay folk” (*laici*) laugh loudly, while the wise know how to laugh moderately and for a good purpose. As regards “buffoonery” and “vain words that lead to laughter” (*scurrilitates /.../ vel verba otiosa et risum moventia*), Hildemar draws an important distinction. Following Benedict, he rejects everything

5 On laughter in Benedict’s Rule, see Alexander 1977.

6 Laughter and joking are an issue in four chapters of the Rule, see RB, IV, VI, VII and IL.

7 See e.g. *Regula orientalis*, PL 50:376, 377, 380, *Regula Pauli et Stephani*, PL 66:957–958, *Regula Sanctorum Serapionis, Macarii et alterius Macarii*, PL 103:440.

8 Smaragdus, *Expositio in Regulam S. Benedicti*, ed. Spannagel & Engelbert 1974, p. 134, ll. 20–23; p. 188, ll. 15–17, 26–29; cf. Schmitz 1980, pp. 8–10, and Standaert 1997, p. 40.

“associated with frivolity” (*ad lasciviam*) or that is only empty, vain talk, which therefore “has no rational basis in itself, whether spiritual or physical” (*quae non habent rationem in se tam anime quam corporis*). On the other hand, he asserts that there are “words proper/suitable for/to laughter” (*verba risui apta*) which “the wise” (*sapientes*) understand how to use for good purposes. Laughter, and the eliciting cause, the joke, are not necessarily evil, but “contribute to something good” (*in bono proficiunt*) when they lead man to edification.<sup>9</sup>

Hildemar’s comment is remarkable, because it signals an intellectual turnabout. What previously was regarded as morally corrupting, albeit at least occasionally unavoidable, and which a monk had to manage as best as he could, has turned into something positive, something to make use of as morally and humanly valuable. It all depends on where, when, how, and for what purpose the jokes and laughter were initiated and exhibited. This conclusion was not new. Earlier John Chrysostom had argued that laughter is not an evil in itself. For example, he had noted that people laugh when they suddenly meet a friend they have not seen for many years, and he cannot understand why such laughter would be corrupting or even sinful.<sup>10</sup>

Many, but far from all, would agree with Hildemar. Jokes may be appropriate among laypersons, declares St. Bernard (d. 1153), but “in a priest’s mouth [they are] blasphemy” (*in ore sacerdotis, blasphemiae*). A priest should remember, Bernard concludes: “You have dedicated your mouth to the Gospel” (*consecrasti os tuum Evangelio*). Therefore allow no frivolities to pass your lips. You should relate no “nonsense or tales” (*nugas ... vel fabulas*).<sup>11</sup>

Bernard saw the monastic ideal embodied in the monk Humbert, whom he praised in a funeral oration for his profound indifference to worldly things. Humbert had reduced speaking and his need for food and clothing to a minimum. And he did not laugh at all:

Did any of you ever see him laughing, even among many others who laughed? He exhibited a cheerful countenance so that he might not dampen the mood for those others present. But if you recall carefully, he never allowed himself a real laugh.<sup>12</sup>

9 FlCas, pp. 51, 62, 79–80; cf. Schmitz 1980, p. 8. The commentary on the Rule was formerly ascribed to Paul the Deacon.

10 John Chrysostom, *In epistolam ad Hebraeos, Homilia XV*, PG 63:122.

11 Bernard of Clairvaux, *De consideratione* ... LII, ed. Leclercq & Rochais 1963, pp. 429–430; cf. also Wim Verbaal’s article in this volume, on p. 193.

12 Bernard of Clairvaux, *Sermo: In obitu Domni Humberti*, ed. Leclercq & Rochais 1968, pp. 442–443: “Numquid aliquis vestrum eum ridentem, etiam inter multos ridentes, invenit? Serenabit quidem vultum suum assidentium gratia, ne fieret onerosus; sed risum integrum, si bene recolitis, non admisit.”

No less rigorous was St. Francis (d. 1226). In one of his admonitions he says: "Woe to those brothers whose delight is in vain and empty words and with these seduce people to laugh" (*Et ve illi religioso qui delectat se in verbis otiosis et inanibus et cum his perducit homines ad risum*).<sup>13</sup>

## A positive tradition

Smaragdus and Hildemar represent two attitudes that subsequently became important as they came to be more widely accepted:

1. Laughter is natural to man. Already Aristotle had pointed out that man is the only creature with the ability to laugh. In the Middle Ages it was said that "risibility" (*risibilitas*) is the *proprium* of man and "given by nature" (*a natura datum*). Other living creatures also have their *propria*; for instance, that of the horse is "to whinny" (*hin-nibilitas*). Many therefore drew the logical conclusion that since Jesus was a human being, it can be assumed that even he laughed, although the Bible does not mention anything about it. For the scholastics it was a given conclusion, summarized by the phrase: "The ability to laugh is appropriate to what a man is" (*risibile convenit ei quod homo est*).<sup>14</sup> The more rigorously disposed responded by referring to the so-called Lentulus-letter. The writer, Lentulus, represented himself as having seen Jesus, and says that he also heard that he was "never seen to laugh but weep" (*numquam visus est ridere, flere autem*). But this provided only poor comfort. Shrewd observers realized that the letter was a forgery.<sup>15</sup>

2. Laughter and jokes are not evil in themselves; everything depends on how and when they are used and for what purpose. In Ecclesiastes (3, 1 and 4) it is written, "Everything has its time, there is a time for every purpose under heaven /... / a time to weep, a time to laugh" (*omnia tempus habent et suis spatiis transeunt universa sub caelo /.../ tempus flendi et tempus ridendi*). John of Salisbury (d. c. 1180), who in time became bishop of Chartres, speaks of a "discernment" (*discretio*), considering "place, time, manner, person and thing" (*loci, temporis, modi, personae et causae*); and so does Thomas Aquinas.<sup>16</sup> That could mean that you do not joke about what or whomsoever,

13 Francis of Assisi, *Verba sancte adminitionis*, ed. Cabassi 2002, p. 460; cf. Matthew 12:36.

14 Aristotle, *Parts of Animals* III, x, transl. Peck 1993; HWPh, *Proprium*; John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, ed. Webb 1909, I, p. 305 *et passim*; Peter the Chanter, *Verbum abbreviatum*, PL 205:203; Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 3a, q. 16, art. 5; Suchomski 1975, pp. 12–13.

15 Dobschütz 1899, pp. 319–324; cf. James 1955, pp. 477–478, and Lutz 1975, pp. 91–97.

16 John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, ed. Webb 1909, 2, p. 316, ll. 17–18; Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 2a2ae, q. 168, art. 2.

that you do not do it rudely, and that you do not do it during Communion.<sup>17</sup> But the limits were not clear. Boundaries had shifted.

### Psychological reasons

In defense of laughter stood John Chrysostom, who writes that laughter is innate, grafted onto the soul “so that it might relax, so that it might not slacken” (ἵνα ἀνῆται ποτε ἡ ψυχὴ, οὐχ ἵνα διαχέηται).<sup>18</sup> Mental recovery and recreation is its proper role. His near-contemporary John Cassian applies in his *Collationes* an image to drive home the same message: The soul is a bow which loses all power if always held in tension. For the relaxation that refreshes and is useful (*utilitas*) Cassian uses the term *remissio*, formed from the verb *remittere*, which means ‘let up’, ‘give in to’. John Chrysostom uses instead the verb ἀνίημι, meaning ‘let up’ or, more literally, ‘loosen the string’ (e.g. a bow), which in substantive form becomes ‘relaxing’ (ἀνεσις).<sup>19</sup> The metaphor of the bow is ancient. It is found already in Herodotos (c. 485–425 B.C.) and would become ubiquitous in late medieval Europe, famous not least because of James of Voragine’s version in the *Legenda aurea* (written 1260/1267).<sup>20</sup>

Thomas Aquinas (d. 1274) gave the old idea a philosophical-theological legitimacy. According to him, rest for the soul is just as necessary as sleep is for the body. And laughter, play, and jokes can offer good rest – healthy for the soul – as long as they are rooted in morality (*virtus moralis*). Happiness which is morally correct is referred to by Thomas with the Greek word *eutrapelia* (derived from Aristotle), which he translates as *iucunditas*. Words are an expression of *eutrapelia* when they are uttered without sin and for spiritual recreation or recovery (*iocosum uerbum quandoque causa sine peccato recreationis*). This is not the same as “distraction” (*distractio*), which is an aimless departure from virtue, and easily gives rise to “inappropriate joy” (*laetitia inepta*). Included among its salutary effects, as he further argues, is that recreation ameliorates the gloom which is a sister of “boredom” (*acedia*), a mortal sin, which makes man indifferent to his spiritual wellbeing. Thomas quite consistently takes a further step: He

17 John himself seems to have understood the joke in the right way. You have “combined jokes with seriousness” (*miscuisti ... iocos seriis*), “moderately” (*temperatos*) without lacking in “dignity and respect” (*sine detrimento dignationis et verecundiae*), writes Peter, abbot of Moûtier-la-Celle in a letter of response to John, whose intention to amuse Peter was achieved: “My heart is in jubilation, my mouth is full of laughter” (*cor meum iubilo, os meum impletum risu*). Nevertheless, it was perhaps not a belly laugh that filled the mouth of the abbot. Peter of Celle, *Epistola LXIX*, PL 202:515.

18 John Chrysostom, *In epistolam ad Hebraeos*, 9, 15, PG 63:122.

19 John Cassian, *Collationes*, 21, ed. Petschenig 1886.

20 Herodotos, *Histories*, II chapter 173, transl. Godley 1946. Dr. Brian Möller Jensen gave me this reference; James of Voragine, *Legenda aurea*, ed. Graesse 1969, p. 105.

defends jesters (*ioculatores*), widely condemned by Church authorities because they perform a “shameless art” (*ars ignominosa*), inspired by the devil himself, whose servants they are (*famuli diaboli, ministri Satanae*). But their art, according to Thomas, is not evil in itself, but can serve the good, when it contributes to much-needed recreation and is performed in accordance with *eutrapelia*.<sup>21</sup>

Earlier Peter the Chanter (d. 1197) had defended jesters who performed decently and played and sang for a “recreational and perhaps didactic purpose” (*ad recreationem uel forte informationem*). One who took notice was Thomas of Chobham (d. 1233/36), a student in Paris and later active in England. According to him, the good jesters (*ioculatores*) are able to comfort people in their tribulations, while the evil ones (*histriones, mimi, scurrrae*) lead them into temptation.<sup>22</sup>

These arguments arose again in other contexts. The miracle plays, which staged the Christian faith, introduced burlesque elements and other amusements, which sometimes caused offense. In England a great debate occurred between defenders and detractors, often with a Lollard connection, such as in *A Treatise of Miraculis Pleyinge*. Those defending the plays argued that people might need time for “relaxation” (*recreatioun*). Jokes also had the positive effect that they made people happy, when life seemed bleak.<sup>23</sup>

## Pedagogical reasons

Even pedagogical reasons were proposed. Those reasons became frequent in homiletic contexts, where it was suggested that a sermon might include an “appropriate joke” (*opportuna iocatio*), a “humorous story” (*narratio iocosa*), or a “humorous example” (*iocundum exemplum*). Several worthwhile features were attributed to humor:

1. *Attracting a public to the sermon.* Preachers preferred to appear outdoors, in the open, and in places where people were gathered for markets and church festivals. In such contexts there was always competition for an audience, since jesters, acrobats, and

21 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 2a2ae, q. 39, q. 168, art. 2–4; Thomas Aquinas, *Sententia Librorum Ethicorum*, 2 lect. 9, 4 lect. 9 n. 9, lect. 16 nn. 3, 7, 8, 15, 16. The corresponding sections in Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics* are: II, 7 (1108a); IV, 8 (1128a); and X, 6 (1176b). Cf. Suchomski 1975, pp. 55–61; Dufeil 1990; Kuschel 1996, pp. 45–53. For Church condemnations, see e.g. Gratianus, *Decretum Gratiani*, PL 187: 244; Mansi 1893, vol. 22, chapter XVI, cols. 1003 and 1006. Cf. Gautier 1892, p. 197; Suchomski 1975, pp. 24–28; Hartung 2003, pp. 39–65; Wehrli 1982, p. 19.

22 Peter the Chanter, *Summa de sacramentis et animae consiliis*, III:2a, § 343, ll. 32–34. Cf. § 212, ll. 121–123, 142–144; Thomas of Chobham, *Summa confessorum*, ed. Broomfield 1968, pp. XVIII–XXXVIII and 292f.

23 See Woolf 1972, pp. 55, 85–92; cf. Hess 1965, pp. 152–162.



musicians also came there to perform and earn a coin. During the late Middle Ages, it was usual for comic plays such as farces and sotties to be performed wherever people gathered. When so much demanded attention, something special was needed to get people to stop and listen. Simple witticisms seldom succeeded; it required verbal dexterity and a flair for repartee, especially when wags lurked in the audience at a market square and made fun of the preacher. But if he could turn the laughter against them, the critics were usually silenced and the battle for public favor won.<sup>24</sup>

2. *Putting people in a happy frame of mind.* Anyone who is in a good mood is open and receptive, while gloominess has the opposite effect. And anyone who is bored might fall asleep or leave. A good laugh brings them to life and makes them pay attention. In his handbook of preaching (*Manuale curatorum*), Ulrich Surgant (1450–1503) writes that “when the preacher discovers sleepy or bored listeners, he might sometimes use a somewhat fabled example to awaken them and relieve their boredom” (*posset /.../ predicator aliquotiens uti aliquot tali fabuloso exemplo, quando deprehenderit auditores somnolentes vel attediatos, ad excitandum eos et sublevandum eorum tedium*).<sup>25</sup> Inspiration about rhetorical tricks could be found in classical rhetoric, such as in *Ad Herennium*, which enjoyed a good reputation even though it was written by a heathen. There it is stated that a speaker can advantageously turn to anecdotes, fables, caricatures, exaggerations, and more to win over an audience.<sup>26</sup>

3. *To illustrate and concretize a message.* If there were a witty point that captured the moral, the message would be easier to remember. The use of examples, particularly humorous ones, clearly showed themselves to be effective. Étienne de Besançon (d. 1294) noted that people “better understand these kinds of stories and examples” (*narrationes quidem hujus (modi) et exempla facilius intellectu capiuntur*) than they do abstract disquisitions; he added that “they are instilled more firmly in the memory, and many people prefer listening to them” (*et memorie firmitus imprimuntur, et a multis libentius audiuntur*), than to a regular sermon<sup>27</sup> – albeit Étienne had in mind examples in general.

Concretization was also achieved through active performance. The priest himself might perform a scene or have others perform it in order to show what had once happened in the past, or he might use pictures (often burlesque) on fences or church walls to focus attention.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Pauli 1924, nr 191, p. 123.

<sup>25</sup> Quoted by Staehelin 1927, p. 58, note 203; cf. Roth 1956, pp. 150–194. Earlier, Jacques de Vitry (1165–1240) recommended rhetorical flourishes to maintain audience attention. See Crane 1890, pp. XLII–XLIII, note.

<sup>26</sup> Ps.-Cicero, *Ad Herennium*, 7, I. iv. 7, 10.

<sup>27</sup> Crane 1890, p. XX, note.

Not surprisingly, objections were raised. Some complained that fictions, fabricated stories, were being used in Christian witness; since fiction is the same as fabrication, it therefore is tantamount to lying. Authoritative confirmation could be quoted. Timothy I, 4:7 states: "Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives' tales; rather, train yourself to be godly" (*ineptas et aniles fabulas devita exerce te ipsum ad pietatem*). And Pope Leo IV (847–855) had urged priests to stick to the word of God and avoid fatuous stories: "From your hearts shall ye proclaim and preach the word of God, and refrain from fatuous stories" (*Verbum Domini et non fabulas inanes ex corde vestro debetis populo anuntiare et praedicare*).<sup>28</sup>

Counterarguments were proposed. Following Augustine, Johan Hiltalingen (d. 1392) claims that fiction cannot be equated with falsehood or untruth, since its purpose is not to deceive or mislead. He says that he is even able to recommend a playful falsehood, if it is harmless.<sup>29</sup> In any case, some restraint was called for. "Fables of this kind," said Jacobus de Fusignano (c. 1300), "should seldom be used by a preacher, and only with great caution, lest he mislead his listeners" (*fabulis autem huiusmodi rarissime praedicator debet uti, et cum magna cautela, ne auditores in errorem inducat*).<sup>30</sup> On this, most homilists agreed. If a humorous story were to be told, the intention or moral must be explicitly stated so that listeners would not confuse fiction with reality. Such stories are much more appropriate, according to Ulrich Surgent, "in private conversations rather than in public sermons" (*in collationibus privatis /.../ quam in publicis predicationibus*).<sup>31</sup>

Others had had bad experiences. People come to a sermon and wish to hear something amusing (*aliquid verbum jocosum*) and ignore the message and the serious intent; they remember some nonsense or folly (*fatuitas*) and forget about what is edifying.<sup>32</sup> Some preachers pulled out all the stops and even made blasphemous or irreverent references to Jesus. The Dominican Gabriele Barletta (d. *post* 1480), active in Italy, where he became famous and popular for his phenomenal verbosity (to preach was to "barlettare"), did not hesitate to ask his audience what clue was it that led the Samaritan to know that Jesus was a Jew. Barletta does refer to the circumcision of Jesus, which might have been offensive. But the example is not unique. Coarse jokes were heard, and scatological humor seems to have been appreciated. Stunning similes and comparisons did not disappear with the Reformation; one German priest had occasion to liken Jesus to a monkey.<sup>33</sup>

28 Leo Papa, *Epistolae et decreta*, PL 115: 679–680.

29 Weismann 1972, p. 77; Trapp 1954, p. 414 *et passim*; cf. Cullhed 2015, chapter 2.

30 Roth 1956, pp. 99–100, note 203.

31 Staehelin 1927, p. 58, note 4.

32 Owst 1926, p. 185.

33 Verdon 2001, p. 32; cf. Pauli 1924, note 695; DBI, 6, pp. 399–400; Schindler 1992, p. 154.

Even laymen reacted. Dante wrote acidly in *La Divina Commedia* about preachers' vain need to please the audience:

Ora si va con motti e iscede / A predicare, e pur che ben si rida, / Gonfia il cappuccino, e piu non si ride.<sup>34</sup>

Ordinary people also objected. At Mass on Easter Sunday, according to an early sixteenth-century witness, the preacher was intent upon provoking the so-called Easter laughter (*risus paschalis*). It seemed that any old joke would do, as long as laughter was evoked. To top it all off, the preacher forgot to proclaim the Easter mystery. On being asked about the appropriateness of these jokes, one of the most criticized preachers referred to Thomas Aquinas and the concept of *eutrapelia*, which shows his ignorance of Thomas' thinking. Thomas did not accept jokes and humor when "Christian doctrine" (*sacra doctrina*) was to be expounded.<sup>35</sup>

### Ideological and moral reasons

To spread Christianity across the world and combat heresies within Christian communities was seen as a righteous mission. From a social point of view it was an ideological battle, where laughter and jokes were permitted to drive home the message and disparage the enemy. According to the Old Testament, even God could laugh derisively at his enemies.<sup>36</sup>

There is plenty of defiant and condescending laughter against the enemies of God and the Church, especially in hagiographies. The story is widespread about St. George, who refused to fall back into paganism and just smiled – in some versions scoffed – at the Roman governor Dacianus and his attempts at persuasion.<sup>37</sup> George thus does what is morally right. Against immorality, scornful and derisive laughter is justified. John of Salisbury in his *Policraticus* rejects coarse and scurrilous jokes, but in his *Historia Pontificalis* defends scornful laughter as a legitimate means to punish those who are so narrow-minded that they do not appreciate the value of the lessons of history. Much later, Geiler von Keysersberg (1445–1510) was to claim that it "profiteth that a man /.../ to ridicule and despise a haughty /.../ soul" (*ist nützlich das ein moensch /.../ verspot und veracht den hofferligen /.../ geist*). Ultimately, it promotes a better moral

34 Dante Alighieri, *Paradiso*, XXIX, 115–117: "Now preachers ply their trade with buffoonery and jokes, / their cowls inflating if they get a laugh, / and the people ask for nothing more", transl. Hollander & Hollander.

35 Fluck 1934, pp. 189–212; Wendland 1980, pp. 59–70, 297–300; Jacobelli 1992; Staehelin 1927, pp. 44–64.

36 Psalms 2:4, 36:13, 58:9; cf. Proverbs 1:26.

37 James of Voragine, *Legenda aurea*, ed. Graesse 1969, p. 263; FL 3, p. 494.

order. Because no one, not even “the haughty”, according to Geiler, “can long stand to be mocked” (*der hofferlig geist mag nit lang leiden, das er also verschmahet werde*). A medieval proverb expresses the gist of this notion of corrective laughter: “Bad habits are chastened with laughter” (*Ridendo castigantur mores*).<sup>38</sup>

### Social reasons

Urbane clerics also invoked social reasons. Jokes and humor can spread mirth and enhance the mood of a gathering. Suitably voiced, openly received, and well phrased they can promote intimacy and easy interaction. Therefore, writes John of Salisbury in *Policraticus*, they should be utilized and enjoyed during a pleasant and civilized meal. In all respects, such a meal is characterized by good manners and moderation in joy – albeit John expresses himself more rhetorically and according to a manner that aesthetes of the time could appreciate: “We should by all means encourage that which helps to moderate conscious joy” (*at id quod hilaritatem conciliat modestiae consciam unique conquirendum*). Unbridled whims and thoughtlessness do not belong here, no more than voracious eating and drinking. “Very boring, and quite foreign to sophisticated behavior” (*sunt autem nimis tristia et fere ciuilitas ignara*) he declares somewhat pompously, are “meals” (*conuiuia*) where “only the stomach is filled” (*solus uenter impletur*), and which are full “goosy noise and foolish prattle” (*clamore anserino et ineptis fabulis*). Furthermore, John also advocates an active presence from the guests. They should all contribute to the illuminating conversation, and through good-natured jokes contribute to an entertaining and intimate atmosphere. Good-natured joking excludes scorn and invective, but a mutual interactive humor is required: participants must all be able to endure jokes at their expense.<sup>39</sup>

John, who ended his days as bishop in Chartres (d. 1180), knew that joking could get out of control, as did other commentators: in a monastic rule contemporary with Benedict’s, it is recommended that monks refrain from jokes, because they can easily lead to trouble and discord, something that even John Chrysostom noted and warned against.<sup>40</sup>

### Free zones

Strict standards are not always easy to follow, and the very prohibition could elicit violations. Obviously, clerics were not always God’s most obedient children. An early

<sup>38</sup> John of Salisbury, *Historia pontificalis*, transl. Chibnall 1986, p. 3; Freiiin 1921, p. 115; Walther & Schmidt 1963–1986, II, 9:41127.

<sup>39</sup> John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, ed. Webb 1909, I, lib. VIII, cap. 7–10. I might add that my comment relates to the two kinds of meals John can accept, namely *civilia* and *philosophica*, which he distinguishes from *convivia plebeia*. Cf. Suchomski 1975, pp. 46–52.

<sup>40</sup> John Chrysostom, *De Statuis ad populum Antiochenum*, *Homilia XV*, PG 49:158.

witness to improper behavior is a letter of admonition from Bishop Hincmar of Reims in 852, addressed to the priests of his diocese:

Let no priest venture to get drunk on the anniversary of someone's death, or on the thirty-third or seventh memorial day (of someone's death), or at any other gathering where clergy come together for prayer; nor wish to drink for the love of the saints, or for his own soul; or force others to drink, or at someone else's request engorge on food and drink. He should not venture to [evoke] applause or coarse laughter, or tell or sing vain stories; nor may he permit that anyone in his presence make shameful jokes, or [perform] with bears or dancers; or allow that people wear devil's masks, which in the vernacular are called "*talamascas*". For this is diabolical behavior and forbidden by holy canon law.<sup>41</sup>

Generally it was understood within the Church that it was necessary, for psychological and other reasons, to occasionally allow the strictest observances to lapse. Therefore, free zones were established, where much was allowed that otherwise was not; they were distributed over the religious calendar and placed near major religious holidays.<sup>42</sup> Since the free zones were institutionalized, everyone, even laymen, knew that at a fixed time and place extraordinary rules came into force. The distinction between seriousness and joy was strict, formally; but in practice transitions could occur almost unnoticed between a free zone and normality, between unbridled rampage and strict observance of the rules.

The Church year began with Advent and Christmas celebrations, when general amusements and entertainment of a hilarious sort had their given place in close proximity to, yet distinct from, the principal church services. The amusements began on St. Nicholas' Day (6 December), resumed on Christmas Day (25 December), and continued past New Year's Day until Epiphany. During this period of freedom, sometimes called "December freedom" (*libertas dicembrica*), clerics not only ate and drank profusely; they also dressed up, played games, and joked.<sup>43</sup>

Jocular antics and jokes also occurred during the celebration of Easter, Pentecost, Assumption (15 August), and St. Martin's Day (11 November). Most famous has be-

41 My translation. "Ut nullus presbyterorum ad anniversariam diem, vel tricesimam tertiam, vel septimam alicujus defuncti, aut quacunque vocatione ad collectam presbyteri convenerint, se inebriare praesumat, nec precari in amore sanctorum vel ipsius animae bibere, aut alios ad bibendum cogere, vel se aliena precatione ingurgitare: nec plausus et risus inconditos, et fabulas inanes ibi referre aut cantare praesumat, nec turpia joca cum urso vel tornatricibus ante se facere permittat, nec larvas daemonum, quas vulgo talamascas dicunt, ibi anteferre consentiat: quia hoc diabolicum est, et a sacris canonibus prohibitum." Hincmar, *Capitula Synodica*, PL 125:776.

42 The free zone is a general phenomenon, found in different communities, although differently distributed. A deployment pattern is thus discernible in different social contexts. See Erikson 1966, pp. 27–29, 296–299.

43 An early witness from the 1160s is John Beleth, a teacher in Paris. John Beleth, *Summa de ecclesiasticis*, ed. Douteil 1976, p. 223.

come the so-called Feast of Fools, when, as during Carnival, order was turned upside down and many of the Church's taboos were transgressed. During periods of crisis in the history of the Church, the Feast of Fools was called into question; but it survived into the time of the Reformation, when mutual criticism and competition between the old (Roman Catholic) and the new (Protestant) Churches led to changes in the forms and practices of Church life.<sup>44</sup>

## Conclusion

A moral lesson may be drawn. When ascetic ideals, promulgated as desirable virtues, clash with the reality that is human nature, the ideal image must be readjusted. The result of the change is always the same: to make a virtue of necessity. Thus a more humane discourse on laughter was articulated in contrast to asceticism. And despite the evolution of religion, and despite society's restructuring of the social fabric, the Middle Ages' discursive modes of laughter and joking would survive up to modern times, although sometimes rephrased or even reshaped to meet the demands of new circumstances.

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44 Heers 1971, pp. 18–182; Ferm 2002, pp. 142–157; CUP, vol. IV, p. 653.

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# *Tempus flendi et tempus ridendi:*

## Manifestations of Emotion in Medieval Biblical Commentary

*Alexander Andrée*

Looking for traces of medieval expressions of emotions, scholars have not turned so much to biblical commentary as a source of how joy, fear, sorrow or affections of other kinds were experienced by medieval people.<sup>1</sup> This is understandable, since as a genre, medieval biblical commentary often appears dry, dull and factual, at least to our eyes. But if we look at the Bible itself, composed as it is of a wide variety of literary genres, texts and styles, it will soon be evident that its books are full of expressions of emotion. The Bible and its medieval interpretation ought therefore to be an untapped resource for this kind of research. It may be thought that grief, fear, anguish and similar negative emotions would dominate Scripture, but positive sensations such as joy, satisfaction and gratitude are also present in its pages. Peter, for example, cried bitterly when he understood that he had betrayed Christ (Matthew 26:75), but Sarah laughed mockingly at the prospect of becoming a mother at ninety (Genesis 18:12). Indeed, in the Bible there are entire books devoted to the expression of one single emotion or a set of related ones: the Song of Songs is often described as the canticle of joy, whereas the Book of Lamentations, obviously, deals with its opposite.

Acknowledging this potential resource, the overarching question of this essay is how the medieval commentators, on a human level, reacted to and treated the expressions of sentiments they found on the sacred pages – either as displayed by the characters in the books and stories, or as phrased by the authors of these same texts. The tools for hermeneutic inquiry, furthermore, with which the medieval exegetes were equipped, ought to have furnished them with ample opportunities for emotional extrapolations. Of particular importance in this context are the four levels of interpretation so ingeniously employed by the biblical commentators: the model that allows

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, the following classic studies of medieval emotions: Besnier, Moreau & Renault 2003; Nagy 2000; Nagy & Boquet 2009; Nagy & Boquet 2011.

one and the same passage to be explained according to its basic historical meaning, but also in a transferred 'spiritual' or allegorical sense, as well as according to its moral or tropological implications; anagogy, the looking forward to things beyond this world is also sometimes, if not as often, employed.<sup>2</sup> This awareness on the part of the commentators of the relevance of the totality of the biblical message, and the detail with which they took care to expound it, ought also to speak in favor of this assumption.

To pursue an answer to this question, however, has not turned out to be an easy task, first of all since the material is vast and remains largely unstudied: indeed, surveys of medieval exegesis are scarce; studies of commentaries on single biblical books are rare; editions of the texts are lacking; many texts are still in manuscript; once the relevant material has, finally, been gathered one will find that explicit treatment of our topic is difficult to unearth. The findings of the present study must therefore be regarded as provisional and tentative, marking the beginning of a pioneering course of inquiry, proffering a survey of some biblical passages and their expositions that could or, to my mind, should have elicited the interest of the commentators.

### A time to weep and a time to laugh

We will take our cue for this inquiry from the title of this essay: *Tempus flendi et tempus ridendi* – "There is a time to weep, and a time to laugh."<sup>3</sup> These are words of the Preacher, *Ecclesiastes* in Greek, *Contionator* in Latin, in the biblical book of the same name. The question is whether these two times, for weeping and laughing, are acknowledged in the medieval biblical commentaries. How are the notions of joy and mourning as reported in Old Testament texts brought to bear upon the commentaries in the later medieval period? What value did the commentators attribute to the feelings expressed? Did they even regard them as feelings properly speaking? How did they measure them, and how did they choose to expound and explain them?

The first and most influential Latin commentary on *Ecclesiastes*, and thus on this passage, was that of Jerome, who wrote it with the aid of certain learned Jews<sup>4</sup> in Bethlehem in AD 388–389. It is a very short work, and so is Jerome's exposition of this line, *Tempus flendi et tempus ridendi*. He says: "*A time to weep, and a time to laugh*. Now is the time to weep, and in the future, to laugh: for blessed are those who weep, for they will laugh."<sup>5</sup> Jerome comments on this passage in connection with the verse im-

2 For a comprehensive survey of the usage of these four 'senses' of Scripture, see de Lubac 1959–1964. The clearest medieval expression of this fourfold hermeneutics is found in Hugh of Saint-Victor's *Didascalicon*, ed. Buttner 1939, particularly 6, 3–5.

3 *Ecclesiastes* 3:4.

4 See Jerome, *Commentarius in Ecclesiasten*, ed. Adriaen 1959, p. 249.

5 *Ibid.*, p. 274: "*Tempus flendi et tempus ridendi*. Nunc flendi tempus est, et in futuro ridendi: *Beati enim flentes, quoniam ipsi ridebunt*."

mediately following, which is on a related topic, *Tempus plangendi et tempus saltandi*. Jerome comments accordingly:

*A time to mourn, and a time to dance.* Therefore those are chastised in the Gospel to whom the Lord speaks: *We have lamented for you, and you have not mourned; we have sung, and you have not danced.* Mourning is for the present, so that we may dance afterwards that dance which David danced before the Ark of the Covenant, and displeasing Saul's daughter, he more pleased God.<sup>6</sup>

Jerome makes the obvious connection between this passage and the Beatitudes, delivered by Christ in connection with the Sermon on the Mount (Luke 6:21 and 25): "Blessed are ye that hunger now: for you shall be filled. Blessed are ye that weep now: for you shall laugh", and, "Woe to you that are filled: for you shall hunger. Woe to you that now laugh: for you shall mourn and weep."<sup>7</sup> The message is clear and consistent, and a commonplace in medieval exegesis: joy, laughter and dancing are exclusively reserved for the afterlife; our present existence here on earth is better spent in preparation for it, by weeping and mourning for our sins.

In keeping with this notion, it is relatively easy to find expressions of sorrow and pain in Scripture. The Book of Lamentations, for example, traditionally interpreted as the prophet Jeremiah's lament over Jerusalem fallen into the hands of the Chaldeans, is an epitome of mourning, and was understood in the Middle Ages morally as the soul's lament over its fallen state, beleaguered by its many sins.<sup>8</sup> Contrition and compunction is a commonplace in medieval interpretations of biblical outbursts of tears and sighs. In fact, the many Hebraisms left in the Vulgate translation of the Old Testament (and sometimes in the New) could in the Latin be interpreted as exaggerated displays

6 *Ibid.*, 3, 4, 50–58, p. 274: "*Tempus plangendi et tempus saltandi*. Idcirco corripuntur in euangelio, quibus Dominus ait: *Lamentauimus uobis et non planxistis; cantauimus et non saltastis*. Plangendum est impraesentiarum, ut postea saltare ualeamus illam saltationem, quam Dauid saltauit ante arcam testamenti; et Saulis filiae displicens, magis placuit Deo." All translations from the Latin are my own.

7 Luke 6:21: "Beati qui nunc esuritis, quia saturabimini. Beati qui nunc fletis, quia ridebitis"; Luke 6:25: "Vae uobis, qui saturati estis: quia esurietis. Vae uobis, qui ridetis nunc: quia lugebitis et flebitis."

8 See for example the interpretation offered by the *Glossa 'ordinaria'*, the standard Bible commentary of the high Middle Ages, on Lamentations 1:1: "*QUOMODO SEDET SOLA CIVITAS*. Anima, scilicet, quoniam virtutibus et suffragiis sanctorum quasi CIVITAS POPULO PLENA, desolata, que prius pollebat diuinis opibus inter frequentias sodalium, nunc inter hosets sedet squalida ..."; "*HOW DOTH THE CITY SIT SOLITARY*, that is to say the soul, once full of virtues and approbations of the saints AS A CITY FULL OF PEOPLE, now desolate, she who previously, among the throngs of friends, was mighty by diuine aid, now sits wretched among enemies", ed. & transl. Andr  e 2005, pp. 176–177.

of emotion.<sup>9</sup> Emphatic usages and intensifications of various kinds contributed to this phenomenon.

### Rhetoric in the service of emotion

An example of this sense of exaggeration is found in Psalm 6, the first 'penitential' Psalm, where David exclaims: "I have labored in my groanings, every night I will wash my bed: I will water my couch [or: bed cover] with my tears."<sup>10</sup> The commentaries of Augustine and Cassiodorus were the most influential interpretations of the Psalms throughout our period. Augustine, first, commenting on this particular passage, focused on the two different tenses employed by the Psalmist, perfect and future (*laboraui; lauabo/rigabo*), claiming that this is how someone expresses himself who has been working in vain but proposes to himself a renewed effort. It is the feeling of someone disappointed, but not yet disheartened that, according to Augustine, finds expression in this verse of the Psalm.<sup>11</sup> Augustine also stresses the fact that the verb *rigare* is stronger than *lauare*: "something may be washed [*lauari*] on the surface, but a cleansing [*rigatio*] penetrates to the inside, which signifies weeping all the way to the innermost part of the heart".<sup>12</sup>

Cassiodorus repeats Augustine's idea of the fuller force of *rigare*, and also develops the meaning of 'couch', *stratum*, which strictly speaking would have fallen outside our investigation, had not Cassiodorus suggested that the entire expression is an instance of the rhetorical figure of hyperbole,<sup>13</sup> the use of exaggeration in a speech to create a

<sup>9</sup> Examples of Hebraisms are: "Rex regum", "dominus dominantium", "uanitas uanitatum"; "plorans plorauit", "morte moriatur", "desiderio desiderauit". See further Sheerin 1996, pp. 146–147.

<sup>10</sup> Psalms 6:7: "Laboraui in gemitu meo; lauabo per singulas noctes lectum meum; lacrimis meis stratum meum rigabo."

<sup>11</sup> Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 6, 7, ed. Dekkers 1956, p. 32: "Temporum uero uarietas, quod praeteritum posuit, cum diceret: laboraui in gemitu meo, et futurum, cum diceret: lauabo per singulas noctes lectum meum; rursus futurum: in lacrimis stratum meum rigabo, illud ostendit quid sibi dicere debeat, cum quisque in gemitu frustra laborauerit. Tamquam diceret: non profuit cum hoc feci, ergo illud faciam."

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 31–32: "In lacrimis stratum meum rigabo, repetitio est. Cum enim dicit in lacrimis, ostendit quemadmodum superius lauabo dixerit. Hoc autem accipimus stratum, quod superius lectum. Quamquam rigabo amplius sit aliquid quam lauabo, quoniam potest aliquid in superficie lauare; rigatio uero ad interiora permeat, quod significat fletum usque ad cordis intima."

<sup>13</sup> Cassiodorus, *Expositio psalmorum* 6, 7, 231–244, ed. Adriaen 1958, p. 76: "Lacrimis stratum meum rigabo. Rigare uberius aliquid significat quam lauare. Sed uideamus, cum superius lectum dixisset, quare iterum repetere uoluisset stratum? stratum enim significat cumulum peccatorum; quod ideo lacrimis rigat, ut eodem saluberrimo imbre resolutum, homo in nouam messem uirtutis adolescat, fiat que ex peccatore iustus, ex lugente laetus, ex aegroto sanissimus. Nam si stratum collectionem uestium uelis aduertere, ipsa impossibilitas occurrit quae de lecti laua-



strong impression on the audience. For Cassiodorus, the twin repetition of *lauabo/rigabo*, with their differing objects, *lectum* and *stratum*, is linguistically unnecessary and to be understood as an exaggerated eruption of sentiment, and not as an approximation of the true state of affairs. Indeed, looking at it from our vantage point, the use of the tenets of rhetoric to expound sacred Scripture seems to provide an analysis by which we may access the medieval reactions to biblical emotions.

As with so many other disciplines, the art of rhetoric (alongside the study of the Bible) flourished anew in the twelfth century, and many commentators employed the devices of the former to explain the subject-matter of the latter. One of the first to do so is Bruno (1032–1101), once schoolmaster at Rheims, who eventually left his books and schools to withdraw into the wilderness and founded, in 1084, with a few select followers, the first Carthusian monastery. But once withdrawn from the world, he did not completely abandon his former pursuits and maintained, for the first period of its existence, a high intellectual standard in his new monastery. Amongst other things, he is said to have written a commentary on the Psalms, in which he used rhetorical figures of speech to elucidate the sometimes obscure utterances of the Psalmist.<sup>14</sup> Partly abandoning the lead of Augustine and Cassiodorus, in expounding the sixth Psalm, Bruno equals both *stratum* and *lectum* with the human conscience, which the Psalmist had cleansed with tears through many nights.

Nevertheless, as the Psalm continues, “My eye is troubled through indignation: I have grown old amongst all my enemies”,<sup>15</sup> Bruno launches into an interesting and somewhat fanciful deduction: as the sane find repose, the sick cannot. Thus conscience and rest are for the good, torment and anxiety for the wicked. Therefore, the Psalmist says, “I have worked”, because “my eye”, that is the contemplation of my mind, “is troubled”, that is pierced, “through indignation”, that is through the thought of anger, that is of eternal punishment, because I feared this anger and this because “I have grown old”, that is fallen from the newness of Christ in which I was before, to the antiquity of Adam, being “amongst all my enemies”, not among some, but among all, the visible as well as the invisible. By these enemies are understood the vices that make the Psalmist sin, and the sinners who call him back from the path of the just by their flattery or bad example. But when he has attained satisfaction and thus is sure of his salvation, the Psalmist addresses his visible enemies (*apostropham ... facit*), out of too much joy (*ex nimia laetitia*), telling them to bother no longer to try to call him back, because they will not be able to, and he says: “I have grown old etc.”<sup>16</sup> Bruno uses the word *apos-*

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tione surrexit. Siue hoc per figuram hyperbolen potest accipi, per quam solent aliqua in magnitudine exaggerationis extendi, sicut de nauigantibus in centesimo sexto psalmo dicturus est: ascendunt usque ad caelos et descendunt usque ad abyssos.”

14 See Kraebel 2009. The text is printed in PL 152:637–1420.

15 Psalms 6:8: “Turbatus est a furore oculus meus; inueteraui inter omnes inimicos meos.”

16 Bruno of Chartreux, *Expositio in Psalmos* VI, PL 152:657d–658b: “Stratus vero et lectus idem

*trophe*, ‘allocution’ or ‘address’, which is a rhetorical figure, classically defined as when the speaker turns from the judges or his audience, and addresses some other person or thing, real or imagined. According to Bruno, it is the overwhelming joy with which his heart abounds that makes the Psalmist open his mouth and address his enemies, the joy of having overcome and made atonement for his sins. Thus, following Bruno, penitential satisfaction leads to joy, which leads to the use of rhetorical exclamation.

So much for happiness brought about by the repudiation of sin. What about more spontaneous expressions of joy? Commenting on the other passage quoted from Genesis at the outset of this essay, on Sarah laughing when she was told that, despite her advanced age, she would carry and give birth to a child,<sup>17</sup> the Venerable Bede, in his notes on parts of Genesis, says that Sarah laughed because even as she doubted the truth of the message, she rejoiced over it, just as her husband, Abraham, had laughed in marvel before.<sup>18</sup> Remigius of Auxerre adopts this notion and develops it in his Gen-

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sunt hic. Conscientia vero per similitudinem dicitur lectus et stratus. Sicut enim lecto sanus requiescit, aeger vero minime quiescere potest; ita et conscientia bonis et requies, malis vero tormentum et anxietas, et ideo laboravi; quia oculus meus, id est consideratio mentis meae, turbatus est, id est compunctus, et hoc superius dixit aliter, sic. Et anima mea turbata est valde, sed ob hoc repetit, ut addat quare turbatus est, dico turbatus est, quae turbatio processit a furore tuo, id est a cogitatione furoris, id est vindictae perpetuae, quia timebam furorem illum, et hoc ideo quia inveteravi, id est de novitate Christi in qua prius eram, in vetustatem Adae cecidi, existens inter omnes inimicos meos, non inter quosdam, sed inter omnes visibiles scilicet et invisibiles: inter vitia quae me peccare fecerunt, et peccatores qui me minis vel blanditiis vel malo exemplo suo a via iustitiae revocaverunt. Perfecta satisfactione et de remissione securus, ex nimia laetitia apostropham ad hostes visibiles facit, dicens ne laborent eum amplius revocare, quia non poterunt, et hoc sic dicit: Ego prius inveteravi inter vos, et ideo satisfaciens oravi Deum ut me sanaret, et sanavit; et ideo vos omnes qui operamini iniquitatem, non qui operati estis et quievistis, sed qui adhuc operamini, et exemplo vestro me revocare vultis, discedite a me, id est cessate me revocare omnimodo, quia nequibitis; nam Dominus, cui me servum feci, exaudivit, id est audivit ut impetrarem, vocem fletus mei, id est orationem quam feci cum fletu meo, scilicet procedenti ex culpa mea.”

17 Genesis 18:12–13: “Quae risit occulte dicens: Postquam consenui, et dominus meus uetulus est, uoluptati operam dabo? Dixit autem Dominus ad Abraham: Quae risit Sara, dicens: Num uere paritura sum anus?”

18 Bede, *In principium Genesis usque ad natiuitatem Isaac*, 4, 18, ed. Jones 1967, p. 217: “Quae risit occulte dicens, postquam senui et dominus meus uetulus est, uoluptati operam dabo? Huius sententiae meminit apostolus Petrus, cum mulieres uiris suis obtemperare admonens adiecit, sicut Sara obediebat Abrahae, dominum eum vocans, videtur autem simile huic loco quod supra de Abraham legitur quia, audito Sarae partu, ceciderit in faciem et riserit in corde suo dicens, putas ne centenario nascetur filius, et Sara nonagenaria pariet? Addidit que dicens ad Deum, vtinam Ismahel uiuat coram te. Verum quia apostolus dicit quod Abraham non haesitauerit diffidentia, Saram uero haesitasse, sequens Domini sermo manifestat, dicentis ad Abraham: quae risit Sara dicens, num uere paritura sum anus? Restat intellegi quod audito quia Sara paritura esset filium, et Abraham prius riserit admirans in gaudio, et ipsa Sara postmodum dubitans in gaudio.”

esis commentary. “Why did Sarah laugh”, he asks, and, “why did the Lord rebuke her when she laughed and not Abraham who had laughed before?” The answer is, says Remigius, that whereas Abraham’s laughter was one of joy and marvel, Sarah’s was one of doubt and incredulity, and this was known by the Lord. He continues, “But it is not clear why Sarah dared to deny that she had laughed, if she knew it was the Lord who was speaking to her, unless perhaps we say that she thought it was men with whom she was speaking.”<sup>19</sup>

### Whine rather than mirth

At the outset I mentioned the words from Matthew’s Gospel to the effect that Peter cried bitterly once he had understood that he had betrayed Christ, not just once but three times, all before the crowing of the cock.<sup>20</sup> “And Peter remembered the word of Jesus which he had said: Before the cock crow, thou wilt deny me thrice. And going forth, he wept bitterly.” *Fleuit amare* are the words of the Latin Vulgate, and Augustine, in a sermon commenting on this passage, made a pun out of it: “Fleuit amare, qui nouerat *amare*.”<sup>21</sup> Christian of Stavelot, a monk in northern France in the ninth century, somewhat materialistically focused on the fact that Peter went outside (*foras*) to cry, suggesting that he did so because he was still ‘weak’ and did not dare to shed his tears in the hall of the high priest.<sup>22</sup>

Another passage that could potentially reap an emotional harvest is when Christ, in John’s Gospel, is about to raise Lazarus from the dead and, according to the evan-

19 Remigius of Auxerre, *Expositio super Genesim*, 18, 13, ed. Van Name Edwards 1999, p. 122: “*Quare risit Sara?* Cur Dominus Saram ridentem redarguit, cum et Abraham supra riserit, et non sit redargutus? Profecto quia risus Abrahae gaudii fuit et admirationis, Sarae autem dubitationis et diffidentiae, et hoc ab illo discerni potuit, qui iudicauit. Sed quare Sara risum ausa est negare, si Deum intellegebat esse qui loquebatur, non apparet, nisi forte dicamus quod Sara homines putabat.”

20 Matthew 26:75: “Et recordatus est Petrus uerbi Iesu, quod dixerat: Priusquam gallus cantet, ter me negabis. Et egressus foras, fleuit amare.”

21 Augustine, *Sermo* 295, PL 38:1350: “Amen dico tibi, antequam gallus cantet, ter me negabis. factum est quod praedixerat medicus: fieri non potuit quod praesumpsit aegrotus. sed quid? continuo respexit eum dominus. sic scriptum est, sic loquitur euangelium: respexit eum dominus, et exiit foras, et fleuit amare. exiit foras: hoc est, confiteri. fleuit amare, qui nouerat amare. dulcedo secuta est in amore, cuius amaritudo praecesserat in dolore. merito etiam post resurrectionem dominus ipsi petro oues suas commendauit pascendas.”

22 Christian of Stavelot, *Expositio in euangelium Matthaei* 26, 636, ed. Huygens 2008, p. 494: “ET CONTINUO GALLUS CANTAUIT. Ante respexit dominus Petrum et tunc RECORDATUS PETRUS UERBI DOMINI ET EGRESSUS FORAS, FLEUIT AMARE. Fragilis erat adhuc beatus Petrus, qui nec plorare ausus est in atrio sacerdotis. Spiritualiter designat quia non possumus inter malos perfecte agere paenitentiam et multum nocent consortia malorum: inter discipulos positus Christum filium dei confessus est, in atrio sacerdotis eundem negauit se nosse.”

gelist (John 11:33), when he saw his sister weeping, “groaned in the spirit, and troubled himself”.<sup>23</sup> And a little later, when he saw where Lazarus had been buried, “Jesus wept.”<sup>24</sup> Why did Jesus groan in his spirit, trouble himself and, in the end, weep? Why this sudden outburst of emotion in the man who is God?

Augustine offers only a very brief comment on the passage in his *Tractatus* on John’s Gospel, explaining his shedding tears as an expression of Christ’s divine will rather than of human emotion: Jesus cried simply because he wanted to, and it was in his power to do so.<sup>25</sup> Although here referring to the divine will of Christ, this interpretation is consistent with Augustine’s Stoic ideal of emotions as controlled by the will.<sup>26</sup> This idea is picked up and developed some seven hundred years later, in the early twelfth century, by Anselm of Laon in his glosses on the Gospel of John, in which he adds that Christ wept, “because he is the fountain of piety ... He wept to teach sinners the need for tears.”<sup>27</sup> And with this we are back where we started: Tears are for this world, laughter for the next. I will end this survey with a quotation from the elusive Honorius Augustodonensis, commenting on the passage from *Ecclesiastes* that has served as the theme for this essay, and will, in turn serve as a conclusion here:

Why does Solomon say [i.e. *Ecclesiastes*: medieval commentators treated the wisdom books of the Old Testament the works of Solomon], *A time to weep and a time to laugh; a time to mourn and a time to dance*? Who can ignore that we weep at certain times, and laugh at certain times? And why did he say, *a time to mourn and a time to dance*? Perhaps he wanted to show that we ought to engage in the pleasantries of dancing? Not at all! For by no means ought we to act foolishly. The time to weep is the present life, and the time to laugh is the future life. Therefore, he who in the present life strives to cleanse his sins by daily tears and weeping will laugh, that is rejoice, in the future life. Similarly, the time to mourn is the present life and the time to dance is the blessed life. For in the movement of the dance man demonstrates the joy of his mind and the rejoicing of his soul.<sup>28</sup>

23 John 11:33: “Infremuit spiritu, et turbavit seipsum.”

24 John 11:34–35: “Et dixit: Ubi posuistis eum? Dicunt ei: Domine, veni, et vide [...] Et lacrimatus est Jesus.”

25 Augustine, *In Iohannis euangelium tractatus* 49, 18, ed. Willems 1954, p. 428: “Esuriuit Iesus, uerum est, sed quia uoluit; dormiuit Iesus, uerum est, sed quia uoluit; contristatus est Iesus, uerum est, sed quia uoluit; mortuus est Iesus, uerum est, sed quia uoluit; in illius potestate erat sic uel sic affici, uel non affici.”

26 See, for example, Augustine, *De ciuitate Dei*, 9, 4, eds Dombart & Kalb 1955, pp. 251–253.

27 Anselm of Laon, *Glosae super Iohannem* XI, 175–178, ed. Andrée 2014, p. 207: “LACRIMATVS EST, quia fons pietatis erat. Flebat pro parte humanitatis, quem resuscitare poterat per potentiam diuinitatis. Fleuit ut peccatores doceret fletibus indigere.”

28 Honorius Augustodonensis, *Quaestiones et responsiones in Ecclesiasten* III, PL 172:336d: “Quare dicit Salomon: Tempus flendi et tempus ridendi; tempus plangendi, et tempus saltandi? Quis enim ignorat quia alio tempore flemus, alio autem ridemus? aut quid fuit dicere, tempus plangendi, et tempus saltandi? Nunquid forsitan ostendere uoluit, quod oporteat nos saltationum exercere ludibria? Absit! Nihil enim oportet nos scurriliter agere. Sed tempus flendi est vita

From this brief foray we may, pending further evidence, conclude that medieval biblical exegesis displays a limited interest in exploring human feelings and emotions. Feelings of sadness and grief are natural to a creature that by its nature is fallen; laughter and rejoicing is something to save for the afterlife, once all the hurdles and temptations of the present life have been overcome, and sins have been expiated. In the meantime, laughter and its expressions were probably left for outside the classroom, as was dancing, as we have learned from our last quotation.

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praesens, tempus autem ridendi est vita futura. Qui ergo in praesenti vita quotidianis fletibus et lacrymis purgare peccata sua studuerit, in vita futura ridebit, id est gaudebit. Similiter tempus plangendi est vita praesens, tempus saltandi vita beata. In motu namque saltationis homo suae mentis gaudium et exultationem animi demonstrat. Qui ergo in praesenti vita plangendo studet abolere peccata, in futura vita saltabit, hoc est, laetabitur et exultabit in gloria aeternae felicitatis.”

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*Our Lady of Fontenay, c. 1275–1300. L'Abbaye de Fontenay, France. © L'Abbaye de Fontenay. (See also p. 226.)*



# Bernard's Smile and the Conversion of Laughter

Wim Verbaal

## Posing the problem – Bernard laughing

The monastery is no place for laughter. Monks are supposed to weep and sigh, not laugh. Their task is to follow Christ, whom Scripture never mentions laughing.<sup>1</sup>

All too often these words have been put in the mouth of many an exemplary monk, Bernard of Clairvaux being a prime example. He was one of the pioneers of the Cistercian reform movement and thanks to his first biographer he entered history as a severe ascetic *par excellence*, drinking oil instead of water without noticing it and living for years in a monastery without ever noticing the windows in the upper walls of the refectory. Or even worse: travelling an entire day alongside the Lake of Le Mans without seeing it!<sup>2</sup> Could it be possible to catch a glimpse of humor that might soften the austere reputation of a monk like this?

The impression rendered above seems to be confirmed by another of his biographers, who reports that upon seeing clerics laugh, Bernard himself repeatedly noted that he could not remember since entering monastic life that he had ever laughed in a way that was not forced rather than something he had to suppress, and that he had to

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1 The monastic task of weeping goes back to Jerome, who says that a monk is not to teach, but to weep (*monachus autem non doctoris habet, sed plangentis officium*: Contra Vigilantium 15). This became a hot topic in the twelfth century, when problems arose between the different new monastic currents and their pastoral tasks.

2 *Vita prima sancti Bernardi abbatis* (henceforward *Vpr*), book I by William of Saint-Thierry, book II by Arnold of Bonneval, books III–V by Geoffrey of Auxerre; for a recent edition and transcriptions, see Verdeyen (ed.) 2011. For Bernard not knowing that there were windows in the refectory, see *Vpr* I.20. For him drinking oil instead of water, see *Vpr* I.33. For Bernard's blindness for the Lake of Le Mans, see *Vpr* III.4.

be made to laugh more than restrained from doing so.<sup>3</sup> A rather gloomy personality is evoked before our eyes.

Yet, we have a second version of Bernard's biography, rewritten and revised by his cousin, Geoffrey de la Roche-Vanneau, who entered monastic life together with him and remained one of his closest collaborators. Geoffrey shared the hagiographic objectives of the earlier biographers, but is at the same time characterized by a more down-to-earth mentality and he could not accept many of the typical hagiographical *topoi* that had been introduced into the life of his much admired cousin. Lots of miracle stories disappeared from this second revision, as well as many of the saint's reported character traits, which in Geoffrey's eyes did not correspond to reality.<sup>4</sup>

Now, in his revised version, Geoffrey retained the first part of Bernard's statement but removed the ending that suggests that Bernard had to make himself laugh rather than stifle it.<sup>5</sup> This edited quotation ought to catch our attention: given its new context, Bernard actually says: 'I have never roared with laughter like those clerics over there. Which is a shame for a monk.' He did not in other words say that he needed some extraordinary compulsion to start laughing. But at the same time he never roared with laughter and his hilarity was demure.

In that case, however, Bernard's statement does not suggest a somber or gloomy character. Anyone who could not remember having to force himself to laugh but rather to control his mirth seems more of a joyous and cheerful person. But, at the same time, he seems to be aware of the inconsistency of the image of a laughing monk, for – as we saw – monks are supposed to weep and sigh, not laugh. According to his cousin, Bernard assuredly needed no impulse to laugh, certainly no more than he needed the reins.

The first biographer, who had an intimate acquaintance with the older Bernard, must have misunderstood the quotation. Or, more probably, he tried to give this rather

<sup>3</sup> *Vpr* III.5. See note 5.

<sup>4</sup> Preparing for my PhD dissertation in 2000 I noticed the different stages and rewritings of Bernard's biography. I still hope to find the time to elaborate them in the form of publications.

<sup>5</sup> *Vsc* 41 [= *Vita secunda* in PL 185]. Compare the sentences: "De risu dicimus quod ex ore eius frequenter audiuimus, dum cachinnos religiosorum hominum miraretur: 'non meminisse se a primis annis suae conuersionis aliquando sic risisse, ut non potius ad ridendum quam ad reprimendum sibi uim facere oporteret; et risui suo stimulum magis adhibere quam frenum.'" (*Vpr* III.5) and "De risu frequenter auditum est ex ore illius, dum cachinnos religiosorum hominum miraretur, non meminisse se a primis annis suae conuersionis aliquando sic risisse, ut non potius ad ridendum, quam ad reprimendum sibi vim facere oporteret." (*Vsc* 41 in PL 185) The phrase is (consciously?) not clearly formulated: the first biographer joined *non potius* to the verb phrase *sibi vim facere*, whereas in Geoffrey's version its function is to oppose *ad ridendum* to *ad reprimendum*: he could not remember ever having laughed in such a way that he would have to force himself not so much to laugh, but to suppress it. I am much grateful to Erika Kihlman and her persistent criticism to get the point clear.

un-monastic statement a more ascetic twist in order to keep his adored abbot inside the boundaries of traditional hagiography.

Let us thus assume that Bernard was not perhaps the dismal character who emerges from his biographies and may even have had a cheerful personality, was quick to laugh. But the question still remains: did he laugh? And if he did, what made him laugh? For there can be no doubt that Bernard took his monastic vocation very seriously.

His statement quoted above might be understood in this sense as well. Both his biographer and his cousin mention that Bernard's words are linked to his amazement at the sight of clerics roaring with laughter, which does not mean that Bernard was insensitive to the comic, but rather that as a monk he had to use all his strength to avoid turning into a freakish chimera in the eyes of the world, into an inconsistent monster, a monk who did not sigh and weep, but roared with laughter.

So, the problem remains. Being a monk – and so one who should weep – and being of a cheerful character, what place, in his monastic view, did Bernard accord to laughter, to joy? Did it have any place at all? How could it? Did the Cistercians not seek to adhere more strictly to Benedict's Rule? And is Benedict not rather severe regarding laughter, never forbidding it completely, but condemning all excessive and lavish mirth (Benedict's Rule 4.54) and offering the image of the ideal monk as one who does not laugh readily and who speaks calmly and gravely (Benedict's Rule 7.59–60)? How could monastic life thus offer any room for cheerfulness and joy? And where does this problem with laughter come from in the first place?

Here, we encounter methodological difficulties. Scholarship on laughter is dominated by studies on the history of emotions and emotivity, as well as by what might be called legislative scholarship that studies the prescriptions and prohibitions of laughter in rules, laws and institutions.<sup>6</sup> Its focus lies first and foremost on what made people laugh, what was perceived as humorous, how this changed over time and what were its social and political implications.<sup>7</sup> It aims at a reconstruction of the history of the humorous, perhaps less of humor itself. To a very large extent, it remains encapsulated in the positivistic preconceptions that still characterize historical studies to such a large extent.<sup>8</sup>

As a literary scholar one often feels uneasy when reading these studies. They are necessarily founded upon the interpretation of texts. But to what extent do texts allow for an extrapolation towards reality? Is it not a very modern, post-nineteenth-century and pre-postmodern idea that texts transfer factual reality? And that things written and

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6 An excellent overview and bibliographies can be found in Classen 2010. See also the first part in Beard 2014, pp. 23–69.

7 See for example the studies collected in Halsall 2002.

8 See some of the reflections in Kellner 2006 and 2013.

things existing have a one-to-one relationship to each other? Assuredly, modern historical scholarship is no longer so naive as to treat texts simply as eyewitness accounts. Yet pervading the background of almost all historical scholarship there is still this sense of a structural longing to know what it was truly like – *wie es wirklich gewesen*. And this ‘truly’ – *wirklich* – normally signifies ‘factually’, ‘historically’ true.

Now, even a slight acquaintance with textual cultures from antiquity and the Middle Ages soon renders one aware that the challenges here do not just pertain to the inevitable disjunctions between textual representation and historical factuality. In pre-modern culture, the text has to be considered a reality in itself, as true as the factual reality of the writer and his readers, but not coinciding with it completely or even displaying some sort of parallel to it. Perhaps, what sums it up best is that old phrase which describes textual realities as being “in the world but not from the world”.<sup>9</sup>

In stressing this point, I do not intend to hunt down chimeras of my own; indeed, it is not my purpose to single out medieval historians and ridicule them for their lack of textual comprehension, but rather to underline the importance of acknowledging the utter complexity of the relations that exist between texts and their context, between the text as *signifiant* and its multiplicity of *signifiés*. I do so in partial answer to a growing need for a new history of the functioning of texts alongside more traditional factual histories. What is the relation of texts to their context? Can the gap between the reality of the text and the reality around the text be bridged and, if so, how? What is the role of the reader in this process? And then, does the reader confront the text with his or her own factual reality? Or should the readers not rather try to confront their own reality with the reality of the text?

The textual passage just discussed may illustrate our point. Both the first biographer, who had been Bernard’s secretary for years, and Bernard’s cousin apparently knew Bernard’s statement regarding clerics roaring with laughter. The biographer adopted it and placed it in his hagiographic account, but he added the continuation which the cousin removed. The biographer’s aim was not to give us a truthful image of his hero, but to make him conform to the saint of hagiographical discourse. He had to distort ‘factual reality’, the verbatim quotation of a statement, in order to achieve his purpose. It did not make him a liar according to his own reckoning, as we would be prone to see it today and as many scholars indeed did: he merely created the only hagiographic reality that could exist in textual form. He conceived his act of writing as a transferal from fact to word, from an always-changing mortality to stable spirituality, from the man that Bernard was to the saint he was considered to be.

Bernard’s cousin clearly had problems with this way of treating the ‘factual’ reality of his kinsman. He brought textual reality closer to what the historical reality of Bernard meant to him. He considered reality, as he had experienced it himself, to be more

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9 After John 17:14.

normative than the requirements of hagiographic discourse. Where the biographer adhered to the norms of the hagiographic genre and thus complied with its rules, taking them as supreme reality or at least as the steps toward such a reality, Bernard's cousin turned the relationship around. Instead of imposing literary norms on factual reality, thus implying the higher degree of reality in text than in fact, he imposed (to a certain extent) the norm of reality upon the text.

And indeed both these texts originate in a period in which a true literary revolution can be recognized, after which texts had to adhere more strongly to factual reality – 'to real life', we would say.<sup>10</sup>

These theoretical reflections seem more evident than they actually are. They are necessary in order to clarify the approach that will now be adopted towards humor, probably one of the most difficult aspects of the past to come to terms with. Even our contemporary world employs different and incompatible ways of making people laugh. Flemish wit is not at all comparable to Dutch wit. Both are completely different from German wit. Likewise, Bavarian humor appears to be entirely different from the famous *Berliner Witz*. If geography plays such an important role in diversifying humor and the humorous, what can be said about historical diversification? Is it possible to laugh at the same things as our ancestors did? Is it not true that there are greater discrepancies between what makes our grandparents and our children laugh than between what makes them weep? And both can frequently remain oblivious of what tickles the other's funny bone.

Here already the problems begin when considering humor in the past. The scholar of humor is dependent on texts. But what do they tell him? Scholars mainly only have eyes for the passages in the text that portray laughter, which are then used to understand what caused it. But does that mean that what is laughable in the text also automatically arouses laughter outside it? Is the laughter in the text not constructed for other reasons? Does it not have a function in the text to evoke something completely different? Is the function of laughter in the text thus not subject to the functioning of the text as a whole?

A very nice example of this can be found in Matthew Innes's analysis of the way Thegan constructs the image of Louis the Pious in his biography of the king.<sup>11</sup> As Innes sees it, Louis's refusal to laugh is anything but an indication of the latter's gloomy and uncertain character: it is a complicated image, based upon an intense intertextual dialogue with ancient and contemporaneous writers, aimed at the construction of an imperturbable king who has everything under control, even his own emotions. In

<sup>10</sup> The demand for veracity was very strong in twelfth-century writing, as can be noticed especially in poetry, where it becomes once again a *topos* in the prologues.

<sup>11</sup> Innes 2002.

sharp contrast to contemporaneous facts, this textual reality has to be imposed as the higher truth to which factual reality will yield – at least, that is the thought behind it. Laughter in this text does not therefore teach us anything about the Carolingian sense of humor. Its function is rather to help infuse an imperial image of the king into the minds of those who read or heard the text.

This example demonstrates the difficulties of decoding how elements in a text function. Note as well that it only refers to laughter in a text and not humor itself. The analysis hardly touches on reasons for the laughter. What was it that made these people laugh? We do not know. We only learn to interpret the function of the laughter in this text against the background of an entire library of other texts. The laughter does not reach us from this text alone. It resonates with echoes of laughs throughout literary history and with as many echoes of refusals to laugh. In order to understand one specific occurrence of laughter the scholar needs to take into account the long literary and textual history behind it. In order to understand Bernard's smile, his humor, we need to venture briefly into a cursory history of laughter up to the saint's day.

## A history of medieval laughter

### *Antiquity*

It is not that difficult to compose a literary history just by describing the way texts display humor. As this is my purpose here, perhaps it must be emphasized first that I will primarily be discussing the humorous, i.e. that which is supposed to evoke laughter and at which the text hints (laughter arising in the text itself or an explicit admonition to laugh). My aim is to observe the changing ways in which humor is invoked to make the text function. It may very well be that humor is not used to prompt laughter at all: it can even evoke the exact opposite. To elucidate this, I will give two examples of the way humor is used (and often misunderstood) in antiquity.

O rem ridiculam, Cato, et iocosam,  
dignamque auribus et tuo cachinno.  
ride, quicquid amas, Cato, Catullum:  
res est ridicula et nimis iocosa.  
deprendi modo pupulum puellae  
trusantem: hunc ego, si placet Dionae,  
protelo rigida mea cecidi.<sup>12</sup>

12 "A ridiculous thing, Cato, full of joy, / worthy to hear and worthy of your laugh. / Laugh, Cato, if you love your Catullus – / it is just too ridiculous and too full of joy. / I caught this young boy and his girl / screwing. It may please Venus, because I / felled him at once with my own stiff spear." (In order to keep close to the sense of the text, all translations are mine, unless otherwise indicated.)

Catullus's *Carmen* 56 is well known and an appropriate demonstration of the differences between a modern sense of humor and that of antiquity.<sup>13</sup> It also very nicely illustrates the difficulties of interpreting and understanding ancient humor. The poem displays all the elements we need to make us understand that something funny is going on. First of all, there is the meter linked to the light and playful verse. Then, the first four lines multiply verbal hints that something comical is going to follow: it is ridiculous, playful, nice to hear and good to laugh at. If the addressee loves Catullus, he must laugh now.

It is difficult to believe, however, that what follows will prompt modern laughter. Catullus describes a scene of human debasement, the rape of a child. He says he "took" a young slave boy – and that he was truly young is suggested by the *pupulum* – while the latter was having sex with a slave girl. Catullus "felled" him from behind "as Venus likes it"! To modern taste, the cheerful joke Catullus promised is simply hideous and we are more likely to accuse the Romans of their bad taste and their crude morality.

We have to ask ourselves, however, if the Romans who constituted Catullus's audience would have liked it any more than we do. They belonged to the upper classes and their mindset was Stoic or inclined to a sophisticated form of Epicureanism. Even when living in a society in which slavery was the norm, Catullus's average Roman reader will not have roared with laughter at the vulgarity of the scenery.

So what may have been the pun of this poem? Why does Catullus go to such efforts to underline the ridiculous nature of his obscene fantasy and devote more than half of the poem to doing so? The reason has been looked for in the addressee. Two personalities bearing the name of Cato come to mind here. The first is Valerius Cato, one of the leading poets of the movement that came to be known as the *neoterici*. The poem may be addressed to him as a rewrite of a Hellenistic poem that has been lost to us.

More likely, the more famous Cato the Stoic is the relevant one here, popularly reputed never to have laughed.<sup>14</sup> If we can believe all the traditions surrounding him, he only married because he considered it his duty toward the State – which did not hinder him from passing on his wife to a friend on his request. Such a person would certainly not have laughed aloud at the violation of a young slave boy.

Both of Cato's character traits suit the function of the poem, which would then be directed at one of the most distinguished political personalities of Rome, whose severity had become proverbial during his own lifetime and who could not be imagined enjoying sexual pleasure. So the humor here does not come from the action evoked in the last three lines. It is provocative, aggressive and political, matching the tenor of two other poems by Catullus, in which he ridicules Caesar and Cicero precisely by ex-

13 It is revealing when looking for translations of the poem how often its obscenity is veiled or transmuted. For commentary and some bibliography, see Thomson 1997, pp. 339–340.

14 See Scott 1969.



aggerating their supposedly strong points: in Caesar his sympathy for the people, in Cicero his gifted eloquence.

The humor of the poem thus forms part of the contemporary political debate. It is not bound to the textual message. Actually, it offers nothing humorous that can be laughed with. The humor is rather social, breaking out of the textual boundaries, and only readable for those initiated in contemporary political struggles. It can be enjoyed by the elite, to which Catullus belongs.

The humor of Catullus's poem is still easily recognized thanks to our excellent knowledge of the situation and the personalities he hints at. My other example shows that this is often not the case. It brings us to the other end of antiquity, even the early Middle Ages, according to some. Virgil the Grammarian remains one of the most mysterious figures in Latin literature. Datable, probably, to the first half of the seventh century, his letters and epitomes are considered to be either the complete nonsense of a hallucinating lunatic or an almost incomprehensible parody, of which the ultimate sense entirely escapes us. In history, however, his bizarre proposals have at times been taken seriously.

Primus igitur fuit quidam senex Donatus apud Troeam, quem ferunt mille uixisse annos. Hic cum ad Romulum, a quo condita est Roma urbs, uenisset, gratulantissime ab eodem susceptus IIII continuos ibi fecit annos, scolam construens et innumerabilia opuscula relinquens. In quibus problemsmata proponebat, dicens: "Quae sit mulier illa, o fili, quae ubera sua innumeris filis porregit, quae quantum suxa fuerint, tantum in ea inundant?" Hoc est sapientia. "Quid interest inter uerbum et sermonem et sententiam et loquelam orationemque?" 'Verbum' est omne, quod lingua profertur et uoce; 'sermo' autem, cuius nomen ex duobus uerbis compositum est, hoc est serendo et monendo, comptior ac diligentior fit; 'sententia' uero, quae sensu concipitur; porro 'loquela' est, quando cum quadam eloquentia dictionis ordo protexitur; 'oratio' est, quando usque ad manuum artem describendi oratorius sermo perueniat. Fuit itidem apud Troeam quidam Virgilius eiusdem Donati auditor, qui in describendis uersibus diligentissimus erat. Qui LXX uolumina de ratione metris scribens et epistolam ad Virgilium Assianum missam de uerbi explanatione. Tertius Virgilius ego.<sup>15</sup>

15 "Thus, the first was an old man Donatus near Troy. They say he lived a thousand years. This one went to Romulus, the founder of the city of Rome and was treated by him with great hospitality. He stayed there for four years, built a school and left an enormous amount of writings. In them he posits many problems such as: 'Who is that woman, my son, who is a wetnurse to countless sons? The more they suck, the more they are refilled.' That is wisdom. Or 'what is the difference between *verbum* and *sermo* and *sententia* and *loquela* and *oratio*?' *Verbum* is all that is pronounced by the tongue and the voice. *Sermo*, however, is composed out of two words, *serendo* which means sowing, and *monendo*, which means *urging*. Thus it is more adorned and diligent. *Sententia*, on the other hand, is what is understood by the senses. *Loquela* is when spoken language is ordered and eloquent. We speak of *oratio* when the pronounced speech in the end is artfully written down. At Troy, there was a Virgil, who was a pupil of Donatus and who was an excellent describer of verses. He wrote 70 volumes on the reasons of meter and sent a letter on the explanation of the word to Virgil the Asian. The third Virgil am I."

This passage, from the catalogue of grammarians in the twelfth epitome, contains a strange mixture of biblical allusions (the hyperbolic age of the old Donatus, the 70 volumes on meter), classical reminiscences (the central role of Troy, the importance of Virgil in no less than three grammarians), riddles (wisdom as mother) and pseudo-grammatical explanations. There is no sign here that the reader is dealing with a humorous text. All of it is presented in a serious tone – or so it seems.

Had this been an isolated piece of work, the humor could have been more easily grasped perhaps. Now, it is important to know here that the entire work of some hundred pages is written in this same tone, which leaves us guessing as to whether it is purely mocking, half-serious or even serious, *tout court*. The more ridiculous the topic – for example the two-weeks long discussion between two grammarians on the vocative of *ego* – the more serious the tone.

The humor of the text – if at all there, to begin with – can only be appreciated as a mockery of the entire classical literary tradition, with late-antique grammarians and etymologists as its focal point – men like Isidore of Seville, to whom the text appears to allude several times. But can the same be said of the biblical topics? And what about the classical names? Once again, it would be hard to identify any tangible instances of the laughable here. Rather, the object of humor is the text itself, but this can only be grasped by those acquainted with late antique grammarian practices, versed moreover in biblical language and not without classical baggage. Once again it is an elite, but now one based on literary education.

Indeed, it would seem that humor in classical texts increasingly focuses on the textual itself, less and less concerned with external aspects. Humor thus became, first and foremost, a question of textual and literary play.

### *Laughing in the monastery*

It has often been noted that early medieval texts do not seem to offer much comic relief. This apparent lack of the humorous has even led scholars to explicitly suggest that there must have been laughing at the banquets and hunting parties that formed an important part of Carolingian court life – as if it were necessary to convince their readers that laughter has ‘historically’ always had a place in human society. The real question here, however, is why the act of laughing was not considered to merit mention or use in writing. Are we to believe that it had no function, that is no literary function, in Carolingian society? What would be the reason for such seriousness in its textual production – *if* we are indeed right to assume that humor is completely absent here.

Two remarks have to be made as regards the supposed disappearance of humor in early medieval texts. First, there is no real certainty about whether or not humor is truly absent, as I will try to demonstrate below. But it is true that humor had changed,

becoming very subtle, hardly perceptible – before it would start to resort to sharp contrasts. Secondly, most of the texts in this period stem from the monastery and according to Benedict's Rule monks were not allowed to roar with laughter – so neither were their texts.

Of course, both elements are interconnected. The monastery may not have known the boisterous clamor of inns and taverns, but monks are still human and perhaps nothing is as human as laughter. So yes, there is laughter in the monastery. Monks have no choice but to let humor be part of their lives. Only it has to be held in check, be toned down. The turbulent disorder has to be transformed into silent smiles and definitely has no place in written testimonies.

Indeed, texts that stem from the monasteries in the centuries between the time of Charlemagne and Bernard certainly display a kind of humor, but it is subtle, less overt, although at times quite surprising in its sudden deployment of sharp contrasts. Martha Bayless has given a nice example of this subtlety in her treatment of Alcuin's *Disputatio Pippini*.<sup>16</sup> A second example, taken from Walahfrid Strabo, confirms this and might also tell us something about the function of humor in texts from this period.

Nox erat et magni alternis per climata coeli  
 Ignibus auxerunt astra remota jubar;  
 Pollachar infusum Lethaeo munere somnum  
 Emotis curis, noctis amabat opes.  
 Cum subito tenebras fama est Iovis armiger altas  
 Decutiens, oculis visus adesse viri.  
 Perge, ait, et terrae nebulas transcende prementes;  
 Ducam etenim, quo te praemia magna manent,  
 Laetus ad haec grates cernenti cuncta quod aegram  
 Quaesitu longo vult satiare animam.  
 Ales ad alta volat, timidumque per aera portat,  
 Donec terrorem purior aethra dedit.  
 Daedalus ille novus, partim suadente timore  
 Partim praeproperum, quod terit horret iter.  
 Sordibus hisne, inquit, quis turgent membra gravatum  
 Lucida stelligeri me feret aula poli?  
 Quin patere excurrat distenti egestio ventris,  
 Terra suum servet pondus, abibo levis.  
 Unguirapus ventura sciens, caudam ore teneto  
 Dixit, et expurga foetida quaeque celer.  
 Tum vero ut longum mundus duraret in aevum,  
 Ilia pro totis nisibus evacuat.  
 Hic aquila, absurdum est, divinis sedibus, inquit,  
 Inserere, aspergat qui loca celsa luc.  
 Ergo redi et strati sordes intende relapsus

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<sup>16</sup> Bayless 2002.

Nec rursus speres sordibus astra sequi.  
 Evigilans quidquid supero sibi visus ab axe  
 Fundere, per lectum repperit ire suum.  
 Pro pudor atque nefas, visis deceptus iniquis ...<sup>17</sup>

The poem is a strange example of Walafrid Strabo's poetic talents. He is considered one of the most gifted Carolingian poets, with a wide array of meters and techniques at his personal disposal. This poem is clearly meant to be humorous. But in what exactly does its humor reside? Of course, there is the story with its scatological elements, which does not seem very representative of the subtlety I have just attributed to monastic or Carolingian poetry. The image of a new Ganymede who has to empty his stomach before he can enter the celestial spheres offers a rather crude and ribald kind of humor. But this is exactly what is at stake in the poem: what it tries to achieve is to set up a strong tension between the high epic literary register and the low basic content.

The opening sets the tone. *Nox erat* immediately alludes to the visionary scenes in the *Aeneid*.<sup>18</sup> The subsequent lines with their extremely high epic register continue the construction of the elevated literary style, which is then all of a sudden undermined by the strange and, in this epic context, unexpected name of Pollachar. The epic tone is immediately resumed, however, and continues again till almost halfway through the poem. There, the irony starts taking the lead when an alliteration of *t*-words alludes to the growing fear of this new Daedalus, after which the scatological part starts and the high register loses all of its credibility.

Playing with the registers is a typical kind of humor for these texts from a monastic culture. It belongs to a very classicist approach to textual reality. We also see it in the

17 "It was night and throughout the regions of the vast sky / distant stars increased the splendor with their twinkling lights; / Pollachar, free from all cares, was enjoying / the wealth of the night, sleep infused with Lethe's gift. / When suddenly, as rumor reports, Jupiter's armor-bearer, / breaking through the deep shadows, appeared to the man's eyes to be present. / 'Come,' it said, 'and transcend the oppressive mists of the earth, / for I will lead you to a place where great rewards await you.' / Happy at these words, the man renders thanks to the omniscient one, / because he is willing to gratify a soul exhausted by its long quest. / The bird flies heavenward, and carries the fearful man through the airs, / until the clarity of the bright heavens gave him a fright. / That new Daedalus, partly persuaded by fear / partly because he dreads the precipitous path that he is treading, / says, 'Will the gleaming hall of the star-studded firmament suffer me, / weighed down as I am with this filth with which my limbs swell? / No! Instead, let the waste of the distended belly run forth, / let the earth keep its weight – I will go off light.' / The talon-grabber, knowing what was going to take place, said, 'Hold my tail / with your mouth and, be quick, cleanse yourself of all stench.' / Then indeed, so that he might remain pure forever, / he makes every effort to void his inner organs. / At this the eagle said, 'It is absurd to place in a divine setting / a person who spatters lofty places with corruption. / Therefore go back and, once you have slid back, pay heed to the filth of your bedding; / and may you not hope to aim at the stars again with filth.' / Awakening, he found passing through his bed everything / that he imagined pouring forth from the high vault of heaven. / O shame and wickedness, a man deceived by wrongful visions [...]" Transl. Jan Ziolkowski, in Ziolkowski 1993, pp. 273–274.

18 Cf. *Aeneis* VIII.26.

anonymous *Waltharius*, which embodies true epic but with a gentle twist of irony that is completely strange to the ancient genre. And at the end, it completely undermines all heroic flavor through the heroes' savage mockery of each other's wounds.

But the question still remains as to the function of the humor in Walahfrid's poem, which in all honesty remains rather obscure. My own interpretation tends to link it to Walahfrid's personal situation: the image of a ridiculous person with a non-epic name and behaving in a decisively non-epic way fits rather well with the elevation Walahfrid enjoyed as a simple monk when he became the personal tutor of the young Charles the Bald. Probably this was due to the intervention of his protector, Grimaldus, but the poem might be read with a kind of self-irony that is not unusual for Walahfrid, judging by his other works.

In that sense, we might approach it as an ironic self-image, which is becoming increasingly common in the monastic literature of this age. A nice example is offered in the opening of the *Ecbasis captivi*, the ironic self-depiction of the anonymous poet as a calf that has escaped only to fall into the claws of the wolf. Works like these have a strong self-reflective moralistic sense. They turn inwards, shaping the reader's image of himself through an identification with the image of the poet, as developed in the poem. As such they offer the reader their soft tone, compassionate, without any aggression. This will change from the tenth century onward.

### *Clerical laughter in the world*

In the tenth and eleventh centuries something changes in Latin literature. The gentle tone of the monastically inspired works gives way to a harsher one. If monastic humor can be characterized as Virgilian – epic, distant, self-reflexive, compassionate – then the new laughter is more reminiscent of Juvenal's sarcasm.

Liutprand of Cremona provides us with a nice example, both in his historical work, the *Antapodosis*, as in the report of his (unsuccessful) diplomatic trip to Constantinople. When, in the latter text, he describes a procession from the palace to Hagia Sophia, he quotes from a hymn sung aloud: "Ecce venit stella matutina, surgit Eous, reverberat obtutu solis radios, pallida Saracenorum mors, Nicephorus μέδων, i.e. princeps!"<sup>19</sup> Liutprand cannot restrain himself from ridiculing the hymn and changes it into a slanderous version: "Carbo exstincte veni, μέλε, anus incessu, Sylvanus vultu, rustice, lustrivage, capripes, cornute, bimembre, setiger, indocilis, agrestis, barbare, dure, villose, rebellis, Capadox!"<sup>20</sup>

19 *Legatio* 10: "Here comes the morning star, there arises Eous, he reflects the suns' rays with his glare, the pallid death of the Saracens, Nicephoros the μέδων" (that is, the "prince"). Transl. Squatriti, in *Squatriti* 2007, p. 244.

20 *Legatio* 10: "Come, extincted piece of charcoal, *cher ami*, with your old crone steps and your goat-face, peasant, tramp, goat-legged cuckold, crossbreed, boar, unruly lumpish barbarian, hard-headed, shaggy, rebellious Cappadocian." My translation.

Liutprand constantly resorts to such venomous phrases in his descriptions of the meetings with Nicephorus Phocas, for example when the emperor disdainfully says: “Vos non Romani sed Langobardi estis!” This provokes Liutprand to a real harangue against the nobility of the Romans:

Romulum fratricidam, e quo et Romani dicti sunt, porniogenitum, hoc est ex adulterio natum, chronographia innotuit, asylumque sibi fecisse, in quo alieni aeris debitores, fugitivos servos, homicidas ac pro reatibus suis morte dignos suscepit, multitudinemque quandam talium sibi ascivit, quos Romanos appellavit; ex qua nobilitate propagati sunt ipsi, quos vos kosmocratores, id est imperatores, appellatis. Quos nos – Langobardi scilicet, Saxones, Franci, Lotharingi, Bagoarii, Suevi, Burgundiones – tanto dedignamur ut <in> inimicos nostros commoti nil aliud contumeliarum nisi “Romane!” dicamus, hoc solo, id est Romanorum nomine, quicquid ignobilitatis, quicquid timiditatis, quicquid avaritiae, quicquid luxuriae, quicquid mendacii, immo quicquid vitiorum est, comprehendentes.<sup>21</sup>

One can imagine that his mission was not very successful in the end.

This kind of mordant, harsh humor is almost unheard of in earlier times. It seems to characterize the new period to come, the era of the cathedral schools and universities with their students and masters. It is the humor that can be sampled from the writings of Adalbero of Laon, of Abelard and Gilbert de la Porrée. It is a humor that is aggressive, self-assertive, directed against the other and socially charged. It is full of Juvenal’s indignation with the stupidity of the other, denigrating and sarcastic. For such humor, there seems to be no place inside the monastery.

### *Laughing in the school*

As for the schools themselves, it would seem that humor remained more innocent there. From halfway through the eleventh century, we may steal a glimpse of what was happening in the classrooms and how teachers were trying to hold the attention of their students. The humor they used was gentler. It could not be too harsh or too provocative, although it could not be too soft and innocent either. Students were young and longing for something lively in the classroom.

21 *Legatio* 12: “The annals recognize that fratricidal Romulus, from whose name they are called Romans, was born to a whore, that is, he was generated in defilement; and he made a refuge for himself where he welcomed defaulted debtors from foreign climes, runaway slaves, murderers, and people who deserved death for their crimes, and he attracted such a throng of such people that he called them Romans; from this aristocracy there arose those whom you call *cosmocrators*, or emperors. We, that means the Lombards, Saxons, Franks, Lotharingians, Bavarians, Swabians, Burgundians, so disdain them that we utter no other insult than ‘You Roman!’ to our enemies when aroused, and we understand that single term, the name of the Romans, to include every baseness, every cowardice, every kind of greed, every promiscuity, every mendacity, indeed every vice.” Transl. Squatriti, in Squatriti 2007, pp. 246–247.

At times, teachers tried to use humor as a didactic means, as in Serlo of Wilton's poem:

Illas aut illos de cunctis elige mille:  
Vincet eas vel eos mea vel meus, illa vel ille.<sup>22</sup>

Similar verses could also be employed as an exercise in grammar on the pronouns. The one that follows by Hildebert of Lavardin teaches classical poetics: meter, images, even humor:

Milo domi non est. Peregre Milone profecto  
arva vacant, uxor non minus inde parit.  
Cur sit ager sterilis, cur uxor lactitet edam:  
quo fodiatur ager non habet, uxor habet.<sup>23</sup>

The exercises could become provocative and more or less eroticized. Both Serlo and Marbod of Rennes have some poems that almost transgress the norms of obscenity. Those by Marbod even treat pederasty. They never go too far, though, except perhaps when they are to serve some kind of moralistic antidote that, however, always sounds a bit far-fetched.

At school, the humor may become satirical, but in that case it will not be directed against anybody in particular. It just offers an example, illustrating the possibilities of invective without the indignation that characterizes the outburst of Liutprand or certain passages in the anonymous *Ysengrimus*. On the whole, it remains more innocent, textual and parodic, rather than becoming truly aggressive. It is insider humor, softly ironical and self-promoting. It evokes Ovid's grin, a bit self-satisfied and always with overtones of the erotic.

## Bernard's smile

The time has come to return to Bernard with an attempt to understand the use of humor in his texts. For one may be assured, humor can indeed be found there. How could it not be? Bernard was a child of his time. He had been educated at the schools. He must have been through the types of exercise we find in the works of Marbod or Serlo. Later in life, he was even accused of having written erotic poems in his youth.<sup>24</sup> This is more than probable, as it was a typical feature of general educational practice.

22 Serlo of Wilton, *Carmen* 6, ed. Öberg 1965: "Make a choice of thousand girls or boys out of all: / the most beautiful of them all remains she or he that is mine."

23 Hildebert of Lavardin, *Carmen minor* 7, ed. Scott 1969: "Milo is not at home. Milo has gone abroad. / His lands are left fallow. Yet his wife has given birth. / I will tell you why is land remains sterile and his wife is nursing: / the land has nothing to be ploughed with, his wife has."

24 Berengar of Poitiers, *Apologia contra Sanctum Bernardum*, ed. Thomson 1980, p. 111.



But it might also explain why Bernard never wrote poems as a monk. And that even during the entire twelfth century, the flourishing Cistercian literature never produced any poetry. Poetry had become too delicate a form of writing, too closely linked to Ovidian eroticism – playful and false.<sup>25</sup>

Can it be that a similar attitude was adopted toward humor? Was laughing banished from Clairvaux because of its associations with the schools? Or did it undergo a conversion, just like eroticism, which did not simply disappear, but was transformed into a spiritual Eros, into the love of the Song of Songs? Did the same happen with humor? Does Bernard want his readers to laugh? And if so, what does he aim to achieve through it?

My immediate answer to the first question is yes, of course he wants them to laugh, and quite often, for that matter. But he never speaks about it. Actually, when talking about laughing (*ridere, cachinnare*), it almost always has a negative meaning. In this, Bernard adhered to the Bible, where laughter is a negative sign: it is aggressive and always at someone else's expense. As such, it is condemned in Bernard's texts, without fail.

Yet, when looking at the function of laughter in his texts, this kind of aggressive humor is the first thing to catch the eye. Bernard is a master satirist. He knows how to use ridicule in order to evoke indignation in response to a display of laughter. But, it must be said, he does not achieve this in the hyperbolic way in which Liutprand, Adalbero or the *Ysengrimus* launch their attacks on their opponents. Bernard is subtler. He stays closer to reality. His satire is that of realism, but described in such a way that it becomes laughable – or painful.

Cases in point are his description of general customs, as when he describes the secular knights as very fashion-conscious, to such a degree that their movements on the battlefield are hindered.

vos per contrarium in oculorum gravamen femineo ritu comam nutritis, longis ac profusis camisiis propria vobis vestigia obvolvitis, delicatas ac teneras manus amplis et circumfluentibus manicis sepelitis.<sup>26</sup>

More famous are his diatribes against the customs of Cluny, which have all too often been taken at face value as representative of his personal opinions. Too little attention has been given to the satirical background of his realism, as when he depicts monks on their way to market in order to find the best textiles:

<sup>25</sup> See Verbaal 2012, and further elaborated in Verbaal 2013.

<sup>26</sup> Bernard of Clairvaux, *De laude novae militiae* 3, ed. Leclercq 1963, p. 216: "You, however, cultivate your hair as women so that they fall into your eyes. Your long tunics float and hem your own feet. You bury your delicate and frail hands in wide and undulating sleeves."

“Ceterum in habitu”, inquis, “non est religio, sed in corde.” Bene. At tu quando cucullam empturus lustras urbes, fora circuis, percurris nundinas, domos scrutaris negotiatorum, cunctam evertis singulorum suppellectilem, ingentes explicas cumulos pannorum, attractas digitis, admoves oculis, solis opponis radio, quidquid grossum, quidquid pallidum occurrerit, respuis; si quid autem sui puritate ac nitore placuerit, illud mox quantolibet pretio satagis tibi retinere: rogo te, ex corde facis hoc, an simpliciter?<sup>27</sup>

The image evoked is of such realism that one can only wonder how somebody who, according to his biographer, did not see the Lake of Le Mans while traveling on its shores could have retained such a careful and lively image of market-goers sampling textiles. The humor here of course consists in the fact that Bernard’s readers would probably have been prone to associate this imagery with women, rather than monks.

No less famous is his evocation of the Cluniac table. One dish follows another and because meat is forbidden, the largest fish are served in double quantities. When you have eaten your share of the first one, a second one is offered that makes you forget what you ate just moments before. The cooks display such creativity that each dish inspires fresh appetite and the stomach becomes engorged before one can even notice it. Then, Bernard lets off one of his formidable fireworks:

Quis enim dicere sufficit, quot modis, ut cetera taceam, sola ova versantur et vexantur, quanto studio evertuntur, subvertuntur, liquantur, durantur, diminuuntur, et nunc quidem frixa, nunc assa, nunc farsa, nunc mixtim, nunc singillatim apponuntur?<sup>28</sup>

A masterpiece, this sentence, and untranslatable! A masterpiece in irony, to be sure, but also in literary prowess. It is not just the eggs that are shaken and scrambled here: the same holds true of the language. And as the glutton’s stomach begins to protest, so does the reader when he tries to digest this sentence at the speed with which it is delivered to him.

These fragments come close to the aggressive humor typical of the cathedral schools. And, indeed, Bernard uses it in the same way. He wants to provoke indignation. It is directed against the other and serves as a defense of one’s own position. Bernard was acquainted with this kind of humor. And he knew how to use it, just as well as his contemporaries that I mentioned earlier.

27 Bernard of Clairvaux, *Apologia ad Guillelmum abbatem* 26, ed. Leclercq 1963, p. 102: “‘Yet’, you say, ‘religion is not to be found in the clothes but in the heart.’ Fine. But then, when you want to buy yourself a cowl, I see you haunting the towns, combing the marketplaces, hurrying over the fairs, ransacking the shops. You rummage through all their stocks, unfold enormous heaps of textile and fondle it with your fingers, bring it to your eyes, hold it against the sunlight. Whatever seems coarsely-woven, whatever seems a bit faded, you reject. But if there is a bit that pleases you by its purity and its luster, then no price will refrain you from trying to seize it. Now I ask you: do you mean this when talking about acting in simplicity or from the heart?”

28 *Ibid.*, 20, p. 98.

A similar satiric tone can be found in other texts that do not have a specific external target. They are more closely related to Bernard's particular use of humor, as will be seen. Some of the most beautiful examples of this kind of humor can be found in his first treatise *The degrees of humility and pride*, from which comes the following example of a monk who has the giggles.

Ut enim vesica collecto turgida vento punctoque forata exiguo, si stringitur, crepitat dum detumescit, ac ventus egrediens non passim effusus, sed strictim emissus crebros quosdam sonitus reddit, sic monachus, ubi vanis scurrilibusque cor suum cogitationibus impleverit, propter disciplinam silentii non inveniens ventus vanitatis qua plenius egrediatur, inter angustias faucium per cachinnos excutitur. Saepe vultum pudibundus abscondit, claudit labia, dentes stringit; ridet tamen nolens, cachinnat invitus. Cumque os pugnis obstruxerit suis, per nares adhuc sternutare auditur.<sup>29</sup>

The image is generally recognizable and it fits in perfectly with the function Bernard seeks to give to his text. In the second part of his treatise, Bernard treats the steps of pride and for each descending grade offers us the sketch of a monk. Every sketch is true to life and every school teacher will instantly be reminded of some of their own pupils. The realism is stunning and funny, but Bernard does not simply want to amuse the reader. He uses his gifts as a satirist in order to give him a lesson in pedagogy.

The treatise was written for his cousin, Geoffrey de la Roche-Vanneau – the same Geoffrey as mentioned *supra* – when he had become abbot of the first daughter-house of Clairvaux. It is a pedagogical treatise, teaching the young abbot how he is to become aware of his own behavior and be able to govern it. Bernard's satirical realism shows that he knows how to handle a classroom and how to use laughter as a means of teaching. Once again, Bernard is a child of his age: he is aware of the didactic possibilities of humor and he does not hesitate to apply it in his own spiritual teaching as an abbot. Yet, he is not just a child of the schools, but a monk first and foremost, and we know that, principally speaking, there ought not have been much room for his type of sarcastic humor in the confines of the monastery. Here, humor was expected to be subtler and more gentle.

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29 Bernard of Clairvaux, *De gradibus humilitatis et superbiae* 40, ed. Leclercq 1963, p. 47: "Just like a bladder that is swollen with air but has a small hole in it, as soon as you start squeezing it, it crackles as it shrinks. The wind does not come out everywhere at the same time but is let out only by the tiny hole and thus gives repeated short noises. Thus the monk, whose heart is filled with idle and foolish thoughts and who, under the obligation of silence, does not find how fully to ventilate his idleness, feels his throat suffocated by chuckling. Often, in shame, he hides his face, presses his lips together, sets his teeth. But it is no use. He starts laughing, even unwilling. Uncontrollably, he chuckles. Even when he seals up his mouth with his fists, you can hear him snickering by the nose."

Sarcasm is indeed not the only kind of humor in Bernard's work, nor can it be deemed the most important one. It is a way of arousing a feeling in the reader: indignation mostly, but also, as in the treatise for his cousin, the acute vision of a teacher. It is a didactic tool, not the ultimate objective. The ideal monk cannot be one that is laughing with or at others. According to Benedict he should barely be laughing at all.

In Bernard's texts, the ideal monk is characterized by an expression of joy, he is radiant with joy. *Hilaritas* is the word that he uses again and again to evoke the saintly monk. Such an attitude will bring forth another kind of humor than biting satire, but it is a humor that can also be found in his texts. It is a slightly and gently ironic one. It does not make the reader laugh but it makes him smile and perhaps touches him in a deeper sense than the caricatures Bernard proves himself such a master of.

In his Letter 85, Bernard answers a lost letter of his friend William of Saint-Thierry. William apparently complained that he loved Bernard more than his friend loved him. Letter 85 develops in four paragraphs the question of whether William can indeed know that he loves more than that he is loved. First, Bernard denies that William is able to know this, as only God can scrutinize the human heart. But then suddenly he seems to concede and he admits that he too believes that William loves him more than he, Bernard, loves his friend. But, he immediately adds, I love you as much as I can and I can love you as much as God has allowed me to. So, he finally asks his friend, pull me up toward you, that I may love you more than I do now and become as saintly as you are, because God bestows greater power to love on the man who is saintlier.

From this quick summary it may be clear that the letter is dripping with irony. But it is never hurtful, never wants to distress his friend. It is smilingly ironic and tries to make William realize what he is actually saying. The friendship between the two men did not suffer from this letter. It became even more intense, just because each of them knew his position in relation to the other. In his part of Bernard's biography, William mentions another of these occasions where Bernard gives him a similar ironic reproach and here William describes Bernard as smiling.<sup>30</sup>

Bernard knew how to make use of humor. He could be as satirical and mordant as his contemporaries at the schools. But unlike them perhaps, it did not stop at provoked indignation. Bernard subjected the use of humor to the pedagogical project of

30 In *Vpr* I.60, William recounts how he was recovering from an illness in Clairvaux. After Septuagesima Sunday, however, he wanted to join the other monks in their fasting and he refused to eat the meat that was offered to him because of his illness. Bernard tried to convince him but William stuck to his decision, whereupon Bernard left him alone. That night, William's illness returned with such violence that he feared to die before dawn. At the first light of day Bernard came to visit him "not as usual with a compassionate countenance but as someone who is prepared to argue. Smiling, however, he simply said: 'And what are we going to eat today?'" (*Subridens tamen: 'Quid, inquit, 'hodie comedetis?'*).

his writings. In this aspect he is a child of his age too. But while the teachers in the schools seemed to use humor in the first place to sustain the attention of their pupils, Bernard shaped it into a didactic tool that served his spiritual pedagogy.

SIMILE est regnum caelorum monacho negotiatori qui, audiens proximarum nundinarum opinionem, sarcinas suas composuit in foro exponendas. Quas octonario numero evchens, onus iumentorum austri, obvium habuit Dominum Iesum Christum, qui strenuitatem et industrias aspiciens: "Unde", inquit, "et quo?" – Monachus: "A monasterio ad nundinas res quas vides vendere, si emptorem invenerint". – Dominus: "Iam invenerunt emptorem, si venditorem habuerint. Explica primam." – Monachus: "Nec sapientiam tuam latet mercium harum pretiositas, nec me latet ad emendum tua omnipotens facultas. Prima igitur haec sarcina vide quid habeat. Tu dixisti: BEATI PAUPERES SPIRITU. Haec itaque nihil habet nisi paupertates et miserias, paupertatum et miseriarum angustias." – Dominus: "Papae! Quorsum ista?" – Monachus: "Cophinus stercoreis multum valet ad radicem arboris." – Dominus: "Placet quod dicis. Prima igitur haec merces quale pretium desiderat?" – Monachus: "Regnum caelorum." – Dominus: "Grande pretium! Sed non rem, quin potius debemus rei pensare effectum."<sup>31</sup>

Bernard paints us a proper little bargaining scene with lively dialogue and true-to-life sales talk. Without any problem, the seven-page-text could be staged as a lively lesson on the eight beatitudes and the redemption of man.<sup>32</sup> It is full of wit and gentle humor in its setting and in the concrete execution. It is not the laughter that counts, however, but what it can achieve. And the lesson is assimilated more easily when it raises a smile. Bernard is a fine teacher and definitely not the gloomy person people sometimes remember him as.

<sup>31</sup> Bernard of Clairvaux, *Parabola* VII, ed. Leclercq 1972, pp. 295–296: "The kingdom of heaven is like a monk and merchant, who on hearing a market being announced stuffs his goods in sacks to bring them to the marketplace. He takes eight of them and loads them on the mules of the south. Then he encounters the Lord Jesus Christ who, remarking his activity and diligence, asks him: 'Where do you come from and where are you going to?' The monk: 'I come from the monastery and go to the fair to sell those things you can see, if I can find a buyer.' The Lord: 'They have found a buyer, if they have a seller. Open the first one.' The monk: 'The value of this merchandise will not escape your wisdom, neither do I ignore your omnipotent facility for buying them. So, have a look to what the first sack contains. You said: "Blessed are the poor in spirit." Here you will find nothing else than poverty and misery, nothing but the anguish of the poor and the miserable.' The Lord: 'Phew! What is this?' The monk: 'A bucket of dung is very good for tree-roots.' The Lord: 'I like what you say. What is the price you demand for this first merchandise?' The monk: 'The Kingdom of Heaven.' The Lord: 'That is a high price! But we should not ponder on the thing itself but on its outcome.'"

<sup>32</sup> On this text, see Birkedal Bruun 2006, pp. 291–310.

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*Fig. 1a Smiling angel (detail), c. 1255. Reims Cathedral, France, central portal, west façade. © 2016. De Agostini Picture Library/Scala, Florence.*

# “I Felt Like Jumping for Joy”

## – Smile and Laughter in Medieval Imagery

*Mia Åkestam*

By the end of the twelfth century the Folkungar family began their ascent in the realm of Sweden, on the periphery of the Christian world. Locally the domain was rather a core area, and it became increasingly important during the following centuries. An ambition was to reform the kingdom, and establish an aristocracy after a German-French model. By the mid-fourteenth century, the ambitions had extended to the religious realm. Preparations were undertaken to establish a new monastic order with Birgitta Birgersdotter, the future St. Birgitta, as *primus motor* and with a considerable royal donation as its economic basis.

The distance from Sweden to Germany, France and Europe's central areas was considerable, from a geographic, a cultural and an economic point of view, but on the other hand travels were frequent. People visited places, and gained experience of cultures and languages in connection with ecclesiastical matters, politics, studies and pilgrimage.

This era coincides with changes in the western society, manifested in the building of grand cathedrals, and the ideals of courtly culture. Gothic art visualized the new ideas, and took interest in the human face, body and nature.<sup>1</sup>

With a starting point in “the gothic smiles” of the sculptures of the great cathedrals in the thirteenth century, my aim is to draw attention to the importance of international ideals in local affairs. How was information to be communicated when it came to imagery and more general ideas? Who could see? Accessibility to places and spaces, public or not, were crucial.

The following discussion concerns the international attitudes towards smile and laughter and their effects on a local community, prevailing from an emerging royal dynasty in the late thirteenth century to St. Birgitta and the Birgittine Order by the end

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<sup>1</sup> For medieval society and the cathedrals, see Duby 1966; Camille 1996; Jaeger 2000.

of the fourteenth century. Finally, I will discuss text and image in a Birgittine example, to show how 'international' smile and joy could be assimilated in a local context.

### *The smiling angels of Reims*

The smiling angels on the exterior of the Notre Dame de Reims are central artworks in discussions of the gothic smile, and *Le sourire de Reims* is a well-known concept.<sup>2</sup> In the Annunciation scene on the central portal of the west façade, the Archangel Gabriel greets the Virgin Mary with a radiant smile (fig. 1a & b). It is a tall, gracefully swaying figure with a small head that became a characteristic for the gothic style. The smile, and the angel's elegant pose of aristocratic refinement have been connected with courtly culture and manners esteemed in the thirteenth century. Whether intentional or not, the contrast with the Virgin's body, her restrained gesture and inward focus are striking. The effect can to some extent depend on different artists and periods of production. Today, the Virgin of the Annunciation is dated to c. 1240, the angel to c. 1250.

There is something deeply human about the angel's smile as well as his posture. According to Svanberg the influence to this human 'gothic' smile is to be looked for in the contemporary courtly culture.<sup>3</sup> Binski agrees that it is a point to associate the gothic smile with the secular world and vernacular literature. The smiling faces were introduced because they added something to the visual language, and he continues: "Faces became vital *loci* for meaning."<sup>4</sup> To him, the gothic expressivity is not solely connected to the vernacular culture, it transcends the vernacular.<sup>5</sup> Thus, the smiles are signs of the divine, even if they appear to be human.

One fundamental reason for the angel's joy is the Incarnation. The Annunciation scene, expressed as an event of heavenly joy, is also found elsewhere: in sculpture groups in the Magdeburg (mid-thirteenth century) and Regensburg (end of thirteenth century) cathedrals, where the Virgin returns the angel's radiant, happy smile. As in Reims, the two actors stand separated, tied to columns, with a minimum of attributes. The scene is identified through their friendly faces and collected courtly body language. I will return to the Annunciation in my last example.

The conflict between the profane and the religious spheres is to some degree shaped by modern scholars. Without getting into the discussion of humor or what made people smile and laugh, as these questions are treated by Olle Ferm and others in

2 The quantity of sculpture is impressive, and it required many sculptors who worked in different styles over a long period. Some of them came from Amiens. After a fire in 1210 the community began building a new gothic structure.

3 Svanberg 1997, p. 360

4 Binski 1997, p. 352.

5 *Ibid.*, pp. 353–354.



Fig. 1b. *Annunciation and Visitation*, c. 1255. Reims Cathedral, France, central portal, west façade (detail), © 2016. Photo Scala, Florence.

this volume, I would like to remind of Michail Bakhtin's concept of the carnival understood as a protest against a suppressing power, i.e. religion. But, as Gurevich argues, the austere monastic ideals that Bakhtin refers to had little to do with everyday concerns of lay people, or the duties of the cities, cathedrals or parish churches.<sup>6</sup>

Rather, the religious and secular domains were not separable in this context. The vernacular and courtly smile is not opposed to the angel's *gaudium aeternum*, the eternal joy of Heaven. The heavenly court and the hierarchy of angels were also a reality. Of course there was fun, joy, sorrow and pain, as well as laughter, dance, devotion and prayer within a society that was part profane and part religious. Religiosity was a part of life; the Virgin Mary and Jesus Christ were human ideals *in imitatio*.

The Notre Dame de Reims was the coronation cathedral of the kings of France, and had also been a cultural and educational center for a long time. The public space, to which the new west façade formed a magnificent back-drop, was an arena for important royal celebrations and processions of many kinds. Such events brought with

<sup>6</sup> Gurevich 1997, pp. 54–60.





Fig. 2a. *Wise virgins*, c. 1250. *Dom of St. Mauritius and St. Katharina, Magdeburg, Germany, Paradise portal/north portal*. © Paul Maeyaert/Bridgeman Images.

them a large number of visitors. The cathedral was also significant for pilgrims. As such, it is an eloquent example of a place that was probably well-known in large parts of the Christian world.

#### *The wise smile in Magdeburg Cathedral*

The wise and the foolish virgins from the parable in Matthew 25:1–13 are represented on the north portal of Magdeburg cathedral (fig. 2a & b). The portal was originally created c. 1250, and repositioned when it was enlarged in the early fourteenth century. This motif is Gertsman's main topic, when she seeks to establish the concept of 'viewing community' in a discussion of gothic smiles. The foolish virgins cry and gesticulate, with bodies out of control, while the smiling wise virgins are calm and collected. The wise do not gesticulate, but gesture, according to Gertsman's understanding.<sup>7</sup> The smile is here used as "a tool for differentiation; its presence demonstrates the inner

<sup>7</sup> Gertsman 2010, p. 30, see pp. 29–34 for 'viewing community' and a profound discussion of the parable and the gestures and body language of the virgins.

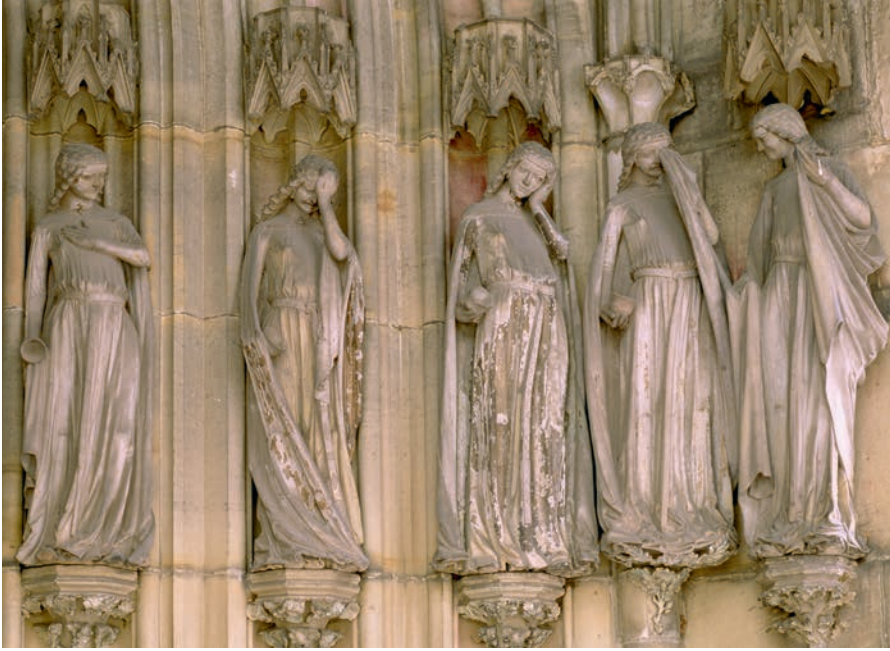


Fig. 2b. Foolish virgins, c. 1250. Dom of St. Mauritius and St. Katharina, Magdeburg, Germany, Paradise portal/north portal. © Paul Maeyaert/Bridgeman Images.

goodness of the Wise Virgins and is equated with salvation, while its lack signals the moral weakness of their foolish counterparts”.<sup>8</sup> Although Gertsman’s idea of the facial expression as gesture is appealing, I cannot fully agree that the dichotomies are as sharp as she indicates. The two groups, however, can be easily identified.

I find it worth noticing that all ten virgins in Magdeburg are modeled on the same type, with the same long, curly hair, and with similar faces. They wear identical dresses and mantels; the canopies over their heads do not differ to any extent. Thus, it is only their facial expressions, gestures and body language that communicate inner qualities. Schmitt has coined the term *contenance* that includes body language, head, face, gaze and gestures – in short *contenance* shows a figure’s qualities. The term, taken from old French, works well on the complex medieval imagery.<sup>9</sup> The Magdeburg virgins, so stripped of attributes and external signs, are like a medieval exercise in reproducing *contenance*.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.

<sup>9</sup> Schmitt 1990, pp. 143f.



Fig. 3. *King of the World and foolish virgin (detail), 1275–1300. Strasbourg Cathedral, France. Photo: Priscille Leroy/Creative commons license.*

### *The foolish smile in Strasbourg*

The smiling gothic face is of a different kind in the cathedral of Strasbourg (1275–1300). Here, the smile of the king of the world is a sign for temptation and seduction of the foolish, whereas the wise virgins appear serious and honorable, with Christ as partner.<sup>10</sup>

The male figure represents the world, he is the Tempter, *le tentateur*, a handsome Satan (fig. 3). Crowned and elegant, he holds out an apple to invite the foolish virgin. The man leans a bit backwards, and keeps his chin high, arm with elbow out, in an akimbo-gesture, he stands straddle-legged with toes pointing outwards. Every part of his body shows arrogance and pride. The foolish virgin is attracted. She drops her oil-lamp; she sways, moves as if to please. She smiles, flattered. We can also notice that the man's backside is eaten away by snakes, lizards and toads, to underline his bad character.

Is it possible to tell that these smiles are seductive and erotic, only from the smiling faces? I think not. If the faces were isolated, the meaning ascribed to the smiles would

<sup>10</sup> Jaeger 2000, pp. 331–348; Le Goff & Truong 2003, pp. 157–158; see also Gertsman 2010, pp. 36–37.





Fig. 4. *The Last Judgment*, 1233 –1235. Bamberg Cathedral, Germany, Door of the Princes. © 2016. Photo Scala, Florence.

be a question of interpretation. Their seductive smiles are carriers of other meanings than in the angelic smiles in Reims, and as in Reims and Magdeburg the facial expressions are reinforced by gestures and postures. Again the *contenance* is crucial for the viewer and interpreter.

#### *Hysterical laughter in Bamberg*

It is more difficult when it comes to laughter. Laughter does not occur in positive contexts, but rather as horrified grimacing and crazy laughing. All kinds of grief, horror, and evilness are obviously possible and important to imagine – but not a happy laughter.

The Last Judgment in Bamberg (1233–1235) shows different kinds of smiles and hysterical laughter. The sample of facial expressions here is highly original, even though the Last Judgment was a motif that was repeated throughout the Medieval Ages (see cover and fig. 4). The fear and grinning in the romanesque tympanum of Autun are equally expressive, together with a number of romanesque capitals and gothic gargoyles.



*Fig. 5a. St. Olof, wooden sculpture, 1325–1350, Bunge, Gotland, Sweden.  
© SHM, Lennart Karlsson.*



*Fig. 5b (detail). St. Olof, wooden sculpture, 1325–1350, Bunge, Gotland, Sweden.  
Photo: Mia Åkestam.*

Provincial works of art from Sweden underlines that this idea was true also in a more peripheral territory (fig. 5a & b). The grinning warrior under St. Olof's feet symbolizes the strike that killed the king and made him a martyr in the battle against the heathens at Stiklastad in 1030.

### Spaces and places

In this field of much debated sculpture, few, if anyone, pay attention to the importance of the actual, spatial context. Scholars have discussed the portal as place for a mystic *rite de passage* within theological and anthropological premises. This place can be regarded as “a threshold between the sacred and the secular realms”, as Gertsman puts it.<sup>11</sup> The portals' legislative functions are compiled by Barbara Deimling, who mentions the taking of oaths, marriage, nailing letters of privilege and as the place for remission of sins.<sup>12</sup> Thus, the portal is identified as a liminal space.

I'd like to return to the fact that the examples above are taken from cathedral exteriors, and their most obvious spatial context; the great gothic cathedral, like the aforementioned Notre Dame de Reims, formed a new public space in the city, where major

<sup>11</sup> Gertsman 2010, pp. 29 and 41.

<sup>12</sup> Deimling 1997, pp. 324–327.

celebrations and processions of all kinds took place. It is also worth remembering that many new towns were founded during the thirteenth century, with a demographic growth as a contributing factor to urbanization and specialization.<sup>13</sup> In older sites, new townscapes also emerged when the romanesque cathedrals were enlarged and transformed into the gothic style. Architectural structures cast shadows and reflected sunlight over the square and streets of the town, while the sculptures of the portals were of more human size and acted within a reachable area. Anyone who passed by could be subjected to the effects of the life-size and lifelike smiling sculptures. This accessibility should be crucial for a viewing community. With these public spaces in mind I argue that the cultural distance between the centers in Europe and peripheral places partly could be short in time and space. An ideal, an image, a text or a manuscript traveled fast.

The effect of a smiling sculpture would be different if it is on display on the exterior of a cathedral or attracted the gaze of a few initiated, as in the following two examples.

#### *The Angels' choir in Lincoln*

When the Angels' choir was erected in the east end of Lincoln Cathedral, the plan was to replace the smaller twelfth-century apse with a five bay long square presbytery, enclosing the high altar and major shrines. The project begun in 1256 and was completed by 1280. Besides being a shrine for the bishops Hugh of Lincoln (canonized in 1220), Robert Grosseteste (d. 1252) and the much earlier bishop Remigius, the choir had other functions. The canon's space was enlarged, and "a neat separation of lay and clerical interests" could be realized, says Binski.<sup>14</sup>

The happy smiles and the angels playing heavenly music up in the light of the triforium, some fifteen meters above floor level, show how the architectural context was used to structure meaning. The joyful performance is taking place between heaven and earth. The figures' position, in the spandrels of the triforium, made the smiles hard to see even in daylight and with sharp eyes. It is also worth noticing that, in addition to ordinary attributes as scrolls or censers, the joyful angels hold musical instruments, both wind and strings. According to Binski, the image program manifests "the poetics of the gothic smile".<sup>15</sup>

This exclusive place was chosen for an elaborated idea that could be discussed in terms of theology and philosophy by a selected group. Here, the point is their exclu-

<sup>13</sup> Duby 1966; Maillefer 1999, pp. 41–42.

<sup>14</sup> Binski 1997, pp. 357–358.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 361–362 for a discussion on music and instruments. He argues that the guiding principles for the program are provided by the last psalm of praise, Ps. 146–150: *Laudate eum omnes angeli eius*.



sivity – no one really saw the smiling faces in Lincoln, they became an intellectual exercise.

### *The donor – Reglindis in Naumburg*

Contemporary with Lincoln's Angels' choir is the west choir of Naumburg Cathedral (c. 1250), with twelve life-size, almost full round statues of the counts of Meissen – founders and benefactors of the church more than two centuries earlier. The sculptures are standing high above the floor, each one on a corbel, tied to the columns and walls of their church. Well-known to art-historians are the couple Ekkehardt and Uta and also the couple margrave Hermann and margravine Reglindis, the last owners of Naumburg Castle. The sculpture of Reglindis is made some 150 years after her death, so – despite the intense naturalism – it is not a portrait.

Reglindis face highlights the problem of representing the individual, historical or contemporary (fig. on p. 12). According to Classen her face is so happy, her smile so sincere, as if she is about to burst out laughing, with round cheeks and sparkling eyes.<sup>16</sup> Svanberg describes this smile as not only courtly, but also inviting and very personal<sup>17</sup> while Binski sees these new gothic faces also as “signs of deeper reflection on the character of medieval religious representation itself”.<sup>18</sup> Gertsman emphasizes that this smile implies a temporality and a physicality that deny eternity,<sup>19</sup> in other words, a perpetual “here and now”. Recent works by cognitive psychologists argue that our brains, automatically and timeless, react on facial expressions of the other we encounter.<sup>20</sup>

In addition, “the smiling donor”, *hilaris dator*, is another concept that appears in written sources by the end of the eleventh century. It was not considered appropriate to donate, without showing that one was happy to do so.<sup>21</sup> Thus, this smile can also be regarded as specific gesture within a limited context.

### Smiles for a chosen few

The sculptures in the choirs in Lincoln and Naumburg addressed a chosen few, exclusive groups of churchmen and nobles in different ways. In Lincoln an elite of churchmen, the cathedral chapter, walled off the Angels' choir to further separate the clerical space from the lay area. In Naumburg the lay-people come forward in the memory

<sup>16</sup> Classen 2010, pp. 68–69.

<sup>17</sup> Svanberg 1997, p. 362.

<sup>18</sup> Binski 1997, p. 350.

<sup>19</sup> Gertsman 2010, p. 35.

<sup>20</sup> Brilliant 2007, pp. 91–99. For an overview and different aspects of medieval faces, see Little & Maines 2007, pp. 83–89.

<sup>21</sup> Le Goff 1997, p. 51.

of the “joyful donor”, the smiling donors and rulers, in their own choir. Thus, we can neither suppose direct agency within a wider context, nor presume that many saw the sculptures. We rather have to deal with intermediation of intellectual work and exegesis in the first instance, knowledge of a courtly culture and profane ideals for the rulers in the second.

*Our Lady of Fontenay and the Cistercian smile*

The smiling sculpture seems to have been an ideal not only in the great cathedrals, but also in monasteries and parish churches, albeit on a smaller scale. The monastic cultures have been highlighted for their texts, by for example Hugo of St. Victor and Bernard of Clairvaux, giving us an idea of the intellectual and theologically founded attitudes toward smiles and laughter (see, for example, Wim Verbaal’s article on p. 193 in the present volume). St. Bernhard is also considered “the great enemy of images”.<sup>22</sup> The apologia he wrote to William, abbot of Saint-Thierry, is a well-known example where he attacked the numerous pictures inside the monasteries and churches. Apparently the reality was not so austere, and according to the apologia, Bernhard mainly attacked amusing images of jesters and fantastic creatures.<sup>23</sup>

There were sculptures of the Virgin and Child in Cistercian churches in the thirteenth century, and probably also on portals. Our Lady of Fontenay is regarded the main work, around which a number of Burgundian statues of the Virgin is grouped (see fig. on p. 192).<sup>24</sup> Of special interest here are, of course, the smiles of the Virgin and Child. In addition, Fontenay also has a fragment of a smiling face of an angel (fig. 6).

Earlier, I stressed the mobility and the importance of travel in connection with the portals of cathedrals. Cultural transfer was likewise important in the Cistercian Order. Their organization with annual meetings indicates that not only ideas, but also aesthetic considerations and achievements, promptly could be implied even in remote monasteries.

With the examples above in mind, it is time to return to Sweden to discuss what impact the courtly, gothic smile might have had. Were there echoes?

## Secular and religious ambitions – the Folkungar dynasty in Bjälbo

When the Folkungar dynasty emerged as the leading force in Sweden in the 1170s, the site Bjälbo in Östergötland was their key center and residence. During this period new courtly ideals was brought to the realm. Birger Brosa was the leading figure. As

<sup>22</sup> Forsyth 1957, p. 177.

<sup>23</sup> See Rudolph 1990, esp. p. 110.

<sup>24</sup> Forsyth 1957, p. 177.



Fig. 6. *Smiling angel, fragment, thirteenth century, Abbaye de Fontenay, France. Photo: Myrabella/Wikimedia Commons.*

the Swedish ‘jarl’, *dux sveorum*, from 1174 to 1202 he was head of both the dynasty and the realm.<sup>25</sup> His nickname “Brosa” means “the smiling” in Old Norse.

Birger Brosa was contemporary with the emperor Fredric Barbarossa (d. 1190), who, according to written sources, was always smiling. The Bavarian priest Rahewin describes him in the *Gesta Frederici Primi* as a man with sharp, piercing eyes and fine lips, who had a red beard and short cut reddish, curly hair, adding that “his whole face was glad and joyful” (*totaque facies laeta et hilaris*). The Italian chronicler Acerbus Morena speaks of the emperor’s “joyful face” (*hilari vultu*), adding, “as if he always wanted to give the impression of smiling and laughing”. During the Third Crusade the emperor’s permanently cheerful face is noticed, as “if he knew of neither sorrow, nor

<sup>25</sup> A jarl was of royal family and the leader of the realm. The title was changed to the international “duke” during the thirteenth century. The only person superior to the jarl was the elected king.



wrath or repugnance". From the sources we can also note his sharp, piercing eyes and that "he wanted to give the impression", not that he was joyful.<sup>26</sup> Barbarossa smiled in majestic superiority. He shows an elevated emperor's benevolent face. Was this a smile that revealed nothing, a mask used as a ruling gesture?

The German emperor and his international court would be an ideal model in the north. With the adding of the nickname, "the smiling", it seems that the Swedish ruler had adopted the international trend early, performing with a courtly smile on his face. When Birger traveled, or welcomed guests at his court, he would meet the ideals of Barbarossa's court. In this context, with political negotiation, marriages and promises of loyalty, it is adequate to think of the human smile as a gesture.

The Folkungar held the position and Birger Brosa was followed by a number of jarls, most notable Birger Jarl (Magnusson), from 1248 until his death 1266.<sup>27</sup> The family deliberately focused on diplomatic contacts with the nobility in northern Germany already in the early 1200s. Diplomacy and foreign affairs involved the German knight-hood on different levels, with German knights present at the Swedish court as ambassadors and counselors. A number of marriages were arranged, in order to strengthen the international bonds.<sup>28</sup>

The adoption of modernity and style is also manifest in their architecture, sculpture and writings. The new style, *opus novum* – known to us as the gothic style since the middle of the nineteenth century – was closely related to the monarchy. Its extension followed the new ideas of royal power, and was consequently favored also in Scandinavia and by the Folkungar. Cathedrals were enlarged and provided with new façades and vaulting. Corbel-heads of kings, queens, dukes and duchesses supported the new vaulting, and effigies were erected, most notably of Birger Jarl in the Cistercian monastery church in Varnhem and Magnus Ladulås in the Franciscan's church in Stockholm.<sup>29</sup> Sculpture of royal saints, such as St. Olof and St. Erik, was favored.

A magnificent brick-built palace complex, created as a place for elegant feasts, recreation and meetings was erected in Vadstena, on the shore of the Lake Vättern (c. 12 kilometers from the residence in Bjälbo). The palace was bigger than most comparable sites in northern Europe. Birger Jarl probably initiated the project when his son Valdemar was elected king in 1250, and Valdemar completed the palace by the end of the 1260s.

26 Svanberg 1997, p. 358. See Le Goff 1997, p. 44 on "Rex Facetus", the jesting king and the happy, smiling king. See also Rosenwein 2006, p. 10 for the early German emperors.

27 See Schück 1984, pp. 65–72. Two of his sons were elected kings; Valdemar 1250–1275 and Magnus Ladulås 1275–1290, his son Bengt was bishop in Linköping and Duke of Finland.

28 Fritz 1972, pp. 33–48; Schück 1984, pp. 65–72; Maillefer 1999, pp. 39–46.

29 See Svanberg 2012 for a comprehensive discussion on this topic.

In the diocesan capital of Linköping, a gothic basilica replaced the old romanesque cathedral, with inspiration from England. As Bjälbo and Vadstena belonged to this diocese, the Folkungar dynasty had special interests there, and three of the bishops during the thirteenth century were Folkungar from Bjälbo.

This era – with its actors, their relations, enemies and friends – is described in the *Erikskrönika* (*Chronicle of Duke Erik*), written in the middle of the fourteenth century.<sup>30</sup> Corinne Péneau discusses the chronicle in this volume (see p. 64), with special focus on expressions of emotions, as she highlights how the chronicle puts forward the concepts of the good, joyful king, and that of the regime of an evil man with a mad laughter. Péneau finds that “emotions become crucial when it comes to important political matters”. Written for the Folkungar dynasty, the chronicle deals with Swedish history during the period 1230–1320. From the very same aristocratic group that expanded from Bjälbo and Vadstena palace we thus have a secular source, a chronicle suggesting that a courtly culture was established.

The Madonna in Grebo is representative of the smiling devotional sculptures of this period. The wooden images for altars and chapels were smaller than those for cathedrals, needless to say, and they also lacked the monumentality. The impression of her noble and restrained smile is friendly and joyful (fig. 7). A gothic smile like this is readable as an honest smile, not because of the corners of the mouth but of the contraction of the lower eyelids. Today's scholars call this a ‘Duchenne smile’, after the French physician Guillaume Duchenne.<sup>31</sup> The Madonna is of a type that was introduced in Sweden by the middle of the thirteenth century. This sculpture is likely to be of local origin, from Linköping diocese, and it shows a distinct French influence, according to Jacobsson.<sup>32</sup> As the Cistercians traveled between Alvastra and Clairvaux on a regular basis, we can presume that the brothers in Östergötland knew of the smiling Madonnas of Burgundy. There were surprisingly good sculptors in the province at the time. The smiling Madonna of Grebo is only one of about fifty local works of high artistic quality from the thirteenth century,<sup>33</sup> and it shows an intention to adopt an international style.

30 First published, commented and discussed by Klemming 1865, and more recently by Jansson 2003.

31 See e.g. Ekman, Davidson & Friesen 1990, pp. 342–353. Paul Ekman is a leading scholar in the field of non-verbal communication. He argues that facial expressions are universal, and puts special emphasis on the smile as a signal of happiness and joy.

32 Jacobsson 1995, p. 38.

33 My inventory in ATA, and Medeltidens bildvärld, <http://medeltidbild.historiska.se/medeltidbild/>.



*Fig. 7. The Virgin Mary, c. 1275, Grebo, Östergötland, Sweden. © SHM, Lennart Karlsson.*

## The grandest enterprise – a new monastic order

The royal palace in Vadstena with its estate, as mentioned above, was donated to a new monastic order already in 1348. The recipient was Birgitta Birgersdotter, the future St. Birgitta. Donors were King Magnus Eriksson of the Folkungar family and Queen Blanche of Namur.

Birgitta (1303–1373) was part of, and a strong force in, this milieu by birth. Her religious influence increased considerably with the preparations for the foundation of her monastic order in Vadstena. Thus, we have an unbroken line of courtly ideals, power, international contacts, literature, art and architecture when Birgitta and her group established the Birgittine Order in Sweden.<sup>34</sup> The Folkungar palace was again a material manifestation of far-reaching changes.

There is a difference between donating to an already existing monastic order, such as Cistercians, Dominicans or Franciscans, and to found a new. The old orders were established theoretically and theologically, and highly organized. They were also, in Rosenwein's terminology, overarching "emotional communities."<sup>35</sup> The architects behind the theology, organization and religious ideals of the Birgittine Order prepared everything from the beginning, at the same time as they belonged to already existing communities. In many ways this was a joint project, even if the Cistercians in Alvastra were influential.

Birgitta's *vita* emphasizes the fact that her mother was of the Folkungar dynasty and her noble father a leading force and legislator in the realm. Birgitta also smiles. In a revelation from Rome, she talks of herself with the words: "she remarked with a smile ...".<sup>36</sup> Later, her friendly and gentle person and her smiling face were described by one of her servants.<sup>37</sup>

The aristocratic ideals were essential to Birgitta, while pride and arrogance were a source of despair; many of her revelations address and criticize the present knight-hood, particularly in Book II.<sup>38</sup> The virtues of chivalry and a courtly behavior were even characteristics of God.

My last example is extracted from one of Birgitta's *Revelations*. It is an image of the Annunciation, and I use it to summarize the elements discussed above.

34 This could also be explained as an "emotional community", following Rosenwein 2006, p. 15 where she specifies that the learning of emotions and reactions are dependent on household, neighborhood and the larger society, in that order.

35 *Ibid.*, pp. 20–25.

36 Birgitta, *Revelations*, Book VI:102, transl. Searby & Morris 2012, vol. 3.

37 Windeatt 1985, chapter 39.

38 Birgitta, *Revelations*, Book II, transl. Searby & Morris 2006, vol. 1.

*Jumping for joy*

In St. Birgitta's *Revelations* the Virgin Mary speaks with her own voice. She addresses Birgitta and tells how she experienced the Annunciation. The Virgin begins: *Ego sum regina celi, mater Dei*, "I am the Queen of Heaven, mother of God", and continues:

*Et cum hec mirarer, vidi tria mirabilia. Vidi namque sydus, sed non quale fulget de celo. Vidi lumen, sed non quale lucet in mundo. Sensi odorem, sed non qualis herbarum vel aliquid tale, sed suauissimum et vere ineffabilem, quo tota replebar et pre gaudio exultabam. Inde statim audiui unam vocem, sed non de ore humano. Et ea audita satis timui, reputans, ne forte esset illusio. Et statim apparuit ante me angelus Dei quasi homo pulcherrimus, sed non carne vestitus, qui dixit ad me: "Aue, gracia plena!" etcetera.*<sup>39</sup>

I saw three wonderful sights. I saw a star, but not the kind that shines from the sky. I saw a light, but not the kind that glows in the world. I sensed a smell, not of herbs or anything like that, but indescribably sweet, which quite filled me up so that I felt like jumping for joy. Right then I heard a voice, but not from a human mouth. I was quite afraid when I heard it and wondered whether it was an illusion. An angel of God then appeared before me in the fairest human shape, although not in the flesh, and he said to me: 'Hail, full of grace!'<sup>40</sup>

The first thing to notice is that all senses are active; the Virgin sees, she feels a wonderful scent, and she hears. The effect is strong, first she wants to jump for joy, and then she becomes quite afraid. This is, with Schmitt's distinction, Mary's memory of the events, not the story told in the Bible.<sup>41</sup>

In the Latin version the Virgin says "et pre gaudio exultabam" translated by Searby to "I felt like jumping for joy". The Old Swedish has "frygdhadhis for glædhi skuld",<sup>42</sup> and the translation into modern Swedish "jag jublade av fröjd" is even less expressive: "I rejoiced." In both the original texts, in Latin and Old Swedish, however, we can deduce a strong emotional experience that is hard to master. The difference between wanting to jump for joy, and to actually do so is considerable. The Virgin was excited, and her ability to master her emotions is a sign of her virtue and noble character.<sup>43</sup>

Attitudes towards laughter follows decorum; a warning about laughter is the matter when John the Baptist speaks to Birgitta and explains: "It may seem good to have

39 Birgitta, *Revelaciones*, I:10, ed. Undhagen 1977, p. 264.

40 *Ibid.*, transl. Searby & Morris 2006, Vol. I, p. 22.

41 Schmitt 2013, pp. 14–15, discusses history as an official story, written and authoritarian, while the memory is oral, multiple, regional, subordinate and always closely linked to identity.

42 Birgitta, *Revelation* I:10, ed. Andersson 2014.

43 See Le Goff & Truong 2003, pp. 81–86, for a discussion of the serious attitude towards laughter and the importance of self-restraint during the Middle Ages. See also *ibid.*, pp. 157–158, regarding the Virgin Mary and Eve, female beauty and the female face during the thirteenth century.

laughter on one's lips and pleasant sensations in one's body, but there is a barb in these things. Immoderate laughter leads to immoderate mirth."<sup>44</sup>

The idea of the angels is equally fitting for the aristocracy in Vadstena. According to Birgitta, the soul is more worthy, because she is a spiritual creature, and like the angels made for eternal joy.<sup>45</sup>

*The Annunciation in Norra Fågelås – Virgin Mary on a pedestal*

In art, the smile was replaced by a more serious expression during the fourteenth century, while the friendly, courtly *contenance* still prevailed.

The painted Annunciation scene on the wings of the altar shrine for the Virgin Mary from Norra Fågelås (c. 1400) is a remarkable picture.<sup>46</sup> Technically, it is designed as a mural, but painted on panels, where tempera normally would be used.

The painting shows the Virgin as a collected, courteously greeting queen, humbly dressed without ostentation and splendor (fig. 8). Roses and clinging vine float peacefully around her. The archangel Gabriel seems to have landed in this very moment. His wings and scroll are still streaming in the wind, as is the vine. The Virgin wears her crown as Queen of Heaven, *Regina celi*.<sup>47</sup> Both angel and Virgin are slender, elegant and friendly, their *contenance* reflecting the ideals of a courtly culture. It is worth noticing that they both stand on low pedestals.

Pedestals were in fact a sign of idolatry in medieval painting. A well-established image convention was the fall of the idols, during the exodus from Egypt. When the Child or Virgin was reproduced standing on a pedestal, it meant that they had conquered the pagan idols, according to Camille. In the medieval courtly culture, women were placed on a pedestal, in images as an elevated Venus.<sup>48</sup> The references to Mary are obvious in such a context.

44 Birgitta, *Revelations*, II:29, transl. Searby & Morris 2006, Vol. 1, p. 70

45 *Ibid.*, V: int. 16, answer to 5<sup>th</sup> question (line 43–44), transl. Searby & Morris 2008, vol. II, pp. 320–321.

46 SD, *Svenskt Diplomatarium*, SDHK 16614 (SD 677). The altarpiece was made c. 1400 in Vadstena and was moved to Norra Fågelås in 1405. See Åkestam 2009, pp. 194–195, 204; Åkestam 2010, pp. 210–232, 349–350.

47 See Åkestam 2009, pp. 191–207. Birgitta's *Revelations*, esp. Book V:4, gives a key to the use of the Annunciation motif with a crowned Mary and a chivalric angel. The context is narrow; members of the family and the inner circle near St. Birgitta and Vadstena used the motif during the end of the fourteenth century. There are two murals, the first commissioned by Birgitta's aunt, lady Katarina, for her estate church, the second is in the nuns' chapterhouse at Vadstena. An antependium with a crowned Annunciation and Nativity with St. Birgitta was donated to Linköping Cathedral by relatives, the knight Sten Bosson, and his brother, bishop Knut Bosson.

48 Camille 1989, pp. 298–316.





*Fig. 8. Annunciation, panel on altarshrine, c. 1400, Norra Fågelås, Sweden. © SHM, Lennart Karlsson.*



Another way to use the pedestal as a visual code was to denote “image”, a painted image of a sculpture is indicated in this manner. This can be seen in illustrations of the Pygmalion myth, and in manuscripts where people are depicted praying before images.<sup>49</sup> The pedestals indicate that this is a picture of a picture – perhaps a special sculpture-group with unique properties? Types of Annunciation sculptures as in Reims, Magdeburg and Bamberg come to mind, with their elegant, courtly figures standing on columns.

## Conclusions

The smiling faces on the exteriors of gothic cathedrals were visible at places where travelers might pass by. They were exposed to all kinds of viewers: kings, clerics, princesses, ambassadors, pilgrims and ordinary people. The cathedrals formed public spaces in the new townscapes, where the angels’ joyful smiles communicated with the beholders.

This ideal did not include a loud laughter, neither in the great cathedrals nor in the remote places of Bjälbo and Vadstena. A new awareness of smile and laughter became an important factor. When the Folkungar dynasty established themselves as a royal family, they had political and cultural ambitions to connect to an international courtly culture. German knights were frequent partners in this process. Approaches concerning manners, and how one desired to be judged by others, were a part of such a social transformation.

The smiling, courtly ideals persisted in the establishment of the Birgittine order. St. Birgitta often returned to the ancient knighthood, who were virtuous and good unlike the present, in her *Revelations*. The earlier secular aspirations were in some ways a prerequisite for the monastic order. In the 1250s the magnificent palace in Vadstena was built as a royal summer residence. Only eighty years later the palace was donated to Lady Birgitta and was rebuilt as a Birgittine convent, where the courtly ideals prevailed and the Queen of Heaven, the Virgin Mary, explained how she “felt like jumping for joy”.

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49 *Ibid.*, pp. 220–221.

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# Tears and Weeping in the Spirituality of St. Birgitta of Sweden

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Historians of the spirituality of medieval visionary women commonly observe that tears were a prominent part of the devotional lives and reputations of many late-medieval women – some whose weeping was viewed by their friends and neighbors as an obvious sign of holiness, and others whose sobbing was considered to be disorderly or demon-possessed.<sup>1</sup> For example, the thirteenth-century beguine Marie d'Oignies (d. 1213) reportedly disrupted services through her copious weeping over the sufferings of Christ. Similarly, the Franciscan tertiary Angela of Foligno (d. 1309) wept over her sins and was overcome with screaming while entering the basilica in Assisi. And, perhaps the most notorious for uncontrollable sobbing was the laywoman Margery Kempe (d. c. 1438), who loudly lamented her sins and those of others, even howling and roaring for long hours at a time.<sup>2</sup> During their lifetimes, the weeping of these medieval visionaries attracted both wonderment and scorn, as some contemporaries saw the tears as evidence of the women's sincere and intense religious devotion while others considered the crying to be hypocritical, disturbed, or delusional.

Similarly, in our day many scholars interpret the tears of medieval visionary women in positive terms as part of a “well-attested late medieval Christian tradition of weeping”<sup>3</sup> and interpret this emotional display as an expression of women's spiritual power. Other scholars, however, dismiss the women's tears as hysterical<sup>4</sup> or sometimes interpret them as a sign of underlying neurological disorders like Tourette's syndrome.<sup>5</sup> As Clarissa W. Atkinson points out with respect to Margery Kempe, “her vocation,

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1 On the significance of the gift of tears to medieval culture and religious women, see, for example, Knight 2012, pp. 139–140, and Perfetti 2005, pp. 1–22.

2 Bhattacharji 2005, pp. 229–241; Atkinson 1983, pp. 31–32, 58–66, 164–167, 180–181.

3 Bhattacharji 2005, p. 233.

4 For an overview of treatments of Margery Kempe as “hysterical”, see Atkinson 1983, pp. 210–212.

5 Stork 1997, pp. 261–300.

with its visions, weeping, and 'self-centered' meditations, appalls historians who look to medieval Christianity for the roots of their own faith, and is easily disregarded by those who look to the past for confirmation of a secular perspective".<sup>6</sup>

Historical accounts frequently identify Birgitta of Sweden (d. 1373), who was one of the foremost visionaries of the later Middle Ages, as belonging to a tradition of medieval piety based on the cultivation of emotions. Usually in passing, scholars observe that as a member of this tradition, Birgitta displayed tears as part of her life of prayer, and served as a model for other medieval weeping women like Margery Kempe and Dorothy of Montau (d. 1394).<sup>7</sup> Although weeping is widely recognized as holding a place of some kind in Birgitta's piety, little sustained attention has been given to the role of tears in her spirituality and *Revelations*.

Thus, this essay explores the meanings and efficacy of tears in Birgitta's devotional life and visionary writings, interpreted within the context of the history of late medieval spirituality and theology. This essay is inspired by Kimberley Patton's and John Stratton Hawley's insight that "tears, as they flow through the religious imagination, are richly charged with symbolic meaning and ritual efficacy. The shedding of tears, a physiological function in response to intense emotion or physical pain, has metaphysical importance in religious thought and experience."<sup>8</sup> The essay examines tears in Birgitta's life and spirituality according to the following four themes: 1) tears as a sign of sanctity, 2) tears as a sign of contrition, 3) tears as a symbol of compassion, and 4) tears as an instrument of redemption. It argues that Birgitta's conception and enactment of tears, while grounded in the medieval tradition of affective spirituality, both draws upon a richly complex theology of redemption and reveals her understanding of the salvific power of motherhood.

### Emotions in Birgitta's *Revelations*

Generally speaking, elicitations and expressions of emotion are abundant in Birgitta's *Revelations*.<sup>9</sup> Some portions of the texts appear to be designed to provoke laughter or even repulsion from their readers or listeners, not unlike the use of vignettes in sermons to deeply touch and move members of an audience through a well-crafted story. Many vivid passages incorporate far-fetched humorous analogies or extended grotesque descriptions of suffering souls, which seem designed to move Birgitta's audience toward repentance by provoking impassioned emotional responses in the readers.

Upon reading her *Revelations*, one sometimes develops the impression that Birgit-

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6 Atkinson 1983, p. 201.

7 *Ibid.*, pp. 168–181.

8 Patton & Hawley 2005, p. 1.

9 For an introduction to Birgitta's life, influence, and *Revelations*, see Morris 1999.

ta herself must have possessed a wicked sense of humor, since some satirical passages almost seem designed to elicit laughter in the manner of slapstick comedy, even as they present moral lessons for their listeners. For instance, one passage compares bishops, who were absent from their church offices, to grunting pigs dressed in priests' clothing (VII 29),<sup>10</sup> and another asserts that a frivolous and carnal bishop was like a monkey in a "costume that has been made for him that hangs down and hides his torso but leaves his private parts completely exposed" (III 11.7). In another revelation (VI 98) Birgitta is critical of a proud Benedictine abbess, whom she compares to the devil's fat cow for the poor example she gave to her sisters. The Son of God speaks in this vision, stating that this abbess "wades in mire and splatters by-standers with the dung from her tail. Thus she splatters the sisters with her immoral example" (VI 98.1).<sup>11</sup> In fact, Birgitta's maid in Rome remembered her as "kind" and with a "laughing face",<sup>12</sup> providing us with the image of this saintly widow as a warm person who may have enjoyed a good joke now and then.

Yet, when we listen to Birgitta's words about laughter and merriment, one receives quite a different impression. Repeatedly, her *Revelations* sternly exhort her audience to "avoid any occasion of frivolity" (III 1.21), to reject "superfluous mirth" (I 48), to take no delight in jesters (IV 62), and even to "pay no attention to [...] dancing good-for-nothings" (VI 64). She sharply warns her readers about the dangers of laughter, stating that "it may seem good to have laughter on one's lips and pleasant sensations in one's body, but there is a barb in these things. Immoderate laughter leads to immoderate mirth, and the pleasure of the body leads to inconstancy of mind, which gives rise to sadness [...] along with distress" (II 29.25–26). In fact, one of the most prominent themes of her *Revelations* is the importance of fixing one's eyes on heaven instead of on earth and the value of relinquishing the temporal enjoyments of this world in favor of the eternal joys of heaven. In I 32.1 Christ exhorts her as follows:

You should let go of riches and gather virtues, let go of what will pass and gather eternal things, let go of visible things and gather invisible. In return for the pleasure of the body, I will give you the exultation of your soul; in return for the merriment of the world, I will give you the merriment of heaven.

Although she may have had a good sense of humor, sometimes using comic scenes to move her audiences, Birgitta generally considered laughter to be a sign of inordinate affection for worldly pleasures.

10 Unless noted otherwise, references to Birgitta's *Revelations* will be made parenthetically to the book, chapter, and sometimes verse numbers. Unless noted otherwise, English translations of the *Revelations* in this essay are by Denis Searby, see Birgitta, *Liber caelestis*.

11 See also VII 11, where the Queen of Naples is compared to a monkey that sniffs at its own stinking posterior.

12 Morris 1999, p. 2; Atkinson 1983, p. 35.



Furthermore, although they are not autobiographical in any straightforward sense, Birgitta's *Revelations* and *vita* also sometimes expose the saint's own heartfelt emotions, often associated with her family relationships and everyday life. Through these texts we receive glimpses of Birgitta's anguish over a wide range of her life circumstances: her distress at a young age about her poor needlework (AP 76);<sup>13</sup> anxiety about her husband's illness (AP 80); grief upon her husband's death (V 11); worry about a lack of funds for purchasing food and other necessities of life (VI 46); concern about adversity suffered by her friends (VI 43); and anxiety over her difficulty with obeying her spiritual father (VI 43). Frequently, we also read in the *Revelations* about her fears, troubled spirit, and even terror in response to visions. She repeatedly feels worried that she may have been deceived and that her visions may have been illusions from an evil spirit (I 4; III 10; IV 14; IV 78; *Extrav.* 47);<sup>14</sup> she is terrified by her visions of hell (VI 75); and she feared that the recipients of her words would discredit them (II 28; VI 100; IV 21). Yet, we also read in many passages that joy and exultation are present to Birgitta at moments of visionary ecstasy and rapture, as in VI 88, where it states that "on Christmas night such a great and wonderful feeling of exultation came to the bride of Christ in her heart that she could scarcely contain herself with joy" (cf. I 20; I 31; IV 77; VI 52; IV 139; VII 19; VII 21; VII 24; VII 27), or in IV 77, a rare first person account, in which Birgitta exclaims, "As often as I hear the words of your Spirit, [...] my soul within me swallows them with an indescribably sweet sensation like that from the sweetest food that seems to drop into my heart with great joy and indescribable consolation" (cf. VI 52.4–5; *Extrav.* 116.1–2).

However, while the *Revelations* provide glimpses into her emotional states throughout much of her lifetime, Birgitta was generally suspicious about the trustworthiness of emotional states. Several passages warn that emotions can be deceptive and used by the devil to lead the faithful astray. For example, in IV 68 the Virgin Mary cautions her that "sometimes the devil [...] submits people to trials and tribulations in order to break them through excessive sadness. Sometimes, too, the devil fills people's hearts with anxiety and worry so as to make them become lukewarm in God's service or, when they are careless in small respects, to make them fall in greater ones" (IV 68.7). In IV 38.3 the Son of God similarly warns about the dangerous power of emotions, which can be induced by the devil:

You must [...] be careful so that the devil does not deceive you. [...] Sometimes he induces happy moods into your heart to make you feel empty joy; at other times he gives you sad ones to make you omit in your sorrow the good deeds that you could do and to make you sad and wretched before anything sad has occurred.

13 Parenthetical references to Birgitta's canonization *vita* and testimonies presented at her canonization process are to *Acta et processus* 1924–1931; references will be given as AP followed by page number.

14 Birgitta, *Revelaciones Extravagantes*, ed. Hollman 1956.

For Birgitta, emotions and the affections of the heart should ultimately be channeled toward heavenly things and love for God. As St. Agnes tells Birgitta in IV 20.21, “my daughter, in all your feelings and actions, consider God’s justice and mercy, and always keep the end in sight”.

### Tears in Birgitta’s spirituality and theology

When we turn to the topic of tears in Birgitta’s spirituality, it is instructive to keep in mind, as recent scholars have insightfully observed, that interpretations of tears are historically and culturally conditioned. Lyn A. Blanchfield points out that “weeping as a bodily function is ahistorical, [but] its meanings are not”.<sup>15</sup> Piroska Nagy, furthermore, explains that “as visible signs, tears perform a social function: they participate in communication by gestures, and their meaning differs according to cultural contexts”.<sup>16</sup> Emphasizing the socially constructed meanings of emotional expressions, these scholars also stress that tears are subject to multilayered interpretations. As Elina Gertsman observes, tears in the Middle Ages were a “culturally charged prism for a host of [...] performances”.<sup>17</sup> They were considered to be markers of sanctity and devotion, vehicles of communication with the heavenly realm, and “powerful and efficacious liquid” capable of spiritual cleansing, promoting procreation, and even releasing souls from purgatory.<sup>18</sup> These layers of meaning that medieval people ascribed to tears, especially within the context of religious devotion and piety, can be distinctly illustrated by a close examination of writings about tears in Birgitta’s corpus of texts.

#### *Tears as a sign of sanctity*

Surviving texts that were used on behalf of her canonization suggest that Birgitta’s tears and weeping were used as strong evidence of her sanctity. The repeated mention of Birgitta’s tears in the *vita* authored by Prior Peter of Alvastra and Master Peter of Skänninge, as well as in the testimonies of witnesses from her canonization process, indicates that her devotees saw her tears as a sign of holiness. Tears figure prominently in her canonization *vita*, which tells us that she fervently prayed with tears from a young age (AP 77) and throughout her marriage (AP 78); confessed her sins with great sorrow and tears (AP 84); sometimes reported her visions to her confessors with tears (AP 84); and wept over her children’s sins on a daily basis (AP 79). The *vita* also describes her great devotion to the passion of Christ, which she reportedly could scarcely

<sup>15</sup> Blanchfield 2012, p. xxii.

<sup>16</sup> Nagy 2005.

<sup>17</sup> Gertsman 2012, p. xii.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. xi–xx.

contemplate without tears, even from the age of ten (AP 76). Similarly, witnesses at her canonization process present Birgitta's tears as an outward sign of her sincere devotion, and as evidence of her sanctity. Her daughter Katarina testified that she saw Birgitta pray on her knees at night with great devotion and weeping (AP 306). Birgitta's confessor Alfonso of Jaén also stated that she said her prayers with great devotion and tears (AP 366; cf. Prior Peter of Alvastra, AP 475, 484), and others, including Hartlevus, the bishop of Västerås, reported that he saw her many times in her house in Rome weeping with devotions that included bodily mortifications (AP 295). Several witnesses, who observed her in both Sweden and Rome, also indicated that she received the Eucharistic sacrament with great tears (Hartlevus, bishop of Västerås, AP 293; Laurentius, prior of San Giovanni in Lateran, AP 415; and Francisca Papzura, AP 437).

Her *vita* and these testimonies suggest that Birgitta's devotional life included visible tears that were shed primarily in private spaces, but they do not embellish their accounts of her tears with any great detail. The testimonies have a formulaic quality to them, suggesting that her fourteenth-century devotees saw tears as a necessary but not particularly distinguishing feature of Birgitta's sanctity. As Elina Gertsman, like other scholars, has observed, "copious weeping [...] becomes a central trope in the lives of female mystics" by at least the thirteenth century.<sup>19</sup>

### *Tears as a sign of contrition*

When we turn to the *Revelations* themselves, we see that according to these texts, Birgitta understood weeping as an appropriate complement to heartfelt prayer and as a sign of sincere contrition for one's own sins. Weeping for one's sins is the most common or basic context in which tears appear in the *Revelations*. On occasion devout figures in these texts weep for joy; Joseph, for example, is said to have wept at the Nativity (VII 21). We sometimes also read in these texts about the shedding of tears on account of beauty – the beauty of the Virgin Mary that "brings tears to the eyes, when [her] poverty and patient suffering are brought to mind" (IV 19.3). However, one of the prominent themes of the *Revelations* is the importance of lamenting and bewailing the evil that one has done (I 18.5).

Quite a few passages relate stories about conversions and deathbed confessions accompanied by tears. In one chapter a pagan woman turns to the Christian faith "with tears in her eyes" (VI 50.11), and in another an apostate Cistercian priest broke into tears of contrition and reformed his life after Birgitta urged him to return to orthodox Christian beliefs (IV 23.32–36). In another scene a brother who harbored a secret sin "broke into tears" after Birgitta urged him to "do more diligent penance"; "a confessor was called, and he made a complete and tearful declaration of his sins" (IV 93.19,

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xiii.

cf. VI 97). In these and similar accounts tears are signs of sorrow for one's sins; they also lead the repentant to the sacrament of confession.

It is clear that Birgitta saw weeping as going hand-in-hand with lamenting one's sins in prayer; however, the *Revelations* do not contain extensive descriptions of Birgitta weeping over her own sins. Christ states in Book V that "in order not to be turned aside from heaven's way, one must be piously solicitous and pray and weep" (V inter-rogation 4.8). Furthermore, in Book I he declares, "No one is so unworthy, no one so bad that his face will not be flooded in tears and his every limb stirred up to devotion, if he would but turn to me" (I 53.21). Elsewhere, Christ exhorts Birgitta to follow the example of Mary, the sister of Lazarus: "Welcome me into the home of your minds with the most fervent charity, loving nothing as me, having total trust in me, each day humbling yourselves along with Mary by weeping for your sins" (IV 72.8–9). In a rare first-person account, Birgitta speaks to Christ's mother with concern that she does not shed tears of contrition as often as she should: "My lady, [...] I am afraid that I do not weep for my sins or make amends for them as much as I should like" (I 22.2).

For Birgitta, tears of contrition most certainly were outward signs of sincere devotion and even efficacious for cleansing one's sins – like a kind of bleach for getting rid of stains. "Penance," Mary tells her, "works like a good washerwoman does on stains, and contrition is like a good bleacher" (IV 39.8). The *Revelations* confirm Piroška Nagy's observation that tears in the Middle Ages, which were understood as integral to conversion and spiritual purification, "were seen as an efficacious means of His [God's] grace to wash away one's sins".<sup>20</sup>

Furthermore, in passages from the *Revelations*, Christ teaches Birgitta about the efficacy of tears for salvation, differentiating for her between tears that are acceptable to God and those that are not. In IV 13, he tells her that just as some springs produce water that is "cloudy," "muddy," and not drinkable, some people's tears are "muddy and stinking, for they do not come from the love of God" (IV 13.1–4). God, he says, does not listen to people who shed such tears that arise from "worldly distress" and "the fear of hell," rather than out of consideration for "God's kindnesses as well as one's own sins". Tears that originate from the proper source or spring are efficacious for raising "the soul up from earthly things to heaven and bring[ing] about her new birth for eternal life" (IV 13.5).<sup>21</sup> For Birgitta, tears can be external signs of inward contrition, and when sincere, they can produce spiritual rebirth; yet, as her *Revelations* teach, tears are also not a reliable outward sign of inward devotion, since when they do not arise

<sup>20</sup> Nagy 2004, p. 119; see also pp. 124–126.

<sup>21</sup> See Revelation IV 81 about different types of tears. See also 2 Cor. 7:10: "For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation and brings no regret, but worldly grief produces death."

from authentic motives that only God can see, they are not efficacious for spiritual transformation.<sup>22</sup>

*Tears as a symbol of compassion*

Moreover, in Birgitta's visions and reflections on the crucifixion of Christ, tears and weeping have cosmological and theological significance for the economy of salvation itself. As is well-known, this Swedish holy woman, like many medieval Christians by the thirteenth century and following, cultivated empathetic identification with the emotions of the human Jesus and his mother through meditative prayer and visualizing their participation in scenes from their lives. Well-known theologians such as Anselm of Canterbury (d. 1109), Bernard of Clairvaux (d. 1153), Aelred of Rievaulx (d. 1167), Bonaventure (d. 1274), and the anonymous Franciscan author of the *Meditations on the Life of Christ* (late thirteenth century) encouraged their readers to meditate on specific details of events in the historical activities of Christ and the Virgin Mary. In prayer as well as on pilgrimages, Christians envisioned themselves participating as actors in scenes from the life of Christ and the Virgin Mary, attempting to identify with the joy, love, and sorrow of the human Mary and her Child. In this manner, they not only reverentially recalled significant events from Christian history, but also developed intimacy with the incarnate Christ and his mother by entering into the scenes themselves. The rise of this "affective" form of piety emphasized identification with the sufferings of Christ and the sorrow of Mary at the crucifixion.<sup>23</sup>

In keeping with this trend in medieval Christian spirituality, Birgitta was particularly devoted to the Passion of Christ. Her *vita* reports that Birgitta felt such affection for Christ's passion that she could scarcely think about it without tears (AP 76). On Fridays she apparently kept the memory of the crucifixion alive in her body by pouring hot wax on her skin and driving nails into her flesh to keep the wounds from healing (AP 99). Near the end of her life, she went on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, where in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre she imaginatively entered into the crucifixion scene.

Birgitta's texts contain a number of visions describing the crucifixion in tremendous detail.<sup>24</sup> Each of these revelations, which were often mediated through the Virgin Mary, contains gruesome scenes of tremendous pain and anguish accompanied by weeping. In these passages tears fill the eyes of the suffering Christ (IV 70.1, 14), and streams of blood from the crown of thorns flow down his face, filling and covering his eyes (IV 70.13). Most often in these scenes, however, Birgitta sees the grieving Mother of Christ weeping "inconsolably" (I 10.25), together with Christ's friends. As Mary

22 On contrition and tears, see Blanchfield 2012, pp. xxi–xxx.

23 Atkinson 1983, pp. 129–156.

24 On Birgitta's visions of the crucifixion, see Morris 1999, pp. 129–135.

tells Birgitta, “when I contemplated the places where [...] his hands and feet would be nailed at the crucifixion, my eyes filled with tears and my heart was torn with sadness. My Son looked at my crying eyes then and became deathly saddened” (I 10.13). Birgitta, too, reportedly wept in sorrow when she saw her detailed vision in Jerusalem (VII 15.1). On that occasion, she saw Mary shaking “so violently and with such bitter sighs that it could clearly be seen in her face and expression that a sharp sword of pain was piercing her soul” (VII 15.31). According to the vision, “She [Mary], John, and the other women [at the crucifixion] washed him [Christ’s dead body] with their tears as they wept” (VII 15.33).<sup>25</sup>

In Birgitta’s visions on the Passion – as in other religious traditions and medieval Christian writings – weeping has cosmological power. In the *Revelations* Mary’s tears, together with Christ’s blood, are understood to reverse the effects of the Fall of Adam and Eve. In a key passage, found in I 35, Mary identifies Christ’s suffering with her pain at the crucifixion, and she also identifies his heart with her heart.<sup>26</sup> In this vision (I 35.1, 3, 6, 7), the Mother of Christ speaks to Birgitta, saying:

Consider, daughter, the passion of my Son. [...] When he was suffering, it felt like my own heart was suffering. When something is half outside and half inside and the part outside gets hurt, the part inside feels a similar pain. In the same way, when my Son was being scourged and wounded, it was as though my own heart was being scourged and wounded. [...] As he gazed down at me from the cross and I gazed at him, my tears gushed from my eyes like blood from veins. [...] His pain was my pain and his heart my heart. Just as Adam and Eve sold the world for a single apple, you might say that my Son and I bought the world back with a single heart. And so, my daughter, think of me as I was at the death of my Son.

In this profoundly theological revelation Mary’s gushing tears are an outward sign of her affections and desires, symbolized by her heart. For Birgitta, the heart of Mary represented the Virgin’s assent to God’s will and her deep motherly love for Christ, which were realized in the Incarnation and revealed at the Passion. Mary’s heart was so unified with Christ’s heart that she herself suffered together with him as he was beaten and crucified. Birgitta not only meditated on Mary’s deep pain at the crucifixion, but even more significantly, she considered Mary’s inward suffering, represented by her tears, to be analogous to Christ’s physical suffering, represented by his blood. As Mary states, “my tears gushed from my eyes like blood from veins”. Her tears were a sign of her compassion for Christ and even her participation with Christ in the work of human redemption. (See IV 78: Christ “opened up heaven with the blood of his heart”.) For this reason, Birgitta’s *Revelations* disclose that Christ and his mother “saved the

25 On Mary Magdalene’s tears in the *Revelations*, see VI 119.

26 See also I 10: “It seemed to me as if my own heart had been pierced when I saw my beloved Son’s heart pierced.”

human being as with one heart, [Christ] with the suffering of the heart and flesh, she in the pain and love of the heart" (*Extrav.* 3.5). With their united hearts, Christ and Mary rescued the world from sin, reversing the harm committed by Adam and Eve.

The use of the symbol of the unified hearts is by no means original with Birgitta; a similar expression can be traced at least as far back to Arnold of Bonneval (d. after 1256), an associate of Bernard of Clairvaux who reflected on Mary's participation in the work of redemption. Yet, for Birgitta the union of their hearts is a vivid articulation of Mary's active participation in the economy of salvation, what has come to be known as Mary's "co-redemption". Analogous to Christ's sacrificial blood, Mary's tears, according to this understanding, are a potent and efficacious bodily fluid that participated in accomplishing the salvation of the human race, by conquering the power of hell and opening up the gates of heaven (cf. IV 78). In keeping with Birgitta's "affective" spirituality, Christians are enjoined throughout the *Revelations* to be mindful of Mary's sorrows and tears, contemplating them and imitating them as much as possible, while also urging others to also have compassion for Mary's sorrows (II 24). In the *Revelations* Mary's compassion for her Son's suffering is paradigmatic for all Christians, even as it has cosmic significance for effecting human salvation.<sup>27</sup>

### *Tears as an instrument of redemption*

Furthermore, when we examine the *Revelations* and other related documents, we see that Birgitta's own weeping, especially when performed in the context of her motherhood, carries similar cosmological significance, as her tears intercede for others and participate in the redemption of her children's souls. In the *Revelations* Birgitta regularly intercedes with God for others, weeping and entreating God to have mercy on the souls of the dead (III 13; IV 55; VI 40). This practice is in keeping with what Barbara Newman identifies as medieval "purgatorial piety," which "occupied a privileged place and took on a distinctive character" in the religious lives of women, while not women's exclusive domain.<sup>28</sup> As Newman points out, women's intercessory activity for the dead was a form of *imitatio Mariae*, emulating the compassion of the Virgin, who was "the supreme hope of souls in purgatory and those that would otherwise be damned".<sup>29</sup>

In Birgitta's case the distinctive feature of her ministry to the dead was her profuse weeping over the fate of her children's souls and struggle with the devil for their redemption. Birgitta's most bitter and prolonged weeping occurred out of distress and over concern for her children. On several occasions in the *Revelations* and canoniza-

27 On Birgitta's devotion to the heart of Mary, see Sahlin 1993, pp. 213–227. On Mary as the paradigm of "cosmic weeping," see Patton & Hawley 2005, p. 7.

28 Newman 1995, p. 111.

29 *Ibid.*, p. 112.



tion *vita*, we are also told that Birgitta viewed the spiritual status of her children to be her maternal responsibility. The *vita* reports that she wept on a daily basis over the sins of her children, fearing that they would offend God by neglecting to fast or by engaging in worldly political matters (AP 79). Her concern for the welfare of her children extended into their afterlives, and her prayers and weeping were considered to be instrumental in securing her children's release from the clutches of the devil, as we see in a few remarkable passages from her *vita* and *Revelations*. The offering of her tears and her other actions on behalf of her children's souls (e.g. almsgiving, masses, and pilgrimages) were vicarious payments for the debt incurred by each of their sins.

A chapter from the *Revelations* relates that when her daughter Ingeborg, who had been a Cistercian nun in Riseberga, died at a young age, Birgitta released such great tears and sighs in her oratory that all those nearby were able to hear her weeping (*Extrav.* 98.2). In hagiographic fashion the passage also tells us that Birgitta did not weep because her daughter had died, but rather wept on account of her own shortcomings as Ingeborg's spiritual guide. In her vision Birgitta reportedly tells the Son of God that she actually rejoiced over her daughter's death, since Ingeborg's death would prevent her daughter from falling into more sin. Birgitta explains that she wept because she had not adequately instructed her daughter about God's commandments or corrected her daughter's offenses; she also wept because she regretted that she had served as a model of conceit to Ingeborg. Reassuring Birgitta about her daughter's fate, Christ declares in her vision, "Every mother who weeps because her daughter offends God and instructs her according to her best conscience is a true mother of love and a mother of tears. And her daughter, on account of her mother, is a daughter of God" (*Extrav.* 98.5). Ingeborg's salvation was assured because of the tears and loving instruction of her mother.<sup>30</sup>

In the *vita*, moreover, we read that Birgitta shed many tears over the long illness of her son Bengt (d. 1346), who died while still a child; she apparently believed that her son's illness occurred as a result of his parents' sins. Near the end of Bengt's life, the devil reportedly taunts Birgitta in a vision about her weeping: "Why, woman, with all this water of tears, are you weakening your sight and laboring in vain? Could water ascend to heaven?" (AP 92).<sup>31</sup> Christ then appears to Birgitta assuring her that Bengt's sufferings had no other cause than an infirm physical condition; in this vision Christ declares Bengt to be a "son of tears and prayers" (AP 92) and comforts Birgitta, implying that because of her tears he would put an end to Bengt's distress. As the boy's soul went forth five days later, Birgitta reportedly received a revelation from the Holy Spirit testifying to the redemptive power of the mother's tears: "Behold what tears accomplish! Now the son of waters has passed over to his rest. Therefore the devil hates the tears of good people, which proceed from divine charity" (AP 92).<sup>32</sup>

30 See Atkinson 1991, p. 176.

31 Translation by Albert Ryle Kezel, in Harris (ed.) 1990, p. 89.

32 *Ibid.*; Atkinson 1991, pp. 176–177.

Even more exceptionally striking is a series of visions about her son Karl, in which Birgitta's tears, labors, and prayers were said to have made satisfaction for his sins (VII 13; AP 329, 386, 533). A worldly knight and reputed philanderer, Karl, who was perhaps his mother's favorite son, greatly worried her throughout his lifetime on account of his worldliness. He died in 1372 while traveling together with his mother on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem.<sup>33</sup> Immediately upon his death, Birgitta reportedly received a revelation in which she learns that the Virgin Mary played an extraordinary role in protecting Karl's soul from carnal thoughts as well as from the power of demons at the moment of the separation of his soul from his body. In this vision the Swedish widow learns that Mary acted as Karl's spiritual midwife – "like a woman helping another woman as she gives birth, helping the baby so that it does not die" (VII 13.1–2).

In a second, much lengthier and more dramatic revelation, the salvific power of Birgitta's own maternal tears is made evident in the struggle for Karl's soul between the Virgin Mary and the devil himself. In a vision Birgitta witnesses a great judgment scene with her son's soul trembling with fear and "naked like a newborn babe" (VII 13.12) before the throne of God. She comes to learn that her weeping for her son Karl, together with her good works and prayers, was so pleasing to God that her tears blotted out her son's sins, awakened God's mercy, and saved him from damnation. Birgitta overhears a dialogue between an angel and the devil (VII 13.60–61), with the angel telling the devil that Birgitta, the mother of Karl:

perseveringly knocked on the door of mercy with loving prayers and works of piety for his sake, shedding many thousands of tears for over thirty years in hope that God might pour his Holy Spirit into his heart so that her son might of his own free will place his property and body and soul at God's service. And God did so. This knight became so ardent that he did not wish to live for any other purpose than to follow the will of God.

The angel explains to the devil that Birgitta's tears and prayers blotted out the record of Karl's sins. The angel states that God "had compassion on her sighs and gave her son the grace of obtaining contrition for every sin he committed". For that reason Karl's sins were even "erased and discarded" from the devil's memory (VII 13.38).

In a loud exchange between an angel and the devil in this vision, the angel furthermore identifies Karl as the "Son of Tears," alluding to the title given to Augustine of Hippo in *The Confessions* on account of his mother's tears and prayers for his conversion.<sup>34</sup> In reply the devil says to the angel, loudly cursing the power of Birgitta's tears: "O, curse that sow, that pig, his mother, who had such a big belly! For there was so much water in her that her whole belly was full of fluids for tears! May she be cursed by me and all my company!" (VII 13.72). The vision concludes with the angel speaking

33 On Birgitta's son Karl, see Morris 1999, pp. 49–50.

34 Atkinson 1991, pp. 178–179.

to Birgitta, saying: "God has shown you this vision not only for your own consolation but also so that the friends of God might understand how much he is willing to do for the sake of the prayers and tears and works of his friends, when they pray with charity for others and work for them with steadfastness and good will" (VII 13.77).<sup>35</sup>

At the basis of this remarkable vision about Karl's spiritual birth through his mother's copious tears and works of mercy lies the theological understanding of redemption – the idea that the suffering of one human being for the sake of another could pay the debt incurred for sin. Birgitta does not simply weep out of love or concern for her son's soul, but she vicariously satisfies God's justice and pays for Karl's debt of sin through her tears, prayers, and other works. As Barbara Newman explains, "the ransom for original sin had been paid by Christ on the cross, but each new sin established new debt, for which justice set a price and mercy paid – sometimes with money, sometimes with masses to bathe the souls in Christ's blood. But the most common currency of women was their pain: tears wrung from the heart, prayers poured like blood from wounded spirits, [...] hunger and sickness and savage blows to the flesh."<sup>36</sup> Birgitta's overflowing tears represent her anguish on behalf of her son's sins, a kind of maternal suffering that was analogous to the Virgin Mary's own intense pain over the agony of her child. Birgitta's intercessory tears make satisfaction for Karl's offenses and effect his salvation. She pays for Karl's offenses against God with her tears, prayers, alms, and other good works, turning aside God's judgment in favor of God's mercy (see VI 13.53).<sup>37</sup>

## Conclusion

Some scholars, emphasizing the intensity of Birgitta's weeping, have interpreted her tears and other expressions of piety as pathological, as signs of a psychological disorder like hysteria<sup>38</sup> or as possible indications of a neurological disorder like epilepsy.<sup>39</sup> While tears were part of her private life of penitence and held profound theological significance, as we have seen, it appears that Birgitta's weeping, in fact, was not publicly enacted or excessive, as it was for some other medieval holy women like Marie d'Oignies, Margery Kempe, or Dorothy of Montau. Only on rare occasions do Birgitta's family members or companions indicate that they saw or heard her weeping. The *Revelations* usually do not clearly indicate in most cases whether Birgitta's tears were actually visible; the question of whether or not they were physically shed does not even seem to

35 For analysis of this vision, *ibid.*, pp. 177–180.

36 Newman 1995, p. 199.

37 On women's tears as "a powerful intercessory force" in medieval hagiography, see Bailey 2013, p. 534.

38 Andrae 1926, pp. 323–324.

39 Landtblom 2004, p. 165.

have been of great concern.<sup>40</sup> In general, as Bridget Morris points out, we know that Birgitta shunned “excessive displays of devotion” and tended to practice rather moderate forms of asceticism.<sup>41</sup>

However, by considering the motif of tears in the *Revelations* and related texts, we can catch a glimpse of the depth of Birgitta’s theological understanding. We see that for her, efficacious prayers and repentance for sins must be accompanied by sincere remorse, represented by the outward sign of weeping. Furthermore, we learn that she held a complex concept of what it means to participate in the Passion of Christ; through her tears and anguish, the Virgin Mary participates in the salvation of humanity, and through her weeping, Birgitta effects the redemption and spiritual birth of her children. Within the religious culture of later medieval Europe, characterized by “affective” spirituality, Birgitta’s tears – whether they were physically shed or not – capitalized on gendered stereotypes of women’s greater susceptibility to crying and closer identification with mercy, yet at the same time they became a powerful source of her religious authority and reputation for holiness.

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40 See Nagy 2004, p. 127, where she states that “whether the spiritual tears were shed bodily or not was rarely of interest to medieval authors”.

41 See Bridget Morris’s introduction to Birgitta, *Liber caelestis*, transl. Searby 2012, p. 9. See also VI 92 and 122 for revelations concerning the importance of restraint in devotional life. One story from the *Diarium Vadstenense*, however, represents Birgitta as constantly weeping when she opposed the marriage of her daughter Märta to Sigvid Ribbing; see Morris 1999, pp. 46–47.

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# True Emotion or Convention?

## Sorrow and Joy in the Vadstena Memorial Book

*Claes Gejrot*

[...] they exchanged a few words, and when the opportunity arose, the ailing man said, "Sir, I cannot fall asleep on any single day unless I first have been crying." Another friar standing close to them then said: "It is a miracle that he is able to weep constantly in this way. Me – alas! – I never cry." The other man then remarked: "So it is, because he is by nature a person very easily attracted to tears."<sup>1</sup>

Tears, tears, tears! Many years ago, when I worked with the *Diarium Vadstenense* – the memorial book of the Birgittine brothers of the medieval Swedish house Vadstena – I often thought that texts such as the one quoted here were exaggerated, hard to handle, a bit strange, sometimes even amusing. Of course, entries like this can be said to belong to a genre that is alive also today. Would it not be equally unexpected to find really realistic portrayals in the obituaries printed in our daily newspapers? Naturally enough, these texts often show what is believed and felt to be the positive sides of the deceased one: *de mortuis nil nisi bene*. In Vadstena, at the beginning of the fifteenth century, the ability to shed tears profusely and endlessly – as in this example from the year 1405 – was apparently regarded as a fine quality, a sign of sanctity and devotion, something worth recording.

The *Diarium* is written in a Latin and a style typical of its time. It covers internal and external events of different kinds in the late Middle Ages, from the late fourteenth century and all the way until the first decades of the Reformation period (the oldest texts were written in the 1380s, the last entries in the 1540s; in its final state the book comprised 252 pages).<sup>2</sup> This memorial book was safely kept in the brothers' part of

<sup>1</sup> "[...] inter aliqua verba occasione sic se offerente dixit idem infirmus: 'Domine, non habeo requiem aliquo die, antequam habuero unum fletum.' Tunc quidam astans dixit [...]: 'Mirum est, quod sic potest lacrimari continue. Ve michi, qui nuncquam fleo.' 'Quia', inquit, 'talis est nature, quod de facili potest se provocare ad lacrimas.'" (*Diarium Vadstenense*, n. 132:12–14.)

<sup>2</sup> The Latin text was published in Gejrot 1988 (edition with introduction) and again in Gejrot



Vadstena Abbey and entrusted to one brother after another. Thus, a long chain of subsequent brothers took care of the book, supervised the writing and wrote texts themselves. About thirty different scribes have been detected, many of them identified by name. In fact, the book must have become increasingly valuable to the brothers, as something precious left to them from the pioneers of the monastery. It also obtained a high degree of confidentiality. Secrets – for instance instructions on how to reach the hidden monastery treasury – could be revealed to subsequent readers of the book.<sup>3</sup>

To a reader today, it soon becomes obvious that the contents and the literary or factual styles used change throughout the book. The way of writing that we saw illustrated by the text just quoted is found in what is described as a memorial book but clearly borders on the writing of legends. During the early years this is not unusual. Let us look briefly at another text from the same period, originating from the same author as the obituary above. In a similar fashion, the *Diarium* writer tells us about a Roman bishop, in our text called Magister Robertus, who had reached the east coast of Sweden after an adventurous sea journey in the winter storms in the first week of January in 1406. He had been saved by praying to St. Birgitta and now he wanted to visit her shrine at Vadstena. He stayed for a while in Linköping before continuing to Vadstena, accompanied by some of the Linköping canons.

Arriving at Skänninge he took off his shoes and came to the monastery [*a distance of approx. 15 km*] completely barefoot, although the ground was covered with snow – almost up to one's knees – and it was the coldest day of the whole year. One of the canons who followed him from Linköping knelt before him and asked with tears in his eyes that he must not kill himself. Magister Robertus answered him kindly and jokingly: "Get thee hence, Satan!" And as they thus walked along the road, they lost their way and walked at least ten kilometres too far. Yet he did not refrain from his decision to walk without shoes until he had reached the monastery.<sup>4</sup>

It is of course impossible to say what is true in this rather charming story. The visitor, Magister Robertus, reacts with humor to the tears of the anxious Swedish canon. The

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1996 (Latin text with translation into Swedish and a commentary on the contents). Below, quotations taken from the *Diarium Vadstenense* text are marked out by *DV*, followed by a reference to the numbers of the relevant entries. The same numbering is used in both editions.

3 *DV* 523 (see also Gejrot 1996, p. 236, commentary).

4 "[...] cum pervenit ad Skänningiam, depositis calciamentis et sic omnino nudatis pedibus ambulans venit ad monasterium, cum tamen tota terra operta erat nive, quasi usque genu, ac eciam illo die tam intensum erat frigus, quod per totum annum ab ante intensius non fuerat. Unus vero canonicorum, qui eum sequebantur de Lyncopia, genuflectens pro eo lacrimose rogabat, ne se interficeret. Cui benigne ac iocose respondit dicens 'Vade retro Satana!'. Et sic ambulantes per viam errabant de via recta bene per unum miliare. Non tamen desistit ab incepto proposito, donec ad monasterium pervenit." (*DV* 137:6–9.)

foreign guest is portrayed as something fantastic, larger than life, but it is a fact that he did come to Linköping and the monastery at this time; other documents prove it.<sup>5</sup> And it is not necessary to disbelieve the basis of the *Diarium* text. But the story of the humble, humorous and barefoot man could have been exaggerated, or adapted to a certain style, well known to the potential readers.

We know the writer of these pages. His name is Thorirus Andree (or in Swedish: Tore Andersson).<sup>6</sup> In quite a few instances he let his emotions flow into his writing. We may look at a third instance of his style to see this characteristic clearly. Here, he writes about one of the daughters of the foundress, St. Birgitta. Her daughter, Cecilia Ulfsdotter, died in 1399 and was buried in the abbey church.<sup>7</sup> Cecilia's obituary is quite long and brings in her mother, as this excerpt shows:

She was like a second Tabitha<sup>8</sup> – full of good works – and many strange things are told about her. For, when she was still in her mother's womb, it happened that a great evildoer was engaged to Saint Birgitta's daughter. Birgitta's husband as well as the king and the councilors of the realm wanted it so. But it was against the Saint's will, for this man had previously caused great harm to the kingdom. Because of this, Birgitta was beset by constant crying spells. It is reported that at one time she was weeping very bitterly when the little baby inside her body cried out to her: "My dearest mother, do not kill me!"<sup>9</sup>

Our writer then goes on to describe Cecilia's complicated birth. The Virgin Mary herself enters the room in order to save the child and also Birgitta, who was in great danger. Cecilia's obituary ends in a typical fashion:

O happy offspring, who deserved such a midwife! Because of this, we hope that she enjoyed the same helping hand during her last moments!<sup>10</sup>

In this text we definitely see a streak of reality. It is known from other sources that Birgitta actually disliked her future son-in-law, the man engaged to her oldest daughter,<sup>11</sup>

5 *Svenskt Diplomatarium från och med 1401*, n. 3081.

6 On Thorirus Andree, see Gejrot 1988, pp. 24–29 and Nyberg 1976, pp. 223ff.

7 On Cecilia Ulfsdotter, see Nygren 1929, pp. 717–719.

8 On Tabitha (Dorcas), see Acts 9:36–42 ('Her life was full of good works and generosity towards the poor').

9 "[...] obiit venerabilis domina Cecilia [...] ut altera Tabita plena operibus bonis, de qua multa mira referuntur. Nam, cum adhuc esset in utero matris, contingebat, quod unus maximus tyrannus desponsavit quandam filiam sancte Byrgitte, quasi contra voluntatem eiusdem sancte, quia sic placuit marito suo et regi et consiliariis regni; quia magnum dampnum antea inferebat regno. Quae cum ob hoc continuis indicibiliter affligeretur fletibus, semel cum amarissime fletet, fertur infantem in utero clamasse: 'Carissima', inquit, 'mater, noli me interficere!'" (DV 100.)

10 "O, quam felix partus, qui talem meruit obstetricem! Propter quod sperandum est, quod eandem finalem habuit adiutricem." (DV 100.)

11 See Klockars 1976, pp. 76–84.

but she could not prevent the marriage. Perhaps the weeping is also true – a natural and expected reaction from a devastated mother. As is pointed out in Claire Sahlin's article in this volume (on p. 239), Birgitta's worries about her children took various forms. The way our author, Brother Thorirus, tells the story displays that he had his eyes again set on legendary material.

As a rule, the *Diarium* records the deaths of brothers and sisters in the two Vadstena convents. Furthermore, most often we find indications of a closeness in time between the deaths and the writing of the obituaries. This is of course what is expected. In these texts, it is common to find expressions and wordings showing how the deceased person had patiently endured illness, pain and various torments. It is not uncommon to find this kind of writing in modern obituaries. Perhaps, it is easy to understand: This is the sort of praise that leaves mourners with a positive lasting picture. In October 1411, the Vadstena nun Helena Sunesdotter died and subsequently received the following text in the *Diarium*:

She lived her life in severe contrition with penances and fasts. For five years she was almost constantly ill and she endured this with the greatest patience. Finally, when her body was so emaciated that it was just skin and bones, she passed away in the Lord, in the best possible way.<sup>12</sup>

As we can see, the nun's saintly patience and torments are rewarded with the best of endings. This type of entry, with the subject piously accepting what God has planned, is quite common in our book. There are a large number of obituaries that use more or less the same phrases to portray the deceased. Among other things, they can be described as faithful or pious (*fidelis, devotus*), as careful in patience (*paciencie observator*) or as zealous members of the order (*zelator ordinis, zelatrix regule*).

By the mid-fifteenth century, it is possible to detect a change in the tone in the obituaries. We can still find these conventional phrases, but not so often. The tone is instead brief and more truthful, as in the case of a nun who died suddenly in April 1492:

Sister Birgitta Jönsdotter passed away on the day before the feast of St. Ambrose, after the midday meal. She died suddenly, without having received the sacraments, at the third hour. She was buried during the sisters' night vespers.<sup>13</sup>

12 "Que in magna penitencia et rigiditate cum disciplinis et abstinenciis deducebat vitam suam. Per quinque annos quasi continue infirma fuit; quam infirmitatem in maxima paciencia tolerabat. Tandem totaliter exhausto corpore, ita quod nichil nisi pellis cum ossibus remaneret, optimo fine quievit in Domino." (DV 203.)

13 "Item, soror Birgitta Iønssadottir obiit [...] in profesto sancti Ambrosii, post prandium, sine sacramentis subito capta circa horam 3<sup>am</sup>; et sub completorio sororum tradita est sepulture." (DV 894.)

But aside from the obituaries, there are also stories told which ring more of human fears, situations where weeping seems only natural as part of the narration. One example of this can be seen in an entry from the summer of 1409. Here we are presented with the horrified reactions of a mother who found her child in a water tank on their country farm:

While they were outdoors busying themselves with work, they carried with them their little daughter, only a year and a half, who then fell into a nearly-full water tank, drowned and choked completely. After a long while, her mother came in and found the girl dead. She cried and wept and called for her husband and his father and others that were on the farm.<sup>14</sup>

The tears feel real, we can all feel the mother's anxiety. What then happens is that the parents offer generous gifts to St. Birgitta, but this is not enough. The little girl is miraculously brought back to life only when the desperate mother has promised to give her daughter as a nun to Birgitta's monastery at Vadstena, when she has reached the proper age.<sup>15</sup> The whole text has the form of a case for a miracle collection. The name of the family and the place where they live are duly marked out, as are the relevant dates. The accident is described in a detailed, realistic and careful way. This type of writing is what is expected in this genre, which calls for a factual report for the use in a canonization process. We cannot say why this story did not make it into the official Birgitta miracle collections. These have been preserved to this day in large, official register volumes. The facts mentioned in miracle narrations had to be confirmed in order to pass the examination. Perhaps something was missing here.<sup>16</sup>

Returning to the obituaries, it is interesting to see that some of the *Diarium* writers show an exceptional interest in sensational affairs. This is especially true of one of the

14 In Latin, the whole passage reads as follows: "Dixerunt, quod filia eorum, quam tunc secum portabant (que tunc erat etatis unius anni cum dimidio vel circa), ipsis existentibus extra domum et in laboribus occupatis cecidit in quoddam dolium, quod erat quasi plenum aqua, ubi submersa totaliter erat suffocata. Sed post longam moram mater intravit, et filiam mortuam inveniens cum fletu et eiulatu maritum vocavit et patrem et ceteros, qui erat in curia. Et ipsis presentibus fecerunt pater et mater votum sancte Birgitte, quod, si filia mortua vite restitueretur, offerre<n>t pro ea unam ymaginem ceream et unam albam ovem cum una media marcha denariorum. Voto autem sic emisso subito visa est puella unum modicum dare singultum, qualem morientes dant, dum rumpitur cor. Et tunc omnes quasi desperantes de vita dixerunt omnes eam vere esse mortuam. Et sic ipsis permanentibus bene per tres horas nullum penitus signum vite in ipsa viderunt. Dixit tandem mesta mater: 'Si Deus omnipotens dederit isti filie mee pristinam vitam, omnino dabo ipsam, cum ad etatem debitam pervenerit, ad monasterium sancte Birgitte in Vazsteno.' Sed mox voto facto in continenti cepit infantula flere; et omnimode est restituta vite et sanitati." (DV 176.)

15 According to the Birgittine Rule, no nun could be admitted before she was eighteen years old, see Birgitta, *Regula Salvatoris*, ed. Eklund 1975, chapter 19, p. 168.

16 On the miracle collections concerning St. Birgitta, see Fröjmark 1992, pp. 31–41.

brothers who was writing entries in the first part of the fifteenth century. In this part of the book, the narration borders on gossip. Here, he shows genuine – or feigned – outrage over the luxuries found in the cell of a deceased sister in 1422:

She left behind many superfluous things, such as fur lined garments and the like. – May they not have been her own!<sup>17</sup>

In the same spirit we can also point to other scandalous news reported through the *Diarium* at this time. Some of these entries could in fact have been adapted for the readers of our modern tabloids. Here is an example from 1415, when rumors of a devastating fire reached the abbey:

A fire broke out in an estate belonging to the abbot of Alvastra. A large part of the buildings was destroyed in the fire, and so were two persons lying in one bed. Some say they were married, others claim they were not. It was a horrendous sight: the man's feet and hands had burned, the woman's head, hands and feet all the way to the trunk were consumed by the fire.<sup>18</sup>

But the scandals are more or less restricted to a few writers. Let us leave this gossiping style and instead take a look at other expressions of emotion. There are authors in the book who seem to strive to give accurate descriptions of memorable events. In fact, texts giving an impression of neutrality and authenticity are also to be found.

There is a famous passage from the year 1455, the story of the little princess who was introduced in the abbey. The princess is the nine-year old daughter of the ruling Swedish king, Karl Knutsson (Bonde).<sup>19</sup> The narrative paints a picture of the events that unfolded that day. They seem true, not least because the author has chosen to include details that were less favorable to the abbey itself. I am referring to the obvious transgressions<sup>20</sup> made by the king that day:

[...] there was a breach of the clausure. First, King Karl with a crown on his head entered the brothers' choir and stayed there throughout the service, dressed in a white tunic and cowl.

17 "Hec reliquit post se multa superflua – et utinam non propria! – scilicet forraturas et similia." (*DV* 331.)

18 "[...] succensus est ignis in curia abbatis de Alvastra. Et combussit magnam partem domorum ac insuper duos iacentes in lecto uno; quos aliqui dicunt fuisse coniuges, aliqui non. Et erat horribilis visio: nam de viro combusti pedes et manus erant, de femina vero caput, manus et pedes usque ad truncum corporis." (*DV* 250.)

19 On King Karl Knutsson, see Kumlien 1973–1975, pp. 622–630.

20 To these royal infringements (even the king was not allowed within the *clausura*) we could also add the fact that the king had procured a papal dispensation in order for his young daughter to enter the monastery (cf. above on the nuns' entrance age). The dispensation is mentioned in *DV* 640 where the *Diarium* writer expresses his concern about a papal bull contrary to the Birgittine Rule (*contraria regule*). See also the commentary in Gejrot 1996, p. 276.

And when the Gospel should have been read, he said himself *Dominus vobiscum* and the rest of the holy Gospel according to John. [...] The choir and a section of the floor until the nuns' entrance were covered with wall hangings and fabric. The introduction ceremonies were performed with great pomp. Ladies and girls, musicians with slide trombones and other musical instruments went first and led the train of virgins as far as the door through which they would enter. When the princess received the habit no one could see pride, laughter or sadness in her, but only spiritual fortitude and devotion. But when she was handed over to the abbess, she wanted to rush from her father's hands and join the sisters inside the convent showing a keen desire to enter the monastery.<sup>21</sup>

In our search for expressions of emotions, it is interesting to see that during these apparently joyful festivities the little girl stood beside her father patiently waiting and showing no signs of joy or sorrow whatsoever. She seems to have been completely neutral – perhaps careful instructions had been given to her, perhaps she was a bit afraid? Are we dealing with conventions or true emotions? It is hard to tell. Maybe the writer of this passage has chosen to describe her as calm and quiet, in a completely expected way, fitting for a princess and future nun. Her only emotional outburst came at the end when she eagerly wanted to throw herself into the arms of the abbess and into her permanent inclusion.

The introduction ceremonies of the princess were of course distinctly royal affairs. And at about this time, the *Diarium* gradually grows into what can best be described as a political chronicle, culminating in the complicated web of Swedish politics, and the wars of the 1460s. This is not the time to dig into these detailed and long narrations, but it will suffice to conclude that the style in this part is best summarized as superficially objective, but politically biased.<sup>22</sup>

We have seen tears, anxiety and scandals. Our next example gives evidence of someone being completely overwhelmed and perhaps scared by the sudden burden of a new assignment. We are now in Vadstena again, in 1456, one year after the ceremonies surrounding the young princess who became a nun. This brief text shows how an abbess could react after having been elected:

21 “[...] facta est transgressio clausure: Nam primo dominus rex *Karolus* coronatus intravit chorum fratrum per totum illud officium ibi manens alba subtili et cappa indutus. Et cum evangelium legi debuisset, ipse dixit ‘Dominus vobiscum’ et sequencia sancti evangelii secundum Iohannem. [...] Chorus et pars pavimenti usque ad portam sororum fuit totum tapetis et panno contextum. In istarum consecracione fuit magna pompa dominarum et puellarum, tubarum ductilium et aliorum ludorum, que omnia deducebant et precedebant virgines usque ad ostium, quo debuerunt intrare. In filia regis non superbia, risus sive luctus [non] videbatur, sed constancia animi et devocio in habitus suscepcione. Sed quando commendabatur abbatisse, voluit prosilire de manibus patris et venire ad sorores, que steterunt intra monasterium, desiderium et amorem intrandi monasterium representans.” (*DV* 658:2–6.)

22 The relevant section is *DV* 715–799. On this part of the *Diarium*, see Gejrot 1988, pp. 42–51; Olesen 1991, pp. 199–203; Gejrot 2000, pp. 531–534.

Sister Cecilia Petersdotter was elected abbess on the same day. She would not, under any circumstances, either by instruction or by threat, agree to her election. Therefore, she disappeared, against the will of everyone, and hid in a corner in a house for several hours.<sup>23</sup>

As it turns out, when she was found someone else was chosen and she did not have to fulfil the commission. The fact that the story reached the secluded male part of the monastery shows the level of concern that this refusal created.

Can we find happiness and joy in the book? Yes, we find examples also in this direction. The feasts at the introduction of the princess is one instance, but the huge arrangements following the translation feast of St. Birgitta's daughter, Katarina, are even more conspicuous.

This feast of Katarina can be seen as a part of the endeavor to have her sanctified. It took place in and around the abbey church in 1489, and it was a glorious moment for the Birgittines at Vadstena.<sup>24</sup> This is shown not least by the long and detailed text that was entered into the *Diarium* after the events. This text describes how the Swedish regent, Sten Sture the Elder, and other secular leaders of the country came to the abbey in the first days of August, accompanied by bishops, priests and a number of laymen. The celebrations were indeed sumptuous and went on for several days. Our author did not hesitate to use expressions that displayed the joy that surrounded the festivities. The sisters sang a sequence with jubilant voices – *iubilosa voce*. And then, outside, there was a procession in joyous happiness (*in leticia et exultacione*):

And so, the clergy and the bishops taking the lead, the procession first entered the church via the brothers' cloister, then they went out again, all over the monastery cemetery, in joyous happiness. And while people everywhere applauded and rejoiced, a new song was sung to the Lord.<sup>25</sup>

We have seen examples of various emotions – sorrow, fear, joy. Are there *Diarium* authors who change their attitude in their writing along the way? This may be a hard question to answer, as the tone can shift somewhat in accordance with the subject matter. In my opinion, the participating authors and editors have been true to their own way of writing. They have all acted according to the special demands and conditions of their own time and circumstances. This means that at the beginning of the text legendary material is a central part of what is important to the writer. At another stage,

23 "[...] electa est in abbatissam soror Cecilia Pædhersdottir. Que nulla ratione, exhortacione seu comminatione, voluit consentire eleccioni de ipsa facte. Ydeo recessit omnibus invititis occultans se in angulis cuiusdam domus per plures horas." (*DV* 674.)

24 On the festivities in 1489, see Fritz & Elfving 2004, pp. 14–26.

25 "Et sic precedente clero et episcopis primo intra ecclesiam per ambitus fratrum deinde egrediendo per totum cimiterium monasterii in leticia et exultacione vulgo universaliter applaudente et congaudente canticum novum Domino cecinerunt." (*DV* 886:19.)



we find personal opinions – even gossip – and at a third stage it may be the political development in the outside world and a more objective kind of reporting. We can of course sometimes speak of the demands of genre convention, but in my opinion, the changing face of the *Diarium* has more to do with the authors being true to their own attitudes and thoughts. Sometime the writers could also go further in expressing their opinions. In the *Diarium Vadstenense* there is material that has been exposed to hard censorship (we have not treated this in this brief paper), there are in fact both politically biased texts and objective reports.

So, to conclude, the obituaries quoted in this article contain, as it were, some clearly idealistic descriptions and some that seem to be more authentic portrayals. Do we find true emotions or conventions? There are in fact examples of both these characteristics, as we have seen. All in all, if we are looking for something like a true character of this text as a whole, or rather, the intention of the authors behind it, perhaps the wisest solution is to view it as a text that has undergone a long evolution. It has passed through the hands of many writers and editors, it has existed for many years. In it we see not one text, characterized by one genre, but many texts that have taken the changing form given to work during a long series of years by its successive authors – Birgittine brothers who shared many things, but in writing kept their distinctive expressions.

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# Emotional Imagery in Anticlerical Preaching

Roger Andersson

It is absolutely clear, perhaps even self-evident, that preaching was an event where you could expect feelings of various kinds to be expressed and experienced. The sermon is a genre of rhetoric and all rhetoric theory, such as the *ars praedicandi*, prescribes the necessity of the preacher's use of emotional appeal in combination with the voice of reason to be able to be fully persuasive.

In fact, we have every reason to believe that not only sermons but also other ecclesiastical celebrations in earlier times may have been, to a much larger extent than we normally assume, the stage for an amalgam of emotions, not to mention a diversity of activities: running about, laughing, crying, drinking and all sorts of things. Therefore, it is not surprising to learn that in the ninth century Hrabanus Maurus was already making the following complaint:

Moreover, when the clergy carried out the crosses and relics the people did not pray or follow with praises, but leapt on their horses and rode around the fields laughing and egging each other on. Not only this, but they also prevented those who wanted to pray from doing so, and then afterwards invited their neighbors and friends to their banquets instead of the poor, played instruments and drank too much.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Hrabanus Maurus, *Homiliae* 19, PL 110:38a–c. Here and in the rest of this article the translations from Latin are my own. In some cases they render the contents quite freely rather than offering exact linguistic counterparts. The complete Latin text reads as follows: “Cum autem sanctae cruces et sanctorum reliquiae cum litaniiis a clero exportantur, ipsi non insistant precibus, neque sequuntur vexillum sanctae crucis cum laudibus, sed super phaleratos resiliunt equos, discurrunt per campos, ora dissolvunt risu, alterutrumque se praecurrere gestiunt, in altum clamorem cum cachinno extollunt, et non solum haec faciendo ipsi inutiles fiunt, sed etiam alios ab intentione precum impediunt: postquam autem domum veniunt, convocant ad convivium non pauperes, vel caecos aut debiles, secundum praeceptum Domini, sed vicinos ac sodales suos qui sint ejusdem voti atque ejusdem studii: vacant epulis studentque calicibus epotandis; acquirunt si possunt musicorum instrumenta, tympanum, citharam, tibiam et lyram. Inter quae nimia pocula, cantant carmina daemonum arte confecta, sicque diem totum cum nocte consumunt.”

It goes without saying that Hrabanus belongs to another era than the one which interests us here, an era that also was deeply concerned with the conversion of pagans. Nevertheless, what this story seems to tell us is that the border between different parts of life were not as distinct in those days as they are today. The emotions and intellectual reasoning may not have been regarded as two fundamentally different approaches to life, but as two aspects of a more all-embracing unity instead.

We see something similar in the elaborate late medieval liturgy for Good Friday, by some called a *tempus flendi*, a time to weep, inviting the churchgoers to engage in emotional outbursts and including imaginatively compelling elements such as creeping (barefoot) to the Cross, or the symbolic burial of Christ (of course here the Host) in the "Easter Sepulchre".<sup>2</sup> Aided by this, the Good Friday preachers did what they could to make people respond in an appropriate way,<sup>3</sup> and according to one of them, the Passion of Christ, re-enacted on this day in most churches, should "draw tears from the eyes and sighs from the heart of every good Christian".<sup>4</sup>

The Swedish preachers from Vadstena Abbey could evoke emotions as well. The famous Acho Iohannis, for example, was apparently very fond of the following little story which he told again and again in his sermons:<sup>5</sup>

When the Holy Father St. Pachomius was praying, demons gathered in front of him. Before his very eyes they bound together the leaves of a huge tree with sturdy ropes, and then they pulled by turns, egging each other on with loud voices. By doing so, they tried to make Pachomius laugh, and thus distract him from his prayers.<sup>6</sup>

Even if the original purpose was to highlight Pachomius's steadfastness, it is almost unthinkable that this endearing story did not make the audience in the abbey church in Vadstena burst out in laughter. And it is the Vadstena preaching which will be in focus here, more specifically one remarkable and quite outspoken preacher, whose sermons are recorded in two manuscripts (Uppsala, Universitetsbiblioteket [Uppsala University Library], C 317 and C 389, henceforth C 317 and C 389), believed to have

2 On these topics, see for example Duffy 2005, pp. 22–37.

3 See in more detail Johnson 2012.

4 "Nam ista benedicta passio Christi isto die trahere debet lacrimas de oculis et singultus de corde cuiuslibet boni Christiani"; see the edition in Wenzel 1994, p. 218 (translation, p. 219) and Johnson 2012, p. 122; cf. also Andersson 2011.

5 Acho entered the abbey in 1416 and died in 1453. From 1442 he was bishop of Västerås. On his life and works, see Berggren 2009, pp. XXXIV–XXXVI; on Vadstena preaching in general, see Andersson & Borgehammar 1997; Andersson 2001.

6 "Vnde eciam legitur de beato Pachomio, quod ipso orante, demones ante eum conglobati, arboris folium coram eo magis funibus colligare videbantur et cum summo conamine trahere sese inuicem, magnis vocibus cohortantes. Et hoc faciebant, vt mentem eius ad risum prouocarent et mentem eius ab oracionibus distraherent." Here quoted from the manuscript Uppsala, Universitetsbiblioteket, C 326, fol. 285r.



*Drawing in manuscript C 389 (inside of back cover), Uppsala University Library, first half of the fifteenth century. The drawing was possibly made by the anonymous preacher discussed in the article. © Uppsala University Library.*

been written during the first half of the fifteenth century. Unfortunately, the identity of this preacher has not been determined, but he is known to always add a personal touch to his sermons, and he never hesitates to criticize the sins of the audience and especially the vices of the clergy fiercely. He is deeply rooted in the tradition from St. Birgitta and her *Revelations*. In fact, his sermons are imbued with quotations from the *Revelations*, and this to such an extent that Stephan Borgehammar has assumed that his:

[...] fervent promotion of Birgitta should perhaps be seen in relation to the criticism levelled against her and her Order at the council of Basel.<sup>7</sup>

And, as both Monica Hedlund and Claire Sahlin have so clearly demonstrated, he was eager to advance the idea that Birgitta was indeed a true prophet, which was not at all self-evident in those days.<sup>8</sup>

The focus of this study is how this particular preacher uses rhetorical images to illustrate priestly vice. And indeed, anticlericalism has been put forward as an important characteristic of Birgitta's spirituality, and therefore also presumably of her followers' as well. In this, as in many other aspects, she was a child of her times. The priestly order, the *sacerdotium*, had been the subject of much debate since the days of Gregory VII. And in 1215, the Fourth Lateran Council managed, at least on the official level, to establish uniformity in the Church by stipulating for example how the administration of the Sacraments, in particular the Eucharist, should be understood and implemented, or by reinforcing the requirement of priestly celibacy.

But the reformers constantly sought new paths during the last two centuries of the medieval period. One important aspect concerned the view on the priestly office, and in particular the sacramental functions. What was considered failure by the priests, led astray by pride and avarice, to fulfil their functions was subject to a close and critical scrutiny, not only in sermons but also in other related genres throughout Europe. All this is well known and well attested. Even though there was no general hostility between the secular clergy and Vadstena Abbey, we certainly have enough contemporary evidence to claim that at least some Vadstena preachers scrutinized clerical vice, even in their sermons *ad populum*. In a letter from the second half of the 1450s, the Chapter of Linköping directs a complaint to the abbey, more precisely the Confessor General Michael Sunonis. The canons are deeply concerned by the fact that in their sermons the Vadstena preachers attack and criticize the secular clergy. If such accusations are

<sup>7</sup> Borgehammar 1995, p. 95.

<sup>8</sup> Several sermons by this preacher are analyzed from this perspective in Hedlund 1993, pp. 319–321 and Sahlin 2001, pp. 212–220.

to be made, it should be in a more appropriate place and in Latin, so that the people's confidence in the clergy is not harmed in any way.<sup>9</sup>

We now return to our nameless preacher, who seems to speak in a similar vein and who is definitely no less fervent than his fellow brothers. And, as could be expected, he draws many of his views on contemporary priests from the *Revelations* of St. Birgitta:

The leaders of the Church commit today in secret ugly deeds that are disgraceful even to pronounce. Christ sees a broad spectrum of detestable things in the Church of today, and all of these things are recounted in the *Revelations*. Here, every kind of clerical vice and corruption of laudable customs is enumerated and lamented.<sup>10</sup>

To some extent this anticlericalism is conveyed by means of indignant exclamations, to some extent by means of a hyperbolic style. But the most important stylistic device is beyond all doubt the pictorial language and the use of images, images that are based on correspondence between outer and inner qualities. Such an evocative imagery certainly has the capacity to appeal to a broad variety of emotions in the hearts of the listeners.

In one sermon for the feast St. Petrus ad vincula (1 August), an important day of pilgrimage, we find a long enumeration of symbols to which different sinners may be likened. This shows how the *Revelations* could be used actively by a preacher as a thesaurus; and the list is probably meant to be used as a help for him to formulate his speech. The numerous references to where in the *Revelations* a certain metaphor can be found help him retrieve the actual passage. The preacher lists no less than twenty-five beastly symbols, and their spiritual meaning.

These abominations are contained in various vices, signified by different things. First, pride is signified by a butterfly (III, 14 and IV, 112). Avarice is compared to a vulture (IV, 52). Insatiable cupidity is compared to wolves (II, 30). Those who plunder the things and possessions of others are compared to a bear (IV, 46). Also those who serve God for the sake of such worldly things are compared to a bear (IV, 114). Some mighty people are compared to a fox (VIII, 17),

9 "Absit a nobis, fratres, quod per hoc intendimus defendere vicia cleri aut prohibere, quod curati non arguantur seu eorum excessus aut mali mores non corrigantur, sed teste Deo vnanimiter affectamus, quod totus clerus pro suis excessibus in lingua latina et loco apto moneantur, arguantur et, quantum in vobis fierit, corrigantur ac ad more bonos et statum clericalem debite reducantur, adeo quod ex hoc nullum scandalum in populo gerenretur", ed. Höjer 1906, p. 49.

10 "Possumus eciam intelligere principes ecclesiarum in tenebris facere, quod turpe est dicere. Quales autem abominaciones nunc Christus videt in ecclesia ex libris reuelacionum sancte Byrgitte satis accipi potest. Vbi omnium viciorum summa et omnium generaliter statuum corruptio in sancta ecclesia de sua laudabili dispositione transformata deplangitur" (C 389, fol. 118v). For quotations from C 317 and C 389 I have used the preliminary transcriptions by Josef Redfors for the project *Vadstenabrödernas predikan* ("The Preaching of the Vadstena Friars"). All quotations have been checked against the manuscripts by myself.



and other mighty people are compared to a wolf (VIII, 16). Ambitious priests who disregard the ecclesiastical offices in favor of worldly tasks are like swine (VII, 29). Clerics who are being removed from their office are compared to an ass (VI, 22). Those who turn the emotion towards what is transitory and pay little attention to what is eternal are likened to a toad (VI, 45). The prelates of the church are like an ape (III, 11), and also other prelates are like a locust (III, 15), and some prelates like a tortoise (III, 7). The emperors of Rome are likened to toads and snakes (IV, 5); pompous people with superfluous clothing to a peacock and a hedgehog (VI, 84). Worldly women who give a bad example to their daughters are like a scorpion (VI, 52). Daughters who imitate their mothers are like cows walking about in mud. Now, as often as they imitate the mothers in pomp and in sins, the pain of the mothers is renewed (the same place). For such, the word "generation of vipers" [Matthew 23:33] is rightly appropriate. Rich parents of the world who instruct their sons in what is worldly are likened to snakes (VI, 32). Evil monks and friars are like lions because of malice, and like snakes because of gluttony and lust (VI, 14). Abbesses who corrupt their sisters by evil examples are compared to fat cows (VI, 98). A sinful soul is compared to a frog (I, 21). Dirty works are also compared to a frog (IV, 62). A society which gapes with astonishment before worldly things and fills itself with immoderate gluttony and with the emptiness of the world and fulfils without prudence the delight of the flesh is compared to bulls (I, 56). Likewise women, who now live without prudence in everything according to the flesh, are like mules: "Therefore delight will be separated from them, the spirit of purity will be withdrawn from them, the eternal joy will flee from them, and the spirit of impurity will inebriate them", which they followed. So says the blessed Virgin (VI, 56).<sup>11</sup>

11 "Hee autem abhominaciones, vt prefertur, in variis viciis continentur per diuersas res designate. Et primo superbia per papilionem; vnde 3 Reu cap 14 et 4 cap 112; auaricia comparatur wlturi 4 cap lii; cupiditas insaciabilis lupis 2 cap 30; alienarum rerum et possessionum iniusti diretores vrsos comparantur 4 cap 46. Item vrsos comparantur qui seruiunt Deo propter ista temporalia 4 cap 114. Item quidam potentes comparantur vulpi 8 cap xvii, et quidam potentes lupo comparantur 8 cap xvi. Ambiciosi ecclesiarum prelati officia sua relinquentes et secularia exercentes similes sunt porcis vii cap xxix. Item clerici deponendi asino 6 cap 22; affectum vertentes ad transitoria, paruipendentes perpetua buboni simulantur 6 cap xlv. Item ecclesiarum prelati simie similes sunt 3 cap xi, et quidam eciam prelati bruco ibidem cap xvi. Item quidam prelati testudini 3 cap vii. Principes Rome bufonibus et viperis 4 cap v. Item pomposi in vestibis pauoni et erinacio 6 cap 84. Item domine mundi filiabus suis praua exempla dantes simulantur scorpio 6 cap lii. Filie imitatrices matrum vaccis in luto ambulantes. Nam quociens imitantur mores matrum in pompa et peccatis, tociens innouatur pena matrum, ibidem. Istis recte conuenit illud 'genimina viperarum'. Item parentes potentes seculi instruunt filios, quomodo temporabiliter prosperentur, simulantur serpentibus 6 cap 32. Item mali religiosi propter maliciam leonibus et propter gulam et cupiditatem comparantur serpentibus 6 cap xiiii. Abbas suas sorores corrumpentes prauis exemplis comparantur vaccis pinguibus 6 cap 98. Rane comparatur anima peccatrix 1 cap 21. Item rane comparantur opera lutosa 4 cap 62. Communitas, que totis affectionibus inhiat temporalibus et implet se immoderata gula et vanitate mundi et complet absque ratione carnis sue delectacionem tauris comparantur, primo cap 56. Item femine, que [changed in MS to 'quia'] nunc viuunt sine ratione, viuunt omnino secundum carnem, similes sunt iumentis. 'Ideo transiet ab eis voluptas, recedet ab eis spiritus puritatis, fugiet ab eis gaudium eternum et inebriabit eos spiritus impuritatis quem sequebantur.' Hec beata Virgo 6 cap lvi." (C 389, fol. 119r-v. The frequent word 'capitulo' has been rendered 'cap' throughout this long quotation.)

It is probably no mere coincidence that he refers to images from the animal world. In every era animals and beasts have been used to symbolize and illustrate human conditions and emotions. And, not surprisingly, in his actual sermons this preacher from time to time includes the image of a dog. Everybody is familiar with dogs, their fidelity, harsh barking, and healing comforting tongues. More precisely, he often compares a preacher to a dog. This is a very positive image which all of us, not only dog-owners, are very likely to recognize. Since everybody is familiar with the agreeable feeling of a faithful dog licking his master or has been afraid of the horrendous barking of another and run away in fear, these feelings are easily brought to life again when the preacher uses this imagery. A dog barks to keep the flock in order, be it a flock of sheep or a flock of humans. After the barking the dog can start healing with his medicinal tongue. But the modern preachers and priests are so tepid that they do not have the courage or the moral strength to bark properly, that is to scrutinize the vices of their listeners. So selfish are they. Nothing but "mute dogs no good for barking".<sup>12</sup> So rare are such faithful, but still admonitory and reproving, priests these days that very few people expect to hear anything pertaining to divine wisdom from the pulpit.<sup>13</sup> The preacher's task and duty is to blame and reprehend sinners wherever sin occurs. Our preacher makes this perfectly clear in a sermon for the Swedish saint Ericus, when he states that priests that really care for their flock should make extensive use of "the sharpest iron of preaching".<sup>14</sup>

The preacher also uses the symbol of clouds and rain. This is quite rewarding since most people recognize the qualities of clouds and rain. In addition, they will now be able to profit from their moral significance. Everybody will understand why tears cleanse the conscience and wash away sin, if they are told that the rain washes away dregs, dirt and excrement from the streets, as our preacher so eloquently puts it.<sup>15</sup> And when we have thus been informed about the salvific powers of rain, all the preacher really has to do is to draw the obvious conclusion, namely, that modern priests are like clouds without rain,<sup>16</sup> because they are too feeble, weak and selfish to wash away sin. So there is an element of recognition involved.

Another rhetorical strategy based upon the method of recognition is the image of a child. As long as children are small, our preacher claims in a sermon on St. Petrus

12 "Canes muti non valentes latrare" (C 389, fol. 300r; a quotation from Isaiah 56:10).

13 "Pauci sunt hodie, qui diuine sapientie intendunt de prelatiis" (C 389, fol. 300r).

14 "Sacerdotes colentes populum Dei quasi vineam cum acutissimo ferro sermonis faciunt eos bonos iusticie fructus" (C 317, fol. 242r).

15 "Sicut pluuia tollit feces et mundat plateas, sic pluuia lacrimarum conscienciam purificat et feces peccatorum lauat" (C 317, fol. 96r).

16 "Nam hodie in ecclesia sunt multe nubes sine aqua, quia clerus mutus effectus est" (C 317, fol. 95v).

ad vincula, they are for natural reasons dirty, and they smell.<sup>17</sup> At those words many listeners may have smiled inwardly, recalling the upbringing of their own children, who certainly, just like all children, were sometimes in need of a good wash. Another thing is that children have not yet developed a sound discretion and understanding of things. They are not yet able to tell what is important from what is not, and sometimes they love an apple more than a castle.<sup>18</sup> A delightful picture from the world of children. The listeners continue to think for themselves, remembering all those times when their children have not been able to tell what is important from what is not. Recognition again. A feeling that creates faith, comfort and a sense of belonging. And when the moral finally comes, they are certainly also more prepared to embrace the idea that modern priests are morally malodorous, unable to make a proper distinction between bodily and spiritual pleasures, between the delights of sin and those of merit, and preferring paltry temporal good to maximal eternal good.

Obviously disgust and repugnance are equally effective. Those, be they priests or other sinners, who find joy in looking back and remembering their sins from the past, are condemned. The wife of Lot who looked back at Sodom and was transformed into a pillar of salt (cf. Genesis 19:26), signifies those who are called by grace, but prefer to go back to all they have left behind. Such have the nostrils of a horse. Because just as a horse that has just relieved itself finds pleasure in nosing and smelling its own excrement, as soon as they have committed their sin these sinners take great pleasure in thinking about the bad odor.<sup>19</sup>

By establishing this correspondence between sin and smell – a common *topos* in medieval hagiography and religious writing – the preacher actually urges the audience to feel and experience a sensation of disgust when thinking about priestly sins. No wonder, then, that they are more than willing to acknowledge anything the preacher tells them about the lustful prelates.

Our preacher does not even hesitate to use feelings of terror and even horror. In one of the *ad vincula* sermons he speaks about the terrifying end of time. As a matter of fact, this time is rapidly approaching and the devil is now – as he speaks – preparing for the final battle and donning all his weapons to fight against the Church. One of the terrible things the devil does – and already has begun to do – is that he obscures and blinds people. Priests in particular are blinded by their worldly possessions.<sup>20</sup> And

17 “Nam sicut pueri quamdiu sunt paruuli sunt naturaliter fetidi et immundi” (C 389, fol. 107v).

18 “Pueri nesciunt discernere inter bonum et malum, ita quod alii plus diligunt pomum quam castrum” (C 389, fol. 108r).

19 “Tales habent equinas nares. Nam sicut equus, qui solutus est, eiecto stercore suo delectatur nares illi opponere. Similiter illi; nam perpetrato peccato, quod coram Deo vilissimum sterces est, de ipsius fetore dulce illis videtur cogitare” (C 317, fol. 153r).

20 “Primum siquidem opus dyaboli, quod istis temporibus agit in christianitate est obscuratio siue excecacio. Homines enim per peccatum excecantur et per pulcritudinem et possessiones mundi et clerus maxime” (C 389, fol. 300r).

much more than anyone else, priests are invaded by evil spirits.<sup>21</sup> A most terrifying picture from the Apocalypse of the eagle flying over the heaven vehemently crying: "Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth" (Revelations 8:13) is therefore used and elaborated upon with the obvious aim of inducing fear in the audience. What is more, the preacher also threatens with extreme cold and frost.<sup>22</sup> The devil is the origin of this everlasting winter,<sup>23</sup> this cold north wind from which all evil is spread out over the world.<sup>24</sup> Stating that sins will result in perpetual frost, ice and freezing was certainly a way for the preacher to relate to something that everybody in the audience would have personal experience of.

What then, to sum up, were the feelings that this preacher in these few examples wanted to evoke in his audiences when discussing priestly behavior?

Comfort, relief and recognition when discussing clouds, rain and dogs. The contrasting effect becomes even greater when the metaphor is extended to the priests. They are required, expected and needed, but are simply too weak to do what they should. Just like when a long expected rain suddenly fails to water the crops. Or when a faithful dog suddenly fails to warn its owner about an unwelcome trespasser.

Security, being at ease, and healthy laughter when he speaks about children. And, of course, insinuating that modern priests are no more rational and intelligent than small children, is a really efficient means of turning the audience against them.

The tone is heightened when he ventures to claim that priests are no better than horses returning to their droppings. What could be more detestable? And when he paints a horrifying picture of the works of the devil in these final days, threatening the listeners with the everlasting winter, it is absolute fear that starts to take possession of their hearts. Knowing now that priestly misconduct is one the main reasons for this, it is then quite obvious whom they should blame.

Medieval people were probably more used to thinking in terms of different layers of meaning than we are, in conceptualizing things not only as objects but also as representations of something hidden, and therefore possibly more likely to accept an image as real and not merely as a literary device.<sup>25</sup> This multi-modal sensibility exposes us to a broader variety of impressions and sensations. Feelings are definitely one of them, and 'excited feelings' are sometimes considered an important characteristic of the outgoing Middle Ages.<sup>26</sup> Images and techniques of visualization are factors that help to convey such an emotionality.

21 "Immissione enim malorum spirituum primum prelatorum status inuaditur" (C 389, fol. 300r).

22 "Secundum opus dyaboli est congelacio" (C 389, fol. 300v).

23 "Huius frigoris auctor est dyabolus" (C 389, fol. 301r).

24 "Ipse enim est aquilo ille a quo panditur omne malum" (C 389, fol. 301r).

25 See the detailed account in Hårdelin 2005 (with a bibliography containing many international references).

26 Cf. Bale 2010, p. 27.

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*Fig. 1. Rune stone, Sö 55, at Bjudby in Blacksta parish, Södermanland, commemorating Hævne, who went England, but died at harmi ("lamented") at home. Photo: Magnus Källström 2006.*



# Sighs and Sorrows – But No Laughter?

## Expressions of Emotions in Runic Inscriptions

*Magnus Källström*

Was the runic script a suitable medium for expressing feelings and emotions? And was it possible to tell a joke in runes? Since the runic script is alphabetic it must have been possible to write anything, but did the rune carvers really take advantage of these possibilities? If they did, to what extent are we capable of understanding their intentions?

In the following I will present and discuss some selected examples found in the runic corpus. These belong to different periods and are found in different parts of Scandinavia. From present-day Sweden we know about 4 000 runic inscriptions, and more than half of these occur on Viking Age rune stones set up in memory of deceased persons. Since the surviving relatives commissioned the carvings in most cases, it might seem an easy task to offer examples of sorrow and grief. In reality such expressions are utterly rare in these texts. Even when a person had met a violent death the runic inscriptions are normally rather unsentimental in their approach. Examples include clauses such as *Hann vaR drepinn austr, sunn Iarls*, “He was killed in the east, the son of Jarl” (U 898) or even *Hanum vā at Vigmundr*, “he was slain by Vigmund” (U 338).

To get some hints as to what those who composed these texts might have felt we often need to read between the lines. At the farm of Eggeby in Spånga parish just outside Stockholm there is a rune stone set up by a woman named Ragnälv (U 69). She tells us that she has built a bridge in memory of her son Anund and invokes God to help his soul “better than he deserved”. The memorial text concludes with the following words: *Munu æigi mærki mæira verða. Mōðir gerði eftir sun sinn æiniga*, “There will be no greater memorials, the mother made in memory of her only son”. No father or husband is mentioned in the text, which is a clear indication that he was already dead. By the adoption of the word *æinigr*, ‘only’, we understand that the mother was now left alone.

A similar case is found on a small rune stone from Ardre church on Gotland (G 111). The stone was set up by a man probably named Simpa, in memory of his

wife Roddjaud, and the inscription concludes with the short sentence: *Dō ung frān ōformāgum*, “She died young leaving under-aged children”. On another rune stone from the same place (G 112) Simpa has also commemorated a nameless daughter, possibly his wife and child both died in childbirth.

Even if we can imagine the widower’s grief, there is no overt expression of his feelings in the runic text. Perhaps the commitment to set up a rune stone in memory of a deceased relative was enough, but sometimes there are inscriptions that say a little more. One example (fig. 1 on p. 276) is found on the large rune stone at Bjuddby in Blacksta parish in Södermanland (Sö 55). A man named Torsten, in memory of himself and his son Hävne, raised the stone and the text includes a section composed in verse:

<i>VaR til Ænglands</i>	<i>unGR drengR farinn,</i>
<i>varð þā heima</i>	<i>at harmi dauðr.</i>

To England had the young man fared,  
then at home he lamented died.

Like many other young men in the first half of the eleventh century the son had traveled to England, probably on a Viking raid. His voyage seems to have been successful and it is not unlikely that he had returned as a wealthy man. Then he suddenly died, but the text says nothing about the cause of death, which might have been disease or an accident.

A clear example of the latter is documented on another rune stone from Södermanland, namely the Sund stone (Sö 318) in Helgesta parish. This stone was set up by two brothers in memory of their father and their sister, and the inscription concludes with the following lines: *Hann drunknaði i Bāgi, harmdauð mykinn. Guð hialpi and þæira ok Guðs möðir!*, “He drowned in Båven, a death of great grief. God and God’s mother help their soul!” Båven is the name of a large lake, and the farm of Sund is still situated adjacent to this lake.

In the two inscriptions just mentioned the word *harmr*, ‘sorrow, grief’, has been used, but there is also another word connected to the same type of emotions attested in the Viking Age runic inscriptions, namely *grātr*, ‘weeping’.

The best example is probably found on two rune stones which still stand on their original site at an old assembly place at Bällsta in Vallentuna parish (U 225–226), outside Stockholm. Here the sons of a local chieftain – or at least a yeoman of some importance – have set up two rune stones in memory of their deceased father. Both inscriptions are composed in verse, and they comprise in all no less than fourteen lines in the meter *fornyrðislag*. The word *grātr* occurs in the last stanza, which runs:

<i>Ok Gyriði</i>	<i>gats at veri.</i>
<i>þý man ī grāti</i>	<i>getit lāta.</i>

Likewise Gyrid loved her husband.  
So in mourning she will have it mentioned.<sup>1</sup>

This interpretation was first found by the Norwegian professor Sophus Bugge and later substantiated by Otto von Friesen and Sven B. F. Jansson, the latter of whom published the inscriptions in *Upplands runinskrifter* in 1943.<sup>2</sup>

The following year Jón Helgason came up with another interpretation of the phrase *ī grāti* on the stone.<sup>3</sup> He claimed that the adoption of the preposition *ī* in this phrase was unparalleled and that one would expect a construction with *með* to get this sense in the text. Helgason admitted that the widow's promise to weep when she spoke about her man was touching in the light of the rune stones' normally rugged expressions of emotions, but he doubted that a chieftain's wife would be content with such a modest tribute.

According to Jón Helgason the noun *grātr* possibly had a special meaning in the inscription, namely 'lament, dirge'. He suggested that a *grātr* was a special kind of poem that the widow had ordered to be composed in memory of her husband.

This interpretation – which Jón Helgason himself regarded as a hypothesis – has gained support from several scholars, but it was criticized by the expert on grief and elegy in the Eddic poems, Daniel Sävborg. According to Sävborg there is no clear evidence for the existence of a special kind of poems called *grātr*.<sup>4</sup> The only example that can be brought up is the fourteenth-century poem *Mariugrātr*, but as Sävborg stresses this text belongs to another time and another context than the verse on the Bällsta stones. He therefore prefers to stick to the earlier interpretation and would rather see the formulation as a proof of undisguised grief as a poetic motif in the Viking Age.

As shown here, it is not impossible to find examples of sorrow and grief in the runic inscriptions, but what about sighs? Are there any examples of this at all in this material? I am not sure, but there are in fact scholars who think that they have detected some. I will restrict myself to a single example.

On a fibula from Nøvling near Ålborg in North Jutland (dated first half of the third century) there is an inscription in the older runes, which reads: **bidawarijartalgidai**. The first part of the inscription consists of a personal name, Bidawarijar, whereas the second part has been construed as a form of the verb *talgian*, 'cut'. The problem is that

<sup>1</sup> Translation by P. Foote in Jansson 1987, p. 121.

<sup>2</sup> UR, I, pp. 347–374.

<sup>3</sup> Helgason 1944, pp. 479–482.

<sup>4</sup> Sävborg 1997, pp. 175–178.

in the third person singular this verb should end in *-ē* not in *-ai*. The Norwegian scholar Ottar Grønvik has tried to solve this problem by assuming that **talgida** does not render a verb but a noun, a personal designation with the meaning ‘cutter’.<sup>5</sup> He is then left with a single *i*-rune at the end, but suggests in this case that the preceding *a*-rune in **talgida** should be taken twice. Grønvik then gets a sequence **ai** which he construes as an interjection: *ai!* A similar interjection of lament is in fact attested in Old Icelandic in expressions as *ay mér veslugri*, *ay mik*. The meaning of the fibula inscription would then be: “Bidawarijar (is) the cutter. Oh!”

I must admit that I am not totally convinced by this interpretation, even if I cannot say it is all wrong. But I think it is rather dangerous to pick out a few runes in a sequence and identify them as somewhat unexpected interjections.

Perhaps it is time to leave the sorrows and sighs behind and enter into the realm of jokes and laughter. But are there really jokes told in runes? There definitely are, but it is not always clear what is intended as a joke. The memorial stones of the Viking Age were obviously not the place for jokes or humorous statements, and the inscriptions on portable objects from this period are often very difficult to understand. We are better provided when it comes to runic inscriptions from the Middle Ages. The deep cultural layers under the medieval cities all over Scandinavia have preserved a lot of everyday texts jotted down in runes on wooden sticks or pieces of animal bone. There is also a rather large stock of graffiti preserved on the walls in many medieval churches.

The extensive material of runic inscriptions from Bryggen in Bergen is famous, and also the crude wording of some of these texts including different types of sexual allusions. Certainly many of these inscriptions should be regarded as medieval jokes, as for example the text in which three men have given themselves nicknames all beginning with *fuð*, the contemporary designation for the vagina, and composed the following, maybe not so clever inscription:

*Jón Silkifuð á mik, en Guðþormr Fuðsleikir reist mik, en Jón Fuðkula ræðr mik.*

Jon Silkifuð owns me, and Guttorm Fuðsleikir carved me, and Jón Fuðkula interprets me.<sup>6</sup>

More inscriptions of this indecent type could be cited, but since they have been quoted so many times before I would rather change the subject to runic inscriptions that sound like jokes to people of later times, even if they were never intended as such. One category concerns the numerous inscriptions where the object itself speaks in the first person. There are e.g. baptismal fonts that tell us who made them and who wrote the runes on them and even how long they will be around, like the famous font from Burseryd church in Småland (Sm 50):

<sup>5</sup> Grønvik 1994, pp. 48–50.

<sup>6</sup> NB 434; Liestøl 1971.

*Fig. 2. Building brick from Lösen church in Blekinge (DR 367), text in Latin: Ego sum lapis "I am a stone". Photo: Erik Moltke 1933 (ATA).*



*Arinbiorn gørði mik, Viðkunder præster skrēf mik, ok hēr skal um stund standa.*

Arinbjörn made me. Vidkunn priest wrote me. And here I shall stand for a while.

There are also speaking knives, with messages such as *Margareta ā mik*, "Margareta owns me", to quote the inscription on the handle of a fourteenth-century knife from Nyköping.<sup>7</sup> The best example, though, is the building brick from Lösen church in Blekinge (DR 367), which even speaks in Latin: *Ego sum lapis*, "I am a stone" (fig. 2). In this case it is not impossible that the text might have been intended as some kind of pun. Building bricks of burnt clay were a novelty in the beginning of the Middle Ages, and maybe there were critics who were unconvinced of their suitability as building material.

I would also like to comment on a wooden stick from Trondheim with a text that

<sup>7</sup> Svärdström 1965, pp. 133–135.

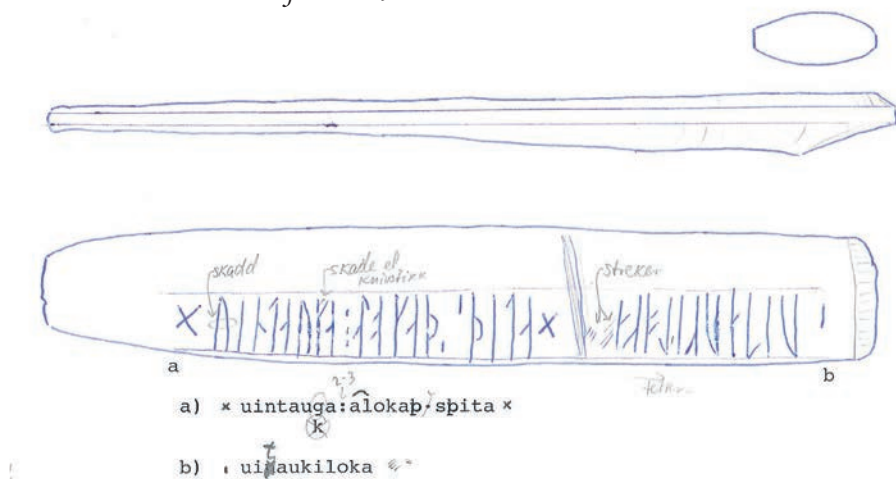


Fig. 3. Wooden stick from Trondheim, Norway (N A 240), with runic texts concerning an opened and closed window. Sketch by James E. Knirk, The Runic Archive, Oslo.

has always caught my interest (N A 240 = N 835 in Hagland ms). The runes say in one line × uintauga : alokaþ · s þita ×, *Vindauga álokað* (?) *es þetta*, “This is an open window”, and in a another line: uitauki · loka-, *Vindauga loka* [ð], “Window closed”. This inscription is reminiscent of those reversible open/closed signs that you can find on the doors of small shops (at least on television) and therefore it sounds like some kind of joke.

For a long time I only knew this inscription from a couple of articles, but when I finally had the opportunity to see some pictures of the object in the Runic archive in Oslo I realized that it was not a jocular statement at all. The two lines are placed on different ends of the wooden stick and they are written in different directions. Between the two lines there is a furrow, which might have been shaped by some kind of recurrent wear (fig. 3). How the stick was used I do not know, but it must have served a practical purpose for keeping a window opened or closed. So what looked like a text intended to be funny was in fact seriously meant.

Those who knew runes in the Middle Ages did not only write dirty words, feeble jokes or instructions for how to keep a window opened or closed, but could also use runes for different kinds of riddles or just as wordplay. From Narsaq in Greenland there is a wooden stick with an interesting runic inscription that has baffled runologists for a long time.

The stick is carved on four planes and the text on one of these can be read as follows:





Fig. 4. Rune inscribed animal bone (U NOR 1996;17B) from Långgränd in Sigtuna, Uppland, with a row of complicated bind-runes that renders a wordplay. Photo: Bengt A. Lundberg 1996/Kulturmiljöbild.

+ ā : sa : sa : sa : is : āsa : sat +

When the object was discovered it was thought to be rather old, even from the days of the legendary Erik the Red, and in an early attempt the following translation was suggested: “on the sea, the sea, the sea is the ambush of the Æsir [i.e. the heathen gods]”<sup>8</sup>. Later on it was demonstrated that the text was in fact a play on words based on a couple of homophonic words, namely *sá*: *Á sá sá sá, es á sá sat*, “On a tub he saw, he who sat on a tub.”<sup>9</sup> Somewhat later similar inscriptions turned up, where the pun is even more evident. A wooden stick from Bergen (N B 566), for example, carries the following text: *huat sa sa er i sa sa sik sa sa er i sa sa*, “What did he see, who looked into the tub? He saw himself, he who looked into the tub.”<sup>10</sup>

A couple of years ago I discovered that there was a variant of this text on a bone piece from Sigtuna.<sup>11</sup> In this case several of the runes were joined together into complicated bindrunes, but what struck me was that the sequences *sa* and *sik* seemed to recur several times in the inscription (fig. 4). When this was found it was not very difficult to understand the text. It should most likely be read in this way:

<sup>8</sup> Moltke 1961, p. 408.

<sup>9</sup> Helgason 1977.

<sup>10</sup> Knirk 1994, pp. 196–197.

<sup>11</sup> Källström 2010.



si sa sikh sa i sa sik sa is

*Sē! Sā(ʰ) sik sã ī sã, sik sã (ī) īs(i).*

Look! He who saw himself in the tub, he saw himself in ice.

I think the idea behind this variant of the text is that the water in the tub was frozen and that the person who looked into it saw his own reflection in the thin ice. If there are any deeper intentions behind the reference to ice I do not know. Maybe the text was just made up to test someone's ability to read this kind of runes.

To judge from the runic material unearthed in Sigtuna during the last 25 years, there was a keen interest in runic writing in this town, not only in eleventh but first and foremost in the twelfth century. Most of the inscriptions are cut in animal bones and no small number seem to be the result of people learning how to read and write runes. There are several examples of rune rows – not all of them written correctly – and some inscriptions contain repeated syllables, such as **ba ba**, which might be the result of a writing exercise. In some cases, the training was more advanced and not only included ordinary runes but also secret runes and different kinds of cipher.

Not all of these ciphers have been properly understood. Recently a Norwegian runologist, K. Jonas Nordby, revealed and solved a runic riddle that everyone had ignored.<sup>12</sup> It is found on an animal bone, from an archaeological excavation in Sigtuna in 2000, and consists of three runic characters. The runes look somewhat odd with a couple of additional branches, but the text has been interpreted as the rather common word **raþ**, “interpret”. What Nordby discovered was that the remaining branches also carry a meaning. A reader should first read the runes as **raþ**, then turn the bone 180 degrees and read the remaining lines in the sequence in the opposite direction to the first, as **þat** (fig. 5a & b). The result is *Rãð þat*, which means “Interpret this!” After Nordby cracked the cipher he discovered identical runic inscriptions on objects from other places in Scandinavia, such as Oslo, Bergen and Skara. He even found it on a Byzantine ivory plaque that was kept in a museum in Berlin.<sup>13</sup> So this little runic riddle was something that was known and practiced over a vast area in the Middle Ages. Maybe it was also intended as some kind of joke. Someone is asked to read a text with some strange runic characters, and if the person was successful the only message found was “Read this”!

It is not unlikely that more of this will turn up once it has been recognized, and recently I came across a picture of another rune-inscribed bone from Sigtuna with a runic riddle composed in the same way as the cipher that Nordby has revealed.<sup>14</sup> The

<sup>12</sup> Nordby 2012.

<sup>13</sup> Nordby 2013.

<sup>14</sup> Källström 2014.

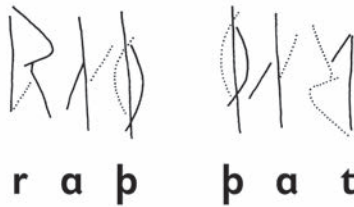
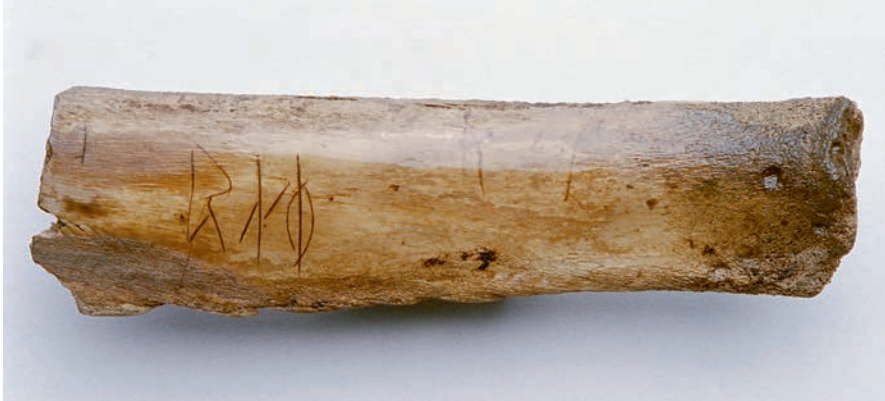
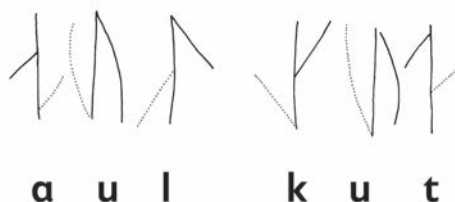


Fig. 5a & 5b. The rune inscribed animal bone (U NOR 2000;32B) from Professorn 1 in Sigtuna, Uppland, with a runic cipher covering the message Rād þat!, “Read this!”. Photo: Bengt A. Lundberg 2000/Kulturmiljöbild (5a), drawing (5b) by Magnus Källström.

find was made fourteen years ago in the same excavation and also consists of three runes. They should first be read in one direction as **aul**, then the bone must be turned and you get the sequence **kut** (fig. 6a & b).

But what does this mean? It is very likely that the last sequence, **kut**, represents the neuter singular of the adjective *gōðr*, “good”, which means that **aul** might render a noun of neuter gender. The first word that comes to mind is of course *øl*, the Old Norse word for ‘beer’ and the meaning would then be *øl gott*, “good beer”!

This is a suitable subject for a runic riddle of this kind. Another possibility is that it was not the quality of the drink that the rune-skilled bone carver was aiming at. As recognized, the Old Swedish word *öl* refers not only to beer, but also to the occasions when beer was consumed, such as *barnsöl*, *bryllöpsöl*, *budhöl*, *fastinga öl*, *giftaröl* and so on. So we might equally as well translate *øl gott* as “good banquet”.



*Fig. 6a & 6b. Animal bone (U Sl95) from the same site in Sigtuna and the same type of cipher as in fig. 5. The text reads Ql gott, "Good beer"! Photo: Bengt A. Lundberg 2000/ Kulturmiljöbild (6a), drawing (6b) by Magnus Källström.*

The runes were an alphabetic system and despite the drawbacks of limited amounts of characters in some periods, could serve the same purposes as any other alphabet. Those who wanted to express feelings and emotions could also do so in runes. The rarity of overt expressions of sorrows found in the memorial inscriptions from the Viking period despite the large number of monuments, is probably due to the formal style of these texts. They are generally short, formulaic and objective in their description of the events they portray, but by reading between the lines it is sometimes possible to grasp the grief of those left behind.

The memorial texts were not the place for laughter and jokes, not even in the Viking period, but when it comes to less formal inscriptions on portable objects from

the eleventh century and later, there was obviously room for some laughter and even a few – in some cases probably unintentional – humorous texts. Several times it looks as if these texts were used in the teaching of runes and maybe this was also the main purpose of the cryptic inscription about “good beer” quoted above. Or should it rather be characterized as a Viking Age party trick?

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# The Longing for Happiness: Virtue or Vice?

*Tomas Ekenberg*

In moral philosophy (and in moralistic discourse too) self-interest is often pitted against morality. Morality involves transcending self-interest and acting for some higher or nobler purpose, acting in accordance with duty, or perhaps with the aim of the common good of mankind or at least society as a whole. This very sharp contrast between the person who is aiming at what is good for herself and the person aiming at what is morally good, good in itself, or good *simpliciter* – or at any rate the significance this contrast enjoys – seems to be an invention that is fairly recent.

Historians of philosophy often point out that for most, if not all, ancient philosophers the central question for moral inquiry was how to attain a good and blessed life for oneself, how to live happily, how to reach *eudaimonia*. Plato and Aristotle both made a point of arguing that virtuous conduct actually leads to the happy life – and this not as a bonus, a special treat offered to those who choose to be good – but the virtuous life needs to be a happy life or else being virtuous could not be something human beings should aim at. What ethics is about is to try to answer the question of how we ought to live. And when the ancients ask this question, what they mean is “what is the good life?” In other words, they assume that being moral is the same as living well or “living in the best way”. And living well, they further assume, is impossible without aiming at living well – aiming at one’s well-being or happiness. Therefore, for the ancients no interesting contrast can be drawn between aiming for happiness and aiming for what is morally good, unless, of course, aiming for happiness takes harmful or disgraceful forms. At this point, however, ancient philosophers are likely to make a distinction between true and apparent good and argue that what is aimed at by the drunkard and the fornicator is not happiness but rather apparent happiness. The wicked person is mistaken about what a happy life really consists in.

The distinction between, on the one hand, personal well-being and, on the other

hand, moral value is – I suggest – a fairly recent invention, at least as an explicit doctrine. This distinction is taken to its extreme in the eighteenth century by Immanuel Kant, according to whom all inclination is bad (even altruistic inclinations). Acting out of duty only and purely from respect for the moral law is the only thing that can be considered morally good, according to Kant. The moral law is universal and unchanging and its first principles purely formal, but from these we can deduce, for instance, that lying is always wrong. Notoriously, his view apparently entails that even if a lie might help some completely innocent person not to get slain by a raging murderer, lying is morally wrong even here. Lying is against the moral law, and only when the law is not merely complied with but truly respected and obeyed can there be moral worth. Only then does a person act morally. A person who acts out of duty in this way has a good will, according to Kant. A person who has a good will never does what he or she wants (except perhaps incidentally), but instead acts only out of duty. To put it poignantly, Kant does not think that morality is about doing what you want, but about doing what it is your duty to do, in a perfectly disinterested manner.

Not everyone agrees with Kant. A majority of moral philosophers in the analytic tradition (to which the majority of Swedish philosophers belong) have rejected Kant's deontological ethics. But when it comes to the devaluation of striving for happiness, there has actually been a remarkable level of agreement. Among non-Kantians, many philosophers have moved towards consequentialism, where the contrast between personal happiness and the moral good is almost as sharp as in Kant, though spelled out somewhat differently: Here the moral good is cashed out as utility, and utility, in turn, should be thought of as the welfare of all human beings – or the happiness of all members of society – and therefore there is an important distinction to be made between what is good for the individual and what is good for the community or for mankind.

A question one may ask is this: How is it that happiness stopped being of primary significance to moral philosophers? Or how is it that happiness stopped being the focal point of ethical thought? I will not be able to answer this question. But I think at least part of the answer can be found in the Middle Ages, and therefore this paper is devoted to tracing at least one development that I think is relevant. I will focus especially on one question: If I want to be happy, does this mean I am on my way to being a morally upright person, or does it mean I am wicked, or could it perhaps mean either, or somehow both? If I am right, the answer to these questions crucially depends on what we mean by the word 'happiness', but also on the notion of the will and the notion of happiness as a natural end or object of the will – notions taken up and developed by Augustine's medieval followers.



## Augustine and the will to happiness

In the medieval philosophical debates, Augustine was always present as something of a constant virtual participant, one whose views one must always take into account. This is especially true in the area of ethics and moral psychology. Augustine put forward a conceptual framework suitable for dealing with both classical ethical issues and moral issues peculiar to a Christian outlook. This conceptual framework or network of notions centered on the notion of the will, *voluntas*, and his discussions about free choice or *liberum arbitrium* became a point of reference for nearly all discussions about ethics and philosophical anthropology through the Middle Ages, and even onwards into modern times.

Now, Augustine did not himself build any philosophical systems, but rather responded to various philosophical issues as they arose, and he did so using a philosophical vocabulary and a conceptual framework which he found in the debates of his time. If we compare him to, say, Plotinus, from whom Augustine drew a lot of philosophical inspiration, then Augustine looks positively unsystematic in his endeavors, and eclectic (to say the least) in his choices of philosophical alliances and borrowings. But I think that if we see him as a philosophically informed rhetorician and Christian cleric (which of course he was) then he makes sense: He was working from the assumption that a true philosophy – the true philosophy – could be distilled from the Christian doctrines by an intelligent and scholarly believer. More than anything else, philosophizing becomes a project of translating the simplistic language of Scripture and Church Fathers into the sophisticated language of a learned Roman. In this light it is easy to see why and how Augustine uses the ancient philosophers in his more philosophical moments.

Further, as the late Michael Frede has convincingly shown in his book *A Free Will*, Augustine was very much a late ancient thinker, and not a medieval thinker. If we keep this in mind, then his basically ancient outlook on ethics is a feature of his thought that should come as no surprise: Augustine's moral thinking very much starts from the question of how we shall proceed in order to attain the happy life. He thinks we all want to be happy, and so we all want the answer to this question. And moreover he thinks that, in principle, there is absolutely no conflict between our wanting to be happy and our being morally upright human beings. On the contrary, being moral requires willing your own happiness, since only if you will to be happy you will actually become happy when you get those things you will.

Before proceeding I should say something about my unidiomatic usage of the English verb 'to will'. There is a point to this, as we shall soon see. I am using 'to will' to translate Augustine's *velle*, which we tend to think of as a very ambiguous word, but which is perhaps the closest thing we get to a true technical philosophical *term* in Augustine's ethics. While he uses it to define and elucidate central ethical notions such

as right action, virtue, and psychological conflict, he treats it as a primitive notion. He does not propose a definition of will nor does he, properly speaking, develop a theory of the will.<sup>1</sup> However, since the notion of will or ‘willing’ is so central in Augustine and in the entire tradition that followed, I believe the linguistic uncouthness is warranted.

In early works such as *De beata vita* and *De libero arbitrio*, Augustine proceeds as one would expect from someone who stands squarely in the philosophical discussions of his time: he thinks everyone wills happiness, and asks how we might attain it. In order to be happy we need to have those things we will to have, and the things should be such that, once acquired, we need not worry about losing them. And so if we will to be happy we had better will things within reach and “in our power”, and the more secure our grip on them, the better. Unlike worldly things such as money and friends and family, things like wisdom and virtue are indeed in our power and so what we ought to aim at is wisdom, virtue, and what Augustine calls a good will, *bona voluntas*. What Augustine has given us is basically an ethical outlook which both Neo-Platonists and Stoics agree on, and so nothing here is very controversial. In the first book of *De libero arbitrio*, Augustine describes the good will to his friend Evodius as “a will by which we seek to live rightly and honorably, and to attain the highest wisdom”.<sup>2</sup>

There are of course certain Christian tenets that do not sit well with the basic ethical assumptions of most pagan philosophies, and among these are the doctrines of the fall of the human race, and of salvation and the afterlife. With these doctrines as a background, morality is not really about living well in this life but rather about preparing for the next. And because the first human beings Adam and Eve rebelled, the human race as a whole has been condemned and human nature has become corrupted and all human beings are now born into sin.

In the picture that emerges, a good will is not something we can work our way towards on our own. Instead a good will is always and entirely a gratuitous gift from God. As we move on into Augustine’s mature works, things get complicated as, of course, they should. Augustine still thinks all human beings aim at happiness and he still thinks a central problem for philosophy is to answer why some people fail to aim at happiness proper and end up pursuing merely apparent happiness, but at this point Augustine is clearly in partial disagreement with the philosophers, or at least the Stoics, though possibly also the Neo-Platonists.<sup>3</sup>

And the very word ‘will’, *voluntas*, is actually extremely important here. The way Augustine employs this single notion, *voluntas*, can be seen as constituting a full-on

1 I develop this point at some length in Ekenberg 2014, pp. 28–45.

2 “Voluntas qua adpetimus recte honesteque uiuere, et ad summam sapientiam peruenire.” Augustine, *De libero arbitrio* 1, 12, 25, ed. Green 1970, p. 227.

3 See e.g. Augustine, *De trinitate* 13, 4, 7, eds Mountain & Glorie 1968, CCSL 50A, pp. 390–391, for the claim that all human beings will to be happy.

challenge aimed at the Stoics. Why? Because this word makes sure we see that whatever cause or factor or entity is involved in inclining the good and the bad to do what they do, it is one and the same thing in both cases.

According to the Stoics we all wish we were happy but only the truly virtuous really are happy, and these are the sages, the wise persons. The rest of us, according to the Stoics, are miserable. And what makes us ordinary people act is very different from what makes the wise act. We are constantly being thrown into confusion by our own passions, which in turn are the result of a fundamental intellectual error. Because we lack knowledge, we are always bound to make poor decisions and then suffer the consequences. So while we the vicious are driven by passion, the virtuous act out of correct judgment and choice. According to the Stoics then, the causes behind good actions and bad actions are very different and we should not attribute these different acts to a higher and a lower part (rational and irrational) of the soul, as Plato seems to do in the *Republic*. All acts are acts of one and the same rational soul, but depending on whether the soul judges correctly, we get either passionate-and-bad action or dispassionate-and-good action.

To Augustine, by contrast, all action is passionate. All action – good or bad – is willed. We find the point most strikingly put in a passage in *De civitate Dei*:

But the character of the human will is of moment; because, if it is wrong, these motions of the soul will be wrong, but if it is right, they will be not merely blameless, but even praiseworthy. For the will is in them all; yea, none of them is anything else than will. For what are desire and delight but a will of consent to the things we wish? And what are fear and sadness but a will of aversion from the things which we do not will? But when consent takes the form of seeking to possess the things we will, this is called desire; and when consent takes the form of enjoying the things we will, this is called delight.<sup>4</sup>

And while he agrees with the Stoics that all action is produced by one and the same soul, Augustine actually proceeds one step further and argues that this soul with respect to action is always involved in the same sort of act, namely, willing. Everything we do is willed, and it is always we who do the willing, even if that willing we do, good

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4 Augustine, *De civitate Dei* 14, 6, eds Dombart & Kalb 1955, 48, p. 421: "Interest autem qualis sit uoluntas hominis; quia si peruersa est, peruersos habebit hos motus; si autem recta est, non solum inculpabiles, uerum etiam laudabiles erunt. Voluntas est quippe in omnibus; immo omnes nihil aliud quam uoluntates sunt. Nam quid est cupiditas et laetitia nisi uoluntas in eorum consensione quae uolumus? Et quid est metus atque tristitia nisi uoluntas in dissensione ab his quae nolumus? Sed cum consentimus appetendo ea quae uolumus, cupiditas; cum autem consentimus fruendo his quae uolumus, laetitia uocatur." Translation by H. Bettenson: *City of God*, London (1984), slightly modified.

or bad, is a gift from God.<sup>5</sup> And while we all love and desire happiness and so will happiness, very few of us will happiness rightly, and so very few of us are morally just.<sup>6</sup>

We will now turn to the Middle Ages. The first medieval philosopher to thoroughly treat problems of ethics and moral psychology is Anselm of Canterbury. Anselm starts from Augustine's discussion about happiness in the *De trinitate*, but instead of insisting, against the Stoics, that the actions of good human beings and bad human beings are both to be traced back to an act of the same sort, an act of will, Anselm suggests that we need two wills or two affections of the will in order to explain both moral and immoral conduct.

### Anselm and the two affections

Like Augustine, Anselm claims that all human beings will to be happy, and therefore they also will all those things they think will contribute to their happiness.<sup>7</sup> Further, he thinks that whereas all human beings will happiness, some people will happiness rightly and some not. But at this point he makes an addition to Augustine's account: What explains the difference between the good person and the bad person is that the good person has and is moved by two wills whereas the bad person has and is moved by only one. In addition to the will to happiness, which all human beings have, the good person also has a will to justice.

Augustine argued that since no one can be made happy against her will, human beings need a will to happiness or else we could not possibly ever become happy.<sup>8</sup> And so we all will happiness.

Anselm adds to this an analogous argument for a will to justice: Since no one can be just against her will, every just person must have a will to justice, or else he or she would not be just:

God's intention was to make rational nature just and happy, in order that it may enjoy Him. But it couldn't be just nor be happy without the will to justice and [the will to] happiness.<sup>9</sup>

5 See especially *De spiritu et littera*, eds Urba & Zycha 1913, chapters 55–60 for Augustine's way of posing and dealing with the problem that Man is the author of sin while being merely the recipient of all things he has, including his good will, if he has it.

6 See Augustine's *De trinitate* 13, 5–6; 13, 8–9, eds Mountain & Glorie 1968, CCSL 50A, pp. 392–393.

7 Anselm, *De casu diaboli* 13, ed. Schmitt 1968, vol. 1, pp. 255–256.

8 Augustine, *De trinitate* 13, 8, eds Mountain & Glorie 1968, CCSL 50A, p. 397: "Beatus nemo nolens fit"; "No one can be made happy against his will."

9 "Intentio namque dei fuit, ut iustam faceret atque beatam naturam rationalem ad fruendum se. Sed neque iusta neque beata esse potuit sine voluntate iustitiae et beatitudinis." My translation. Anselm, *De concordia* 3, 13, ed. Schmitt 1968, vol. 2, p. 285.

Now by introducing the two wills, or two affections of the will, it seems Anselm has reintroduced the notion, rejected by Augustine, that the good person and the bad person are motivated differently in their actions. Even if Anselm is not suggesting a Stoic picture, where the bad person is motivated by passion and the good person by a dispassionate judgment, Anselm is still clearly saying either that the bad person is moved by her will to happiness and the good person instead by her will to justice, or perhaps both. In any case we do not get Augustine's neat picture where both the good and the bad are motivated in precisely the same way – that is, by a will arising in their one and only rational soul as an instance of the person's willing to be happy.

It should immediately be said that even if Anselm were to have posited a difference in what kind of will motivates the good and the bad person, this does not mean we are back to the Stoic picture. Anselm is still clearly on Augustine's side in one very important respect. From the Stoic point of view, both Augustine and Anselm think that both the good and the bad act out of passion. The morally upright does not act from dispassionate judgment but out of a passionate love of justice, or a passionate love of truth, or in other words a passionate love of God. This is what it means to will justice. Willing justice does not mean judging that some certain course of action is compatible with the demands of reason. Willing justice means loving justice, or perhaps even being in love with justice. At crucial junctures in the discussion, Anselm switches to talking not about a *voluntas iustitiae*, but to an *affectio iustitiae* or even *amor iustitiae*.<sup>10</sup>

Why does Anselm complicate Augustine's picture? Here is at least part of the answer: Anselm has started worrying about angels, especially the fallen angels. And it appears he has good reason to worry about them. He thinks that the entire human race has been created in order to fill the seats left vacant in heaven by the fallen angels and so in order to end up with a coherent picture of the fall of the human race, he must also deal with the fall of the angels.

As long as we think about human beings some things do not appear so problematic. Augustine asked what it is that makes some human beings pursue, not real but false happiness, and thus choose and love things that are bad. How can this be? An answer that promptly presents itself is that we may mislead ourselves and others – we may trick people into thinking something good which in fact is not good. Perhaps this is what happened with Adam and Eve. The serpent tricked the first parents and the rest is history.

But let us now turn to angels. Angels are thought to be intellectually superior to human beings, and they are not as easily tricked, if they can be tricked at all. Moreover, if we turn the clock back to before anyone had sinned, there was not really anyone there to do the tricking. We have a happy bunch of good angels, and God, and little

<sup>10</sup> See e.g., Anselm, *De casu diaboli* 24, ed. Schmitt 1968, vol. 1, pp. 271–272.

else. So Satan was not misled into thinking something would make him happy that in fact would not. But then how could it be that he sinned?

The dialogue *The Fall of Satan* (*De casu diaboli*) is aimed at answering this question, and this is where Anselm puts his theory about the two wills to work. Satan did not commit any intellectual mistake. He was not aiming at happiness while being in the wrong about what happiness really consists of. Instead what happened was that he somehow failed to love justice. All the angels willed happiness, but because Satan did not also will justice he ended up willing something, a “benefit” (*commodum*), which could have made him happy but which God at that point had decided was out of bounds. This Satan knew, but he willed it anyway. And so his very act of will was itself an act of disobedience to God, and therefore he is rightly punished with eternal misery.

In one word, we need the two wills, for without them we cannot explain how someone, who is not in error as to what in fact could make him happy, can still somehow fail in willing happiness rightly. One thing to note here is that while we do get some sort of solution to the problem of the fall of the rebel angels, it comes at a price: the will to happiness now starts to look dubious. Of course, Anselm assures us that both good and bad angels will happiness. Their willing happiness is required in order for them to actually become happy. Therefore willing happiness cannot be bad *per se*. Or can it? From a slightly different perspective, willing happiness *per se* is exactly what Satan did and that was precisely what his sin consisted in. In other words, willing happiness is always bad if not always accompanied by the will to justice.

### Scotus on freedom and nature

John Duns Scotus discussed and seems to some extent to have adopted Anselm’s theory of the two wills. In Scotus, however, the Anselmian notions are placed in a much more developed philosophical and theological framework and, as Peter King has shown, Scotus’s theory of the angels’ fall is in the end quite different from Anselm’s.<sup>11</sup>

Like Anselm, Scotus thinks of the will to happiness as a ‘natural’ will. However, while this claim, for Anselm, amounts to the Augustinian notion that willing happiness is constitutive of the act of willing (or loving), Scotus here introduces a contrast between what belongs to nature and what transcends nature.<sup>12</sup> By adding a will to justice, we get a creature who can either act or not act, in accordance with its inclination towards what it thinks would make it happy, and freedom consists in precisely this power to act or not act in accordance with the natural will to happiness or benefit. In Scotistic terminology, a creature is free if it can either elicit or not elicit any will-act suggested by the natural will to happiness. This contrast between what is naturally de-

<sup>11</sup> See King 2011.

<sup>12</sup> For a discussion of this aspect of Scotus’s account, see Boler 1993.

sired and what is freely chosen becomes even clearer when Scotus identifies the will to justice as the capacity of the will to make free choices. The affection for justice makes the human being able to render the affection for happiness and benefit ineffective, and makes the human being able to act morally instead. Further, this ability is, according to Scotus, innate:

[T]his affection for justice, which is the first checkrein on the affection for the beneficial, inasmuch as we need not actually seek that towards which the latter affection inclines us, nor must we seek it above all else (namely, to the extent to which we are inclined by this affection for the advantageous) – this affection for what is just, I say, is the liberty innate to the will, since it represents the first checkrein.<sup>13</sup>

At this point we are arguably approaching the Kantian view of morality. The will to happiness is a matter of natural necessity and in order for angels and human beings to bring themselves up to the level of moral agency they need first to transcend and at least partially free themselves of their own pursuit of happiness. Through the will to justice they have freedom of choice, and with it they can and should choose not to will those beneficial things not compatible with justice. Had, by contrast, their wills simply consisted in the natural will to happiness, and if that will actually willed things, it would then do so out of necessity. While Scotus thinks the will is naturally and therefore in a sense necessarily inclined towards happiness and therefore towards beneficial things, he thinks the will never naturally nor necessarily acts so as to obtain some particular good. The choice – the actual eliciting of the will – is up to the angels and human beings themselves.

When the natural will is taken to be oriented towards happiness, I grant this. [...] However, that nature is so inclined towards its object by this affection for the advantageous that if it had of itself an elicited act, it could not help eliciting it with no moderation in the most forceful way possible. But the natural will, as having only the affection for the beneficial, is not the cause of any elicited act; only the will as free can cause such, and therefore, qua eliciting an act, the will does have what is required to moderate passion.<sup>14</sup>

13 “Illa igitur affectio iustitiae, quae est prima moderatrix affectionis commodi et quantum ad hoc quod non oportet voluntatem actu appetere illud ad quod inclinat affectio commodi et quantum ad hoc quod non oportet eam summe appetere (quantum scilicet ad illud ad quod inclinat affectio commodi), illa – inquam – affectio iustitiae est libertas innata voluntati, quia ipsa est prima moderatrix affectionis talis.” John Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio* II, dist. 6 q. 2 ed. & transl. Wolter 1986, pp. 468–471.

14 “Quando ergo accepit quod voluntas naturalis est respectu beatitudinis, concedo [...] Tamen ita inclinatur affectione commodi in obiectum suum, quod – si ex se haberet actum elicitedum – non posset illum moderari quin eliceretur summe, quantum potest elici; sed voluntas ut habens solum affectionem commodi, naturalem, non est causa alicuius actus elicitedi, sed tantum ut libera, et ideo ut eliciens actum habet unde moderatum passionem.” John Duns Scotus, *ibid.*, pp. 472–473.



Since Scotus's two wills are so different from one another, it is at least not easy to see how they could both be wills in the original Augustinian sense – that is affections, emotions, passions. While the will to happiness (or the will to benefit) can indeed be thought of as love and affection for those things the agent considers good and conducive to a happy life, the will to justice cannot be an affection of this sort. To desire justice in this picture is not to desire something one considers good and conducive to the happy life, but, Scotus explains, to love something 'in itself'.<sup>15</sup> To love something 'in itself' should according to him be contrasted with loving something 'for oneself', and so Scotus thinks that the pursuit of happiness that is driven by the Anselmian will-to-happiness is intrinsically egocentric, whereas the pursuit of justice and morality must potentially transcend these self-centered concerns.<sup>16</sup>

Scotus's point about the self-centered nature of the individual's pursuit of happiness becomes even clearer when we look at his discussion about what Satan's sin might have consisted in. For Scotus's answer depends on an assumption of moral psychology about the nature of willing that is clearly not there in his predecessors, Augustine and Anselm. According to Scotus, two stages or two moments can be distinguished in each and every willing, and even if there may be no temporal succession involved, one stage is clearly prior to the other. For when we will something, according to Scotus, the willing of some certain benefit is always preceded by the willing of a beneficiary: We may will goods for ourselves or we may will goods for someone else. Scotus calls this aspect of the willing *velle-amicitiae*, or friendship-will. From the friendship-will flows another will, a will of good things for that person, whom the friendship-will is directed at. This second aspect of the willing is called by Scotus desire-will, or *velle-concupiscentiae*. Now Satan's fault consisted in an inordinate willing, which in turn consisted in an inordinate friendship-willing directed at himself, followed by an inordinate desire-willing directed at some object he was not entitled to. His friendship-will should have been directed at God. Had it been directed at God, then his desire-willing could not have been inordinate, Scotus explains.<sup>17</sup>

But is not Satan's willing some benefit for himself simply an instance of his desiring to be happy? Why is it unethical to want good things? Our starting point was the notion that ethics should answer the question "how do we attain the happy life?" We are now saying that ethics is not about pursuing happiness, but rather about desiring or pursuing or choosing justice, and justice may demand that we resolutely put our pursuit of happiness on hold. When we started, we agreed that people may be confused and in err about what happiness consists in, but this observation seemed only

15 See John Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio* III, suppl. dist. 46, pp. 178–179.

16 For a recent discussion of Scotus's rejection of eudaimonist assumptions, see Irwin 2008, esp. pp. 160–165.

17 See John Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio* II, dist. 6, q. 2, pp. 462–463. For Peter King's discussion, see King 2011, esp. p. 365.

to underscore the claim that morality is about seeking the happy life. In Anselm and Scotus, our desire for happiness has started looking dubious. If the will to happiness is always egocentric and self-serving, then it is no wonder that this will may be a problem from an ethical point of view. But are there really any compelling reasons to think of the happy life as essentially and necessarily centered on the self and on crass desire-satisfaction in this way?

### Happiness and *gaudium*

If I am right so far, then the medieval developments in ethics, and in particular those pertaining to ancient eudaimonistic assumptions, are intimately connected to the developments in the notion of the will, but also to a transformation of the very notion of happiness involved in ethical discussion.

From Augustine's notion of *voluntas* as emotion or affection (largely based on, but also developed in contrast with Stoic assumptions) we eventually end up in Scotus's sharp distinction between will and nature as a distinction between what is done freely and what happens out of necessity. Bestowal by God of the two Anselmian affections gives a rational creature the power to elicit or not elicit the will-acts suggested by the natural affection for happiness, and this very power is what the free will consists in.

We naturally and necessarily desire beneficial things because we love happiness, but we freely choose to act or not act on these desires. The desires as such are neither morally good nor morally bad, insofar as they spring from our natural desire for happiness. Actually choosing something for the sake of one's own happiness may, however, be either morally right or morally wrong, as the case may be. Saying that something is conducive to one's own happiness is not, therefore, the same as saying that this thing is good from an ethical point of view. In order to be moral, a person must ascertain whether those things she desires meet the demands of justice. If there is a conflict, she should choose justice over her own happiness. If, furthermore, she chooses justice, she does so because she desires justice, and desires justice more than happiness, yet this latter desire must have a structure very different from the desire for happiness. It cannot be an instance of desiring what one considers good as in beneficial, something which will help one realize the happy life.

The will to justice cannot, it seems, even be thought of as an emotional attachment to an object, since such emotional attachment involves a relation between the subject and the object and therefore essentially involves reference to the subject, or the self. Instead it must be thought of as a special sort of desire which is aimed at some good thing, a desire the description of which involves no reference to the person who is desiring this good. Scotus, as we have seen, argues that a human being can love something "in itself" as opposed to "for himself". He also argues that willing may be either self-

directed or other-directed in its very essence – that every act of willing involves a prior reference to a presumptive beneficiary of the benefit willed. Alternatively, we can think about the will to justice not as a desire, emotion or love at all, but instead as a power or capacity distinct from and consequent upon such conative states. Then, while the will to happiness is the name for our natural inclination towards our own happiness, the will to justice is the name not of an inclination, but rather a power to choose not to follow that natural inclination. The will to justice constitutes a power of eliciting or not eliciting wills in accordance with the inclination; it is a capacity for choice.

The second important factor behind this shift is the Augustinian notion of happiness. Nicholas Wolterstorff argues that Augustine in the *Confessions* is operating with a notion of happiness that is clearly very different from the *eudaimonia* of the ancient philosophers. Whereas the ancient philosophers subscribed to what Wolterstorff calls the activity principle, according to which the happy life is a life essentially consisting in a certain form of activity, Augustine thinks of happiness in much more passive terms. Happiness is a gift. Further, by happiness, Augustine means joy – *gaudium* – and joy is clearly not an activity but an experiential state, a feeling. The goal for human beings is true happiness and true happiness consists in the experience of the true joy that can only be had – i.e. felt – by the faithful believer:

O Lord, [...] far be it from me to think that whatever joy I feel makes me truly happy. For there is a joy that is not given to those who do not love you, but only to those who love you for your own sake. [...] This is true happiness, and there is no other. Those who think that there is another kind of happiness look for joy elsewhere, but theirs is not true joy. Yet their minds are set on something akin to joy.<sup>18</sup>

The passage quoted is from the *Confessions*, but the conception of happiness as joy is arguably in place already from the start, and can be seen in Augustine's early work *De libero arbitrio*. For in discussing the good life, Augustine identifies happiness not with the activity of living rightly and honorably – an activity in which the person with a good will is clearly involved – but rather with the joy a person experiences in possessing such a good will:

Augustine: Hence if it is precisely by a good will that we embrace and take delight in this [good] will, and put it ahead of all the things that we are unable to retain just by willing to do so, then, as the argument has shown, our mind will possess those very virtues whose

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18 Augustine, *Confessions* 10.22, as quoted in Wolterstorff 2014, p. 52. "Absit, domine, absit a corde servi tui, qui confitetur tibi, absit, ut, quocumque gaudio gaudeam, beatum me putem, est enim gaudium, quod non datur impiis, sed eis, qui te gratis colunt [...] ipsa est et non est altera. qui autem aliam putant esse, aliud sectantur gaudium neque ipsum verum. ab aliqua tamen imagine gaudii voluntas eorum non avertitur." Translation by R. S. Pine Coffin, in St Augustine, *Confessions*, London 1984.

possession is the same thing as living rightly and honorably. The upshot is that anyone who wills to live rightly and honorably, if he wills himself to will this instead of transient goods, acquires so great a possession with such ease that having what he willed is nothing other for him than willing it.

Evodius: To tell the truth, I can scarcely keep myself from shouting for joy, when such a great and easily acquired good has suddenly sprung up before me!

Augustine: If indeed the joy occasioned by acquiring this good elevates the mind calmly, peacefully and steadfastly, this is called the happy life. You do not think that living happily is something other than rejoicing in genuine and certain goods, do you?<sup>19</sup>

The close connection between happiness and joy in passages such as this, helps us see why there is in Anselm such a close connection between happiness and the beneficial – *commodum*. Instead of the will to happiness, Anselm often talks about the will to *commoda*. True happiness consists in the satisfaction of those wills that are aimed at those beneficial things consistent with justice. In such a state Anselm assures us we will be fulfilled and lack nothing:

For in happiness – on this all agree – there is a sufficiency of mutually consistent beneficial things without any lack (and this is true both of angelic happiness, and of the happiness that Adam had in paradise).<sup>20</sup>

If happiness is all about experiencing joy, then our desire for happiness – which in Anselm translates into a desire for *commoda* that we may enjoy – should indeed be seen as dubious. Not all joy is good, of course. Many things that we enjoy now will at least potentially turn on us and make us miserable at some point. According to the Stoics, this is true of the entire range of *commoda*, which is why they think we should not aim at *commoda* at all, but at virtue instead. But the moment we realize that not all joy is consistent with the happy life, and that aiming at happiness is not necessarily the same as aiming at obtaining the proper set of beneficial things, it is no longer as clear

19 Augustine, *De libero arbitrio* 1, 13, 29, ed. Green 1970, pp. 230–231: “Aug. Hanc igitur voluntatem, si bona itidem voluntate diligamus atque amplectamur, rebusque omnibus quas retinere non quia volumus possumus, antepnamus; consequenter illae virtutes, ut ratio docuit, animum nostrum incolent, quas habere idipsum est recte honesteque vivere. Ex quo conficitur ut quisque recte honesteque vult vivere, si id se velle prae fugacibus bonis velit, assequatur tantam rem tanta facilitate, ut nihil aliud ei quam ipsum velle sit habere quod voluit. Ev. Vere tibi dico, vix me contineo quin exclamem laetitia, repente mihi oborto tam magno, et tam in facili constituto bono. Aug. Atqui hoc ipsum gaudium, quod huius boni adeptione gignitur, cum tranquille et quiete atque constanter erigit animum, beata vita dicitur: nisi tu putas aliud esse beate vivere, quam veris bonis certisque gaudere.” Transl. from P. King, *On the Free Choice of the Will, On Grace and Free Choice, and Other Writings*, Cambridge 2010, pp. 97–98.

20 “In beatitudine autem, secundum omnium sensum, est sufficientia competentium commodorum sine omni indigentia, siue angelica intelligatur beatitudo, siue illa quam habebat Adam in paradiso.” My translation. Anselm, *De concordia* 3:13, ed. Schmitt 1968, vol. 2, p. 285.

that Augustine and Anselm are right in claiming that we all will happiness – in their sense of happiness. We all will to live happily, to be sure, but this does not necessarily mean we always aim at the subjective experience of joy, nor that we constantly strive to obtain and retain a certain collection of things that will provide such joy.

On the other hand, if Augustine and Anselm are right in holding that human beings pursue the experience of joy out of natural necessity in the way just suggested, then it seems we do need another distinct source of motivation in human beings – such as Scotus's Anselmian affection for justice – in order to explain the phenomenon of truly moral conduct.

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Herr Wernher von Teufen, 1305–1340. Codex Manesse, Cod. Pal. germ. 848, fol. 69r.  
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# *Joi d'amor* as Discursive Practice

Carin Franzén

When the French literary historian Gaston Paris coined the term *amour courtois* in 1883, he used it to designate a specific cultural and literary phenomenon that appeared first in the southwest of France, at the courts of Poitou and Aquitaine, in the eleventh century and then extended eastwards and to northern Italy and Spain. The impact of this specific code of love on western culture and the literature to come can hardly be overlooked. Its first articulations are to be found in Occitan troubadour lyrics, soon followed by verse narrative in chivalric romances that dramatized its main features, characterized by key words such as *joi d'amor*, *fin'amor* and *cortezia*, all describing a mental and moral code in order to educate lovers in a courtly setting.

To be sure, courtly love shares various discursive elements with Classical and Christian doctrines of love but its dominant configuration of a male subject's desire and worship of a secular woman is probably unique at this period of time. Whereas the two hegemonic systems of love during the Middle Ages – the Classical and the Christian – repress sexuality or transcend its bodily experiences in the name of a higher and abstract goal, such as Beauty, Truth or God, courtly love articulates desire by transforming it into gestures, songs and words. Even though there are similarities between the transcendental movement in spiritual love and the worship of an unattainable Lady in the troubadour lyrics and the romances, courtly love remains in a secular and worldly setting, where the impediments to sexual fulfilment have a social rather than religious function. It has been claimed that courtly love was a strategy used by European elites against the Church in order to render sexual enjoyment innocent.<sup>1</sup>

At any rate, and regardless of what kind of sexual relations people had in real life, a striking particularity of this cultural and literary performance is the correlation of joy and the impediments to realizing desire, which can be assessed if we look more closely

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<sup>1</sup> Reddy 2012, p. 179.

at the Lady in troubadour lyrics. Even though she is described with words that resemble those used in the medieval Marian cult, the Lady is an earthly woman evoking an ambiguous desire that can be exemplified by these two lines from the song "Lanquan li jorn son lonc en mai" by the troubadour Jaufré Rudel (active c. 1130–1150): *nulhs autres joys tan no'm play / cum jauzimen d'amor de lonh* ('no other joy pleases me as much / as the possession of the love from afar').<sup>2</sup> As already pointed out, the notion of *joi* (or *joy*) is central in the troubadour lyrics, and it has been defined as a seminal and paradoxical value of courtly love, as "the anxious and almost painful exaltation of love".<sup>3</sup> Thus, in these two lines we find a paradigmatic example of this complex configuration: *joi* is said to result from an enjoyment of something unattained – *jauzimen d'amor de lonh*. In other words, at the very core of courtly love lies renunciation of the sexual union with the beloved, even though fulfilment of desire remains as a dream or an imaginary state.

In the six songs left by Jaufré Rudel the word *joi* occurs fourteen times and *jauzimen* eighteen, whereas the notion of *amor de lonh* occurs in three of them. Even though Jaufré Rudel has been called an idealist and his songs indicate a pure dream, it can be argued that his depiction of love and *joi*, as a result of unfulfilled desire, is a general condition in the discursive formation of courtly love. Furthermore, the incompatibility between the lover and the beloved in the social context has often been underlined: the object of desire is mainly a married woman, a feudal Lady or a Queen, and the lover is a vassal or a knight at her court. However, it has been suggested that this asymmetry between the lover and the beloved is a configuration of a more profound condition of the courtly love code, the disappointment of desire.<sup>4</sup>

In what follows I will try to highlight the phenomenon of courtly love as a discursive formation that is related to power, gender and sexuality in medieval culture. As a point of departure I take the very notion of *joi* in the troubadour lyrics. In doing this I put between parentheses the always somewhat speculative question of what kind of affect or type of emotion courtly love actually reflects or indicates.<sup>5</sup> The emphasis on the contextual analyses of power as always multiple, implying incessant modifications of force relations, also differ from a definition of courtly love as a sensibility in the sense of agreed-on modes of feelings, shared by consensus.<sup>6</sup> The phenomenon we are dealing with is better described as a *heteroglossia* where different kinds of discursive elements – courtly, spiritual, idealizing and defaming – coexist and therefore refract every search for a simple origin. Or as Foucault puts it when he describes the mobility

2 Jaufré Rudel, ed. & transl. Jensen 1998, p. 122.

3 Zink 2013, p. 49.

4 Febvre 1944, p. 210.

5 Reddy 2012, p. 6.

6 Foucault 1998, p. 100; Jaeger 2003, pp. 7–12.

of a discourse: “it circulates, is used, disappears, allows or prevents the realization of a desire, serves or resists various interests, participates in challenge and struggle, and becomes a theme of appropriation or rivalry”.<sup>7</sup>

### Performances of *joi*

The signification of *joi* within the troubadour lyric seems to be more specific than the modern equivalences in French (*joie*) or English (*joy*).<sup>8</sup> This Occitan noun in its masculine form *lo joi* is said, for example, to be without comparison in the second stanza of the song “Pel doutz chan que.l rossinhols fai” by one of the most influential troubadours, Bernart de Ventadorn (active c. 1150–1195):

Qui sabia lo *joi* qu’eu ai  
que *jois* fos vezutz ni auzitz  
totz autre *jois* fora petitz  
vas qu’eu tenc que.l meus *jois* es grans.<sup>9</sup>

As in the lines we just saw from Jaufré Rudel’s poem, this incomparable joy is also tied to a love from afar – *lo cors s’en es lonhans* (‘[my] body is far away from her’)<sup>10</sup> – but Bernart de Ventadorn also underlines in the first stanza that his joy is inseparable from his song: *ab joi comensa mos chans* (‘with joy my song begins’).

Thus, we have a kind of paradoxical configuration of an expressive joy that at the same time is represented as an inner experience that cannot be described: *Qui sabia lo joi qu’eu ai, que jois fos vezutz ni auzitz* (‘If someone knew the joy I have, and this joy were seen and heard’). However, neither the union with the beloved nor the loss of self is part of this secular mysticism as courtly love has been called.<sup>11</sup> The intensity of its *joi* cannot be separated from its measure and rules – *mezura* – that in turn depends on a specific social context.

At the feudal courts, the troubadour lyrics and romances were performed as rituals, strictly formalized, but nevertheless highly expressive and playful. According to Leo Spitzer’s description courtly love was a social game constituted by poetry and imagination.<sup>12</sup> From a psychoanalytic perspective this cultural game seems to be a perfect illustration of sublimation, a deviation of a drive from sexual satisfaction towards another

<sup>7</sup> Foucault 2002, p. 118.

<sup>8</sup> See Camproux 1965, p. 122.

<sup>9</sup> “If someone knew the joy I have, and this joy were seen and heard, all other joys would be slight next to the one I have, so great is my joy”, Bernart de Ventadorn, “Pel doutz chan que.l rossinhols fai”, ed. & transl. Nichols & Galm 1962, pp. 138–139. My italics.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 138.

<sup>11</sup> Bezzola 1960, p. 312.

<sup>12</sup> Spitzer 1970, pp. 105–106.

aim, a process that is facilitated by the creation of an ideal, the Lady for instance.<sup>13</sup> In fact, psychoanalysts such as Jacques Lacan and Julia Kristeva have shown a sustained interest in the phenomenon of courtly love. According to the medievalist Sarah Kay, Lacan “sees modern subjectivity as deriving from the erotic configurations of medieval courtly love poetry.”<sup>14</sup> At any rate, this subjectivity must be regarded as masculine or at least based on a theory of the male (loving) subject. As Kristeva puts it, the configuration of the Lady is “an imaginary addressee, the pretext for the incantation”, that is the courtly songs.<sup>15</sup> Psychoanalytic approaches have undeniably been criticized for positing desire “as an ahistorical given”.<sup>16</sup> Nonetheless, psychoanalytic theory can also be seen as historicizing desire and love by the idea that subjectivity results from a continuous dialectic between biology (corporeality) and the symbolic order (which is culturally and historically specific). I will come back to the psychoanalytic approach to the phenomenon of courtly love. First, however, I will return to the notion of *joi*.

In Occitan there are several words for the English term ‘joy’, such as *jau* or *jai*, that can be derived from the Latin word *gaudium*. The specific word *joi* (also spelled *joy*) seems to have been a technical term created within the code of courtly love, and could therefore be seen as a formation of the Latin word for play or game, *joculum*.<sup>17</sup> If we return to the already quoted poem by Bernart de Ventadorn the first stanza reads:

Pel doutz chan que.l rossinhols fai  
 la noih can me sui adormitz  
 revelh de *joi* totz esbaitz  
 d’amor pensius e cossirans;  
 c’aisso es mos melhers mesters  
 que tostems ai *joi* volunters  
 et ab *joi* comensa mos chans.<sup>18</sup>

The song sings of a joy full of love – *joi totz esbaitz, d’amor* – that seems to refer to, at the same time, an inner experience and the performance of a code. As Camproux puts

<sup>13</sup> See Freud, *On Narcissism*, ed. & transl. Strachey 1957, pp. 94–95.

<sup>14</sup> Kay 2001, p. 26.

<sup>15</sup> Kristeva 1987, p. 287.

<sup>16</sup> Reddy 2012, p. 22.

<sup>17</sup> See Camproux 1965, pp. 123–124.

<sup>18</sup> “During the night when I am asleep, I wake with joy at the nightingale’s sweet song, all confused, troubled and pensive in love; for this is my best pastime, in which I always gladly take joy; and with joy my song begins.” Bernart de Ventadorn, “Pel doutz chan que.l rossinhols fai”, ed. & transl. Nichols & Galm 1962, pp. 138–139. My italics.

it: “Joi’ belongs to a vocabulary of ethics.”<sup>19</sup> In this first stanza the troubadour also talks about his joy as his supreme craft and service: *mos melher mesters*.<sup>20</sup>

Rather than passion, courtly love is action, but it is an action that has as its only aim the song and its social setting. As a creative joy, and hence a cultural performance, courtly love differs from Christian and Classical love, which are normative in quite another sense. The philosophical and social ideal of antiquity was above all equilibrium – rather far from the anxious exaltation of love at the basis of the courtly code. For the sake of Christianity, as Denis de Rougemont has pointed out, Eros is transformed into a moral duty: “The first commandment of the Decalogue is: ‘Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.’”<sup>21</sup> At the feudal courts the vassal must indeed love and serve his feudal superior, but the hierarchical structure is transformed into an art, which combines social restraints and a permission to articulate desire.

As discursive practices both courtly and Christian love yield regulations of sexuality and desire, but in the latter case love is a result of a moral decree that very much resembles a superego, while to subjugate one’s will to an ideal Lady is a smoother technique in order to control one’s self and desire. Thus, the very performance of courtly love also gives room for a joy that articulates an intense pleasure, as in the first stanza from another of Bernart de Ventadorn’s songs, “Can l’erba fresch’ e.lh folha par”:

Can l’erba fresch’ e.lh folha par  
e la flors boton’ el verjan  
e.l rossinhols autet e clar  
leva sa votz e mou so chan,  
*joi* ai de lui e *joi* ai de la flor  
e *joi* de me e de midons major.  
Daus totas partz sui de *joi* claus e sens,  
mas sel es *jois* que totz autres *jois* vens.<sup>22</sup>

As can be noticed, the word *joi* is repeated six times within this traditional poetical topos of springtime with nightingales. In the following stanzas however, it becomes clear that this intense joy, and expression of the lover’s desire, is not shared. The code is deployed in a way that is typical for the troubadour lyrics: the Lady is referred to

19 Camproux 1965, p. 122, my translation.

20 The word ‘mester’ means service, occupation, employment.

21 Rougemont 1983, pp. 310–311.

22 “When the fresh grass and the leaf appear and the flower buds on the branch, and when the nightingale lifts his voice high and clear and sings his song, I rejoice in him, I rejoice in the flower, and I rejoice in myself, but even more in my lady. I am surrounded and bound with joy, but this is a joy which conquers all others.” Bernart de Ventadorn, “Can l’erba fresch’ e.lh folha par”, ed. & transl. Nichols & Galm 1962, pp. 153–155. My italics.

as both an impossible object of desire and a figure to be obeyed. Furthermore, other people – *la gen* – are the poet's enemies in this love game where the code as such is also articulated in a concrete way in the sixth stanza: *Parlar de gram ab cubertz entresens, / e, pus no.ns val arditz, valgues nos gens* ('We should speak by secret signs. Since boldness does us little good, perhaps trickery might be of some worth'). These lines can also be read as a reference to the song itself, with its allusive and crafted language. In the last stanza however, the initial joy is changed into a somewhat resigned confession of the lover's service: *que lonja paraula d'amar / es grans enois e par d'enjan* ('talking a long time about love is a great annoyance and seems a trick').

However, this resignation can also be conceived as part of the game, which indicates a turning point in the power relationship between the vassal and his superior Lady. For the sake of clarity, let me illustrate this thought by a quotation from a much later text, Marguerite de Navarre's *Heptaméron* posthumously published in 1559: *Le nom de maistresse, est converty en amye, et le nom de serviteur en amy. C'est de là où le proverbe est dict: De bien servir et loyal estre, de serviteur on devient maistre* ('The title "lady" is soon exchanged for "mistress", and her "devoted servant" soon becomes her "lover". Hence the well-known proverb: loyal service makes the servant master').<sup>23</sup> In other words, through sexual fulfilment the lady's servant becomes her master, and her idealized position vanishes with the possession of her body. It is very plausible that this is also the case for feudal women during the twelfth century. As in the *Heptaméron*, in the troubadour lyrics love is an arena where power relations are acted out and seem to circle around the sexual act, which in the medieval and early modern social context has more to do with possession (in all its senses) than with love.

### A multivalent discourse

To be sure, the very idea that courtly love could empower women has been contested, and the configuration of the Lady has been explained as a male subject's narcissistic projection or as a disguise for the feudal lord, which can be sustained by the strange masculine form of the beloved object used in Bernart de Ventadorn's song above – *midons*.

However, one can also argue that the courtly love code had a real effect on women's lives and on their possibilities to act in the world. As Joan Scott points out, agency "is not the innate property of an abstract individual, but the attribute of subjects who are defined by – subjected to – discourses that bring them into being as both subordinate and capable of action".<sup>24</sup> I want to wrap up this brief presentation of the *joi* of courtly love by a reflection on its impact on gender roles.

23 Marguerite de Navarre, *L'Heptaméron*, ed. Cazauran 2000, pp. 158–159; transl. Chilton 2004, p. 153.

24 Scott 2011, p. 111.

If conceived as a set of discursive strategies dealing with desire, the most salient trait of courtly love seems to be the deferral of sexual fulfilment, which also resembles platonic and Christian doctrines. However, the code is from the beginning ambiguous. Even more so, if one considers its counter-texts where sublimation and idealization of love are changed into crude descriptions of the sexual act, the object of desire is also degraded. This ambiguity has been described as “twin fruits on the same branch”.<sup>25</sup>

In the counter-texts it also becomes less surprising that the phenomenon of courtly love appears in a patriarchal, feudal order, where women belong to men in the same way as goods, as reflected in these lines by the first known Occitan troubadour, William, ninth Duke of Aquitaine and seventh Count of Poitou (1071–1126): *Qu'ie.l doney a son senhor polin payssen* ('For I gave it to its master when still a colt in pasture').<sup>26</sup>

Apart from this testimony to a social structure of exchange of women, it is nevertheless tempting to regard the ambiguous configuration of the Lady in courtly literature as a sign of the instability of its discursive practices. In fact, courtly love is not a fixed system, but can serve many different strategies and articulate different discursive positions related to gender roles. It is rather obvious that the first troubadour does not compose the following stanza from “Farai un vers pos mi sonelh” to serve a Lady, but to demonstrate his power as a feudal lord:

Tant las fotei com auzirets:  
Cen e quatre vint et ueit vetz,  
Q'a pauc no.i rompei mos corretz  
E mos arnes<sup>27</sup>

To be sure, these lines also express a kind of joy, but not of refined love or of being in the service of this love. Within the courtly love code, the hyperbolic virility is part of a specific gendered performance reflecting a “warrior-gallant ethic”, to use Robert Bernard's description of its counterpart later on in the *Heptaméron*.<sup>28</sup>

To summarize, there are at least three discursive positions in the code of courtly love, which are related to feudal power relations and the social behavior that they convey.<sup>29</sup> The central position, often identified with the code as such, is based on the vassal's enunciations, but as we just saw we can also discern a position that must be attributed to the feudal lord, who furthermore has been regarded as the real addressee behind the

<sup>25</sup> Lewis 1936, p. 145.

<sup>26</sup> Quoted from Huchet 1987, p. 21.

<sup>27</sup> “And I screwed them this many times: One hundred and eighty-eight. And I almost fractured my straps and my gear.” William IX, “Farai un vers pos mi sonelh”, ed. Jeanroy 1927, p. 12, transl. Bond 1990, p. 51.

<sup>28</sup> See Bernard 1974, p. 4.

<sup>29</sup> Köhler 1964, pp. 38–39.



worship of the Lady.<sup>30</sup> The third position is attributed to the Lady, who seldom talks, but when she does, in the few songs left by female troubadours or more clearly in the courtly literature to come, it is often in order to defend her own idealized position.<sup>31</sup>

When courtly love is taken as a discursive practice the Lady appears at the same time as an imaginary construction in the hegemonic order and as a discursive position that real women can appropriate as a strategy. Considering that women had a central place in the courtly culture – many of the manuscripts are dedicated to feudal ladies and queens – the courtly configuration of love seems even to have been dialogical in the strong sense of the word.

As a discursive practice courtly love is integrated in the structure of a feudal society, but it also articulates a joyful way of dealing with sexuality and desire that undermines its power relations and makes it possible to thwart them. At any rate, and to put it with Bernart de Ventadorn in “Can vei la lauzeta mover”, this medieval code still tells us that it is more important to practice love in words and games than defining what it is:

Ai las, tan cuidava saber  
d'amor, e tan petit en sai,  
car eu d'amar n'om posc tener  
celeis don ja pro non aurai.<sup>32</sup>

Instead of speculating about what kind of feeling courtly love is, inaugurates or reflects, I think it is more fruitful to consider this social, cultural and literary phenomenon as a discursive practice. In the wake of Foucault, different historical representations of corporeal and subjective expressions have been identified as cultural constructions, self-fashioning, and rhetorical manipulations. Especially psychoanalytic, feminist, and queer theories have provoked new and challenging questions on the various regimes that regulate historical configurations of desire in literary, artistic, and intellectual contexts. The result has been the emergence of several works where literary and cultural phenomena such as courtly love, marital relationships, mystical experiences, etc. are conceived as discourses, involving a wide range of interests, moral issues, power structures, deliberate attempts at deconstruction, defense mechanisms, performances and projections. These critical perspectives are all relevant as a means of grasping the complexities of configurations of courtly love and its relation to social norms and cultural contexts. Furthermore, the outcome of such a critical perspective is a re-historicization of desire, which ponders how this category takes shape from the constraints imposed by surrounding political, religious, aesthetic, and economic discourses. Thus, this very

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 44.

<sup>31</sup> See Franzén 2012, p. 12.

<sup>32</sup> “Alas! I thought I knew so much about love, but really, I know so little. For I cannot keep myself from loving her From whom I shall have no favor.” Bernart de Ventadorn, “Can vei la lauzeta mover”, ed. & transl. Nichols & Galm 1962, pp. 166–168.

brief assessment of the relation between courtly love and the notion of *joi* (that has to be developed elsewhere) consists of a reappraisal of desire as a discursive practice that at the same time maintains and transgresses cultural norms during the Middle Ages.

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# The Weeping Lady in the Arthurian Romance

*Sofia Lodén*

Weeping women are omnipresent in twelfth century French romance. Their grief has different reasons, but in one way or another it is the male characters who cause it. In Chrétien de Troyes' Arthurian romance *Le Chevalier au lion*, we are given a most elaborate description of the courtly lady Laudine's sorrow, caused by the death of her husband, Esclados le Roux, who is killed at an early stage in the romance by Yvain, one of the Knights of the Round Table.<sup>1</sup> This paper seeks to explore how female grief, as a literary theme, was adapted in *Herr Ivan* (also known as *Herra Ivan* or *Herr Ivan lejonriddaren*), the Old Swedish translation of *Le Chevalier au lion*, dated to 1303.<sup>2</sup> I will point to some modifications made by the Swedish translator, and then discuss what these modifications can tell us about the translation.<sup>3</sup>

*Herr Ivan* was quickly followed by two other translations – *Hertig Fredrik av Normandie* and *Flores och Blanzeflor* – and thus marks the beginnings of a new literary tradition of translated chivalric romances in Sweden.<sup>4</sup> *Hertig Fredrik av Normandie*

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<sup>1</sup> The research on *Le Chevalier au lion* is extensive. For a general introduction to the romance, see Hunt 2005.

<sup>2</sup> As concluded in my doctoral dissertation from 2012, *Le Chevalier au lion* was, indeed, the Swedish translator's main source when writing *Herr Ivan*. However, the Old Norse version *Ivens saga*, from the middle of the thirteenth century, functioned as a secondary source that helped the translator in his work. Since the scope of this paper is limited, I will not further discuss the role of the Old Norse saga, whose relevance for the Swedish rewriting of Laudine's grief is limited. For a fuller discussion of the relationship between the saga and the Swedish text, see Lodén 2012, pp. 38–141.

<sup>3</sup> Research on medieval translation is a continually growing field, particularly since the groundbreaking work of Copeland 1991. Also the Nordic context of translated literature has been the subject of many studies, some of which are Eriksen 2014, Lodén 2012, Pettersson 2009 and Rikhardsdottir 2012.

<sup>4</sup> There is no trace of earlier literary texts of the same scope as the *Eufemiavisor*: the runic inscrip-

retells the adventures of a certain duke of Normandy and was, according to its epilogue, translated from a German version of a French text, none of which is still extant.<sup>5</sup> When it comes to *Flores och Blanzeflor*, previous research has shown that this text was translated from *Flóres saga ok Blankiflúr*, the Old Norse version of *Le Conte de Floire et Blanchefleur*.<sup>6</sup>

These three Old Swedish texts were written anonymously in the Germanic rhymed verse form *knittel* and are commonly referred to as the *Eufemiavisor*.<sup>7</sup> The name goes back to Queen Eufemia of Norway (1270–1312, Queen 1300–1312), who is said to have been the commissioner of the texts.<sup>8</sup> In 1859, the Norwegian historian Peter Andreas Munch argued that the *Eufemiavisor* were written in order to honor the Swedish duke Erik Magnusson who, in 1302, became engaged to Eufemia's daughter Ingeborg. The union would be the Norwegian King Hákon's way of securing the throne for his family: since he had no son, he needed his only daughter Ingeborg to be married to someone who could protect the interests of the king. According to Munch, the appearance of each one of the *Eufemiavisor* corresponds to the events of this union: *Herr Ivan*, dated to 1303, should be linked to the engagement in 1302 and *Flores och Blanzeflor*, dated to 1312, would have been written in order to celebrate the marriage, which took place the same year. When it comes to *Hertig Fredrik av Normandie*, Munch argued that this text would have been written in 1308 in order to improve the relationship between the king and the duke, marked by a period of conflict. Munch's hypotheses have long dominated the research on the *Eufemiavisor*, even though they have been subject to discussion.<sup>9</sup>

The study of how emotions in medieval romance were translated from one vernacular into another has sometimes revealed considerable divergences between different text traditions. For example, in his doctoral dissertation from 1997 on the *Eddic ele-*

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tions and law texts that precede them are really not narrative literary texts as extensive as these three. The *Eufemiavisor* mark the beginning of a new courtly tradition in Old Swedish, with translations such as *Konung Alexander*, *Namnlös och Valentin* and *Riddar Paris och Jungfru Vienna*. On this new tradition, see Lodén 2015.

5 In William Layher's view, the narrative of *Hertig Fredrik av Normandie* is "marked by the occasionally haphazard juxtaposition of narrative tropes drawn from the bridal-quest and Arthurian traditions". See Layher 2010, p. 93.

6 The French *Le Conte de Floire et Blanchefleur*, considered as a "roman idyllique", had a great success in medieval Europe and was translated into many languages. See Grieve 1997.

7 Given the stylistic similarities between these three texts (these similarities are analysed closely by Jansson 1945), it is plausible that one and the same author wrote them. Several scholars, for example Beckman 1953, pp. 365–367 and Ståhle 1967, pp. 64–67, have argued that this author would have been Peter Algotsson. However, this hypothesis still needs to be confirmed.

8 On Queen Eufemia, see Bandlien ed. 2012, in particular the articles by Bandlien, Holck, Imsen and Mikkelsen Hoel.

9 See for example Würth 2000, Bampi 2008 and Layher 2010.





*Graf Albrecht von Heigerloch, 1305–1340. From Codex Manesse, Cod. Pal. germ. 848, Fol. 42r. © Universitätsbibliothek Heidelberg, Heidelberg, Germany.*

gies, Daniel Sävborg discusses how grief was depicted in the French romance and then translated into Old Norse in the *riddarasögur*, written during the reign of the Norwegian king Hákon Hákonarson (r. 1217–1263). When courtly literature was translated into Old Norse, Sävborg points out that the different scenes in which grief was depicted were often shortened in the sagas.<sup>10</sup> Would this also be the tendency in *Herr Ivan*?

Whereas a great number of French romances were translated into Old Norse during the reign of King Hákon, the case was different in medieval Sweden where not only fewer texts were translated, but also at a later stage in history.<sup>11</sup> The Old Norse tradition was certainly crucial for the *Eufemiavisor*. Nevertheless, whereas the sagas were written in prose, the Swedish tradition of courtly romance was dominated by texts in *knittel* and thus differs considerably.

### From crazed to controlled

First, let me summarize what leads us to the scene in which we find the weeping Laudine. The knight Yvain, looking for an adventure, provokes a great storm at the magic fountain of Barenton. Esclados le Roux, the defender of the fountain, appears and challenges Yvain into combat. The latter attacks Esclados by breaking his helm, Esclados is mortally injured and flees home to his castle where he dies. Yvain, who wants to be sure of his victory and bring back proof of it, follows his opponent. When he arrives at the castle, the gates close behind him, cutting his horse in two and making Yvain a prisoner. Before the people of the castle start looking for their master's killer, a maiden, Lunete, finds Yvain and decides to hide him from the rest with the help of a ring that makes the knight invisible. While Yvain is kept in the maiden's protection, he spots Laudine, the lady of the castle and the widow of Esclados le Roux, through a window. Her grief occupies, as already stated, a central place in the text. Let us now look at how Chrétien closely describes how she weeps, cries out and struggles with herself after having learnt about her husband's death:

[...] there entered one of the most beautiful women ever seen by human eye – such an exceptionally beautiful lady has never before been reported or told of. But she was so crazed with grief that she was on the verge of killing herself. All at once she cried out as loudly as she could and fell down in a faint. When she was lifted back to her feet, she began clawing at herself

<sup>10</sup> Sävborg 1997, pp. 193–195.

<sup>11</sup> Five Old Norse translations explicitly refer to King Hákon as the commissioner: *Tristrams saga* (a translation of *Tristan et Yseut*), *Ívens saga* (a translation of *Le Chevalier au lion*), *Möttuls saga* (a translation of *Le Mantel mautailé*), *Elíss saga* (a translation of *Élie de Saint-Gilles*) and *Strengleikar* (a translation of the *Lais* of Marie de France). But also other texts, like *Erex saga* (a translation of *Érec et Énide*), *Parcevals saga* (a translation of *Le Conte du Graal*) and *Karlamagnús saga* (a compilation of different *chansons de geste*) belong to the same context, even though they do not mention King Hákon explicitly. On this subject, see Eriksen 2014, pp. 106–108.



and tearing out her hair like a madwoman; her hands grabbed and ripped her clothing and she fainted with every step. Nothing could comfort her, for she could see her lord dead in the coffin being carried in front of her. She felt she could never be comforted again, and so she cried out at the top of her voice.<sup>12</sup>

This is a shorter extract from a longer passage in Chrétien's romance that describes Laudine's grief. Even if the Swedish text contains a translation of the passage, it modifies the tone:

Then the noble lady approached. Our Lord has not created a more beautiful face. For grief she was not able to speak or hear; the sounds she made were pitiable, caused by grief and lamentation and much weeping. As soon as she saw the corpse she fell down in a swoon. The ladies standing beside her had water brought to her. As soon as the lady recovered her senses she tore her hair most pitifully. Knights and squires entreated her: "All of us want to give you advice, ladies and maidens and noble women, stop your crying for the present, send for priests, old and young, and have Masses sung and read for his soul!"<sup>13</sup>

Laudine's beauty is underlined in both texts, as well as the fact that her grief makes her tear off her hair and fall down to the ground. But whereas the lady in the French version cries out loud, is described as *fole* (crazed) and tears off not only her hair but also her clothes, the grief of her Swedish counterpart seems more controlled: she is unable to speak or hear and weeps rather than cries out. More interestingly, instead of going into the details of the lady's sorrow, the translator adds a passage in which the lady's knights give her the advice to calm down. Thus, the Swedish Laudine never becomes *fole*, but remains more controlled in her emotions.

12 Chrétien de Troyes, *Le Chevalier au lion*, transl. Kibler 1991, p. 309. The original has: "Vint une des plus beles dames / C'onques veïst riens terriene. / De si tres bele crestiene / Ne fu onques plez ne parole; / Mes de duel feire estoit si fole / Qu'a po qu'ele ne s'ocioit / A la foïee, si croïot / Si haut com ele pooit plus, / Et recheoit pasmee jus. / Et quant ele estoit relevee, / Ausi come fame desvee, / Se comançoit a dessirer / Et ses chevols a detirer; / Ses mains detuert et ront ses dras, / Si se repasme a chascun pas, / Ne riens ne la puet conforter, / Que son seignor en voit porter / Devant li, en la biere, mort, / Don ja ne cuide avoir confort; / Por ce croïot a haute voiz" (ed. Uitti 1994, ll. 1144–1163).

13 Williams & Palmgren 1999, p. 53. The original has: "þa kom þær gangande þe stolta frugha. / Guþ haver eigh vænare alit giørt. / For sorgh gat hon eigh talat ælla hōrt; / ømkelik þa varo hænna lat / for sorgh ok iæmber ok mykin grat. / Førsta hon a likit sa / i ovit fiol hon niþer ok la. / Þe fruær hænne stoþo næræ / loto vatn a hænne bææ. / Þæt første þe frua forsinnæpe sik / hon ref sit har sva iæmerlik. / Riddara ok svena hænne bæpo: / 'Vi viliom þæt alle Iþer rapa, / fruor ok mōr ok hoviska qvinna, / I latin Iþan grat i þætta sinne, / senden buþ æptir klærka gamal ok unga / ok lætin for hans siæl læsæ ok siunga!'" (*Herra Ivan*, ll. 942–958).

## The manipulative lady revisited

If we look at what follows in the French text, it becomes clear that Laudine's appearance in front of the invisible Yvain functions as a revenge of her husband's death:

The lady, although she does not know it, has fully avenged the death of her husband: she has taken greater vengeance than she could ever have thought possible had Love herself not avenged her by striking Yvain such a gentle blow through the eyes into the heart. The effects of this blow are more enduring than those from lance or sword: a sword blow is healed and cured as soon as a doctor sees to it; but the wound of Love grows worse when it is nearest to its doctor. My lord Yvain has suffered this wound from which he'll never be healed, for Love has completely overwhelmed him.<sup>14</sup>

Without knowing it, Laudine has hurt her greatest enemy Yvain, who is from now on injured with a wound that will never heal, caused, as Chrétien describes it, not by a sword but by the love that he suddenly feels for the lady. Thus, it seems as though the lady's grief is given a manipulative role: it is by watching Laudine's tears and desperation that the knight gets this wound of love. This manipulative role of female grief is far from unique for this text. In Chrétien's fifth and last romance, *Le Conte du Graal*, the beautiful maiden Blanchefleur visits Perceval in his bed one night, weeping desperately: "Weeping, she left her room and came, still weeping and sighing, to the bed where the knight was asleep."<sup>15</sup> After having shown her great distress, Blanchefleur tells the knight about the danger that threatens her castle and thereby manages to obtain Perceval's intervention.

Another example of the power of female emotion can be found in the famous *Roman de la Rose*, where a passage describes how a woman manipulates her spouse with tears and kisses and thereby makes him reveal a secret that he should have kept to himself: "and [she] sheds many tears on him, accompanied by feigned kisses."<sup>16</sup> Interestingly, in *Herr Ivan*, the lady's tears do not have any real power over the knight: the trans-

14 Chrétien de Troyes, *Le Chevalier au lion*, transl. Kibler 1991, pp. 311–312. The original has: "Bien a vangiee, et si nel set, / La dame la mort son seignor. / Vangence en a feite greignor / Que ele panre n'an seüst, / S'Amors vangiee ne l'eüst, / Qui si dolcemant le requiert / Que par les ialz el cuer le fiert; / Et cist cos a plus grant duree / Que cos de lance ne d'espee : / Cos d'espee garist et saine / Mout tost, des que mires i painne; / Et la plaie d'Amors anpire / Qant ele est plus pres de son mire. / Cele plaie a messire Yvains, / Dom il ne sera ja mes sains, / Qu'Amors s'est tote a lui randue" (ed. Uitti 1994, ll. 1364–1379).

15 Chrétien de Troyes, *Le Conte du Graal*, transl. Kibler, 1991, p. 405. The original has: "Plorant est de la chanbre issue / Et vient au lit ou cil se dort, / Et plore et sopire mout fort" (ed. Poirion 1994, ll. 1964–1966).

16 My translation. The original has: "Et pleure seur lui lermes maintes, / Entre les baiseries faintes" (Guillaume de Lorris & Jean de Meun, *Le Roman de la Rose*, ed. Strubel 1992, ll. 16543–16544).

lator actually omits the whole passage that describes Laudine's revenge on the knight.

In Chrétien's text, it is by watching Laudine's grief over her dead husband that Yvain falls in love with her, which raises the question whether her grief is not a condition for the love that Yvain feels for her:

And my lord Yvain was still at the window observing her; and the more he watched her, the more he loved her and the more she pleased him. He wished that she would cease her weeping and her reading, and that it were possible for him to speak to her. Love, who had caught him at the window, filled him with this wish.<sup>17</sup>

In the Swedish text this is clearly not the case. It is the lady's beauty, rather than her tears, that makes Ivan fall in love with her. Laudine's grief has no power over the Swedish Ivan; on the contrary, the translator stresses that it is the knight who wants power over the lady:

Sir Ivan observed her once more. He thought to himself and said, when he saw her white cheeks: "God give that you were mine! Were I to have power over the lady, I would consider it the world's highest glory!"<sup>18</sup>

In this way, the Swedish Ivan is never really affected by the lady's tears, but driven by the idea of possessing her through a marriage that would represent a high form of honor (*æra*) to him. When Ivan looks at the lady through the window, he sees a beautiful woman that would help him gain the honor that his chivalrous quest is all about. When he sees the tears of the lady, he assuredly wants to intervene – not out of love, but in his search for honor. Accordingly, looking at her weeping, he says to himself that it would be a dishonor not to help her: "If I do not help her, it will be a disgrace to me!"; a statement that is not to be found in the French text where the knight at this moment is more occupied by his emotional struggle than by chivalrous ideals.<sup>19</sup>

In the French text, the lady's grief makes Yvain himself suffer, and it seems to be in this suffering that his love for her is born:

17 Chrétien de Troyes, *Le Chevalier au lion*, transl. Kibler 1991, p. 312. The original has: "Et messire Yvains est ancor / A la fenestre ou il l'esgarde; / Et quant il plus s'an done garde, / Plus l'ainme, et plus li abelist. / Ce qu'ele plore et qu'ele list / Volsist qu'ele lessié eüst / Et qu'a lui parler li pleüst. / An ce voloir l'a Amors mis / Qui a la fenestre l'a pris" (ed. Uitti 1994, ll. 1418–1426).

18 Williams & Palmgren 1999, p. 59. The original has: "Hærra Ivan ater til hænnu sa, / han þænkte mæþ sik ok saghþe sva, / þa han sa hænnu hvíta kin: / 'Nu gave þæt Guð at þu vare min! / Matte iak þe fru valdugh væra, / iak toke þæt for al væruldsins æra!'" (*Hærra Ivan* 1999, ll. 1079–1084).

19 *Ibid.*, p. 57. The original has: "Hiælper iak eigh hænnu, þæt ær mik skam!" (*Hærra Ivan* 1999, l. 1036).

I grieve for her beautiful hair, which surpasses pure gold as it glistens; it kindles and enflames me with passion when I see her tearing and pulling it out. Nor can the tears that flow from her eyes ever be dried: all these things displease me.<sup>20</sup>

It goes without saying that the distress of the French Yvain must be understood in the light of the literary context it belongs to: Chrétien's work was greatly influenced by the Occitan troubadour tradition, in which the notion *fin'amor*, strongly bound to suffering, was central. Once again, the passage is omitted in the Swedish version. It is only when the knight can no longer watch the lady through the window that the Swedish Ivan shows a sign of sadness: "That he could no longer see her made his heart ache."<sup>21</sup> Ivan's sadness, however, never goes further than this.

### Grief, honor and power

To sum up, there are major differences between the French romance *Le Chevalier au lion* and the Swedish *Herr Ivan* when it comes to representing Laudine's grief. Whereas the French text describes how the lady has revenged her husband's death and the theme of grief is strongly bound to the notion of love, the Swedish translator moves the focus from love to marriage, and the honor that marriage to a noble and beautiful lady represents.<sup>22</sup> The allusions to the troubadour context are "lost in translation". By focusing less on the lady's and the knight's emotions, *Herr Ivan* thus rewrites the whole passage.

According to Joseph M. Sullivan, the segment in which Yvain arrives in Laudine's realm and finally marries her reflects a clear rewriting of the exercise of power in *Herr Ivan*.<sup>23</sup> Convincingly, Sullivan has shown how the Swedish translator proposes "a section of narrative that works much more as a model of ideal government and rulership than had Chrétien's original version".<sup>24</sup> Sullivan has raised the question of whether the Swedish poet wanted to restore the dynamic between man and woman, according to which the man rules and the wife supports him.<sup>25</sup> He argues that Laudine's restraint in her emotions reflects the translator's "authorial agenda to educate his Swed-

20 Chrétien de Troyes, *Le Chevalier au lion*, transl. Kibler 1991, p. 313. The original has: "Grant duel ai de ses biax chevox / C'onques rien tant amer ne vox, / Que fin or passent, tant reluisent. / D'ire m'espranent et aguissent, / Qant je les voi ronpre et tranchier; / N'onques ne pueent estanchier / Les lermes qui des ialz li chieient: / Totes ces choses me dessieent" (ed. Uitti 1994, ll. 1463–1470).

21 Williams & Palmgren 1999, p. 59. The original has: "Þæt han fik hænne eigh længer se, / þæt giorþe honum i hiærtat ve" (*Herra Ivan* 1999, ll. 1107–1108).

22 See Lodén 2012.

23 Sullivan 2009b.

24 *Ibid.*, p. 32.

25 Sullivan 2009a, p. 61.

ish audience".<sup>26</sup> By eliminating the madness and lack of control in the lady's behavior, the translator has made her "especially capable of making an important political, state decision", i.e. to choose a new husband and ruler over her realm.<sup>27</sup> Sullivan sees this rewriting as an example of the didactic function of the Swedish text, showing its audience, the Swedish nobility, "how to live successfully in a feudalized world".<sup>28</sup>

There is no doubt that the Swedish translator has rewritten the passage in which Yvain arrives in Laudine's realm in order to adapt it to a new context. As Sullivan has shown, the Swedish Ivan is clearly presented as a more explicit political ruler than his French exemplar; the translator's stress on the notion of honor is only one example of this. Also Sullivan's view of the Swedish Laudine as a conscious political agent, who is able to control her emotions, throws a great deal of light on the subject, and is further supported by the passage that follows in *Herr Ivan*, in which Laudine and her maiden discuss a possible marriage between Laudine and Ivan.

However, we should not forget that Chrétien's lady of the castle unconsciously exerted great political influence, only in a more subtle way: by showing openly her strong emotions rather than controlling herself. If we look closely at Chrétien's text, the tremendous grief of the French Laudine is not only a sign of a woman's lack of reason and political influence, but just as much an example of female power over men. Even if Laudine, crying out loudly and tearing her hair, is not aware of Yvain's observant gaze, her behavior responds to what Chrétien's audience would expect from a courtly female character in Laudine's situation. As shown above, similar scenes, depicting this manipulative power of female emotion, are to be found in *Le Conte du Graal* and *Le Roman de la Rose*. Even if the French Laudine herself is not aware of the direct consequences of her behavior, it is nevertheless her grief that helps her obtain what she must obtain: the revenge of her husband followed by the love, and protection, of his superior, finally resulting in a marriage between them. By thoroughly depicting Laudine's sorrow and the madness that it causes, Chrétien gives an elegant example of how a noble lady's suffering is bound to curse any knight.

By portraying the lady's grief as controlled, *Herr Ivan* dismisses this manipulative power of female emotion and tones down the female influence on men more generally. Whereas the French text is strongly anchored in the Occitan tradition, emphasizing the bonds between love and suffering, *Herr Ivan* shifts the focus from love to marriage and from grief to honor. Indeed, whereas Chrétien's romance is the fruit of a long tradition of courtly literature, the Swedish translation marks the beginning of a new literary tradition in which the translator is free to redraw the ideological agenda.

Even though descriptive passages are often shortened in *Herr Ivan*, thus remind-

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<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 63.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 52.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 63.

ing us of the translation strategies in many of the Old Norse *riddarasögur*, the Swedish translator offers above all a well thought-out rewriting of the French romance.<sup>29</sup> Indeed, *Herr Ivan* clarifies successfully that political power is a question of self-command and reason, rather than of emotion and manipulation. The Swedish translator did not want to keep the image of a manipulative lady and a spellbound knight, but transform it into a picture of a decisive young man, engaging in an important, honorable and, above all, sensible alliance, thus acting as a male model for the relatively new Swedish aristocracy. By allowing Laudine greater control of her emotions, he avoids a discourse on love that did not fit his ideological aims, and whose literary associations were probably of little importance to him.

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<sup>29</sup> This is developed in Lodén 2012, pp. 278–280.

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